



11 11-Getting Rid Of My Stepsister

Norman: 1

I received a call from Maximus, so I put all my work on hold and rushed to my car. As I glanced at the sky, I realized I would have had to return home soon anyway. The storm was already beginning to set in.

The deadliest storm.

But right now, there seemed to be an even bigger issue at hand. When Maximus calls, it means all hell has broken loose.

In a very dramatic way.

After parking the car in the driveway, I let the guard take it to the garage while I sprinted into the mansion. Maximus' words from the call still echoed in my head:

"By the time you come home today, I will be gone."

With that playing in my mind, I rushed past the living room and slowed down when I noticed my stepsister and her mother having a conversation.



For a brief moment, I saw Helanie lift her head, and our eyes met before I disappeared from her sight.

I made it to Maximus' room and found a girl leaving in a hurry. I hadn't seen her at the academy or around our community before, so I could already guess what this mess was about. Once inside the bedroom, the bigger picture started to reveal itself.

My father was sitting on the lonely sofa by the window, Kaye was leaning back against the wall with his head down and his hands in his pockets, and Maximus was rummaging through his closet.

"Thank goodness you're here, Norman. Now stop your brother from leaving," my father's desperate plea for help made me turn to Maximus. He had pulled out a bag and was filling it.

"Maximus, what's going on? Have you lost your mind?" I demanded as I approached him, snatching the folded clothes from his hands and throwing them aside on the bed, pushing him away from it.

My mind kept racing, trying to piece everything together. Why was Kaye here and soaking wet?



Did they both have something to do with the girl that left the room when I arrived?

Oh no!

This couldn't be good. It would break a rule that could land both of them in serious trouble.

"Can someone tell me what happened?" I finally yelled, tired of watching everyone stand around like zombies. My father, like a chatterbox, quickly started explaining.

He filled me in on what had occurred. Honestly, it wasn't a big deal. Kaye losing his temper when someone entered his room, Maximus sneaking in a pack member, and Dad arguing with them--it had all happened many times before.

The only reason Maximus seemed to be taking things so seriously this time was because of the Helanie's presence. It had to be.

Being yelled at in front of her must've been the tipping point for Maximus. But what about Kaye? I turned to him, and my heart sank. He hadn't even argued with Dad, yet here he was, standing like a guilty party, while Maximus was the center of attention.

Does raising your voice really help?

"And because of... because of him, I told Maximus to leave the house," Dad concluded, and I nodded in understanding.

"I'm sure Maximus understands you were angry because he broke a rule. It's not like he's really going to pack up and leave," I said, hoping Maximus would remember that this wasn't the first time Dad had said something like that.

"I'm leaving," Maximus replied, sounding more determined than ever. His face was flushed red with anger, and the veins in his neck stood out.

"And go where? There's a storm coming," I protested, trying to grab the clothes from him again as he stuffed them into his bag. This time, though, he stretched his arms wide to block me, holding onto his clothes tightly.

"So, what do you expect me to do? Stay here after Dad humiliated me in front of that pathetic low-life girl?" There it was. I knew it--he felt humiliated because of her.

"Oh! I see what this is really about," I clicked my tongue and stepped back, finally understanding. My father lifted his head, giving me his full attention. He shouldn't be dealing with this much stress at his age, especially over

something so small.

This had never happened before--Dad yelling at one of us, and we immediately started packing our bags. I hated how that girl had disrupted the peace in our family.

"Dad, I'm sorry. I lost my temper--" Kaye cleared his throat, pulling his hands from his pockets, attempting to apologize, but Dad raised his hand to silence him.

"Enough! This isn't the first time you've done this. And because of you, I got angry at Maximus," there was an unusual loudness in Dad's voice. It wasn't fair.

Maximus wasn't even apologizing, yet Dad was worried and practically apologizing to him. Meanwhile, Kaye, the one who was actually trying to apologize, was still getting scolded. The way Kaye instantly closed his eyes and turned his head to the side made me feel the need to speak up against the unfairness.

"Dad! We all know Kaye has anger issues, but entering his room without knocking--that girl is at fault," I finally spoke up. My father averted his gaze from me; he knew I wasn't wrong.



"I think I know what to do," I said, nodding to myself as I paced between my family, contemplating the right decision.

"What is it? Tell me how I can make my son stay," Dad asked, desperate. I was sure Maximus wouldn't actually leave. He couldn't live without the luxuries and the power he had in the mansion and the academy. Everyone bowed down to him, and that was more than enough reason for my dear brother to stay. ¹

"Would you stay if that girl left?" I turned to Maximus, seizing the opportunity to rid us of the bigger problem. If we didn't do something about her now, she'd stay for much longer. Any outsider was a threat to us.

She had already proven that today by getting my brothers into trouble. It was her fault that Maximus was 'leaving' and Kaye was once again under Dad's scrutiny for his temper.

My suggestion landed well. Both my brothers looked at me, hope flickering in their eyes. But Dad seemed troubled.

"Dad, please! Before you say anything, ask yourself--would you rather have peace in your home or keep that girl we didn't even know

existed until she showed up at our door?" I pressed, using this as an example of how much trouble she'd already caused.

"Dad, come on. Even her own mother doesn't want her. Why are you so eager to keep her here?" I rolled my eyes, stepping closer to my father, towering over him.

With a deep, defeated sigh, he slouched down and finally spoke.

"Fine. But you'll have to ask her to leave. I won't be the one kicking her out."

The smile that spread across my face surprised even me. I hadn't realized how much her presence had been bothering me until I made the decision that she would be gone.

"Now tell me, Max! Is that what you want?" I turned to my brother, who had stopped packing.

Our eyes locked, and hope and excitement gleamed in his as he responded, "I'll stay if she's gone." 1

