

## Love's Cruel Stroke Chapter 18

With the kid in tow, Rachel searched the entire neighborhood, but she couldn't find the kitten in question. It was then that she finally realized she might have been duped.

She turned to stare at the kid frigidly as she asked, "Are you really here to look for your kitten?"

Damian felt his skin crawl when he saw the icy way she was looking at him. He hated lying, but if he didn't, then he would have no excuse to stay with this woman. In the end, he pursed his lips and made no reply.

Rachel took his silence for admission and asked bluntly, "What's your name, and where do you stay? I'll drop you home right now."

At once, resentment welled up in Damian. He had taken the risk of coming all this way to see her, but not even half an hour after they had met, she was trying to get rid of him. Tearfully, he cried out, "I don't want to go home!" He stared at her stubbornly, the tears in his eyes threatening to spill over as his lips wobbled dejectedly.

Rachel's heart gave a squeeze, and an ache spread throughout her body like it would suffocate her. The pair of kids she had at home were not crybabies; Casper was sensible and obedient, while Olivia was quiet and reserved. In the past four years, she didn't think her kids had cried more than a handful of times, and she never had to mop up childish tears or soothe tantrums. And yet, she found herself now dealing with somebody else's kid, who looked like he was about to sob buckets.

For some reason, she felt her heart twist at the sight of his disappointed expression. She sighed and crouched down to his eye level, then prompted gently, "You can stay here for a while if you don't want to go home immediately, but you have to go back eventually, or your parents will be worried sick."

Her voice was as soft as cotton candy, and it chased away the stormy clouds that brewed over Damian's head. Unable to stay composed any longer, the little boy rushed up to her and lunged into her arms,

Rachel staggered backward and nearly fell to the ground, after which she carefully carried the kid in her arms and muttered softly, "Why don't I take you to the playground over there, and you can have a bit of fun before you go home?"

However, she had only just risen to her feet and turned around when she heard thunderous footfalls approaching her from behind. Before she could react, she was suddenly surrounded by a dozen men dressed in black suits. These bodyguards looked intimidating, more so than the ones the Yates hired.

At first, Rachel thought that these men were acting under Shirley's orders, but that was until she saw the approaching figure of a man.

It was Jordan, and the air around him seemed frozen as he walked up to her. The tension was thick, and wherever he looked would turn to ice under his frosty gaze.

Rachel could feel the kid in her arms anxiously shrinking into himself. She tightened her hold on him and raised a brow at Jordan, then pointed out in cold greeting, "What a coincidence to run into you twice a day, Mr. Ford."

Jordan's eyes fell on the jacket that he had draped on her a mere two hours ago. She didn't even bother to change out of her clothes before she decided to get close to my son! Narrowing his eyes, he drawled sarcastically, "Given how you've done such thorough research on my family and tried so desperately to get close to us, I do wonder what your intentions may be."

He thought he had done an outstanding job of protecting his sons from the outside world so much so that no one outside the family knew of their existence. And yet, here was a woman who had somehow deftly and efficiently broken through his lines of defense to get close to Damian.

Meanwhile, Damian was trembling in Rachel's arms, and all the color had drained from his face. He could feel how angry his father was, and he had a premonition that things wouldn't end well for him.

Rachel patted the child's back soothingly and frowned as she said sardonically, "Mr. Ford, I'd just like to know what your intentions may be for bringing a horde of burly bodyguards into my neighborhood."

The both of them stared at each other, and for a moment, it was as if a spark was all it took to set things alight between them.

The corner of Jordan's lips curled into a smirk. This woman obviously has a death wish, he thought grimly. He prodded the roof of his mouth with the tip of his tongue before he barked icily, "Damian. Ford. I suggest you come here right now."

He had only just said this when Damian shuddered in Rachel's embrace.

Upon sensing this, Rachel glanced at the child in her arms, then at Jordan. Her brows drew together as she pressed her lips into a thin line. In a hard voice, she asked the child, "Your name is Damian Ford?"

The little one looked even more ashen-faced than before.

"I'm going to count to three, and if you don't come here by then, you'll get what's coming for you," Jordan bit out impatiently, his face cold and impassive.

He hadn't even started counting when Damian leaped out of Rachel's arms and

trudged over to where his father was. He barely took a few steps when Jordan reached down to grab him by the back of his collar before hurling him over to one of the bodyguards in his entourage. "Take him away!" he ordered sullenly.

Not daring to go against Jordan, the bodyguard who was holding onto Damian began to walk off.

Damian, however, roared stubbornly, "Daddy, I was the one who ran off to see this woman! She had nothing to do with it! I'll take any punishment, but just leave her out of this!"