

This chapter is set 15 years into the future when Joaquin and Birdie are still together and are getting married. We wanted this chapter to be based on Joaquin's last chapter in the novel but extend it into the future. We tried to show how well the whole family is doing and just further expand their happiness because of Joaquin's last chapter. Many things have stayed the same but also changed for the better.

First Joaquin and Birdie are getting married and they also adopted a child named Xavier. Medina and I wanted to have them adopt a child because of Joaquin's experiences in the foster care system and how that may have affected him as an adult. Those effects are shown in adopting and taking care of Xavier and showing how much he has matured. We also added that Grace and Rafe are still together and Maya and Claire are too. Having them still together shows how close they are with each other and how Joaquin was right in his last chapter about how they were all good for each other. This chapter is just showing how well the whole family is doing and how much those last few chapters really made their family solidify.

Joaquin

The day of the wedding rehearsal of Joaquin and Birdie and everyone is excited. They were in Maya's backyard and the day couldn't have been more beautiful. Tomorrow marks the anniversary of Xavier being with Joaquin and Birdie. Xavier was fostered at 7 years old and later adopted at 8 and now 9 feeling fully a part of the family. Everyone welcomed him as soon as they found out Joaquin and Birdie were fostering him.

The day was full of excitement in preparation for the wedding tomorrow. Xavier was walking around helping Grace decorating the venue and Maya and Claire were sorting out the catering plans.

"Do you guys think we should have sandwiches or hamburgers," Maya asks Xavier and Grace

Xavier yells "Sandwiches are way better than burgers don't you agree Grace?"

"I totally agree and it's your day as well so you're the one deciding," Grace says to Xavier with a warm smile.

"Okay, I'll write that down. What about drinks?" Maya asks, making sure she has everything right.

"Definitely root beer we have to have root beer that's Zay's favorite drink."

"YES." Xavier agrees exclaiming.

"Then it's settled root beer and sandwiches it is," Claire announces.

Joaquin walks over and asks, "How's it going over here with the planning?"

"It's going great we've decided on root beer and sandwiches!" Xavier exclaims.

"Oh that's great sandwiches are awesome," Joaquin replies as he walks over to work more on the decorations.

Joaquin has been so happy since Xavier came into his life. It feels like he's known him forever. At first, they didn't hit it off but once Joaquin opened up about his experiences in the foster system, Xavier felt more comfortable and Joaquin couldn't have asked for more. Once Xavier was warmed up to Joaquin it was easier for them to have a closer relationship. Joaquin and Birdie always wanted to adopt knowing how the foster system treated kids. And Xavier was even more than they could've asked for in a child. He is caring and sweet and they are more than happy with their decision to foster and adopt him.

Xavier also has amazing relationships with his aunts, Maya and Grace, and now he goes to them for advice sometimes more than Joaquin and Birdie. Joaquin was so scared that Xavier would feel like he didn't fit in but as soon as he was brought into the family he knew he fit in. Joaquin also had doubts that he wouldn't be a good father. Birdie instantly reassured him that he would be a great father.

Joaquin started putting up the lights in the backyard as Rafe walked over.

"Hey do you need help with the lights over here?", Rafe asks

Joaquin replies "Sure can you get that for me end" pointing to the crate of lights.

Rafe hands them to him and starts helping him out. Joaquin can tell that there's something on Rafe's mind so he asks him what's up.

Rafe replies, "You know just with all of this planning for the wedding it's making me feel pressured to say something to Grace."

"Do you really want to ask her that or is it just because of everyone else?" He asks Rafe, knowing the answer already.

"I mean I love Grace, and I want to be with her, but we talked about it, and we both agree that we don't really need to get married. We're happy the way we are." He says with his head slightly tilted down.

Joaquin replies with, "Then it's settled, no engagement, no marriage. You guys don't have to feel pressured just because everyone else is doing it. Do what's best for you and you guys will be happy no matter what."

"Thanks, man"

Joaquin nodded, he could tell that his word really helped Rafe. Seeing Rafe's relief made him relieved and that's something he really needed before the wedding.

Maya announces, " Hey everyone we finished the decoration now we're gonna start dinner!"

Everyone started gathering around their tables to eat some dinner.

Once everyone was seated and started eating Joaquin stood up and started a toast. "Hello everyone thank you so much for coming." He said while standing up with his drink in his hand raised.

"I'm so happy to say that I'm engaged to this wonderful woman right here, Birdie, and even more ecstatic that I can call her my wife in a few days. Ever since that day on my very special birthday when Birdie came back to me I've never been happier in my life. She has taught me many things in our relationship that I would've never known before. Birdies taught me to be open and truly caring to those close to me and to bring the ones I truly care about closer in, not farther out. Also, we'll be celebrating our two year anniversary with Xavier! I'm so incredibly happy that he is here in our lives, and that he'll be celebrating our wedding with us. It's been an amazing two years, and we couldn't have asked for a better kid. So thank you, Xavier. Well then everybody, I hope you enjoy your dinner and have a great night, and thank you for joining us today and tomorrow!"

He sat down as everyone clapped in response to his toast. Grace then stood up to give her toast.

Grace raised her glass and said, "Hello everyone I'm going to make this short and sweet. Even though I haven't known Joaquin and Birdie all my life it definitely has felt like it. Me and Joaquin and of course Maya have gone through so much those few months when we first met but I couldn't have asked for a better way. Getting to know Birdie through the years has made me look at her as an older sister in many ways than I thought I would. Seeing Joaquin and Birdie together makes me so happy because I think we can all tell that they are truly happy. That happiness spreads to all of us and I hope it lasts a lifetime."

"To Joaquin and Birdie!" Maya cheers at the end of Graces' speech letting everyone clap for the soon to be bride and groom.

Sitting back Joaquin thought about how long ago it seemed when he got back with Birdie on his birthday adoption day. He started to remember how important it was

to him and how much of that whole week changed his life. From realizing Mark and Linda truly loved him, to realizing that he actually belonged somewhere finally having his own set of wall pictures that he felt like he truly could have a future because he saw his past. These influential days seemed so far away yet still so close to Joaquin's heart. Never forgetting them and always keeping them close by to look back to.