

Mint Chip

Tommy ran his hands through his dark brown hair, suddenly nervous. He had no idea how he hadn't noticed their similarities before, same hair and nose, the same build, besides her eyes, which were the same deep blue as their dad's. She was him in miniature with their mom's sweet personality, whereas he had gotten their dad's brusqueness. He was incredibly regretful that he had cut her out of his life for the last year and a half and had been planning to apologize the first chance he got. "Look, Evie. I didn't know about Aaron. I'm sorry he did this to you and Beau."

"It's fine Tommy. I wanted a divorce anyway." Evie had been thinking about it. She was positive this had all started because of her inability to have kids. "He's been getting increasingly distant since my operation."

"How are you doing with all of that?" Guilt flared up in him. He had monitored her during her illness. Going so far as to hack her medical files but hadn't gone to help or support her.

"I'm fine with it all; no more pain or bleeding for weeks at a time makes up for being unable to have kids biologically."

"I'm sorry for my reaction after I learned about you being my sister. I was never actually mad at you. I was mad at our parents for hiding it from me, but they aren't here, and you were, so I took it out on you, which wasn't fair at all."

"It was a little fair. I hid it from you too." She shrugged and offered him a small smile.

"Why did you hide it from me?" Tommy sat on the front of his desk and gestured to the seat in front of him.

"I was afraid." She admitted. "I was afraid you'd think I was after the money or Sloane. I asked Mom if I should tell you, and she said if I didn't want anything from you, what was the point?"

"I never thought you were after the money or Sloane. I was upset that you kept it from me because I have always considered you to be my baby sister. Finding out you actually were but hid it made me feel like you didn't want me." Tommy cupped her face. "I was hurt, and I lashed out at you."

"I was miserable hiding it from you. I wanted to tell you and almost did a few times, but I would start having trouble breathing." Evie hugged him. She had missed him so much over the last year; it had been like a constant ache. "And then it became I had hidden it for so long; I didn't know how to say it."

"Princess." Tommy sighed as he hugged her back. It hurt him deeply that she was so afraid of his response, but he understood it came from the fear of losing him. "I understand you were scared, but the fact that you thought I would have been anything but thrilled is a little insulting. I've always been there for you. Remember when you brought that boy to the Christmas Party, and we caught him in the bedroom with Ermine?"

"You hacked his phone and changed all his ringtones to porno sounds, and spam called and texted him." She smiled. "Then took me for ice cream. Mint chip is still my favorite."

"Mine too." Tommy grinned as he walked over and picked up the box in the corner. "Also, who the fuck names their kid Ermine?"

"Apparently, Minnie and Edward."

"I've been digging through Mom and Dad's stuff, looking for things about you, and I found Mom's diary and Dad's journal from the year Mom was pregnant with you. I wanted some insight into why they never told me. Given mom's age, it was very rough, I was at boarding school, and they knew I'd want to come home to be with her. She was three months pregnant when I was home for Christmas and managed to conceal the bump from me, and they gave me a trip to Europe for spring break. You were delivered via c-section, and Oscar and Della had already agreed to adopt you but were more than happy to let us be in your life. They didn't want me to get attached to you or excited about a baby brother or sister when they had already decided to give you up." He pulled out a photo album and handed it to her.

"I found this in a chest in the attic with all Mom's stuff. They loved you very much, just didn't have the energy or the drive to raise another kid, especially another teenager in their sixties and seventies." Evie slowly flicked through the pages. Pictures of Henry and Mary holding her in the hospital. Passing her to her parents. Tommy holding her as a baby. Dozens of pictures documenting them on the fringes of her life right up to the dance recital they had attended with her parents a few nights before they were killed. "You were the best Sugar Plum Fairy I've ever seen, and I've seen that ballet more times than I care to admit."

Evie laughed. "Ballet was their desperate attempt to make me more graceful. I knocked over half the scenery, Tommy!"

"Yep. Best Sugar Plum Fairy ever. You were talented but had no spatial awareness. We celebrated with ice cream that night too."

"You took me out for ice cream a lot."

"It always made you smile, and I enjoy making you smile. You can keep the album. I've got Darla digging into Aaron and Susan's communication, and I'll swing by Beau's condo tomorrow to set you guys up with Sloane Tech." He held up the two halves of the laptop. "Pretty sure I can fix this or at least move everything over to a new one for you. What kind of wall did it hit?"

"I think it hit a stud." Tommy nodded thoughtfully as he looked it over again.

"That makes sense."

"Thank you, Tommy."

"What are big brothers for? Come on; I'll walk you out." He put an arm around her shoulder and paused. "The house in Winter Harbor was from our parents, Evie. They bought it and gave it to you because that's where you were conceived, but I won't blame you if you want to give it up."

Evie sighed heavily. "It just keeps getting worse."

"I know honey."