

29 29-Her Dream Prison

Kaye: 1

I'm not sure why my brothers thought it was a good idea to bring her back into our lives when we had already kicked her out, but there she was, standing in front of me shamelessly in my brother's garage.

From what I recall, he doesn't even allow anyone in his personal space—not even the cleaners.

"Just say you felt sorry for her," I muttered, though I didn't want to admit it out loud. My brother had a soft spot for beautiful women. And as much as I hated her, I couldn't deny that she was stunning. That might've made my brother feel all sorts of ways.

But then again, she was about to become our stepsister once my father officially married her manipulative mother. Wouldn't that be disgusting? Or would it? 1

"Ugh! She was... in need, okay? I don't like her. I hate her just as much as you do," my brother finally confessed. "She showed up out of



nowhere, like a gold-digger, after finding out about her mother's situation. I think she burned bridges because she was so sure she'd live in the mansion and have a comfortable life. So, of course, she's in need of money now—" 1

As my brother spoke honestly, I shook my head and glanced back at her, intending to glare her down, but she was gone.

Or was she?

A frown creased my forehead, confusion taking over as my eyes dropped to the floor, where I found her feet still on the ground.

Obviously, she couldn't have left without her feet moving, which only meant one thing.

"Look now! She's trying to get our attention!" I scoffed. "Of course, she didn't just pass out. She saw I was angry and decided to fake fainting."

Is this how she managed to fool both Emmet and Maximus?

I could believe Maximus, sure, but Emmet? The guy who hates everyone suddenly feeling pity for someone he barely knows?



"What?" Maximus followed my gaze. I quickly shifted my attention back to my brother, trying to gauge his reaction.

He didn't look shocked, nor was there a hint of concern on his face. If there was, I needed to squash it before it grew.

"Helanie!" Maximus rushed past me, and I had no choice but to follow. My steps were heavy, my entire body radiating exhaustion. I was so tired of this girl constantly demanding attention.

"I think she's passed out," Maximus said with a trace of concern, kneeling beside her and lightly patting her cheek.

Ew!

How could he even touch such a disgusting creature? She was her mother's daughter, surely just as manipulative. 2

"Hey, get up!" I nudged her foot with my shoe, trying to rouse her. I had a strong suspicion she was playing us—until my gaze fell on her hand, and everything changed.

I wasn't sure if Maximus was concerned, but I

sure as hell was.

"She... she's holding the Dream Rose," I lunged toward her hand, snatching it to inspect the rose before turning to check the envelope next to it.

"Maximus, she smelled the scent of that rose," I tried to stay calm, but I couldn't. This wasn't good.

"What? You brought this today. What is this?" Now Maximus looked genuinely shocked because he knew I didn't just bring him random flowers.

"Maximus, tell me right now—what does this mean? This rose! What is it for?" Of course, my brother knew I often brought herbs for weapon preparation. But that particular rose? That was something I'd carried for myself. I was going to take it back home and keep it safe, but I left it on the table when I got caught up in an argument with him about Helanie. 2

"The person who smells it gets sent to an alternate reality—not exactly a reality, but their ideal dream world," I explained briefly, still contemplating what I'd done. I should never have left it out in the open.



But how was I supposed to know my brother would have this annoying girl here with him? Maximus never touched anything I brought in until I told him what the herbs did.

"Okay!" Maximus stood up, running his hands through his hair, trying to keep calm. "Let's wake her up from her perfect dream."

Maximus placed his hands on his waist, staring at me. I didn't respond right away because I was still wondering how to explain, in the simplest terms, that it wasn't going to be as easy as he thought.

"I, umm..." I looked away, my hands limp at my sides, my body frozen.

"What? I didn't hear what you said," Maximus stepped closer. We both stood over the unconscious girl.

"I can't bring her back," I finally admitted. As I turned to face my brother, I saw his expressionless face staring back at me.

"You can't bring her back, or you don't want to bring her back?" Maximus frowned, his face flushing with frustration.



working all day. I stayed behind, collected the food, and then walked back to check on him.

"I was waiting for you," he groaned, watching me stand in the doorway, arms crossed.

"Help me out. If she doesn't show up at the candidate shelter, I'll be questioned. I don't even know who she told before coming here, but if she told someone and doesn't return, everyone will be looking at me. And when I have to explain what happened, not only will I be in trouble, but so will you."

As he laid out his concerns more clearly, I felt a bit relieved. He wasn't worried about her—just our reputations.

"But I'm being honest with you," I said, my tone more serious now. "I found that rose with great difficulty only to keep it away so that no one touches it, and I don't know how to bring someone back from the dream prison."

The moment I said that, my brother's face paled. He grabbed my collar, pulling me close so I couldn't avoid his intense gaze.

"Then we're in big trouble." He shook me slightly

in his panic, and in the process, accidentally
ripped open my shirt. 1

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