

## The Villainess Needs a Hug – Hug 12

Before Ivy came home, she'd already had dinner out.

She had no patience left for another argument, so she cut through the living room and headed straight for the ground floor maid's quarters.

But she barely lasted two seconds inside before storming back out, her face cold and her gaze sharp as a knife. "What happened to my bed?"

Emma was just coming down the stairs, cradling an adorable little Bichon Frise in her arms. Micah, who no one had noticed arrive, was at her side.

As soon as he saw Ivy, a flicker of heat flashed in Micah's eyes and he fixed his gaze on her.

"Hey, you're back!" Emma chirped with a sweetness as fake as her smile.

"Next time, tell Mom before you go out. She was worried sick about you all day."

Ivy couldn't be bothered to respond. She strode over, grabbed Emma by the hair, and dragged her toward the maid's room.

"Ivy!" Micah's eyes hardened, but he was too slow to stop her.

"Ah! What are you doing?!" Emma shrieked, caught off guard. Her dog tumbled from her arms, hitting the floor with a yelp.

The rest of the Windsors were just heading to the dining room for dinner when they saw the commotion and froze in shock.

"Ivy, what are you doing?"

"Let her go, Ivy!"

"Have you lost your mind?!"

Everyone rushed toward Ivy, but she was too fast for any of them.

She yanked Emma into the cramped maid's quarters, slammed her face against the bed—and right in front of Emma's mouth was a fresh pile of dog poop.

"Your dog made this mess. You clean it up!" Ivy pressed Emma's cheek down, her voice cold and merciless.

The Windsors tried *to* squeeze in after them. But with a bed and a pile of clutter filling the tiny room, there was barely any space left.

They couldn't get in.

Micah, closest, managed to force his way through, yanking Ivy off and pulling

Emma upright.

All Emma could register was the stench of dog feces, and she retched uncontrollably, tears and snot streaming down her face.

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"Ivy, that was way out of line! This isn't Emma's fault—sometimes puppies don't know any better and make a mess. Punish the dog if you have to, but why take it out on her?" Micah held Emma tightly, his voice shaking with anger as he shouted.

"Dogs run wild when people let them. If you'd kept that mutt out of my room, this wouldn't have happened," Ivy shot back. She'd made sure to shut her door before leaving that morning.

Emma was still gagging, barely able to stand.

She shoved past Micah and fled the room, with Rosetta hurrying after her in concern.

Now that there was space, Adkins managed to squeeze inside.

"Ivy!" He glared at his rebellious eldest daughter, his anger boiling over. He raised his hand to slap her.

"Adkins, don't-!" Micah jumped between them just in time, shielding Ivy with his body.

Adkins's heavy slap landed on the back of Micah's head with a loud, painful thud.

"Micah, this isn't your business! Out!" Adkins's hand stung and his face was flushed with rage.

Micah's hands were still gripping Ivy's thin shoulders. For the first time, he realized just how frail she'd become—her body felt like it was made of nothing but bones.

A pang of guilt twisted in his chest. He turned to Adkins, pleading, "Adkins, Ivy just got back.

She's been through hell out there. Of course she's going to be a little... unstable."

Adkins, still fuming, snapped, "If she's sick, she should see a doctor! This tantrum is unacceptable. We don't owe her anything!"

Hearing her father's furious outburst, Ivy's heart shattered all over again.

Emma was clearly at fault, yet no one dared say a word against her. Instead,

every ounce of their anger was poured onto Ivy, the actual victim.

She looked at Micah. He was staring at her, full of pity—and she felt sick to her stomach.

“Dearest brother-in-law, aren’t you scared to hold me? I have HIV, you know,” Ivy said with a cold little smile.

Micah froze, hands snapping away as if he’d touched a live wire, stumbling back a step.

“Ivy...” he murmured, voice barely audible.

Adkins, who’d been so worked up, had completely forgotten that. At Ivy’s reminder, he also recoiled, suddenly relieved his slap hadn’t landed on her face. What if he’d gotten infected?

“Enough. I won’t stoop to your level. You stay in this room—you’re not going anywhere!” Adkins barked, then stormed out.

Micah’s expression was stormy as he followed close behind.

Dinner was out of the question.

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Emma spent the next hour sobbing in the shower, shampooing her hair and brushing her teeth over and over, convinced she still smelled like dog poop.

Micah showered and changed too, then nervously searched online: “Can you catch HIV from hugging someone?”

The whole Windsor household was in chaos until late in the evening, before they finally sat down at the dinner table.

Edna asked the chef to reheat dinner, but no one had much of an appetite—least of all Emma, who kept retching every time she remembered that pile of dog poop so close to her mouth.

But the ordeal wasn’t over.

After dinner, Micah prepared to leave.

Seeing Emma still upset, he kindly offered to walk her upstairs, planning to comfort her until she fell asleep.

But as soon as Emma pulled back the covers and started to sit, she caught

sight of something on her bed and let out a scream so loud it nearly shook the ceiling.

There, right in the middle of her sheets, was another pile of dog poop—even bigger than the one on Ivy's bed.

"Ahhhhhh-!"

Emma clutched her head, shrieking like a banshee, then collapsed to the floor, dry-heaving. But she'd barely eaten—just a little soup—so all she could do was gag on bile.

The rest of the Windsor family came running, faces flushed with fury.

"It had to be Ivy!" Baillie roared, storming downstairs and kicking open the maid's room door.