

They picked the wrong girl

Chapter 9

At three in the morning, my phone screen lit up.

There were more than 99 missed calls from Eric. Meanwhile, the newest texts popped up one after another.

“Jen, you’re not allowed to get engaged to anyone else!

“If you’re mad about what I said in front of Mrs. Hemingway, I can explain.

“Let’s just talk.

“I’m outside your place. If you don’t come down, I’ll wait till morning.”

I pulled the curtain aside.

In the pouring rain, the once high—and-mighty e-sports champ stood drenched, a warped cake box **in** his hands.

It was from my favorite dessert shop—the one that only sells 20 servings a day.

Leon wrapped his arms around me from behind. “Want me to call security?” he asked quietly.

“No need,” I murmured, letting the curtains fall shut. “He likes torturing himself.”

The next day, the headline read, “Esports Star Eric Druller Trains Through 40°C Fever.” Below it was a photo of him gaming while

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hooked up to an IV.

Fans with sharp eyes noticed the little sunflower pot next to his keyboard.

Exactly like the one I gave him when he first came to the orphanage when no one would sit near him.

Eric’s love is a mess of thorns.

away

It's like he clings to me, but also pushes me away.

Maybe because of how he grew up, he cannot tell the difference between affection and damage.

Then, Regina showed up. She pouted sweetly and said, "Eric's so intense." And just like that, he started softening his edges for her.

That was when it hit me. It was not that Eric did not know how to be

gentle—

he just did not think I deserved it. Maybe because I had seen him at his lowest. Because I knew the truth: what ran in his veins was not cruelty, it was the fear he swallowed in the dark.

I still remember the night he won the national championship.

He was drunk, grinning, leaning against me, arm slung around my neck. "If no one wants you by thirty," he said, slurring just a bit, "I'll reluctantly take you in."

His heartbeat was frantic, thudding against his shirt.

For a second, just one, I thought maybe... Just maybe....

Then the door flew open.

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The guys barged in, laughing, whistling. "Damn, the simp's finally making a move?"

Eric froze. Then, like someone flipped a switch, he pulled away and turned back to them with a wide, mocking grin.

"She blushed! I told you it'd work!"

He tilted his phone toward them like a trophy. On the screen was a group chat.

Sent three minutes ago. "Wanna bet that I can make her blush in 10 minutes?"

I stood there, the warmth drained from my face as the meaning settled

1. in.

I should have known it was just a game to them. Still, I let myself fall

for it.

However, none of it matters anymore. Not when I have finally made peace with cutting a ll of them off for good.