

Julia and Selena and your dads there, too," he said.

He leaned in, his lips inches from mine. I closed my eyes, letting him kiss me, letting myself melt away into the fantasy for just a moment.

It was amazing to imagine: the three of us running off somewhere warm and beautiful, finally laying down real roots and then sharing them with my family.

But it wasn't that simple, and Mason knew it, too.

When I pulled back from him, his eyes were full of sadness.

"I wish we could," I whispered. "But you know it's not possible. I don't want to run. I don't want to be constantly looking over my shoulder wherever we go. And I know you don't want that, either."

Mason nodded solemnly and pulled back onto the road. He had unfinished business at Constantine,

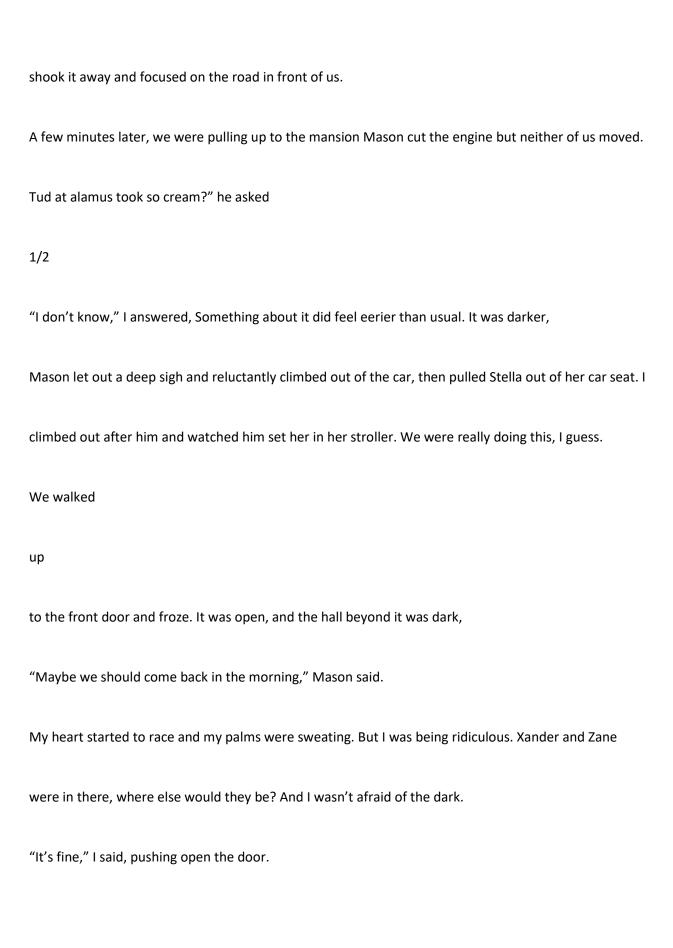
just like I did. Hell, his own f ucking father was the one responsible for all of this.

And I couldn't deny that there was something pulling me back to the mansion, something telling me it

was where I needed to be. I'd felt it when Gabriela assured me that I could come back one day, and I

still felt it now, even though I knew it was dangerous to go there.

The tiniest voice in the back of my head, or maybe it was Lily, piped up. "Your mates are there" But i



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"Wait," Mason said. "T'll go first."
We crept inside slowly, Stella's gurgling and our footsteps the only sounds echoing through the
mansion.
"Zane?" I called, "Xander? Gabriela?" No answer.
"Is it empty?" Mason asked. But just then, we heard footsteps on the stairs. We moved into the great
room to follow them.
Mindy came sprinting in from another room, her eyes wide and wild. She looked f ucking terrified.
"They took them all," she said, "And then they-"
Suddenly, what few lights were left on in the mansion cut off and we were thrust into total darkness.
A scream ripped through the air and footsteps ran frantically.
I waved my hands around trying to make contact with something familiar, and finally landed on an arm
that felt like Mason's. I clung to it tightly.
What felt like minutes later, the lights finally flickered back on. I was holding onto Mason for dear life
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and Mindy was halfway across the room, squatting with her arms thrown over her head.

She looked up at us, then pointed with a shaking finger at Stella's stroller.

It was empty.