

## Chapter 6

The car ride was awkward and silent as Kat flashed me suspicious glances.

"You were awfully red when I found you in the hall," she said, raising an eyebrow.

I wanted to tell her the truth, but I knew it wouldn't change anything. If these twins were as 'untouchable' as everyone claimed, what good would it do? I was still completely torn about what had happened. They had touched me and kissed me against my will. If it was all against my will, then why had I enjoyed it so much? Why did some part of me want it to happen again? I chalked it up to reasonable insanity and the fact that the twins were irresistibly hot.

After claiming innocence a million times, Kat reluctantly stopped interrogating me. I navigated the house carefully, nearly jumping for joy when I saw Darren snoring on the recliner. I flopped down on my bed after finishing some homework and touched my head angrily. It wasn't even sore anymore.

A muffled ringing pulled me from the bed, and I searched for the crappy phone Lauren had gotten me. Our social worker practically demanded Lauren provide me with a cellphone. So, being Lauren, she got me the lowest quality phone possible. I didn't even know they made those chunky flip phones anymore. The only thing this phone was good for was calling people.

"Hello?" I sighed, already knowing who was on the other end. The only person who called this phone was the social worker.

"Hello, Sophia," Melissa, my social worker for the last couple of years, chuckled. "Just calling to check up on you and to see how everything's going."

"Everything is the same," I shrugged. "Not bad, just the same."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Sophia," Melissa sighed. It was no secret Lauren never wanted me. "We've actually just gotten word your father's been sending checks written out for you, and I wanted to see how they were helping."

I snickered. "It's been years and you just got word now?"

"Your father's a pretty private person, it seems," Melissa chuckled. "They should fill up your college fund pretty fast."

"Yeah, if I had gotten any of them," I scoffed, rolling my eyes. Lauren was expecting the next check any day now. No doubt she'd make some snide comment once she received it.

There was a pause on the other end. "You haven't gotten any of the checks?"

"Lauren's gotten them just fine," I shrugged. I had long ago given up on receiving any of the checks, not that I'd want anything from an absentee sperm donor.

Another long pause.

"I see," Melissa sounded irritated. "Thanks for the info, Sophia. I'll see what I can do to fix that."

"Don't bother," I shook my head. "I haven't gotten any since Grandma died, and I really don't feel like hearing Lauren yell at me."

"If you say so," Melissa sounded unconvinced.

Sleep didn't come easy that night. The twins plagued my dreams as though tormenting me in real life wasn't enough. I woke with ragged breaths. My dream was set at school, where the twins hurled cruel insults my way. After the insults, they dragged me into a closet and picked up where they had left off in real life, leaving me even more confused.

I was jolted from my bed as a crack of lightning split the air. Rain hammered down against the house, and what I once found calming now sounded sinister. I flicked my lamp on and pulled myself from bed. The chill of my room did nothing to cool my heated skin. I could practically feel the goosebumps under the twins' rough touches, as if my dream had been real.

Leaning my head against the cool window in my bedroom, I peered out into the rain. We lived in a part of California that was horribly dry for most of the year. Everything about Georgia was green and wet, and I wasn't sure if I found it unsettling or comforting.

Another crack of lightning sounded, and I watched, entranced, as the lightning sent a flash of yellow across the forest beside the house. Everything was completely dark under the pale light of the moon, but the lightning spotlighted everything before plunging the forest into darkness.

I stood with my forehead against the cool glass, my eyes reflecting the brilliant flashes of lightning. Every now and again, the deafening crack of thunder would sound and make me jump a little. I squinted harder at the forest below me. I couldn't tell if it was the busting wind or something else rustling the branches. The lightning only provided seconds of clarity before the darkness returned.

I leaped back from the window in shock. The lightning had illuminated the forest, and I wasn't sure what I had just seen. Two very large, furry heads poked from the forest. The fur surrounding their intelligent eyes was dark as night. I had only a glimpse of their elongated snouts, but if I had to guess, I would've said they were wolves or a black bear. Did wolves and bears even live in Georgia? What was most unsettling was how the two wolves seemed to be staring directly at my bedroom window.

I stayed home from school the next day, feigning sickness. In all honesty, I wasn't mentally prepared for school. The relentless dreams had woken me up, and the sight of the strange animals had kept me up for the remainder of the night. I knew Lauren wouldn't notice if I stayed home from school. As usual, Darren was the one to look out for. I was determined to spend the entire day in my room, only sneaking out for the occasional bathroom break.

I clicked the lock on my door and curled back up in bed. I wasn't sure how long I had slept, but I was beyond grateful it was a peaceful nap. My dreams weren't plagued with Kieran and Ethan. The day passed quickly and effortlessly, and once 2 o'clock came around, I got dressed for work. It wasn't a long shift, thankfully. I wasn't entirely sure if Kat would show up to take me to work, especially with me missing school. Surprisingly, Kat's car pulled into the driveway, and I crept downstairs.

Darren had his attention on some football game re-run, and I darted from the house.

"Where the hell were you today?" Kat frowned. "I wasn't sure if I should pick you up for work or not."

I frowned. "Sorry, had a rough night."

"Did the storm bother you?" Kat frowned, curling a lock of fire-kissed hair around her finger.

I shrugged. "Yeah, it woke me up. I had a hard time falling back asleep. Just needed a break, is all."

"Next time, let a girl know!" Kat scoffed and shook her head.

"I don't exactly have a phone," I pursed my lips. There was no way I planned on pulling out my chunky flip phone. Better no phone than this one.

Kat frowned. "You don't have a phone? Can't you just get your own plan?"

"I'm not eighteen yet," I frowned. "Besides, I need to replenish my savings."

Kat seemed perplexed, and it had never occurred to me that she might be one of the many wealthier families in town.

"Why do you need to replenish it?" Kat frowned.

I chuckled at her confusion. "I've already spent too much money on food, school supplies, and clothes."

"Um, isn't that stuff your parents should help with?" Kat grimaced, confirming my assumption about her.

I sighed. "It's a long story, but I take care of myself."

"That doesn't sound very nice," Kat shook her head.

"Not everyone is," I shrugged, hopping out of her car.

Thankfully, Kat dropped the topic of conversation and started a new one. Complaining about Tyler was one of her favorite things to do. At one point, I almost thought she had some strange crush on him. Kat reluctantly confessed she had dated Tyler two years ago and learned the hard way when he left her for another girl.

The first half of my shift went on perfectly. Around the four-hour mark, I managed to run into another waitress and splatter Ellen sauce all over my dark shirt. The manager working at the time gave me another shirt to change into, but unfortunately, it was short-sleeved. The bruise I had received days ago was already healing, but now it was an ugly yellow color.

I slipped the short-sleeve black t-shirt on in the bathroom, tying my apron around my waist. As I slipped the bathroom, I slammed into something hard. That something emitted a familiar intoxicating smell, and I stumbled as I tried to stay on my feet. A pair of warm, rough hands held my shoulders, steadying me.

Ethan's stern face looked down on me, his full eyebrow cocked as I ran into him for the second time.

"Well, if it isn't the little doll," Ethan smirked down at me, his hands falling to his sides. His unruly, tousled hair hung on his head, a strand falling down to just reach his eyes. He looked like the typical bad boy you'd see in all the movies, a type of guy I had never been interested in. Until now.

"Sorry," I cleared my throat and tried to keep my voice even. Ethan and Kieran held some unseen power that made me act like a blundering idiot whenever I was around them.

"You weren't in school today," Ethan pointed out, a serious look on his handsome face.

Anger and irritation flashed inside of me. Ethan and his brother tormented me, and now he wanted to act concerned? It was clear that the approach I was taking had no effect on their behavior. They wanted me to have a reaction? Fine. Maybe that would bore them and end their strange fixation on me.

"I don't see how that's any of your business," I growled at him, glaring into his dark eyes. Compared to Ethan's large build, I probably seemed like a defensive kitten, but I didn't care. Everything was beginning to weigh on me, and I wasn't sure how long it would be until my sanity left me completely.

I stepped around Ethan and hastily made my way to the kitchen, not daring to search the room for Kieran's intense gaze. I had been in the kitchen for only six minutes when the waitress I had run into stormed over to me.

"What's so special about you?" she snapped.

I stared at her, dumbfounded. Sure, I had run into her by accident, but I apologized for that.

She looked me up and down with a sour expression. Her hazel eyes pierced my skin with their judgmental gaze.

"What?" I scoffed, reacting much too slowly for her liking.

The waitress crossed her arms over her chest. "You must think you're so f\*ck\*ng great, huh?"

"I literally have no idea what you're talking about," I snapped back at her, grateful when I saw Kat rushing up to us.

"Woah, what the hell, Jenny?" Kat barked at the caramel-haired waitress. "What's going on?"

"I have no clue," I shrugged, trying not to shrink under Jenny's glare.

"This is the second time the twins have come in here asking for her specifically," Jenny snapped. "As if she's f\*ck\*ng special or something."

My mouth went dry as she said that, and my heart hammered unhappily.

"By all means, be their waitress," I forced the words out of my mouth.

A look of surprise followed by suspicion crossed Jenny's face. "I've already tried. They want you."

For a split second, I contemplated quitting my job altogether, but that wouldn't solve anything. Was I really going to let two guys force me from my job? From school? Not a chance.

I left the kitchen with a grumble, my stomach doing flips and my heart racing. I took a moment to collect myself.

"Hello, sweetheart," Kieran smirked as I walked up to their table. Ethan sat on the other side, an identical smirk on his face.

I gritted my teeth together. "What can I get you to drink?"

The two of them ordered sodas, and I stormed away before they could say any more. It took me only a minute, as we weren't very busy today.

It was always much easier handling tables of three or fewer. I hated using those huge trays to carry drinks. One little misstep, and all your drinks would go tumbling over. It was much easier to keep food balanced. Most of my accidents involved drinks.

I set both of their drinks in front of them when Kieran's rough hand reached out and snatched my arm.

"What the f\*ck is this?"