

When Love Lasts Chapter 13

Chapter 13

Heather shoved the branch under the tightly coiled underbelly of the snake and set it someplace else. When she looked back and saw how comical Frederick was, she couldn't help sputtering. The way she glanced back at them and smiled made her look like a bright flower in bloom. There was an ethereal beauty about her that complemented the sweet scent of nature around her, and for a moment, Austin was stunned. Upon seeing that Austin was in a daze, Frederick patted the guy's chest and cleared his throat intentionally. "Uh, hey, Austin? We still have an errand to run, remember?" At the mention of this, Austin snapped out of his reverie, and a somber look passed over his otherwise handsome and affable face. Heather's curiosity was piqued when she heard this, and she asked casually, "What's the errand?" Austin and Frederick exchanged a brief and meaningful glance, as though they were telepathically communicating with one another. Heather raised a brow at their secrecy as she stared at them, but that was when she recalled the time when she saw Austin get into a military vehicle back at Wrewell. Now that she had run into them here in the middle of the woods, she was piecing things together. It was as if something in her mind clicked. She hurried over to her basket and pulled out a couple of the opium poppies, then handed them to Austin. "Are you guys looking for these?" "These..." When Frederick saw the flowers she was holding, he exchanged a bewildered look with Austin. Austin's brows were drawn together as he asked gravely, "Where did you get these?" "If you hike up to the summit and look down the side, you'll see that the fields at the base of the mountain are full of these poppies. Are you two on a mission?" she asked, enunciating her words. They were in the middle of the woods, out in the countryside; incidents like this were not rare by any means in these parts. Again, the two men exchanged another meaningful look, and they chose not to answer her question. Not wanting to impose any further, Heather smiled and handed Austin the rest of the poppies, then said, "Here, just take these with you. Don't bother climbing up to the peak in your current state to scope things out. Trekking through those mountains won't be a walk in the park, and the further you guys venture into the hills, the harder it will be for you guys to find your way out. If you get trapped, even I wouldn't be able to save you, so... try figuring out some other way." Austin kept the poppies she handed him and gave them to Frederick like he was passing lab samples. After shoving the flowers into his backpack, Frederick grinned at Heather and said, "We're just tourists!" "Well, then, let's head down the mountain together," Heather said, playing along with his act even though she didn't believe it for a second. Austin pulled Frederick's arms over his shoulders and hoisted him onto his back. Presently, Heather glanced over at Austin. The sunlight that scattered through the foliage above fell upon him and gave his handsome face a warm, golden glow. He had a rugged look about him dressed in Burlean clothes, but he was extremely good-looking nonetheless, more so than any guy she had ever seen. As if sensing her gaze, he turned and locked eyes with her. She quickly snapped out of her daze and looked away from him. When Austin saw the blush that crept up her cheeks, he couldn't help smiling. Heather led them down the mountain, and it was only then that she saw they had come in an SUV that was parked at the foot of the hill. It was a beat-up local model, and she couldn't believe that she hadn't noticed it even though she had gone from one mountain to the next before stumbling into these two hapless men. Austin carefully settled Frederick in the backseat of the car and had him lie down, then closed the door. After that, he walked over to where Heather was and came to a stop in front of her. "Make sure to go back right after you visit your grandparents, okay?" he said with an indulgent look in his eyes as he gazed upon her. Peter had told him that Lara had spent over a million on a BMW so she could return home to visit her grandparents. Thus, it was not surprising at all for Austin to run into her right here in her hometown. For some reason, he felt like there was some universal force at work that constantly pushed him and Lara together, for it seemed as if she was fated to always show up in time and rescue him out of a tight spot. It was also precisely because of the same universal force that he found himself falling for her. Although Peter had told him a great many things—none of which was positive—about Lara, Austin was sure that this was the woman he wanted. She was the love of his life, and it was only right that she spent his money. Besides, he didn't mind her lavish expenditures as long as they made her happy. Heather, on the other hand, looked into his eyes and wondered why he was saying such baffling things. But just as she was about to ask him, he suddenly gripped her shoulders and took a step forward. He leaned down slightly and tipped his head to the side, then kissed her on the lips. She felt something cool brush over her lips, and the skin on her neck tingled as though an electric current had run through her. His kiss was light and brief, and after a few seconds, he pulled away from her lips. Then, he bent over close to her ear so that he could whisper, "I'll wrap things up on my end as soon as I can, Baby, and then I'll go home to you. I won't be able to get back for a while, but promise me you'll wait for me to come home." The 'home' that he was referring to was the Colemar Estate, where he had asked Lara to stay. All this time, he had thought that Heather, whom he had mistaken for Lara, was the woman who had moved into the estate. He hadn't been back to the Colemar Estate to see her, but he didn't think fate would let them meet here, hundreds of miles away from home. He was happy that he could see her, even if he didn't go back to the estate. After he said all those sweet nothings, he gave her a kiss on the forehead, leaving her stumped in place as she gazed up at him in bewilderment. The kiss felt like a fire that started burning from the tips of her ears and all the way down to her toes. She was still processing it even as the man who kissed her turned to get into the SUV and revved up the engine, then pulled away from the foot of the mountain. Heather wasn't sure how to describe the feelings she had for the man. She wasn't blushing, and her heart was as calm as ever, but that kiss earlier had left her completely flustered—helpless, even. This was the second time she had run into him after that fateful night. The first time had been outside the supermarket when he suddenly swept her up in a heated kiss before scurrying off. This time, he had shown up in front of her with the same abruptness and then left in a hurry. He was always telling her things that didn't make sense, too, and she couldn't figure out what he meant by them. Forget it, she told herself. Don't dwell on this and go home!