

W•NDER CITY ST•RIES

VOLUME 4:
WHOSE DREAMS COME
TRUE

BY JUDE MCCLAUGHLIN

EPISODE #6

Be Firm till I Return from Hell

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Be Firm till I Return from Hell

My sister Reesy hadn't spoken to me since Mama's funeral late last year, so I was wracking my brain for why she would be calling me now. She'd been pretty clear that if I didn't show at the funeral in person, I was persona non grata for life. I had shown, for five agonizing minutes of enduring *everyone's* grief—Mama had been the neighborhood matriarch—but apparently that wasn't enough to satisfy her mysterious requirements.

I resolved to be the adult in this situation. I put a smile on my face and answered the video phone, "Reesy, what a nice surprise!"

Reesy was... a mess. Her eyes were red and swollen, the lines in her face were deeper than I'd ever seen them, and her usually-perfect hair was disheveled. She'd composed herself for the call, though, behind her usual wall of ice. "Rennie, I need... a favor."

There was a tiny corner of my mind that resented the hell out of how she'd treated me and wanted to make her beg, but I'd never seen my big sister look like this before. Even when Mama had died so suddenly, she wasn't this... shattered. I said, "Of course." Of course.

She looked a tiny bit surprised, but kept on with what momentum she'd given herself before the call. "I just came home to make this call. This morning, they... the police... shot Kayla."

"*What?*" I said, feeling the news hit me in the chest like a sledgehammer, and the breath went out of me. Kayla was Reesy's granddaughter, her namesake. Her first and favorite, if grandmothers were allowed favorites. "Reesy, my god, what happened?" I immediately pictured the little girl I'd met for the first time three years earlier, ten years old and begging to show me how to do my hair up in afro puffs.

"She's still alive, they tell us," Reesy said, and her voice shook. "They took her away out of the emergency room and won't let Chellé in to see her, won't let me in, won't let anyone in. One of her friends was... I don't even know... they shot him dead in the street, and shot her because she..." Her voice broke so hard tears ran down her cheeks. "Rennie, they say after they killed him, she attacked them... with her mind. Things flew at them with no one

throwing them, and she was inside their heads, and they claimed the only way to stop her was to..."

I wished I was right there to put my arms around her, even though I know it would've ruined me for everything else. I put steel in my voice, because I knew why she'd called me. "Where do they have her locked up, Reesy?"

"The underground unit at Wonder City General," she said, wiping her face with a handkerchief. "Rennie, I know things aren't right between us..."

"Reesy, there are things between us," I said, "but you're family, and I will protect the *hell* out of all of you. We can talk about what's between us... later." If ever, I thought.

Her face crumpled into tears at that, and she covered her face with both hands and a handkerchief. "Rennie, I don't know how to thank you."

"Thank me after I've managed to do something," I said. "I have to go make some phone calls right now, Reesy. I'll text you when I know anything. I love you, okay?"

Reesy pulled herself together again and nodded. In a hoarse voice, she said, "I love you too. I'm going back to the hospital to be there for Chellé."

We hung up. After a moment's thought, I dialed Ruth's emergency audio-only number.

She answered immediately. "Rennie, honey, what's wrong?"

"Ruth," I said, "I need some of the alien anti-telepathy crystals and a ride to Wonder City General. And, if you can manage it, a Gold Stars Writ of Conscription."

"I can do the first two, easy," Ruth said, "but I'll need a name for the Writ."

"That was how you got me out of the asylum, right?" I said.

"Yes," she said, and I felt her immediate understanding.

"Her name is Mikayla Therese Duncan," I said. "She's my niece."