



13 13-Hold Me, Daddy

Helanie: 1

I kept staring at his face, imagining my life without a home. My heartbeat had slowed considerably. It felt as though I had only a few seconds to respond. I could either fall at his feet, beg for forgiveness, and ask to stay or just not care and let my fate decide my future.

But first, I needed to understand what I had done so wrong for them to make such a big scene out of it. I made a mistake, and I would have apologized for it—if only they hadn't assumed I barged into the room on my own. Apologizing would mean admitting I entered his room willingly, rather than under Aunt Emma's manipulation.

"Is there anything you want to say?" he asked, raising an eyebrow and narrowing his eyes at me, snapping me back to reality.

He stood casually, like a boss, with his hands in his pants pockets, his suit perfectly pressed. What could I possibly say to him?

"No. I will leave," I replied softly but with

confidence. I wouldn't stay where I wasn't wanted.

I could see in his eyes that if I objected, he would drag me out. I'd be homeless either way, so why waste my energy begging before someone?

I had begged Alton to stay and save me, and he didn't listen. Why would a complete stranger like Norman care?

"See?" Norman paced back and forth once. I raised my head to watch his face through my blurred vision, unsure when I'd become consumed by the horrifying memories of that night.

"All you have to do is apologize," he muttered.

But I refused to believe him. He had come downstairs after a huge argument with his brothers; there was no way my apology would change his mind.

"I would, if you believed me. I went to his room with Aunt Emma, who opened the door without knocking. I don't know why she wanted to get me in trouble, but that was her doing," I said, watching him stretch his neck, as if he didn't care at all.

Another thunderclap sounded, and this time, a vase near the window in the entrance corridor shattered from the force of the wind.

Norman glanced behind me and gestured toward the broken vase. "You're leaving after this storm."

With that, he turned and walked away.

I stood in silence until the maids began rushing around. It had grown dark so quickly. Everyone was hurrying from one corner of the mansion to another. Taking a deep breath, I walked away from the living room and soon found my mother.

"Norman told me to leave after this storm. You should be happy—you won't have to see me again," I said, my hands clenched tightly in front of me. I felt calm for now, but I knew I'd be devastated once I was truly thrown out.

She sighed, looking anxious. "Come, pray to the Moon Goddess that this storm passes without causing too much damage."

I noticed others heading toward the prayer room in the basement as well.

"Come on," Aunt Emma and Charlotte appeared behind my mother, both ready to leave for the basement. I steadily shook my head.

"I've already prayed," I lied. The Moon Goddess was no longer my goddess. I wouldn't pray to her —she wouldn't listen anyway. 2

"Helanie! Everyone is heading to the basement. Come with us," my mother grasped my arm, causing me to wince. Why did everyone's touch hurt so much?

"Ouch! Not everyone. The maids are still here," I said, glancing around at the maids trying to move vases and decorations away from the windows. It seemed they had miscalculated their earlier preparations.

"That's because they have tasks to complete," my mother complained.

"I'll do the same. I'll help them," I said. Even though the storm frightened me, I wouldn't bow down before the Moon Goddess.

"Let her be. Come on, let's go—everyone is waiting for you to start the prayers," Aunt Emma grabbed my mother's arm and pulled her away.

I caught one last look of my mother staring at me until she disappeared from sight. 3

Now, stuck in the storm, I decided to help the maids and make myself useful. As I hurried

toward the second floor with a few tasks in mind, I saw the brothers leaving the room with Lord McQuoid, who quickly stormed past me, avoiding eye contact.

So, he had finally bowed down to his sons' decisions.

"What are you doing here? Go back to the basement," Norman yelled, startling me with how quickly he could lose his temper.

Kaye walked past me, deliberately bumping into me before speeding downstairs. Maximus followed, almost knocking me to the ground as well.

Maybe they didn't realize they were too big for someone my size, so their little bump felt like a car crashing into me.

"I'm taking care of the decor in front of the windows," I replied to Norman, briskly making my way past him.

"Who the hell gave you any tasks?" I heard him yell after me, but I quickened my pace and disappeared into the darker corridor of the mansion.

Thankfully, he didn't follow me. There were so

many corridors and hallways in this mansion. It felt like they were planning to start their own rogue house soon.

But for now, I need to occupy my mind. I reached the end of the first corridor, where a large window offered a view of the storm outside. I could see just how bad the weather was. Quickly, I grabbed the curtains and tied them together, just in case the window shattered. Then, I started dragging the small table with a vase on it away from the window.

Once that was done, I noticed a room nearby with the door wide open. I didn't want to barge in and get myself into trouble again, but the window in that room was also wide open.

I rushed in to close it—or at least I tried to. The wind was so powerful that it whipped my dress over my head, and I had to constantly hold it down while trying to reach the window. 1

Climbing onto the windowsill, I stretched out my arm to grab the window. The moment I grasped it, I realized it was a terrible idea.

The wind almost sucked me out. Before I knew it, my body was being thrown toward the open window. In that moment, I understood why this



storm was unlike anything I had ever seen. The wind was changing direction violently, and my body flew halfway out of the window, with my hand desperately clinging to the window lock.

I imagined myself either falling from the mansion or being blown away by the wind, but then something grabbed me.

I felt myself being pulled back inside by two powerful, impossibly large hands. Effortlessly, he held me by the waist with one hand, while using the other to grab the window and pull me back against his chest. He shut the window with a swift motion. His cologne hit my nostrils hard, his touch soft even when his hands were large and veiny. 2