

Web of Mistakes

Alana sat on her bed, running out of tears as her mother sat next to her, comforting her through her emotional ordeal.

“I... while I was at school in Ligeia, I met someone. Someone special,” Alana said.

“So, what’s she like?” Belle asked.

Surprise invaded Alana’s face alongside a blush. “I never said it was a girl.”

Belle raised her eyebrows to give her daughter a knowing look. “Alana, honey, I’ve known you since you were born. Plus, I have a wife. I know a lesbian when I see one.”

“I could be bi.”

“Are you?”

Alana looked at her lap. “No.”

“Mhm. You wanna tell me about her? She must be pretty hot.”

Alana rubbed at her still wet cheek with her wrist and sniffled. “It wasn’t about looks.”

“But she was still pretty, right?”

Alana nodded. “It took a while to get there. She’s like dad...”

“That could mean a lot of things, sweetie.”

“She’s an upper cruster. At first I thought she was like the rest of them. Bossy and spoiled and vain, but she mellowed out and we talked. It wasn’t right away. I thought she’d done something with her hair or that I was sick, but... things just seemed different one day.”

Belle looked out the window to the perfect view of the cliff that cast lower Arcadia in shadows for much of the day. There were lights at the top, an opulence teasing the view of the people at the bottom of the city. “They aren’t all bad, you know. Just the ones I like.”

“I... didn’t think you saw it that way.”

“That why you hid her from me? I mean, we should definitely tax the rich a bit more, but hate would be a pretty strong word for how I feel.”

Alana shook her head. “I wasn’t hiding it. I wasn’t lying all the times you asked if I found someone special, you just stopped asking after I realized how I felt. And... now I’m home and she’s up north, and...”

Belle rubbed Alana’s back, smiling softly. “You remind me of your father too, you know? The good parts, I mean.”

Alana wiped her eyes and gave a look that asked “*There were good parts?*”

“He wasn’t a good guy, but he was a looker, I’ll give him that. And, from what little time I spent with him, I got the feeling he cared a lot about what other people thought of him. Always making sure we weren’t seen when we were together. Always making sure to keep his business down here as discreet as possible. The other girls used to call him a phantom or a vampire for how elusive he was, always evading sight, always evading light. Still couldn’t stop himself from dressing nice for his visits though.”

“Do you ever regret having me?”

“What?”

“I’m not a kid, mom. I know I wasn’t planned on his part. I was your ticket before you told him too soon.”

“And who told you that?”

“Spiders.”

Belle let out a weighted sigh, looking down at the spider web tattooed on her daughter’s left shoulder.

“That pack of no good mobsters may know this city, but they don’t know me. Not the person I became after you came into my life.” Belle leaned on Alana’s shoulder, covering the tattoo with her warm body. “It’s not because you look pretty—”

“I don’t,” Alana interrupted.

“It’s not because I need you—”

“You do.”

“But because whenever I see you doing something you love, I can see that glint in your eyes. That passion. That bit of good in this gloomy city that makes me remember when I was younger and popular with all the boys in town.” Belle ran her finger tenderly through Alana’s hair, combing it with her nails. “I’ve made a lot of mistakes, Alana. I regret a lot of things. But you... I’ve never regretted you for a moment and I think that Sabrina girl would have felt the same.”

Alana leaned into her mother’s embrace, more sure of herself and what she wanted to do next. “Thanks, mom.”