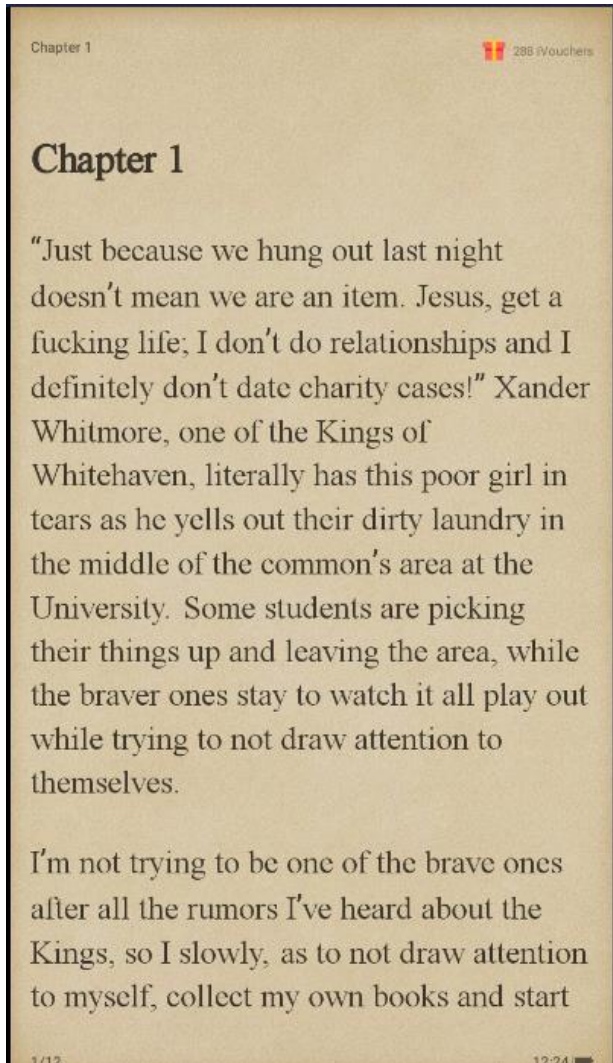


the kings of whitehaven her keepers



following the others out of the commons area.

Trip, another King, pipes in, "Maybe if you're lucky me or Garrett can hang out with you, since you seem so desperate for attention."

Suddenly, the girl is almost being sandwiched by both Trip and Garrett as they stare down at her from the front and back, waiting for her response, only she has nothing but the tears that are flowing down her face. Xander is laughing as he watches his friends badger the poor girl to no end.

His laughter echoes through my head and my steps falter...

What I have been trying to avoid since moving to this new town and starting my

Freshman year at Whitehaven University, is them, the Kings of Whitehaven. I lasted all but a week and a half staying under their radar, and now I'm about to blow my cover because I'm not one to stand here and watch another student be bullied for no reason, my conscience won't let me.

Walking past Xander, I try not to make eye contact with him on my way over to where his friends are, "Stop being douchebags!" I then grab the girl by the arm, trying to pull her away from the two bullies.

I order the girl to leave, and when she goes to run, Trip reaches out to snatch her back, but I let my elbow fly and get him right in the nose. The girl takes off running, and I'm now left in the middle of three very angry Kings.

"That was a brave, but very dumb move

Commented [Ma1]:

little girl." Garrett, the third King says in a low voice.

I whip my head around continuously, watching to see if any of them try touching me, and that's when I see the blood dripping from Trip's nose. Shit, they are really going to hand me my ass now! Why do I always feel like I need to do the right thing?

"Look, I'm sorry I elbowed you, it was a natural reflex, but come on, you can't go around harassing females like that. It's called harassment and you can get in trouble for it. So, I was really looking out for you guys, that's all." I give them a nervous chuckle.

"Oh, I see, so we should be thanking you, is that it?" Garrett asks.

"Oh, no...no thanks needed," I give a nervous laugh, "It was actually my pleasure, so you boys have a good day..."

I don't make it too far before Xander is pulling me back by my ponytail and getting right up in my business, "You just made a huge mistake little girl."

His minty breath fans my face and my heart starts to race at my body's reaction to having him not only manhandling me, but by being so close that all I'd have to do is pucker my lips and they would be kissing his. His dark shaggy hair falling forward as he leans into me, tickles my cheek. I don't know what's wrong with me, but what I do know is I definitely have a target on my back, and it's now calling out to the Kings. It's my worst nightmare come to life.

"Come on guys, the Dean of Students is coming this way, and the bitch isn't worth getting in trouble over." I can hear Garrett's voice, but I'm still mesmerized by Xander's closeness.

When he shoves me away, I groan, but it's not because he hurt me, no, it's because I wasn't ready for him to let go. His smell was intoxicating and maybe a little hypnotic because all too soon, I'm shaking my head and wondering what the fuck just came over me as I watch the three Kings walk away. Students run the other way when they go to leave and Xander jumps at one of them and then laughs when they shriek and cower down. Glancing back one last time, Xander smirks at me before turning and following the others.

"Hey, I'm sorry about the Kings. Someone should have warned you to stay out of their way." A girl with dark hair and pretty blue eyes, tries comforting me.

"Yeah, I knew about them, and I tried to stay under their radar. If it wasn't for my stupid conscience..."

The dark-haired girl giggles, "It was really brave of you to step in for her. She's a scholarship kid and so that alone makes her a target; I guess they got to her already."

I sigh, "It's just my luck, I guess. Now I'm a target for the Kings, and I don't know how to fix it."

"Xander hasn't always been like this, you know. He used to get along with everybody but that all changed when his

mother died, and now he leads the Kings of Whitehaven.”

“So, what’s the story on the other two Kings?” I ask her since she seems to be willing to talk.

She glances around and then pulls me to a little table out in the commons area, “Well, the other dark-haired guy is Garrett Murdock. He’s Xander’s cousin on his mother’s side and is also a spoiled rich kid. Trip Huxley, the light-haired one, he’s the mayor’s son, who is really tight with Xander’s dad.”

I study the pretty girl for a moment, happy that there is at least one person in this school willing to talk to me, “I’m Kambree Hayes. What’s your name?”

“Oh, my God! I am so sorry; you must

think I'm a crazy person!" She chuckles and then holds out her hand for me to shake, "I'm Paxtyn Knowles, a sophomore here."

"Well, thanks, Paxtyn. I appreciate you catching me up to speed with the Kings." I say as I stand up.

"Do you want to grab a frozen coffee sometime?" She asks as she stands as well.

"Sure. It's not like I know anybody else in this town. I would love to get to know you better."

We exchange phone numbers, and then head to our next class. I'm feeling a little better knowing that I've made a friend in this town; maybe it won't be so lonely after all.

"Mom, I'm home!" I call out as I enter the Whitmore estate, which is actually more like a miniature castle, but hey who am I to argue. I just want to graduate college and then move back to Hillcrest and ready myself to take over after grandpa can no longer do so.

I head straight to the kitchen for a quick snack and since my mother doesn't seem to be around, I head up to my room to start on my homework. Mine and my stepbrother's old room are down one wing and mom and Jonas's room is down another wing on the other side of the estate.

I open the door to my room and let out a little gasp at the sight of my stepbrother casually laying back in my bed, "W-what are you doing in my room?"

"W-What do you think?" He mimics my slight stutter, "I'm waiting for my brave little stepsister."

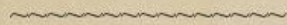
"Look Xander, I didn't mean..."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, you didn't mean it and you're really, really sorry...blah, blah, blah." He swings his legs over the side of the bed and stands up, taking slow and measured steps towards me, "The thing is, Bree, now that you are part of my family, you need to act accordingly, and if you can't, then we will treat you like the rest of the minions."

I'm now stuck between the wall and the big frame of my new stepbrother, "I'm not sure what you mean, Xander."

His stare is a bit creepy, and yet I feel a

stirring inside of me as I breathe in his cologne. It only gets stronger as he dips his head, his hot breath caressing first, my cheek, and then my ear. I close my eyes as my heart starts beating rapidly from the closeness, and just when I think he's going to do something to hurt me, his voice is low and husky, "Then for your own sake, I suggest you find out." He nips my earlobe and then he is gone, leaving me panting in his wake.



Please feel free to leave comments as I always try to respond in a timely manner.

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