

## Chapter 0071

I blasted through my workout, not going too heavy since I was on my own, but I took all of my muscles to complete failure. I have to start pushing myself now. I need to be better, stronger. I have a year to get ready.

I got home around 6:30 and went straight to the kitchen to fuel back up. I didn't have more than my protein shake before my workout, which was a mistake. I am starving and my grumbling stomach is agreeing with me. If I don't eat, I'm going to be sore in the morning.

"Where have you been? We eat dinner at six." A growl comes from the table making me jump and turn around gripping the edge of the counter.

"Oh, sh\*t!" I really wish people would stop that.

I look over to see my dad and Mateo sitting together at the kitchen table, plates half empty. They never eat in here. Mateo is looking at me, but his face is blank, like he's trying to hide his emotions from me.

"You are never to be late for or miss a family dinner again. Do you understand?" My dad growls out.

I look at him confused, I can't even hide it. I have never been allowed to eat with them unless we had company. And as far as I can tell, there is or was no company. I took a look around the kitchen to make sure I didn't miss anyone else in the room. "I don't understand, sir." I have nothing better to say.

"You will join us from now on, 6pm every night, family dinner, that is an order." He's talking to his plate now. He can't even look at me when he's giving me directions. My blood starts to boil.


This has to be Mateo's doing after what I told him last night. I asked him not to try and fix things. I may want my dad to want me, but not by force. I can see in his eyes he's only doing this for Mateo's sake, not for me. To appease my brother, not because he suddenly feels affection for me. I take a deep breath to steady the anger that is now surging through me.

"Unfortunately, I have training every night during that time. I have had training during that time, seven days a week for the last two years. You have never wanted me to sit with you before and I don't believe that you actually want me around now. So, no offense, sir, but I must decline your invitation. I will continue my regular schedule." I turn and walk out of the kitchen, my appetite long gone.

I hear the screech of chair legs and the unmistakable sound of my brother's footsteps. I don't slow for him this time though. It is taking all I have to not turn around and rip him a new a\*shole. It's been 12 hours and he's already gone against what I asked of him and the guys.

"Shorty, wait." He tries for a playful tone and grabs my elbow when we reach the landing. I let him stop me, but I didn't turn towards him. "He's trying, he even waited until 6:15 to start eating and sat at the kitchen table." The plea in his voice almost does me in, but I can't let it.


"No." I take a deep breath and blink back the tears forming. "You are trying, do not force something that isn't there. He will never love me the way I want him to and need him to. I am finally wrapping my head and my heart around that. I am the daily, living, reminder of the fact that he lost the most precious gift the moon goddess gives us. He and I are both counting the days to when I can leave and neither of us has to face each other ever again. I asked you not to try and fix anything." I take a deep shuddering breath and let a single tear fall before I walk to my door. "Goodnight Mateo, I love you too." I say, not looking at him. Then I step through my door and head straight for the shower, my one source of emotional

 +35 BONUS

release.

I wake up feeling better than I thought after last night's trainwreck ending. I made sure to get up extra early, eat really well and head to the training grounds an hour before the guys usually meet up to drive there. I have decided it will take too much energy to actively avoid them all of the time, so I am just going to put as much distance as possible between us. No more unnecessary rides to places five minutes away. No lingering after classes with any of them, including Sierra. They will just try and use our friendship against me and it isn't fair to put her in the middle.

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