

Love Until Death Do Us Part

Chapter 19

Payne was rocking Kevin's tiny backpack on his back.

He was like a carbon copy of Kevin, except Payne was a bit **paler**, lacking that healthy flush in his cheeks.

Last night's thunderstorm had Belle snuggling up with him, telling stories that perked him right up. Now he's **got** these faint dark circles under his eyes.

Bright and early today, Payne found out he's gotta fill in for Belle's kiddo at the preschool. He's down for some preschool fun, but first, he's gotta track down Belle's little rascal.

While Belle was getting ready to show him the door, Payne made a slick getaway.

The two kids faced off, squatting in the bushes.

Leaning in, batting their eyes in sync, they tilted their heads to the left together.

"Whoa!"

Kevin let out a low gasp and plopped down on the ground.

"Someone's there!"

Anna heard the rustle in

the bushes and made a beeline over there with the Dempsey family's security in tow.

Payne wanted to bolt, but Kevin held him down.

Kevin wrapped his arms around Payne, and they both hit the deck, hiding under the dense foliage. The Dempsey's security guy's eyes were bulging—no sign of anyone.

in these low shrubs."

"Must've been a magpie or a squirrel that passed by. No way someone could hide in these bushes. Anna gave a cold once-over to the bushes. She's gotta play her cards right to become Payne's doc and get closer to Newman. She won't let anything mess with her plan.

Anna pulled her gaze back and whispered to the guard, "Let's wrap this up ASAP"

After she and the security guard took off, Kevin and Payne breathed a sigh of relief.

Kevin let go of Payne and blurted out, “How come you’re my spitting image?”

Payne, wide-eyed, sized up Kevin, “You’re Belle’s treasure?”

Kevin’s eyes popped. “You’re the freaky Devil’s kid?”

They got it—“Belle” was Kevin’s mom and “freaky Devil” was Payne’s dad.

Payne, in his babyish voice, said, “We’re identical, so maybe we’re twinsies from the same egg!”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Kevin was clueless.

“We’re brothers! Your dad’s my dad, and your mom’s my mom!” Payne hadn’t finished explaining when Kevin started shaking his head.

“My dad’s no Devil, **my** dad’s Coco—the one tied up in the backyard!”

“Coco?” What on earth is Coco?

Kevin got serious. “Mom said my dad died before I was born, and she scattered his ashes herself. If dad’s been reincarnated, he could only come back as Cassius’s little mutt in the backyard.”

Payne **was** baffled as Kevin insisted, “Our **dad’s** Coco, okay!”

The wrinkle in Payne’s forehead deepened, and Kevin asked, “So why are you toting my backpack?”

Payne slid the backpack off and handed it over

“Belle

Athena was gonna take me to preschool. I’m kinda into it, but I can’t keep pretending to be you. So I took the backpack to find you. I’m Payne.”

Kevin took the backpack. “I’m Kevin”

Let’s swap clothes,” Payne suggested. That way, the grown-ups won’t notice the switcheroo.

After trading threads, Payne said, “I’ll head back first. Belle Athena’s probably freaking out looking for you. After preschool, let’s hash **out** who our real mom and dad **are**”

Chapter 19

Kevin, dead serious, “My mom’s my mom, and my dad’s Coco! Coco’s so cute, you’ll want him as your dad too!”

Payne’s mouth hung open for a second before he asked, “Don’t you like my dad?”

Kevin pursed his lips, nodding then shaking his head. “Pineapple, watch out for Devil—he’s got **wicked** weapons for offing kids!”

“**It’s** Payne, Payne stands for wisdom!” Payne corrected.

But Kevin couldn’t shake the memory of the grape-themed contraceptive. “Pineapple, watch out for grapes! I’m off to find my mom!”

With that, Kevin hopped out of the bushes and spotted two figures **nearby**.

“It’s Payne! Know someone was eavesdropping!”

From a distance, Kevin saw Anna and the bodyguard hadn’t left. He whispered, “Pineapple, hide. I’ll distract the bad dies!”

Kevin bolted in the opposite direction from Payne

Anna nudged her bodyguard, “No time to waste, do it now!”

If Payne snitched to the Newman, she **couldn’t** order a hit on the kid anymore.

She had to gamble, have her guy toss Payne into the pool, and then “rescue” him.

Even if Payne screamed she was the baddie, Anna could claim he was just spooked.

But Kevin’s stubby legs were no match for the towering bodyguard. Near a fountain, the guard took a risk and shoved Kevin right

in!

“Ah!” Kevin tumbled into the half-meter-deep fountain, water jets pelting him, struggling to stand.

He floundered.

Anna saw her moment and dashed toward the fountain.

“Oh no! Mr. Payne’s fallen in!”

She cried out but didn’t dare to dive in—the fountain’s bottom was wired with electricity.

And then, someone charged forward!

Athena was sprawled out by the fountain, arms stretched but couldn't snag the kid. She just dove right in.

A sickness

from five years back meant the mere touch of cold water had her bones screaming in pain. The moment her calves hit the icy water, Athena froze up, her face going ghostly pale in an instant.

Through gritted teeth, she reached into the frigid water, scooped up the little tyke, and clutched the sopping-wet Kevin close to her chest.

Over at Cozy Retreat, Kent was filling in Newman on Payne's disappearance, and the Bradshaw family's bodyguards were on a wild goose chase.

As Newman and Kent headed over, they caught sight of Athena, staggering out of the fountain with a kid in her arms. Newman slightly furrowed his brows. From a distance, he saw the child's face, Was that Payne?

"Daddy!" Payne lunged forward, wrapping around his dad's legs, hiding behind Newman, his little shoulders shivering. "That mean lady and the bad guy are trying to off the kiddo!"

Anna stood there, brain buzzing with a loud "Wham!" **Wait**, why were there two kids here?

She glanced left, then right.

Shivering. Athena emerged from the pool, still clutching Kevin

Kevin was about to **leap** out of Athena's arms and dropkick Anna, but then he caught sight of Newman and quickly buried his face in Athena's embrace, not daring to look up.

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

Athena also spotted Newman, her face turning even paler!

She couldn't let Newman see his own son's face. If Newman got a gander at how much Kevin looked like him, he'd definitely smell a rat!