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a<sup>3</sup>

Bottles of coconut rum, vodka and pineapple juice were scattered

across our kitchen counter. My mother was using her cocktail shaker

"Can you mop that up, Millie?" she asked, sipping her bikini martini.

I was already scooping stray ice cubes into my hands. I dropped them

Flora was in the backyard, soaking up the sun for a glorious tan. It's

amazing how one woman could give birth to two such genetically

diverse people. Flora was gorgeous, and I was not. Flora was

into the sink. Mother poured another one for my sister.

arrogant, and I had nothing to be arrogant about.

**Chapter 27: Ice Cream Personality** 

to strain the liquid into martini glasses.

She accidentally spilled some.

27 | Ice Cream Personality

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For the record, that's notthe boy she was blowing in my red chair.	ਰੰ ਕੌ ਰੰ
"What do you know about dates Millie? No boy has looked twice at you."  She had a point. My ex hadn't exactly been exclusive.	493 35
Anyway, I didn't mind. There is nothing better than having nothing to do. No stress. No problems. I didn't have to change out of my pajamas. I could eat what I wanted, where I wanted – no judgments from anyone. So out came the cookies and ice cream.  I received a text from Julia. Sorry, I can't make it over tonight. Lexi's having the girls over at her place. You can come if you want.  I messaged back, Would Lexi mind?	122 464 119
She said you'd have to bring sthg. Like guac.	් ක්³ ක්³
That's ok. I'm pretty tired anyway.waited for Julia to respond but she didn't, so I added, Have fun.  When 5pm rolled around, Flora sauntered over to the front door and jumped into Matt's car. He hadn't even come out of the car to say hello.	a 321 a
I stayed on the couch, watching TV show reruns. I waved goodbye to my mother, who also had evening plans. She was going out for drinks. More drinks.	a⁴
I wasn't expecting anyone at home for a while, so I was surprised when the doorbell rang. I shook the cookie crumbs o my pajamas and got up. I had passed out on the couch and there were red lines on my face from where I'd pressed into the cushions.  I opened the door without checking who was there.	139 d
"Did you forget somethi-" Oh.	යි සී සී
"Luke?!" There he was; the ' too hot for a daytime fantasyneighbor. The ' I	a <sup>1</sup> a <sup>17</sup>
contribute to global warming I'm so hoboy next door.  "You do know that it's daytime right?" he stared me up and down,  "You look like a mess."  I held the door and ignored his judgment. This wasn't my first time	455 a
dealing with Luke Dawson. "You have my number. You could've texted."  "I could've." He shrugged and walked in, uninvited.	ේ 259
He stood in my living room for the first time. He was curious what our house looked like. The TV was blaring old OC reruns. There were Chinese foo dog statues on either side of the entrance. A bowl of fake crystal were on the co ee table. He didn't comment on anything, he just took it all in.  I started to feel self-conscious. I looked like a mess and he was	<b>å</b> ²
"You're not here for Flora, are you?"	å 152 118
Flora was pretty, but she was not part of Luke's social circle. In fact, it was Flora's life mission to get in. Thinking of Flora in the movie theater right now, I knew she'd kill to be back here with Luke. And I	
He dropped onto the couch, getting way too comfortable in my house. I tried not to focus on how the olive fabric of the couch complemented his skin tone or how tempting it was to sit where he'd extended his arm.	a a⁴ a⁵
"I don't know if you can roll your mind back to the day you totaled my computer," he picked up the remote and instinctively switched to ESPN, "but that car is not one I'm forgetting any time soon. I saw it parked in the driveway and figured it was yours. Who knew we were neighbors?"  "Yeah, who knew?" I rolled my eyes. I've known for 13 years.	් ් ්
"Damn, Millie, is this yours?" he leaned forward, staring at the cookie crumbs, wrappers and melted tub of ice cream on the co ee table.  I was embarrassed and rushed to take it away, but his hand picked up the birthday cake flavored ice cream. "This isn't even vanilla. What	a <sup>5</sup>
are you doing with your life?"  "Vanilla?!" I judged so hard. "You don't need to match your ice cream to your personality."  He laughed, that familiar genuine laugh. I'd forgotten how good it sounded.	456 392
"Do you want some?" I o ered him a clean spoon, tempting him to the dark side.  He put the lid on it. "No."	á²
Luke didn't come by to say hi. I had to remind myself that he never does - not when he has an entire fan club of hot girls and sporty friends.	a <sup>t</sup>
He had a request. Another demand that, if completed, would take my debt on his laptop down. I should've known Luke wasn't into being friends with me.  He only talks to models. As the girl in the lunch line had said.	a් a්
"How much is this favor worth?"  "\$40," he answered, as we arrived at a Professional Sports Physical Therapy and Rehab Center.  "The opportunity cost of my time is more valuable than that," I	a a
argued, staring at the sign. Why were we at rehab? "I'll buy you dinner on the way back."	් ් ් ් ් ් ්
I think he'd been scarred by the cookies/ice cream/candy situation on my co ee table.  "Lame."	<b>.</b>
He didn't care. He walked through the clinic, past signs that pointed to 'fitness and nutrition consulting' and 'performance enhancement sports training.' That last one looked a bit dicey. He walked towards the department that said 'physical therapy.'  "Why are we here? Are you injured?" I asked, trying to hide my concern.	a <del>t</del>
"Wait here please and face the window until I come to you."  "What?!" I asked, but he was already gone.  I faced the window and checked my phone to see if I'd gotten any acceptance letters for part-time jobs. I'd applied to everything in the neighborhood and only received rejections so far. Finally, I got lucky.	at at
Email title: AcceptedI immediately clicked on that. It was for a clothing store in a strip mall nearby. Minimum wage but good a erschool hours.	å <sup>4</sup>
"Hey," Luke's deep voice brought me out of my own mind.  "I got a job!" I exclaimed, almost knocking over the clipboard he held in his hand.  "Where?"	ਰ ਰੰ ਰੰ
I went quiet when I saw another Acceptechail. It was for a pizzeria	a් a්
	35 39
"Luke, this feels so shady-"  "It's ok. I need to make it look like you're my mum, which is why they can't see your face."  It's ok?!Nothing about that was OK.	a <sup>4</sup> a <sup>25</sup>
I stared down at the already signed papers in my hand. "Why isn't your mum here? Doesn't she care that you're having physical therapy?"  "I don't want to freak my parents out. I'm already healed anyway."	a aී
"That's for the doctors to say."  "I don't need to slow down my training for this, ok?" He was talking about his basketball.  "When it's at the expense of your health you do."	් a a f
"When it's at the expense of your health you do."  Our voices were picking up and Luke became conscious of that. He lowered his voice, "My coach approves. This is all above board."  I shoved the clipboard against his chest, having not signed a single thing. Not that it made a di erence. Everything was already signed. He took it back to the front desk and then returned to lead me out of the therapy clinic.	a් a්
	a a a
He took his foot o the gas pedal and slowed down as we neared his driveway. We had eaten a steak and vegetable dinner and were almost home.  There was a convertible parked in the center. A beautiful girl sat on the edge of the car, her ways blende hair cascading down her	a <sup>5</sup>
the edge of the car, her wavy blonde hair cascading down her shoulders. She was in a black cocktail dress with a slit that revealed her long legs and black converse sneakers.  Her arms were wrapped around a Tom Ford model. I'm only kidding. I don't know if he's a model, but he looks like one. Slicked back brown	118 d
don't know if he's a model, but he looks like one. Slicked back brown hair, a navy-blue suit. ( <b>image above</b> )  "My sister," Luke said darkly.  He parked the car behind hers. I didn't know much about Luke's	192 206
sister. She was a year older than him and in college now. Growing up, every parent would always compare their kids to her. She was the gold standard of our neighborhood. The perfect daughter.	<b>4</b> 2

I watched Luke eye the guy she was with. For most people, growing

I stared from him to her and then to the oblivious Tom Ford model.

"I'll see you tomorrow, Millie," he said, barely paying attention to me

He walked towards the boy who visibly tensed at the sight of Luke.

Luke looked confident in his hoodie, not needing a suit to surpass his

up in her shadow would have been tough. But for Luke, he created his

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gold standard of our neighborhood. The perfect daughter.

"She likes me to intimidate her boyfriends," he said.

Hot sibling dynamics must be di icult.

sister's boyfriend. They shook hands tensely.

own standards.

as he got out of the car.