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He was a head taller than her, dressed in black trousers and a button-up midnight blue shirt that had been haphazardly rolled up to his elbows.

His black hair was slicked back, but a few stray strands had fallen into his face.

He was also wearing glasses with black frames, but even through them, she could see the startlingly dark color of his eyes.

He looked like someone who belonged at an art gallery rather than a college house party, but it was that contrast that made him so fascinating to look at.

Vivienne glanced at the phone in her hand and cursed under her breath. She'd missed the call, and her brother had sent her a message saying he'd call again soon.

Shit, just my luck, she thought, glancing up at the man who was still staring at her.

"Um...sorry," he said to her, his voice deep.

He took a step back and spun on his heels until his back was pinned against the mirrored wall of the elevator. They both looked up at the numbers dropping one after the other, and she tried very hard to remember why she was in the elevator in the first place.

Oh right, the call.

"That's okay," she told him, leaning back against the wall opposite him, feeling his eyes on her. "It happens."

"I'm drunk," he said, as if that was some kind of explanation she needed to hear.

"Oh...well."

The elevator pinged open at one of the floors, and Vivienne watched as four big guys squeezed themselves inside with her and the handsome stranger.

Everything was fine until she felt one of the new guys rub his side against her butt, and she realized it was intentional.

She felt disgusted and tried to push him away, but his hands had already grabbed her waist, pulling her close to his chest—definitely the last thing she wanted.

"You're here for the party, aren't you?" he asked with a snicker. "I bet you girls came looking for some action, but you can always have it with me, sugar."

"Stop that!" Vivienne snapped and pushed him away again. The guy was about to make another attempt when a hand came out of nowhere and shoved him against the wall, away from Vivienne.

"Hey, man! What's your fucking problem?" the guy hissed at her savior, the one with dark eyes and dark hair. "Just trying to have some fun, dude. No need to go around causing a scene for nothing."

Her savior glared at him with eyes darker than she'd realized earlier, and grabbed him by the collar. "What makes you think she wanted your attention? Didn't anyone teach you to keep your hands to yourself, you asshole?"

“Fuck you! We weren't doing anything.”

The savior turned to face her, and Vivienne understood what he wanted her to do. She squared her shoulders. “You touched me inappropriately without my consent. That's not right.”

“You heard her,” her savior snapped, his voice almost a growl.

The guy who had grabbed her sneered, his drunken bravado not fading. “She's just playing hard to get, man. We all know what these girls are after.”

Vivienne felt a wave of anger surge through her. Before she could react, the handsome stranger's fist connected with the guy's jaw, sending him stumbling back into the elevator wall.

The guy spat blood onto the floor, his eyes darkening with fury. “You're gonna regret that, asshole.”

One of his friends lunged at Vivienne's savior, aiming a wild punch at his face, but despite being drunk the stranger was faster. He ducked, slamming his shoulder into the guy's gut, driving him back into the mirrored wall with a loud crash. Glass shattered, cutting across their hands and arms, but the stranger didn't even flinch.

Vivienne pressed herself against the elevator wall, her heart pounding.

The first guy, now angrier than before, charged again, but the stranger was ready. He grabbed him by the shirt collar and slammed his head into the side of the elevator, hard enough to dent the metal. The guy groaned, sliding to the floor, barely conscious.

The elevator finally reached the lobby floor with a ding, and the doors

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slid open.

Vivienne didn't realize what she was doing until she grabbed her savior by the hand and dragged him out of the building.

By the time the two of them were outside, she was panting like a dog, barely able to catch her breath.

And him? He was barely breathing any harder than before.

"What the..." she started to say, but cut herself off. "You're human, right? How the hell aren't you tired after... after that? My brain feels like it's about to fucking explode!"

He didn't answer; he just brushed past her and started walking into the night like nothing had happened.

That's when Vivienne noticed his hand.

He was bleeding!

Without even thinking, she grabbed him by the elbow.

But that was a mistake.

He yanked his arm back, as if her touch had burned him, stumbling like he was about to hit the ground.

But then he froze, just staring at her with this weird, intense look.

For some messed-up reason, she had the urge to take a picture of him right there.

But that'd probably freak him out even more, so she let it go.

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"Your hand..." she pointed at his hand. "...it's bleeding."



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[Vivienne]

He glanced down at his hand as if he hadn't even noticed the blood dripping from it.

"It's nothing," he muttered, shaking his head like he could just ignore it away.

Vivienne wasn't having any of that. "Nothing? Dude, you just wrecked those guys and broke a fucking mirror. You're bleeding everywhere. Don't be an idiot."

He gave her a look that was half amused, half annoyed. "I've had worse."

She rolled her eyes. "Oh, what a badass. Do you want a medal, or are you actually going to take care of that?"

Without waiting for an answer, she grabbed his arm again, gentler this time, and started pulling him toward the street. He didn't resist, just followed her like he was too tired to argue.

They ended up at a little convenience store, the kind that's open 24/7 and sells everything from bandages to cheap booze. She shoved him inside, ignoring the weird look the cashier gave them as they headed straight for the first-aid aisle.

"Sit," she ordered, pointing to a bench near the door. He sat, surprisingly obedient.

She grabbed a pack of bandages and some disinfectant, then crouched in front of him. His hand was a mess, cuts everywhere, blood smeared

across his knuckles. It looked even worse up close.

“This is gonna sting,” she warned, pouring the disinfectant over the cuts.

He hissed but didn't pull away, just clenched his jaw and stared at her like she was some kind of puzzle he couldn't figure out.

“You always go around saving damsels in distress?” she asked, trying to distract him—and herself—from the blood.

He snorted.

She pressed a bandage over the worst of the cuts. “You know, most guys would try to save a girl just to get into her pants. What makes you think you're not one of them?”

He frowned. “I'm not.”

She laughed again, even though she wasn't really joking. “You sure you're not trying to seduce me right now, Mr. Badass? That was a pretty cool thing you did in that elevator, saving me and all, so you've got that going for you, at least.”

He gave her an exasperated look, but he couldn't quite hide the slight twitch at the corners of his mouth, or the way his cheeks reddened like he wasn't used to being praised. “I wasn't... I didn't do anything to ‘seduce you’... whatever that means. I was just trying to help.”

“Right, well, it still doesn't change the fact that you were super-hot when you were beating up those guys,” Vivienne said boldly.

Then again, she never really cared how she came off to some people. She was straightforward as she was, and if it bothered her mysterious stranger, he wasn't letting on.

Instead, he raised an eyebrow. "Is that right?"

Vivienne nodded. "Yep. It was."

"So, according to your logic, that gives me some sort of right to have sex with you now?"

Vivienne couldn't help but lift a brow in surprise, a bit shocked at how easily he was talking to her now. She'd half expected him to just stare at her in silence and was surprised when he was actually being talkative.

"Not a right, exactly," she said, shrugging. "It just makes me think you'd be good in bed if you know how to handle yourself like that in a fight."

He gave a surprised little huff of laughter at her words.

"So you're saying I'm hot because I beat the crap out of a bunch of idiots in an elevator?" He tilted his head to one side. "You've got some pretty low standards, I guess."

Vivienne grinned up at him, the grin widening as she saw how red he got when he realized how forward he was being. "I'm pretty sure you know I'm a big girl. I can decide things for myself, you know?"

He rolled his eyes and looked away, staring out the window of the store as the sky suddenly opened up with a crack of thunder, a sudden downpour soaking the pavement in seconds.

"Anyway, thank you," she said after a while. "For saving me from getting assaulted back there. You probably didn't even need to do it, but still... thanks."

He didn't respond at first and then turned to look at her again.

"No problem," he replied after a few moments. "But I have to get going."

Vivienne blinked, surprised, then stood up to let him leave. But he didn't get up; he just stared at her for a few seconds.

"You're from the campus, aren't you?" he asked as a sudden clap of thunder shook the whole store.

"Yeah, I'm from the campus. Why?"

He shrugged, finally standing up from the bench, towering over her again. "I've seen you around," he said, his tone casual but his eyes sharp. "You're hard to miss."

She raised an eyebrow, not sure if she should be flattered or creeped out. "Stalker vibes much?"

He rolled his eyes. "Relax, I'm not stalking you. Just noticed you at a few parties, that's all. You have a way of standing out."

"Yeah, well, maybe you should've introduced yourself before throwing punches in an elevator."

"Maybe I'll take that under consideration next time."

She crossed her arms, leaning back against the wall. "So, that's all you wanted to know?"

He grabbed his jacket and walked over to the cashier. "Not really."

"Then what else?"

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Vivienne watched as he paid for the supplies they used before turning to face her again. "Do you know how to drive?"



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