

SYDNEY'S JOURNEY: BOOK TWO

YESTERDAY'S RAIN

Pathfinders

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RESOURCES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Unexpected Visit

Sydney sat in her bedroom on the bed with her pillow in her lap. Her father was in the living room talking with her mother, and Sydney wanted no part of the conversation.

It had been six months since the judge ruled in her mother's favor and her father was made to adhere to the supervised visitation decree. He was angry for a long time, and after the first several visits with the court liaison, he almost lost his right to see her at all. He finally and reluctantly agreed to anger management counseling and had been going for several months before he called her mother and asked for this visit. He didn't want to see Sydney, he said; he wanted to clear the air with her mother.

Sydney sighed as curiosity got the better of her. She leaned forward, trying to hear some of the conversation now, but the voices were low. There was no yelling or rude comments, and Sydney frowned, wondering what her father might be muttering under his breath for her mother to hear.

After a moment she sat back, settling herself against the headboard of her bed. A moment later, there was a knock on the door.

"Yes?"

"Can I come in, please?"

It was her father. Automatic defense mechanisms kicked in, and Sydney tensed up, grabbing the pillow and hugging it to her chest. When she didn't respond, she heard her father sigh.

"I just want to apologize," he said, and Sydney considered that for a moment before deciding to get up and answer the door.

Her father stood in the doorway, his head down and his hands in his pockets. He had cut his hair, and it was now neatly combed around his

face. He had dark brown eyes, which regarded her thoughtfully as he raised his head to look at her.

“Is it all right if I come in?” he asked, searching her eyes.

“I thought you weren’t here to see me.”

He nodded. “It was your mother’s idea.”

“You aren’t supposed to see me unless you go through the court liaison.”

“I know. Your mother thought a few minutes would be okay.” He looked down at the floor again. “Is it all right?”

Sydney backed up and allowed him into her bedroom. He entered, glancing around with a smile. “You always were the neatest teenager I ever knew,” he said. “You always kept your room so clean and tidy.”

Sydney frowned. She had never heard him pay her a compliment before. Not trusting it, she brushed it aside and sat back down on the bed and waited.

He stood in the middle of the room until she gestured to a chair by her little desk. He sat down and then turned to look at her.

“I couldn’t believe what you said to me at court that day,” he began, and she tensed up again. “You should never talk to your parents that way. We deserve your respect.”

Sydney opened her mouth to respond but stopped when he held up a hand.

“But I want to thank you for that conversation.”

Sydney closed her mouth and frowned. “What? I don’t understand.” She crossed her legs and pulled her pillow even tighter to her chest. “You’re not mad about that?”

“Oh, I was plenty mad at the time. It took me a long time to calm down about it. But after three or four visits with you that didn’t go so well, the liaison took me aside and gave me an ultimatum. Either I did something about my anger issues, or she was going to tell the judge I was a threat to your mental health.”

Her father sat back in the chair and sighed. “She said to not make another appointment to see you until I decided what I was going to do.” Sydney watched him look back down at the floor. “I have to admit, someone telling me what to do is not my favorite thing, even if I know deep down they are right.”

Sydney remained silent, and her father glanced up at her. “Don’t you have anything to say about all this?” he asked.

She shrugged. “I’m waiting for the apology.”

He stared at her for a moment and then reluctantly smiled. "You don't mince words," he said. "Just like Nokomis."

"I miss her."

"Have you talked to her since you moved?" He grimaced. "My mother would smack me upside the head for my behavior toward you and Dakotah."

"Yup."

He laughed now, and Sydney was struck by how handsome he really was. She had never gotten past the scowl on his face to figure out why her mother had chosen to marry him.

As the pain of past taunts and jabs flitted through her memory, she sat back and looked away. She didn't trust this man in front of her who seemed to have seen the light of day in regard to his behavior. He had hurt her over and over again with his words, making sure she could never accept that she was fine the way she was. She had to be better, faster, smarter . . .

"Sydney?"

She glanced over at him but didn't speak, choosing instead to wait and hear him out.

"I'm so sorry for the way I have treated you," he said. "Your mother says I made you feel like you were never enough, and that wasn't the case." He ran a hand through his hair and sighed. "I guess I don't give out a lot of compliments. All you ever heard were harsh words."

Sydney remained quiet, and he went on.

"I am trying to change. I have been this way a long time, and I suspect it will take a long time to change the bad habits and adopt a different way of thinking about things." He caught her gaze and gave her an earnest smile.

"But I want to change. I want to be a good father to you." He looked away then. "I've already lost the only woman I have ever loved. I can't lose you too."

He leaned forward in his chair and reached out for her hand, which she did not give him.

"Please say you'll give me a chance to prove myself," he said. "I know you will need time to process everything, and I won't push you. I will keep to the visitation schedule until the next court date, and then you can make the decision whether or not I need to see you with the liaison present, okay?"

Sydney caught his gaze and held it until he became uncomfortable. Then she nodded.

Relieved, he nodded back and then got up and headed for the door. "I will see you soon, all right?"

Sydney nodded, and he opened the door and left, closing it softly behind him.

He found his ex-wife in the kitchen, washing dishes. She turned when she heard him enter the room.

"How did it go?" she asked, wiping her hands on a towel.

"It was tough," he said. "She's a hard one."

Dakotah nodded. "You've hurt her."

"Yes."

"She doesn't trust you. You will have to prove yourself."

"To you as well?"

Dakotah shook her head. "It's too late for that."

"I love you . . ."

"And I you. But sometimes that's not enough. Some people aren't meant to be together."

He was silent for a moment as his eyes took in her long black hair, neatly tied up and secured with a beaded turtle barrette. She was so brave and caring, which had captivated him from the start. It had taken him a while to fall in love with her, but she had snuck into his heart and now held it in her hand.

"Roger?" asked Dakotah, uncomfortable with the way he was looking at her now.

He turned to go. "Thanks for letting me say my piece," he said, "and for letting me see Sydney."

"I hope it helped you guys," she replied, and he nodded.

"Me too."

He left quietly, pulling the door closed behind him. Sydney came out of her room, still tightly hugging her pillow to her chest, and entered the kitchen.

"So?" she asked.

"So?"

Sydney shrugged. "We'll see."

"I guess so. By the way, Finn called. You left your phone out here. I didn't answer it, but I thought he left a message."

"Okay, thanks." Sydney grabbed her phone and went back to her room, shutting the door.

Dakotah glanced at Sydney's door and then the front door her ex-husband had exited out of. Then she turned back to her dishes.

She sure hoped they could work it out. While she didn't have it in her at the moment to forgive him, she thought maybe Sydney did.

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