

Unbreakable 1971

Chapter 1971

Their gazes intertwined, and she felt the urge to speak, yet words failed her.

Silence hung between them. Neither dared to break it.

The whole scene felt like a dream to Raegan, yet it was vividly real.

Mitchels presence was undeniably tangible. How did you

Raegan tried to ask how Mitchel got here, but before she could finish, he had already seized her arm, pulling her toward the window.

The solid, undeniable feeling confirmed for Raegan that this was no dream. Mitchel had truly come to her wedding.

ALL of a sudden, a long coat enveloped her from head to toe, and the sharp sound of breaking glass pierced the air.

Before Raegan could react, she was lifted firmly by Mitchel. She felt herself being hoisted over a barrier, then cradled uncomfortably in his arms, the motion jarring.

With her vision obscured, she could see nothing, only managing to clutch and shake his arm frantically. Hey! Mitchel, what are you doing?

As her anxiety peaked, Mitchel gently placed her down on a soft, plush cushion.

He then removed the coat that had covered her. Opening her eyes, Raegan found herself seated in a car.

There were traces of blood on Mitchels arm, likely from a scratch he received while jumping out of the window.

Raegan glanced around and noticed that the window of the makeup room was quite close to the guest parking lot.

A small door at the front, previously locked, had been opened, probably by Mitchel.

Raegan asked anxiously, Mitchel, what are you trying to do?

His reply was terse. To take you away.

What? Raegan wondered if she had misheard, or if he was merely joking. Such a statement seemed absurd! To kidnap the bride at the Clifford familys wedding feast was surely not normal behavior.

Mitchel, stop joking. I need to go back An oppressive aura seemed to radiate from Mitchel, almost choking Raegan. At that moment, she didnt want to provoke him, but she also couldnt let his irrational behavior continue. You can go back. Ill tell Stefan to let you leave.

Only invited guests were permitted at the wedding venue.

Following Lorenzos death, the two major families in Aurora had fortified their defenses, wary of provoking the formidable power from Ardlens, akin to a sovereign nation. This strategy rested on the principle that they would not initiate conflict unless foreign forces encroached on their territory.

Indeed, the strength of Ardlens was unmatched, and they avoided conflicts unless absolutely necessary. But any foreign trespass on their lands would not be overlooked lightly, otherwise, Aurora might be ridiculed as a place unable to defend its own borders.

Thus, Raegan was deeply concerned about Mitchel since his uninvited presence constituted trespassing. If he were caught, it would surely cause a lot of trouble.

She glanced at the wound on his arm, still oozing blood, and felt a surge of sympathy. Unwrapping the gauze from her own arm, she offered, Your arm is bleeding. Would you like me to dress the wound?

Mitchel stayed silent, his deep gaze fixed on her.

Chapter 1972

Feeling her heart twinge with empathy and having already expressed her concern, Raegan decided to proceed and dress his wound.

Let me help bandage it, okay? Once its done, you can go back. She spoke in a soothing tone, hoping to coax him into agreement. When he didnt object, she took it as his consent.

Carefully, she rolled up his sleeve and dabbed gently at the blood before wrapping it neatly.

In the cramped space of the car, Raegans expansive wedding gown pressed almost against Mitchel.

She focused on bandaging his arm, making a loop and tying a graceful bow. After bandaging him, she noticed his arm seemed thinner than before. Had he not fully recovered, leaving himself in such a frail state?

Despite her growing sympathy, Raegan was aware of the urgency. She needed to return before her absence was discovered, to avoid causing any commotion.

Raegan intended to withdraw her hand, but was suddenly pulled back into a tight embrace by Mitchel. Her heart raced, panic mingling with confusion in his hold.

Yet, the embrace felt as warm and solid as it had been previously.

Mitchels familiar cool scent enveloped her, instilling a sense of safety and calm.

For a brief moment, Raegan was transported back to their sweetest, most affectionate times. Back when there were no interferences from Lauren, Katie, or Henley. Just the two of them, reluctant to part on those mornings before work.

In that instant, Raegan felt a longing to surrender to the moment, to lose herself in his embrace. She pushed aside thoughts of curses, destinies, or past injuries, choosing instead to savor this hard-won embrace. Just five minutes, she told herself, permitting herself this brief indulgence. After that, reality would reclaim them both.

Silence filled the car.

They held each other wordlessly, as if any sound might break the delicate illusion enveloping them.

Yet, five minutes passed in a flash.

Like Cinderella racing against the clock, Raegan reluctantly pushed Mitchel away, urging, You should go.

She was now entangled with a mysterious assailant. If Mitchel stayed, he would face danger once more. She could not justify such selfishness, not after he had risked his life for her multiple times.

Last time, he had nearly died. Perhaps Katie was correct. Their destinies were misaligned, and togetherness only spelled disaster for them both.

Seeing how resolutely Raegan pushed him away and repeatedly insisted he leave, a shadow fell over Mitchels eyes. Dont you have anything to say to me? he asked.

Raegan bit her lip, replying simply, No. She disliked indecision.

Once her mind was made up, she stood firm.

Really, you have nothing to say to me? Pain echoed in Mitchels deep gaze.

Raegans heart tightened, but she averted her eyes and responded evenly, Thank you for coming to my wedding, but given Auroras current situation, I couldnt invite you

She had her reasons. She knew the agony of watching the man she loved prepare for anothers wedding Standing at the altar while he watched as a guest was no less painful. She refused to experience so.

Whether it was selfishness or self-preservation, she was determined to end things decisively.

Chapter 1973

I need to go back now, Mr. Dixon. Given the Clifford familys stance, Id advise you against taking such risks, Raegan said earnestly.

Mitchel seemed to disregard her warning. Slowly, he reached out, tenderly caressing her face. No, Raegan, youre lying to me

As Raegan met his deep, soulful eyes, she forcefully repressed her feelings, sealing her heart. If she lingered any Longer, the risk to the both of them would only increase.

She pretended to be impatient. Mitchel, why would I lie to you? As you can see, Im getting married Youre not being sincere. Unexpectedly, Mitchel lifted her chin firmly and delivered a forceful kis to her lips.

Hmm Mitchel Her protest was muffled as he grasped her jaw, pulling her close and deepening the kis without reservation.

Instinctively, Raegan raised her hands to push him away, but he seized her wrists.

Her struggle seemed likely to break his grip, yet she halted upon feeling dampness. She remembered his injury. The moisture was probably from his blood-soaked bandages. With this realization, her heart softened, not wanting to worsen his wound.

Seizing the moment, Mitchel embraced her more tightly, his kises intense, forcefully parting her lips and intertwining with her tongue in a dominating manner.

Overwhelmed by his strength, Raegan felt powerless to resist. She was seething inside. How dare he kis her so boldly, especially since she was to be another mans bride. Even if it was a sham, he wasnt aware!

Raegans attempts to resist were feeble, like a kittens scratches, barely making an impact. Her physical weakness forced her to cease struggling.

However, her acquiescence seemed to embolden Mitchel, and he kised her even more passionately, as if reclaiming lost time.

Hmm Raegan groaned in discomfort.

Her pained whimper, more persuasive than any resistance, eventually compelled Mitchel to let her lips go to catch her breath. He still held her close, reluctant to release her, but his touch became gentle, careful not to harm the unborn children.

As Raegan regained her breath and some strength, Raegan tried to push him away, only for her hand to be caught and held tenderly in his.

Mitchels eyes, still fiery from the intensity, now carried a cold sharpness. Carrying my children, who do you plan to marry?

Raegans mind snapped to clarity at the mention of the children. That was right. She needed to protect her children and prevent further harm to Mitchel. She inhaled sharply and stated coldly, The children are mine, and we have no marital bond. I am free to marry whomever I choose.

Her detached tone hit Mitchel hard. Just moments before, he had savored her sweetness, but now she had distanced herself so completely. He spoke in a low, chilling tone. I dont allow it.

Raegan scoffed. I dont need your permission, Mr. Dixon. My marriage is real, not fake!

Her words hinted at Mitchels staged wedding with Katie, her tone laced with bitterness.

Mitchels gaze intensified. That wedding was fake Arent you.?

Mr. Dixon! Raegan interrupted him sharply. I dont need you to love me under some pretense of it being for my good. I dont want that kind of love. Do you understand?

Mitchels face turned ashen.

But Raegan continued relentlessly, her words sharp and almost merciless, So when you made that choice, we were already finished.

Chapter 1974

No, Raegan, were not finished Mitchel clung to her hand, his eyes reddening as if he were on the brink of tears. I dont accept that.

Mr. Dixon, Raegan addressed him, tears welling up in her eyes. Do you realize how much I suffered during that time? In your so-called plan to protect me, the pain I endured was very real. Even if I acknowledge your silent motives were for my sake, what does it change? I cant persuade myself to love you again. I desire a peaceful Life, with a husband who wont inflict any pain. Can you grasp that?

As Raegan articulated these words, her emotions were palpable, revealing her inner turmoil.

On one hand, Raegan was thankful for everything Mitchel had done for her. But whenever she remembered the pain his schemes had caused her, it was too much to bear, and she found forgiveness elusive.

Furthermore, their relationship had consistently brought pain and harm to both of them. Wasnt that a clear sign it wasnt right?

Perhaps, then, taking this chance to completely cut their ties was the best course of action for both him and her.

Raegan could not afford to be reckless like Mitchel. About to be a mother to three, she had to safeguard her own life and be responsible for her children. And Mitchel, with significant responsibilities of his own, could not continue to endanger himself for her sake.

Raegan convinced herself that their being together was a mistake, one that needed to end here. In this lifetime, perhaps, they were destined to be apart..

Mitchel sank into deep silence, his face as pale as paper. It felt as though a vast void had been carved from his heart.

Mitchel resonated deeply with the agony Raegan once weathered.

It seemed fate reveled in its capricious games. Deeds of helplessness, words devoid of sincerity, never did Mitchel anticipate theyd wound Raegan so deeply.

So, whether you agree with me or not, it doesnt bother me, and it doesnt hold me back, Raegan declared, steeling herself to unleash the bitterest truths as she turned her gaze away from him.

With resolve, she swung open the car door, hoisted her dress, and stepped out.

Yet, her bridal gown bore a stain of Mitchels blood, a foreboding sign. Even for a sham wedding, wearing it was out of the question, it would not only embarrass Stefan, but it might also earn Stefan a reprimand from his father.

Raegan hastened her track, trying to change into a spare outfit in time before making her appearance.

Behind her, Mitchel pursued, oblivious to the pain in his wake as he exited the vehicle, his injured knee forgotten. With a resounding thud, he collapsed to the ground.

The ground lay strewn with haphazard cobblestones. Mitchels knee, still in the mending process, collided with the uneven surface, eliciting an audible crack.

The torment of fractured bones rivaled that inflicted by Lorenzos crushing grip. His countenance, as pallid as parchment, dripped with sweat from brow to earth.

Raegan His voice was hoarse, each word a painful exhale, What can I do to earn your forgiveness?

Raegan, Im not sure whats best for you anymore. I admit I was wrong, and Ive made mistakes in everything Ive done. Please, tell me what I can do. I dont want you to leave me or marry someone else.

At his words, Raegan dared not cast a glance backward. She gnawed at her lip, her eyes wide, refusing to blink. She dreaded that a blink would unleash a deluge of tears, cascading like a torrent.

To turn now would reveal Mitchels once-handsome countenance, now twisted in anguish, barely recognizable.

Raegan had gleaned tidbits of Mitchels condition solely through Erick.

Erick abstained from discussing Mitchel. Since Raegan had declared to sever ties with Mitchel, it was best not to relay any updates about him.

Chapter 1975

Apart from assurances of Mitchels steady recovery, Erick had abstained from further mention of him. Raegan remained oblivious to Mitchels passive stance on recovery training.

Raegan kept running forward, brisk and unyielding, until she collided with someone at the corner.

It was Erick, seeking her out.

Raegan! Ericks gaze turned frosty at the sight of blood on her wedding dress. Who is responsible for this?

Erick As soon as Raegan spoke, tears cascaded uncontrollably.

Ericks panic surged, What happened, Raegan? Who bullied you?

Erick had just visited the waiting room but finding it deserted. He nearly tore the roof off in his frantic search. Moreover, shards of glass and threads on the windowsill pointed to one conclusion. Raegan

had been kidnapped!

Erick swiftly alerted Stefan, securing all entrances and exits of the estate. They opted for discretion, conducting covert searches.

Erick hadn't anticipated stumbling upon Raegan, her steps faltering, as he followed the trail.

It's nothing Erick, can you go check on him?

Erick furrowed his brow. Check on who?

Mitchel, he's here. He just appears to be injured. Raegan felt a bit disoriented, understandably so, as the abrupt appearance of Mitchel made it difficult for her to gather her thoughts.

Raegan, stay focused. This isn't the moment to mess up, Erick cautioned, his expression taut.

If anyone were to realize the wedding was a charade, the trail to Casey's whereabouts would be utterly obscured.

After all, the last time they had a fleeting lead, the individual having taken Casey away had vanished with Casey all of a sudden.

That individual was remarkably astute, and after vanishing suddenly, there was no trace since then for over a decade.

Moreover, there were still those in Aurora eyeing Raegan with predatory intent. If they learned the wedding was a sham, she'd likely be their first target. At this juncture, Raegan couldn't afford a single slip-up.

Of course, Raegan understood. Her expression somber, she said, Erick, I know. I just

But she couldn't articulate her thoughts fully. Her decision to abruptly sever ties left her with only self-hypnosis to remain steadfast.

Clutching Erick's sleeve, Raegan gently shook it. Could you please go check on Mitchel and see him off?

Erick was left momentarily speechless. After a few moments of silence, he nodded. Return to the waiting room. Stefan's been trying to find you. I'll tell him to get someone to touch up your makeup.

Alright, Raegan replied, lifting her dress as she headed back.

Victor had arrived early to fetch Raegan. Victor had been momentarily called away to oversee the preparation of the favors, leaving Raegan vulnerable to abduction.

Now, Victor trailed closely behind Raegan, not daring to stray.

Chapter 1976

Erick, with his towering frame and long strides, swiftly spotted the man still kneeling on the cobblestone ground. He halted in front of Mitchel, extending a hand to help him up.

Though the murderous intent against Raegan had something to do with Mitchel, Erick knew Mitchel never wanted so, nor had Mitchel anticipated Raegans presence at the hotel at that time.

Considering how Mitchel had risked his life to save Raegan, Erick wouldnt make things overly difficult for him.

However, this didnt imply Erick had forgiven Mitchel. Understanding anothers hardships was a challenge unless one had personally endured similar trials.

Erick himself couldnt comprehend the pain of having to push away the woman he loved due to circumstances. Of course, he wouldnt go to the extent of endangering his own life either.

While Mitchel bore responsibility, his actions under life-threatening circumstances could be somewhat justifiable.

Yet, Erick felt it was too risky for Mitchel and Raegan to be together. It was better for each to resolve their own issues and leave future matters to fate.

Mitchel declined Ericks hand, opting to hoist himself up from the ground, albeit with difficulty. He merely needed a moment to regain his composure before rising to his feet. In Raegans presence, he refrained from using coercion to sway her decision. His voice hoarse, he addressed Erick, Erick.

This tone gave Erick a pause before he responded, Its best for you to return.

Mitchel stayed silent.

Erick reasoned, What can you achieve by staying here? Raegan was caught off guard and taken away by you within the mansion. Do you truly believe you can get out?

He reminded Mitchel of the unforgiving nature of this place, cautioning, In Aurora, you cant outmatch the Clifford family in a kidnapping.

Mitchel retorted, Its not that I cant outmatch them.

It was Raegans feelings Mitchel was uncertain of. If her heart truly belonged to him, he believed he could safely navigate any peril to bring her back.

Ericks expression soured slightly. If you behave recklessly, I wont be polite.

To Erick, Mitchel posed a greater threat than the individual responsible for Caseys disappearance.

Fearing Mitchels potential to lose control and whisk Raegan away, Erick issued a stern warning, Ill arrange for someone to take you out, but if you come back here, Ill leave it to the Clifford family to deal with, and I wont be part of it.

Mitchel lowered his gaze. Erick, theres no need for you to worry about me.

Erick fell silent.

Fearing Mitchel might exacerbate the situation, Erick felt compelled to be stern. Im not sure whats on your mind right now, but if its because you love Raegan, then you should respect her choices, whether she decides to marry Stefan or be with you. Weve never meddled in her decisions. Its always been Raegans choice. I hope you wont do anything that goes against her wishes. You cant break up and then reconcile on your whim. Have you thought about whether Raegan can handle it?

Erick displayed a photo on his phone, stating, Take a good look at how much she suffered after you regained consciousness.

The photo depicted Raegans emotional distress scores, nearing 26 on the HAMD scale, almost reaching severe depression levels.

Initially, Victor, concerned about Raegans persistent despondency and lack of interest, feared Raegan might jeopardize her health, so she alerted Erick.

Upon reviewing Raegans medical records, Erick discovered signs of depression. However, Raegan kept it to herself, fearing others would fret.

Chapter 1977

Unable to take medication due to her pregnancy, Raegan diligently followed her doctors advice, diverting her focus from fixation on any one thing. Fortunately, her condition wasnt dire. After receiving psychological counseling and through her own efforts, Raegans scores returned to normal levels.

This brought relief to those around Raegan. She consistently cooperated, refusing to give up on herself. She understood the responsibilities of motherhood.

As Mitchel beheld the photo, he felt as though his heart was being constricted, making it difficult to draw breath. It was only then that he comprehended Raegans unbearable pain, akin to his own.

Erick regarded Mitchels pallid face, nearly translucent, and sensed that he grasped the underlying message.

I cant quite wrap my head around how Raegan managed to overcome depression with such determination, Erick confessed, his voice faltering as he recounted the unspoken trials, his eyes brimming with moisture. But she managed it, simply because shes a mother, a daughter, a sister. She knows there are many people who rely on her, care about her So, before you take any action, consider whether Raegan can handle it. If you cause her condition to worsen, I wont let you off the hook!

With these words hanging in the air, Erick turned and walked away.

Having expressed so much, if Mitchel still couldnt understand and persisted in his ways, then he wasnt the right person for Raegan.

A partner who only considered their own feelings wasnt a good partner.

Plus, Mitchel needed to undergo rehabilitation therapy. With he always half-Limping, Raegan would surely find it challenging to feel at ease.

Mitchel remained behind in the wind, the air mingling with scattered droplets, obscuring whose vision.

Meanwhile, Raegan, her head shrouded by Victors jacket, had just entered the waiting room, where she spotted Stefan looking distressed.

Raegan. Seeing Raegan, Stefans eyes lit up, and his arms instinctively moved forward as if to reach out. However, he quickly realized the inappropriateness of such a gesture and restrained himself, allowing his arms to fall back to his sides.

Stefans concern emanated genuine warmth, and Raegan couldnt help but feel a slight flutter in her eyelashes, a tinge of embarrassment creeping over her.

On her way here, she had collided with a servant, prompting Victor to shield her face with her jacket, hoping to prevent gossip.

But deep down, Raegan understood that this gesture was akin to a futile attempt to cover ones ears whilst stealing a bell. After all, the white dress could not be fully concealed, one could tell she was todays bride without seeing her face.

With her wedding dress marred and bloodstained, appearing disheveled on her special day without explanation, Raegan knew all too well that people would inevitably indulge in speculation about her morals. And countless rumors were likely to circulate.

Even though their marriage was a charade, it remained a secret to others. In the eyes of society, a brides loss of dignity on her wedding day equated to the groom, Stefan, losing face. Raegan still felt deeply remorseful and embarrassed.

After all, in a male-dominated and primitive society like Aurora, the preservation of dignity held significant importance, particularly among men.

Stefan, I was spotted by two servants on my way here. Im sorry. You might have to deal with that Raegan spoke, her aversion to inconveniencing others evident in her tone, which carried a subtle hint of remorse.

Stefan didnt seem perturbed by that. Instead, he inspected the bloodstains on her dress hem with concern. Are you injured?

Raegan glanced at the bloodstain. Its not mine

Anticipating Stefan to probe further, he merely seemed relieved. As long as youre unharmed.

Regarding the servants

Dont worry about the servants. Ill take care of it, Stefan assured her tenderly.

Chapter 1978

Though Stefan didnt pry for details, Raegan felt compelled to provide an explanation. Their cooperation was built on mutual trust, and Erick had always emphasized promptly explaining any mishaps to him or Stefan to prevent misunderstandings.

Stefan, it was Mitchel who took me away. Raegan bit her lip, a sign of unease, before adding, He made his way here.

Following a brief silence, Stefan replied, Dont worry. Ill instruct my people not to make trouble for him.

Stefans understanding response heightened Raegans embarrassment.

Erick had characterized their relationship as mutually beneficial with the claim that Stefan required a faux wife to extricate himself from his family.

In reality, Stefan could have selected a bride with a less intricate background to fulfill the role instead of someone like her, surrounded by dangers and troubles. In such a short span, she had already caused him considerable trouble.

Stefan, Im truly sorry. I havent been out much, so probably not many people have seen me. If you need to find someone less problematic, you could Raegan lowered her head.

Its me who needs your assistance, Stefan interjected swiftly.

I want you to understand its more than just assisting me. Considering my position, choosing a bride with a typical background wouldnt be feasible since that would surely arouse the suspicions from my family. However, since youre from the Foster family, it doesnt raise any red flags. Its a practical arrangement, though I realize it might be inconvenient for you, Stefan explained, refraining from casting himself as a sacrificial friend.

He drped his jacket over Raegan, his tone gentle. The wedding is merely for show. Dont let it weigh on you. Lets carry on as we did before.

Raegans eyes were red and tearful, unsure what to say. Stefan was a paragon of kindness, always gentle, patient, and considerate of others.

Later, Stefan had an exact replica of Raegans wedding dress brought in. It was identical down to the last detail.

Raegans eyes widened in astonishment as she asked, Stefan, how did you manage to find an exact duplicate of my wedding dress?

Stefan smiled. I anticipated the unexpected, so I had two complete sets of your wedding attire and accessories prepared, just in case.

Raegan blushed. Stefan, youve done too much.

Stefan chuckled. Just make todays performance convincing, and thatll be all the thanks I need!

Raegan nodded vigorously.

Once Raegan was fully transformed in her makeup and dress, Erick returned to the backstage area, double-checking every detail with a meticulous eye. He gave everything a final check and then gently led Raegan out, hand in hand.

Since Stefan had told his family earlier that he and Raegan had already formalized their marriage in Alcyone, so there was no need to repeat the ceremony in Aurora.

Considering Raegans pregnancy, they opted to forgo the elaborate formalities and focus on the celebration. They kept it simple, raising a glass in a heartfelt toast to Stefans father, the patriarch of the Clifford clan, and that was the extent of the ceremony.

Since this was a pretend marriage, Erick wanted to spare Raegan the hassle of a full-scale wedding and all its trappings.

As they arrived at the banquet hall, Erick discreetly handed Raegan over to Stefan, whispering, Look after her well. Shes precious to me.

Of course, Stefan replied.

Raegan shivered, feeling a flutter of anxiety, and whispered, You two are taking this way too seriously. Its making me really uneasy.

Chapter 1979

Stefan and Erick laughed, their chuckles filling the air.

Lets go. With a warm smile, Stefan offered Raegan his arm, and together they walked toward the gathered guests, a united front.

Raegan looked around, seeing a few familiar faces from Aurora.

Given that this was a pretend wedding, and considering the sensitive circumstances, the guest list had been limited to only those from Aurora.

However, Hector, a business associate of the Clifford family from their overseas dealings, was a notable exception among the guests.

Noticing Raegans unease, Stefan offered a reassuring touch, gently patting the back of her hand. Stay close to me.

Fortunately, the toasting ceremony soon drew to a close.

Stefan seized on Raegans exhaustion as a pretext to usher her away for a much-needed rest.

As they approached the exit, a low voice unexpectedly resonated. The bride departs so soon?

Raegans gaze met the mans, his slicked-back hair revealing a mature face with strong, earnest features that exuded a steady, reassuring presence. Despite his middle-aged appearance, he carried himself with a refined, sophisticated air that commanded attention.

Resplendent in a vivid red velvet suit, the luxurious fabric shimmered strikingly under the light, yet he wore it with a quiet confidence that belied any hint of ostentation or impropriety, as if he were born to wear such vibrant splendor.

The mans gaze met Raegans, holding her eyes for a moment.

Raegans mind reeled, and she instinctively took a step back.

Luckily, Stefan was quick to react, catching Raegan by the elbow and steadying her before she could stumble.

However, the brief disturbance didnt go unnoticed by the man standing before them.

The mans lips curled into a subtle, enigmatic smile as he asked, Miss Foster, do you recall who I am?

His tone was calm, yet it exerted a palpable pressure, like a gentle yet insistent probing that demanded a response.

Raegans body shook with a subtle tremor, her face instantly draining of color, leaving her pale and clammy. A creeping sense of dread washed over her.

But recognizing her reaction was disproportionate, she swiftly composed herself, taking a deep breath before speaking. Sir, I dont actually know you. I must have twisted my ankle just now.

However, the mans piercing gaze lingered, his deep voice asking, Miss Foster, why do you look so afraid?

His piercing, icy gaze seemed to bore into her, its intensity laced with a subtle, unsettling menace.

Raegans heart raced wildly, her panic surging as she struggled to withstand the intensity of his piercing gaze.

Stefan interjected smoothly, Davey, Raegans unease stems not from fear of you, but from the harsh climate of Aurora, to which shes unaccustomed. Her homeland, Ambrosia, boasts a far more temperate environment.

Really? Daveys skepticism shone through in his tone, yet he chose to let the matter rest, forgoing further interrogation.

Chapter 1980

Raegan, this is Davey, a longtime family friend and close associate of my fathers. Stefan maintained a tranquil demeanor, but his hand was stealthily positioned to support Raegans back, offering a silent gesture of protection.

Raegan had been leaning on him for support just moments before.

Concealed beneath the elegant folds of her wedding dress, Raegans faint tremors were observed only by Stefan. She was scared. He was puzzled for a second. Why would she fear Davey? They had never met before.

Raegan sensed Stefans intentions and, with Stefans support, her fear began to recede. She collected herself and extended a courteous greeting, Davey, Im Raegan.

Raegans gentle voice disarmed Davey, softening his heart for a moment. He pondered, if that little girl had survived, shed be roughly Raegans age by now. She must be stunning, with her parents genes.

Davey, then Ill take Raegan back to rest now, Stefan said, preparing to leave.

Daveys gaze intensified, his piercing eyes seeming to see beyond Raegans wedding dress, as if glimpsing a hidden truth. He said, Miss Foster, youre with child. Your health is paramount. Beware of colds, for the babys sake.

Raegans heart skipped a beat once more Whenever Davey mentioned her baby, Raegan sensed a hint of menace in his tone, which made her uneasy.

Stefan stepped forward, positioning himself protectively in front of Raegan, his voice calm and reassuring. Ill keep her safe. Dont worry.

Daveys Lips curled into a wry smile as he uttered a dry, Not bad.

Please, enjoy yourself, Stefan said to Davey, offering Raegan his arm and escorting her away.

Just a few paces away, a young man burst into a sprint, his arms open wide, ready to envelop Raegan in a warm embrace.

Stefans brow furrowed, and he swiftly extended his arm, halting the young mans eager approach with a firm but gentle gesture.

Bryces face flushed with embarrassment as he sheepishly rubbed the back of his head, his greeting trailing off with a hesitant. Raegan

Raegans face lit up with a warm smile. Bryce, what are you doing here?

Hectors tied up, and I happened to be in the area on vacation, so I thought Id drop by, Bryce said cheerfully. Who would have imagined that the former troublemaker, once notorious for dodging his studies, had now achieved a masters degree?

After entering university, Bryce discovered a passion for scientific inquiry, delving deeply into research and becoming utterly absorbed in its pursuit.

After years of intense study, their paths finally crossed again when Raegan returned to Ardlens, and Bryce reached out to her through email, rekindling their connection.

Despite years apart, their connection felt natural and effortless, like no time had passed at all, and they slipped back into each others company with effortless ease, no awkwardness whatsoever.

Stefan, noticing the chill in the air, concern etched on his face, suggested, Lets move inside to talk.

Okay, lets go.

Then, side by side, the three of them walked in together.

Unbeknownst to the trio, Davey lingered behind, his eyes fixed on Bryce with an intensity that bordered on fascination. Raegan's presence evoked a sense of familiarity, reminding Davey of Casey, but Bryce's demeanor struck a deeper chord, echoing memories of his own youthful persona. The feeling of familiarity lingered, and Davey couldn't shake it off.