My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 121

She let out a small, broken whimper and dove back down, her tongue frantic, her teeth grazing me as she tried to prove me wrong. She was gagging, her eyes watering as she fought her own anatomy to please mine.

It was exactly what I needed.

No complexity.

No “stepsister” bullshit.

I watched her struggle for another few minutes, the friction of her tongue and the tight, wet heat of her throat finally grinding down my last bit of restraint. I reached down, my fingers tangling in her hair, and held her head in place.

I didn’t give her a choice. I bucked upward, my hips driving home as I emptied myself into the back of her throat She made a muffled, choked-off sound, her eyes fluttering shut as she took every drop, her hands clutching at my quads until the last of the tremors subsided.

I let go of her hair and slumped back against the silk pillows.

And then within minutes, the haze was gone. I stood up, the muscles in my back popping as I stretched. I pulled on a pair of black boxers, and looked down at her. She was still on the edge of the bed, her hair a bird’s nest, looking at me with a lovestruck expression that bordered on pathetic.

“Clean yourself up,” I said, “I’ll walk you out. My driver is already downstairs, he’ll take you wherever you need to go.”

She blinked at me, her mouth curving into a wide, breathless smile. She looked like she was about to faint from the sheer shock of it. “You’re... you’re actually walking me out? Really?”

I didn’t answer. I just started pulling on a fresh shirt, the fabric tight against my skin. To her, this was some grand, romantic gesture. To me, it was a tactical exit. I wanted her out of my wing and out of my sight before the rest of the house woke up and started asking questions I didn’t want to answer.

“The house is a maze,” I added, my tone dry. “You’ll get lost.”

She scrambled off the bed, stumbling slightly in her haste to please me, her eyes never leaving mine. She was hooked, completely under the spell of a night she'd be talking about for years.

I just needed the space empty so I could reset the board.

I steered the girl out of my wing, my hand flat against the small of her back. I was just trying to get her through the maze of the hallway and into the main living room without any drama.

- "Raphael."

Fuck.

I didn't even have to turn around. I knew that sharp, mocking voice anywhere. It was Claire.

I shifted my gaze and realized the entire space was crawling with my family. Almost everyone was wide awake, lounging on the furniture and sipping their morning espressos like it was a fucking board meeting.

I stopped dead. The girl beside me froze, her eyes going wide as she realized she was standing in the middle of my family.

Claire stood up, her silk robe trailing behind her like a cape as she walked toward us. She had that look in her eye,

the one that meant she was about to make my life difficult just for the fun of it.

"Raphael," she said, "Don't tell me you're just sending her home. Did you even offer her a carbohydrate? A bowl of fruit? We have a chef on staff, you Neanderthal. The least you can do is send her breakfast in bed before you kick

her out."

She stepped closer, tilting her head to look the girl in the eye.

"Hey, are you okay? Would you like some breakfast ur coffee? I can ask the chef to make you whatever you want

The girl started to stammer, her face turning a deep, humiliated shade of red. She looked like she wanted the floor to swallow her whole.

"The car is waiting," I snapped, my voice cutting through Claire's words. I didn't want a conversation. I wanted

clean exit.

Then my eyes fell on the person sitting right behind Claire.

Gianna.

She was tucked into the corner of the couch, her hands wrapped around a small espresso cup. She didn't say a word, but her eyes did all the talking. Slowly, she let her gaze crawl down the girl standing next to me. She started at the messy, bird's nest hair, moved down to the tiny denim skirt, and finally landed on the heels.

Then, she looked back at me.

Our eyes locked for a heartbeat. There was no warmth there. Her face hardened, her brow furrowing into a deep frown of pure disgust.

It wasn't jealousy, it was the look of someone who had just stepped in something foul and couldn't get the smell out of her clothes.

She snapped her gaze away, turning her back to me as if the mere sight of my presence was an insult to her morning.

"Go," I told the girl, my hand applying a final, bruising pressure to her spine to send her toward the front doors

"What?" Claire's glare was sharp, but the corner of her mouth quirked with the kind of dark humor we traded like currency, "No tip? No 'thank you for your service to the patriarchy'? You really are a prick, Raphael. Alessia is right, you're a lost cause. You need to find a nice girl and settle down."

Before I could fire back a retort, she gasped, her eyes lighting up with a truly evil idea.

"That's it. I'm setting you up on a blind date. Someone wholesome. Someone who will make you miserable."

Then I was again cut off by Claire's husband.

"Sit down, Raphael," Vince ordered, "We need to talk. And next time, you keep your... women out of the common areas. This is where our kids play. It's a home, not your personal clubhouse. Don't make me say it again."

"I was trying to sneak her out before the rest of you woke up," I said, my tone dry.

It was the truth, even if it didn't change the fact that I'd been caught. I moved toward the couch, feeling every eye in the room on me.

"We have a leak in the encrypted ledger," Vincenzo continued, "Someone's been probing the offshore nodes in the Caymans. I need you to trace the handshake before the markets open in New York."

I lowered myself onto the same cushion where Gianna was sitting, leaving a respectful gap between us. Gianna didn't even look at me. The shift in the springs was all it took for her to snap her tablet shut and stand up.

Vincenzo was still talking in the background about the data leak, but my mind had already checked out. It jumped straight to her.

"Gianna," I said.

She paused, her back straight as a rod, her fingers white-knuckled around the edge of her device.

"The AI predictive modeling for the Q4 logistics expansion," I continued, leaning back and resting my arm along the top of the sofa, nowhere near her. "I need the neural network to prioritize the risk-variance in the Eastern European sectors. Have the preliminary data sets cleaned and ready for the 10:00 AM strategy briefing at the firm. I want to see the projected failure rates before I walk into that meeting."

I leaned back, my arm resting on the top of the sofa, watching her. The task I gave her was high-level work that usually went to an expert with years of experience. It was a trap, plain and simple. I wanted her to struggle. I wanted to see her fumble the data so I'd have a valid, professional reason to fire her and get her out of my sight for good.

If she messed up the neural network settings, I could kick her out of my company by noon.

She finally turned her head, just enough for me to see the line of her jaw, "I'll have the variance reports on your desk ten minutes before the briefing."

Without another word, she walked away. I watched the sway of her hips until she disappeared around the corner.

I shifted my gaze and found Adriano watching me. He didn't say a word, but his eyes were narrowed. He looked at the empty space where Gianna had just been standing, then his eyes snapped back to mine, pinning me down.

Janedoewritings

Author

I know we don’t like seeing MMCs with other women after they meet the FMC but they’re not a thing yet. He’s not obsessed with her, they’re not in love, and right now the only thing between them is... lust.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 123

Gianna

I sat in the same seat as always, notebook open, pen resting between my fingers. The lecture had already started, but the words on the screen blurred together before I could even catch them. My eyes moved across the lines, trying to hold onto something but they slipped away too fast.

And instead of the text, all I could see was him.

Standing there that morning.

My jaw tightened as the image forced its way back in, his hand around that girl’s waist. The tiny denim skirt, the way she looked at him like he was something to worship. And him... he didn’t even look at her properly, he just used her and dismissed her.

I pressed my lips together as disgust crawled under my skin.

The same man who had cornered me in the garden the night before. The same one who had leaned in close enough that I could feel his breath, like he was about to- I gripped my pen tighter. No. I wasn’t thinking about that.

I wasn’t.

My chest rose sharply as I forced my eyes back to the board.

A game.

That’s what this was.

My stomach twisted as the realization settled in deeper, colder this time. He knew exactly what he was doing. Men like him always did. He had money, power, a name that made people disappear. Why wouldn’t he play?

I stared down at my notebook, the page still half-empty.

The thought of my mother flashed through my mind, her tired smile, the way she finally looked... safe. Settled. It was her chance at something better and I wasn’t going to let him destroy that.

Because that’s what this was.

Strategy.

He tried to cross a line with me, knowing exactly how wrong it was, knowing exactly what it would do if it got out.

I wrote something down, the words uneven, slightly off, but I didn’t stop. I couldn’t afford to stop, not with everything else already slipping.

He could keep his games. He could keep whatever twisted little control tactic he thought he was pulling.

I wasn’t falling for it.

I wasn’t going to be the weak point in my mother’s life. I wasn’t going to be the reason everything fell apart.

I blinked hard and tried again.

The slide changed too fast.

I copied what I could, but the words came out wrong. Letters swapped places. Lines broke halfway through. I

scratched over them, tried again, pressed harder this time like that would force them to behave. My hand started to ache, but the page still looked like a mess. It didn’t match what was on the screen. It never did.

A quiet laugh came from somewhere behind me.

I didn’t turn around.

My chest tightened instead, heat creeping up my neck. I lowered my head and focused harder, forcing my eyes to slow down, to catch one word at a time. Just one. Then the next. But by the time I understood the first, the professor had already moved on.

By the time class ended, my head felt heavy, like it was packed with static. I didn’t even talk to anyone. I just grabbed my stuff and went straight to the library, dropping into a chair like my body was running on autopilot.

My laptop screen glowed back at me.

AI Predictive Modeling: Risk-Variance.

The words were shifting. The letters didn’t want to stay in a straight line. They were dancing, swapping places, turning upside down until the sentence looked like a foreign language I hadn’t learned yet. My dyslexia was always worse when I was tired, and today, I was acting like a freaking ghost but I can do it. I know I

I can.

I hadn’t slept. I’d spent the night at the bar, carrying heavy trays of gin and tonics until my shoulders burned. I didn’t get back to the Capone estate until 5:00 AM. I’d seen the guards at the gate, their dark suits, their silent nods. I’d spent the last two hours of the night scrubbing the smell of smoke and cheap lime juice off my skin so my mother wouldn’t smell the “work” on me when she woke up.

Now, sitting in this library, I felt like I was underwater.

Raphael’s voice was a cold echo in my head. “I want to see the projected failure rates.”

I’ve got this.

I’m not weak, I know what I’m doing.

I don’t need anyone to carry me through this.

I’ll figure it out like I always do.

I’ll be okay.

I looked at the girl sitting two rows down. She was typing fast, her fingers flying over the keys. Why was it so easy for everyone else? Why did the world stay still for them?

P

U

15 Bonys

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 124

My brain felt like a tangled ball of yarn. I tried to read the data set again, but the numbers blurred into gray smudges.

I needed to be perfect. If I wasn’t perfect, I was nothing. I was just a broken thing taking up space in a house that wasn’t mine.

My hand moved to my bag. It was a reflex now, a habit born from years of learning that there was only one way to clear the fog.

I reached inside and felt for the small weight of the device I kept hidden in the side pocket. My fingers brushed the cold plastic and the twin metal contact points, and I felt a tiny spark of relief just touching it. It was a modified TENS unit, stripped down and dialed up... a gift of sorts from a life I tried to forget.

I pulled it out slowly, keeping it hidden under the long wooden desk.

I remembered it. I remembered the way the world used to get very, very quiet and very, very clear when the pain was sharp enough. It was the only thing that could force my brain to stop spinning. It was the only thing that could make the letters stand still and obey me.

I pressed the metal nodes against the skin of my palm, right below my thumb, and clicked the dial. A small, biting sting flared up my arm.

Not enough.

I moved my hand under the table, lifting the hem of my skirt just an inch. I pressed the device firmly against the sensitive skin of my inner thigh. I gritted my teeth and clicked the button twice, holding it down until the muscle seized and the bite of the electricity began to burn. 1

The fog in my brain didn't just lift, it shattered.

Suddenly, the buzzing of the lights didn't matter. The professor's voice became clear, every word landing with perfection. I looked back at the screen, and for the first time all morning, the letters stopped moving. They sat there, black and obedient on the white background, waiting for me to work.

Risk-Variance. Eastern European Sectors.

I breathed in, the sting in my leg keeping me sharp. It worked. It always worked. Pain was the only language my body understood when it wanted to quit.

It was the only thing that could "cure" the mess inside my head.

I began to type.

The neural network must prioritize the volatility in the Ukrainian sector...

My fingers moved. The logic started to flow. I could see the patterns in the data now. Every time my vision started to swim, or my eyes started to heavy, I simply pressed the metal deeper into my skin. I let the sharp bite of it guide me back to the work.

I had to finish this. I had to walk into that 10:00 AM meeting and hand Raphael a perfect report. I wanted to see him realize that I could handle anything he threw at me, no matter what.

And every time the letters began to dance or the fog tried to roll back in, I did the same thing. I shifted the device under the desk, alternating between my thighs to keep the sensation sharp and fresh.

+15 8gnus

By the time I was done with it, my legs were buzzing with a dull, heavy ache, but my screen was full. The predictive models were perfect. The risk-variance was calculated down to the last decimal point.

I clicked save. I had done it. I tucked the device back into my bag, hiding it deep in the side pocket where it belonged. I stood up, my legs feeling shaky, and weak but my head was clear.

I packed my laptop into my bag. Every muscle in my legs felt like it was humming, a dull, electric aftershock that made the walk out of the library feel like I was stepping on clouds.

I didn't take the train. I couldn't risk the delay or the crowd. I pulled out my phone and ordered an Uber, my thumb hovering over the screen until a black sedan pulled up to the curb of the UIC campus.

When the car pulled up to the curb of the skyscraper, I didn't head for the elevators yet. I walked straight into the lobby restroom.

The girl in the mirror looked a mess. My hair was a bird's nest from the wind, my eyes were rimmed with red from the lack of sleep, and my college outfit, the soft skirt and the casual top was not work friendly.

I locked myself in a stall and pulled the white office shirt from my bag. I stepped out of the skirt and pulled on a pair of tailored black trousers.

I stood at the sink and splashed ice-cold water on my face until my skin stung. I pulled a comb through my hair, dragging it back into a low, tight bun that didn't allow a single stray strand,

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+15 Ban

Bonus

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 125

I brushed on a light layer of makeup, just enough to mask the dark circles under my eyes and give my lips a muted, neutral tint. I kicked off my sneakers and slid into my heels. I looked at my reflection one last time. The exhaustion was still there, hidden under the surface, but I finally looked... presentable.

I walked out of the bathroom, swiped my badge at the security gate and stepped into the executive elevator.

The ride up was silent. I watched the floor numbers climb.

I walked past the assistants without a word, my folder tucked under my arm. I reached the double doors of Raphael's office. I didn't wait for Aileen to announce me.

I pushed the doors open and walked inside.

Raphael was sitting behind his massive desk, his sleeves rolled up, his eyes fixed on a monitor. He looked up as approached, his dark eyes tracking my every movement.

I didn't say hello. I didn't apologize for the intrusion. I walked straight to his desk and laid the folder down right in front of him, the paper hitting the wood with a soft, final sound.

"The Q4 logistics expansion model," I said, "Complete with the neural network prioritization for the Eastern European sectors. Risk-variance is accounted for, and the failure rates are projected through the end of the fiscal year."

I stood there, my back straight, my hands folded behind me. I could feel the burn in my thighs, a secret heat that reminded me exactly what it had cost to get here.

"Ten minutes early," I added, my gaze locking onto his, "Just like you asked."

Raphael didn't look up immediately. He let the folder sit there for a long, silent second. Finally, he reached out. His fingers, long and tattooed at the knuckles, flipped the cover open.

I stood like a statue. My legs were screaming, the places where I'd pressed the metal nodes were throbbing with heat but I didn't let a single muscle twitch. I watched his eyes move. They didn't just skim the pages, they hunted. He was looking for a misplaced decimal, a faulty logic jump, or a single line of code that didn't hold water.

He flipped to the back, where the complex neural network graphs were printed. I knew those graphs were perfect. I'd bled, literally and figuratively to make sure the risk-variance was airtight.

I felt a surge of heat in my chest that had nothing to do with the TENS unit. It was pride. I did it.

Raphael's jaw tightened. A small muscle near his ear ticked. He closed the folder. He didn't look impressed. He didn't look surprised.

He looked disappointed.

He leaned back in his chair, his dark eyes finally lifting to mine. They were cold, flat, and filled with a strange kind of irritation, as if my success was a personal insult to his schedule. There was no "well done" in his gaze. There was only a tight-lipped, bitter silence.

"Good job," he said. The words were forced out through gritted teeth.

He didn't offer a seat. He didn't even keep the folder. Instead, he flicked his wrist, sliding the report across the desk. It skidded over the wood, the edge catching the air before it tumbled off the side and landed facedown on the floor near my feet.

"I don't need it anymore," he added, "The Cayman situation shifted ten minutes ago. The Eastern European logistics are irrelevant now. I've already rerouted the capital through the Singapore nodes."

My heart didn't just drop, it felt like it had been kicked. All that work. The night at the bar. The electric shocks under the desk. The sheer, agonizing effort to keep the letters from dancing.

He didn't even look at the folder on the floor. He just turned back to his monitor, dismissing me as if I were a ghost.

"Take it with you on your way out," he muttered, his fingers already flying across his mechanical keyboard.

I stared at the side of his face, my hands curling into fists at my sides. The pride I'd felt seconds ago turned into something hot and acidic.

I reached down and picked up the folder. My fingers left a small smudge on the white cover.

"Understood," I said.

I turned on my heel and walked towards the door, almost feeling like crying after putting so much work into it.

"Actually, Gianna," he voiced, making me go still.

Janedoewritings

Author

Swipe up...

9

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 126

Gianna

3″-

+15 agus

“Actually, Gianna,” he voiced, making me go still.

I stopped just as my hand reached the heavy brass handle of the door. The click of his keyboard ceased, replaced by the sound of a drawer sliding open and I turned immediately.

He didn’t look up from his monitor as he reached into a crate beside his desk and pulled out a stack of thick, bound ledgers,

“Since you have the capacity for high-volume data entry, I need these processed,” he said, his eyes scanning a line of code on his screen. “These are the legacy acquisition files from when I started the firm. They’re all physical handwritten inventories, shipping manifests, and non-indexed hardware specs.”

He set the stack on the corner of the desk.

“The OCR software can’t read the handwriting, and the encryption keys used back then are obsolete,” he continued, finally shifting his gaze to me, “I need them manually transcribed and mapped into the new SQL server. Every line item needs a verified digital signature. It’s tedious, but the architecture of the current system won’t stabilize until the legacy data is integrated.”

I looked at the stack. There had to be thousands of pages. It wasn’t just data entry, it was a forensic digital reconstruction of the company’s entire foundation.

“I need the first three ledgers indexed by next week,” he added, already turning back to his work, “If the primary keys don’t match the physical records, the whole migration fails. Be precise.”

He didn’t wait for me to agree. He just picked up a pen and made a notation on a different file, his mind already miles away from the girl standing in front of him.

“Understood,” I said, my voice barely a whisper.

I walked back to the desk, gathered the heavy books into my arms, and felt the weight of them sink into my chest.

I turned and walked out of the office. As I made it to my desk, I didn’t feel like crying. I felt a strange, dark clarity that I was going to do it, no matter what.

I set the first ledger down. I opened it, and my stomach did a slow, sick flip.

The handwriting was a nightmare. It was a cramped, cursive script, full of loops and slanted lines that looked more like barbed wire than letters. To my eyes, it was a moving target. The words didn’t just sit there, they vibrated, the “f”s and “s”s tangling together until the page looked like a map of a forest I’d never find my way out of.

Disbursement... Asset Recovery...

I tried to type the first entry, but my hand cramped. The letters on the screen didn’t match the movements of my fingers. I deleted the line. Then I deleted it again.

“Focus,” I hissed.

My hand dove into my bag. I didn’t even have to look. I grabbed the TENS unit and slid it under the fabric of my trousers, pressing the nodes against the meat of my right thigh. I dialed it up until the muscle physically buckled.

Papter 126

Zap.

The world went white for a second. The fog in my brain snapped back. The barbed wire on the page settled into recognizable words.

I typed. Entry 001: 4,500 USD – Infrastructure Maintenance.

I worked through the first hour, then the second. Every time the lines started to bleed into one another, I moved the device. I shifted it to my left leg, then back to my right. I could feel the skin beginning to throb, deep bruises blooming under the pants, but I didn’t stop. I needed the sting. I needed the jolts to act as the eyes my brain refused to give me.

I checked the corner of the screen. 6:00 PM.

The people around me was beginning to leave. I could hear the distant, muffled sounds of the office clearing out

Then, I saw him.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 127

Raphael walked toward the restricted elevator, the one that bypassed the lobby and went straight to the private area of the office, I didn't know what it was and Aileen warned me not to ask questions about it. He swiped his black card, the light flashed green, scanned his eyes and the doors hissed open.

He stepped inside and disappeared, leaving me almost alone on the entire floor.

I pulled the next ledger closer, the dust tickling my throat. I slid the device back under my waistband, finding fresh patch of skin on my hip.

Click. Click

The jolt made my teeth ache, but the page became clear again.

Entry 142: 12,000 USD – Legal Consultation.

I didn't care if the building was empty. I didn't care if everyone was halfway home. I was going to finish this if I had to burn every inch of my skin to do it.

"Gianna? Are you still here?"

I jumped, my hand instinctively flyng to my bag to hide the TENS unit. I looked up, blinking against the harsh monitor light, and saw Aileen standing there, her bag slung over her shoulder.

I blinked, my eyes burning, "I'm here."

She stepped into the harsh pool of light at my workstation, her coat already draped over her arm, "The whole floor is empty. Even the night security is wondering why the light is still triggered. It's past six, honey. You need to breathe."

"I'll leave in a few hours," I said, my hand instinctively tightening around the TENS unit in my pocket, "I just have to finish this set."

Aileen frowned, leaning over to look at the pages and the complex SQL database on my screen, "Let me help you. If we tag-team the data entry, we can knock out the next fifty pages in half the time."

I hesitated, the kindness in her voice catching me off guard, “Aileen, you don’t have to do that. It’s late.”

She pulled up a rolling stool before I could even protest. We worked in silence for twenty minutes, her fingers flying over the keys. But then, she paused, her brow furrowing as she read the header of the document she was transcribing.

“Wait,” she said, turning to me. “Gianna, why are you doing this anyway? This is archival junk. This ledger was reconciled and closed out before I even started working for the family. It’s not... it’s not actually important for the current audit. It’s basically just scrap paper.”

I felt a cold prickle of realization hit my chest. I pressed at the bruised skin of my thigh through my pants, the ache of the electrical burns throbbing in time with my heart.

“It’s the boss’s order,” I said, my voice flat, “Raphael said the auditors needed it mapped into the new system by tomorrow morning.”

Aileen’s mouth fell open slightly. She looked confused, her eyes searching mine for a joke that wasn’t there. She knew Raphael’s schedule better than anyone. She knew what was a priority and what was busywork.

“The auditors?” she whispered, then shook her head, a strange look of pity crossing her face. She didn’t say what

+15 Banys

she was thinking. She just turned back to the screen, her jaw set. “Well, if he wants it done, we’ll get it done.”

We worked like that for two hours. Having her there made the letters stop dancing quite so much. I liked Aileen; she was always so sweet, always going out of her way to make sure I had coffee or understood a memo. She felt like the only warm thing in this entire glass-and-steel lifeless building.

At 8:00 PM, my phone vibrated on the desk.

My shift started in forty-five minutes.

“I have to go,” I said, my voice raspy. I started saving the files and shutting down the terminal.

Aileen stood up, stretching her arms above her head. She looked at me, her gaze lingering just a second longer than usual. “It’s dinner time, Gianna. I know a great little Chinese place just a few blocks from here. Do you... do you want to grab a bite? Since we’re both already late?”

+15 8g

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 128

I looked at her, seeing the genuine hope in her face. She was the kind of friend I wished I had the luxury of keeping, but my life was a mess and I didn't want to drag her down with me like I probably did to Ciro, because he is nowhere to be found since that night and I don't know if I want to ask Raphael about it.

"I'd love to, Aileen. Really," I said, and I meant it. "But I have to get back. Some other day? Please?"

She just nodded, her smile turning a little shy as she tucked a strand of hair behind her ear, "Of course. Rain check You look exhausted anyway, get some sleep."

"You too," I said, grabbing my bag.

I walked toward the elevator, feeling her eyes on my back. I felt bad turning her down, but as the doors closed, the only thing I could think about was my Mama D and my girls waiting for me.

"Girl! We're finally in the big leagues!" Bri shouted.

Even through the excitement, the sight of her was jarring, her face was still horribly swollen.

Since they couldn't perform, the weight of the night was resting entirely on me and Emma. Because I won't let Morgan perform. Morgan was barely more than a kid, and I kept her in the same separate, protected corner of my life where I kept Jules.

I stripped off the stiff white shirt and tailored trousers of my office life. I kicked the pants aside and opened my locker at the Rose Garden.

As I caught my reflection in the vanity mirror, my heart sank. Just as I'd suspected, my inner thighs were a mess. Ugly, deep purple-red bruises blossomed across the pale skin, the physical receipt for every electric jolt I'd used to survive the morning. They looked like burns, angry and tender to the touch.

I reached for the lingerie. It was a skimpy, midnight-black set made of sheer lace and dangerously thin silk straps, but the bottom was a high-cut, vintage-style garter belt with wide, overlapping lace panels. I stepped into it carefully, wincing as the fabric brushed against the battered skin.

I adjusted the heavy lace garters, positioning the thick black straps and the floral embroidery so they masked the worst of the discoloration. From a distance, it looked like a provocative design. Only someone who got close enough to touch would see the trauma hidden beneath the lace.

I clipped the sheer stockings into place, checking every angle in the mirror. The bruises were buried under the black thread.

“You ready?” Emma called out, her heels clicking against the floor as she checked her reflection.

I grabbed a tube of dark red lipstick, painting my mouth. “I’m ready.”

The bass of the club wasn’t just music; it was a physical force that rattled my ribs. I stepped onto the elevated stage, the red spotlights catching the sequins on my mask.

I wasn’t Gianna anymore. I wasn’t an AI Stretegy Analyst. I was designed to be whatever these men wanted me to be.

I lowered myself until I was on all fours, the high-cut lace of my bodysuit stretching tight over my hips. I moved slowly, arching my back until it felt like a bowstring about to snap.

+15 8gnus

The crowd erupted.

Rain started to fall, not water, but paper.

If my mother could see me now, she will kill me first and then she would die of shame. The thought flickered in my mind for a second before the neon lights drowned it out.

Crisp fifties and hundreds fluttered down like autumn leaves, brushing against my skin and littering the stage around my hands. I moved through the pile of cash, my hips swaying that made the men at the edge of the stage lean in until they were inches from the wood.

“Over here, sweetheart,” a voice rasped.

+15 Beres

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I turned my head. A man in a tailored gray suit was sitting at a VIP table flush against the stage. He looked older, his face etched with the kind of boredom only a lot of money can

buy. He reached into his breast pocket and pulled out a thick, rubber-banded stack of cold, hard cash.

He slammed it onto the table.

“Crawl to it,” he ordered, his eyes tracking the line of my throat.

I shifted my weight, dragging my knees across the velvet, my eyes locked onto his. I stopped right at the edge of the table, my chest heaving, my face inches from his.

He leaned forward, the smell of expensive scotch rolling off him. He tapped the stack of money with a manicured finger.

“This is yours,” he whispered, “All of it. But I want to see how much you want it.”

He tilted his head back slightly, a smug, expectant look on his face.

“Spit on me,” he said. “Right here. Do it, and take the money.”

What the actual fuck? Men are such disgusting creatures. I looked at the stack of cash, then I looked at his smug, punchable face. For me, this was a total win-win. You’re telling me I get to treat this guy like the literal human trash can he is and I get paid for it?

God, I love this job sometimes.

I leaned in, my lips parting with a dark, mocking clarity. If he wanted to be my personal sidewalk, who was I to deny him?

I did exactly what he asked for, watching the way he leaned into it like a freak. He looked thrilled. I was disgusted. It was perfect.

I turned away, my hips hitting the beat again as I left him there in the smoke, five grand richer and ten times more convinced that the world would be better off if men were just replaced by high-end vibrators and robots that can actually cook.

“Wait.”

I paused, my back arching as I looked over my shoulder, the silver sequins of my mask catching the strobe lights.

He stood up, smoothing the front of his gray blazer. He didn’t look humiliated, he looked like he’d just found his new favorite hobby. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a sleek, gold-embossed VIP card, tapping it.

“The stage is too crowded,” he said, “I want a private room. Just us. Away from the noise.”

I felt a familiar ripple of irritation.

Of course you do, Gary. I didn't know his name, he just looked like a Gary.

"Ten thousand," he added, "One hour. A private suite in the back."

Ten thousand.

My brain did the math faster than I could read a sentence but I knew how this went. Private rooms usually meant hands. It meant greasy fingers trying to find the edges of my lace. It meant dealing with a man who thought ten grand bought him the right to touch.

I turned my body fully toward him, sitting back on my heels.

"Twenty thousand," I added, leaning forward until the scent of my perfume drowned out his scotch. "And the rules are simple. I do whatever I want to do with you. You don't lay a single finger on me. You touch me once, and I walk out, and I keep the money. Do we have a deal?"

It was an insane ask. It was more money than some people made in a year just to sit in a room and look at me. But I saw the way his throat moved as he swallowed.

A slow, twisted smile spread across his face, "Done," he whispered.

Janedoewritings

Author

Taking a break was necessary because, frankly, I'm exhausted. It's been draining to see the/ "pre-emptive" hate for the Capones based on things they haven't actually done. Raphael hasn't crossed those lines with Gianna, and it's confusing to see such vitriol in a dark romance space for characters simply acting within their trope. If you want to dislike them for things

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 130

Gianna

SLAP!

The sound echoed off the walls of the private suite. My palm was actually on fire. It was throbbing with heat that. traveled all the way up to my elbow. I'd been at it for twenty minutes straight, and my arm was getting a better workout than I ever got at the campus gym.

I paused for a second, wiping a stray hair from my forehead. I looked down at him.

This was it. This was the big, scary private session I was worried about. This was what twenty thousand dollars bought in the world of men who have too much power and not enough brain cells.

He didn't want to touch me. He didn't want to talk. He just wanted his backside to be the color of a ripe cherry.

"More," he whimpered. His voice was muffled because his face was pressed face-down into the expensive silk pillows of the lounge bed, "Please, Mommy... harder. I've been so bad."

It was the most hilarious thing I had ever done in my entire life.

I raised my hand again, my fingers stinging, but I didn't stop. I couldn't stop. Every time my palm connected with his skin, I felt a surge of dark, delicious energy.

It was like all the frustration from the day, the dyslexia, the messy archives, Cole, and the way Raphael looked at me-it all flowed out of me and into this guy's skin.

SLAP!

"Yes!" he gasped, his fingers clutching the silk sheets until they wrinkled, "Thank you... thank you."

I felt a strange, cold clarity settling in my chest. I realized right then and there: I actually enjoyed this. I didn't just like the money; I liked the power. I liked the fact that for twenty thousand dollars, I could take all my anger at the patriarchy and literally beat it into someone.

I leaned over him, my shadow falling across his shaking shoulders, "You want more?" I asked.

"Please," he sobbed, his voice tiny and pathetic. "Anything for Mommy."

I felt a smirk tugging at the corner of my mouth. I adjusted my stance, my heels digging into the thick carpet, and brought my hand down again.

SLAP!

The sting in my palm was worth every cent.

"Good boy," I whispered, and I felt the dark laugh bubbling up in my throat as I raised my hand for another round.

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“And then-” I choked, barely able to get the words out between breaths, “he actually said thank you.”

The room exploded.

Bri nearly fell off the couch, clutching her stomach as she laughed, her injured leg forgotten for a second. Jasmine

had her face buried in a pillow, shoulders shaking. Even Mama D, who had been wincing every time she movert was laughing, real and loud.

Morgan sat cross-legged on the floor in front of the coffee table, eyes wide, both hands pressed over her mouth, No,” she gasped, shaking her head. “No way. You’re lying.”

“I swear to God,” I said, dropping back against the couch, my arm still slightly sore as I flexed my fingers,” Twenty thousand dollars. For that.”

“Men are sick,” Jasmine muttered into the pillow, though her voice was muffled with laughter.

I dropped the stack onto the table with a soft thud.

“Count it again,” I said, a small grin tugging at my mouth.

Bri immediately reached for it like a greedy little gremlin, flipping through the bills with practiced speed. “Oh, will,” she said. “Because if this is real, I might start slapping people for a living too.”

“Get in line,” Jasmine shot back, finally sitting up, her hair a mess, eyes still bright. “We’ll build a whole business model. “Therapeutic violence for rich idiots.””

Morgan let out a shaky laugh, still half in disbelief as she reached for another stack. “I can’t believe this is what they spend money on.”

“They have too much of it,” Mama D said quietly, watching us. “And no one ever tells them no.”

My fingers slowed on the edge of the table. For a second, something colder slipped in. No one tells them no... My jaw tightened slightly. Then I pushed it away.

The sun didn’t even have a chance to rise before my alarm started screaming at 6:00 AM. I’d lay there for exactly sixty seconds, staring at the dark ceiling.

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My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 131

My body felt like it was made of wet cement, sinking into the mattress. But I didn't have the luxury of being tired.

Tired was for people who had a safety net. I only had the tightrope.

I'd drag myself to my morning classes, sitting in the back of the lecture halls with my eyes burning. The whiteboards were a disaster. The letters didn't just dance, they revolted. They flipped upside down, mirrored each other, and slid off the screen. My dyslexia was a thick, gray fog that settled over everything. To keep the letters still, I'd reach into my bag.

Click. Zap.

The TENS unit would bite into my thighs under the desk. A sharp, electric sting would snap my brain back to reality. I'd grip my pen, forcing my shaky hand to move across the paper.·

By the time I reached the Orion Vector offices in the afternoon, I was running on fumes and caffeine. Aileen would give me that soft, worried look but whenever I needed it, she'd just nod and cover for me.

The archives were a nightmare of messy, handwritten ink. Thousands of pages of looping script that made my head spin. Every time the lines started to blur into gray smudges, I didn't just use the TENS unit anymore. It wasn't enough to keep the engine running.

I'd pull a heavy wooden ruler from the desk, a thick, solid piece of oak. I'd lay my hand flat on my desk discreetly and slam the wood down across my knuckles.

The pain was a cold, white light that cleared the static. I'd do the same to the tops of my feet.

"Stay awake," I'd hiss to the cabin, "Work."

I'd stay there until 8:00 PM, finishing the ledgers with a precision that would make Raphael satisfied.

Then, the transformation began.

The office girl disappeared. The Rose Garden girl took over.

Some nights I was carrying heavy trays until 3:00 AM, my shoulders screaming. Other nights, I was on that stage, moving my body for men who had no idea I spent my days

calculating my boss's risk-variance. I'd smile, I'd crawl, I'd play the part until the club lights finally dimmed.

By the time I got home at four in the morning, the exhaustion sat so deep in my bones it made me feel nauseous.

My mum always asked questions. Where I'd been. Who I was with. Why I looked like I hadn't slept in days.

I gave her the same answer every time, "Studying."

Group work. Exams. Late nights.

After our last fight, she didn't push the way she used to. The words were still there, I could see them sitting on the edge of her tongue, but she swallowed them down. Now she just looked at me, not at my face but at my hands, my arms, my legs like she was checking for something. As if she was waiting to find proof of damage I hadn't shown her yet.

I'd stand there, forcing my shoulders back, keeping my expression flat, letting her look.

"I'm fine," I'd say.

Every time and every time, she didn't argue. She just nodded slowly, like she didn't believe me but didn't know

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how to prove it. Then she'd step aside and let me pass.

After lying to my mother, I'd go straight to the bathroom, locking the door and turning the faucet on low so my mother wouldn't hear. I'd fill the sink with ice-cold water.

I'd take a deep breath, grab a hand towel, and wrap it tight over my face. Then, I'd plunge my head into the water.

The sensation was immediate, the panic of not being able to breathe, the cold water soaking through the cloth and forcing its way into my nose. It was a simulated drowning, a self-inflicted terror that forced my heart to jump- start. I'd count to thirty, my lungs burning, my body thrashing against the porcelain, until the world was nothing but the desperate need for air.

I'd pull my head out, gasping and shivering, the water dripping onto the floor.

The fog was gone. The burnout was pushed back for another two hours. I'd dry my face, look at the ghost in the mirror, and go to bed for a measly two hours of sleep before the 6:00 AM alarm started the cycle all over again.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 132

+15 Bany

A frantic energy vibrating through me as the clock ticked toward ten. I sat at my desk, my spine stiff and my fingers flying over the keys.

I hadn’t slept last night, not even the two-hour nap I usually allowed myself. I had spent the night in a chair, my face red from the cold water of the sink and my knuckles throbbing from the ruler, but I didn’t care. I had the data. I had the projections. I had built a presentation that was airtight.

Around me, the team started to move. Chairs scraped against the floor. Men in suits straightened their ties and grabbed their tablets. This was the big meeting. This was it. The meeting. The one Raphael had been obsessing over all week.

I stayed where I was for a second longer than everyone else, my fingers resting on the edge of the table. Raphael didn’t even look at me. After he handed me the ledgers, that was it. No follow-ups. No corrections. No clipped remarks. Nothing.

No work either, not really.

I still did what I was supposed to do checked numbers, fixed errors and stayed late when I had to.

I stood up, my legs feeling shaky but my head held high. I smoothed out my black trousers and grabbed my files.

“Ready?” I asked, turning toward Aileen.

Aileen was standing by her desk, clutching a stack of agendas. She didn’t look at me. She was staring at a spot on the wall just behind my shoulder. Her face was pale, and her mouth was pulled into a thin, tight line.

“Gianna,” she said, “You... you might need to sit this one out.”

I froze, “What do you mean? The logistics report is in here. I have the sector breakdowns.”

“I know,” Aileen whispered, finally meeting my eyes. There was a look of pure pity in her gaze that made my stomach turn, “But the meeting is starting. You should stay here and keep working on the digital migration. There’s still a lot of filing to do.”

“Filing?” I stepped toward her, “Aileen, I haven’t slept in forty-eight hours because of this meeting. I skipped my morning lectures. I’m prepared. Is there a chair shortage? I’ll stand. I don’t care.”

“It’s not about the chairs, Gianna,” she said, her voice shaking. She looked toward the glass doors of the conference room where Raphael was already standing, his back to us as he spoke to a group of investors.

“Then what is it? Did I get the numbers wrong? Is the formatting off?” I was desperate now, the words tumbling out of me. I felt the familiar itch of the TENS unit in my pocket, the urge to shock myself just to stay calm. “I can fix it. Just give me five minutes.”

“It’s not the work,” Aileen said, stepping closer and lowering her voice so the passing interns wouldn’t hear. “I tried to talk him out of it. I told him how hard you worked.”

“Talk him out of it?” my throat felt tight, like it was closing up, “Raphael said I couldn’t go?”

Aileen bit her lip, her eyes shining with a frustrated kind of sadness. She didn’t want to say it. She wanted to protect me, but I wouldn’t let her.

“Tell me exactly what he said, Aileen. Why am I staying back?”

She took a shaky breath and looked at the floor. “He told me to make sure you stayed at your desk. He said... he said with the way you get nervous and struggle to read the room and the way you can’t work under pressure... he didn’t want you to embarrass him in front of the client. He said he couldn’t risk you ruining it when the stakes are this high.”

I felt the blood drain from my face, leaving me cold and hollow. Embarrass him?

“He said that?” I whispered.

Aileen reached out to touch my hand, but I flinched away. I couldn’t handle kindness right now. If someone was nice to me, I would shatter into a million jagged pieces.

“That’s how he is, Gianna,” she said fiercely. “He expects perfection from all of us. He doesn’t see what I see.”

I looked through the glass and saw Raphael laugh at something an investor said. I silently walked back to my desk and sat back down in my chair. The movement felt robotic. My body was operating on a delay. I placed my files on the desk, the one full of my hard work, my sleepless nights, and my pride and pushed it away from me.

+158gnus

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 133

“Gianna...” Aileen started.

“Go,” I said, staring at the blank computer screen. “The meeting is starting. You’ll be late.”

I watched her walk away. I watched the glass doors of the conference room swing shut, sealing me out while everyone was in there. The office went quiet. It was just me and the hum of the air conditioning.

“You’re a stain on this name, Gianna! I can’t even put you in a room with people who matter. I’m humiliated to even admit you belong to me.”

“Stay in the back and keep that broken tongue behind your teeth. Don’t make a sound.”

“What did I do to deserve a burden like you? You humiliate me every time you try to speak. I built an empire of perfection, and somehow I ended up with... whatever the fuck you are.”

“It’s your mother’s fault! She’s the one who gave me a daughter with a rotted brain!”

I reached into my bag and pulled out the TENS unit. My hands were shaking so hard I could barely hold it. I didn’t slide it under my clothes this time. I just pressed the metal nodes against the back of my hand, right over the knuckles I had bruised earlier.

I turned the dial all the way to the right.

Zap.

My whole arm jerked, a white-hot flash of electricity tearing through my skin. But for the first time, the pain didn’t clear the fog. It didn’t make the world move in slow motion. It just hurt.

I stared at the closed doors of the meeting room, my eyes burning with tears I refused to let fall.

I stared at the very last ledger and started working, it will be done in an hour if I focused hard enough. I worked until they were all in the meeting, the silence and loneliness gave me more focus, and there was also my TENS.

I felt a shadow fall over the desk after most of the employees had left.

I didn’t look up. If I looked up, the person would know that I was silently crying. I just kept my head down, my hair falling over my face like a curtain, hiding the red rims of my eyes and the way my lower lip was trembling.

The chair next to me scraped against the polished floor. Someone sat down, from my peripheral vision I could see that it was Aileen.

She didn’t say anything at first. I could feel her looking at me, not at the screen, but at me.

I kept typing, my fingers fumbling over the keys, the tears finally winning. One hot drop fell onto the back of my hand, splashing right next to the red mark where I’d shocked myself earlier.

“Gianna?” Aileen’s voice was a whisper, so soft it felt like a touch.

I didn’t answer. I just stared at the ledger, my chest heaving as I tried to pull in a breath that didn’t feel like broken glass.

She reached out, her hand hovering over mine for a second before she gently placed it on my wrist, stopping my frantic, messy typing. Her skin was warm. Mine was like ice.

“Gianna,” she said again, leaning in closer until I could hear the sadness in her own breath, “Are you crying?”

A sob escaped my throat before I could choke it back, a small, pathetic sound that filled the empty vault. I turned my head away, burying my face in my shoulder, my body finally giving in to the exhaustion and the hurt that had been building up for a week.

Aileen didn’t move her hand. Instead, her fingers slid up my arm, her touch light. She leaned in so close that I could feel the warmth of her breath against my damp cheek. The scent of her perfume, something soft and floral, filled my senses.

“Gianna, look at me,” she whispered.

I slowly turned my head, my vision still blurry. Her eyes were wide, filled with a look that wasn’t just pity

anymore.

“He’s wrong,” she said, as she reached up with her other hand, her thumb gently brushing away a stray tear, “You aren’t an embarrassment. You’re the most incredible person in this entire building. I’ve watched you. I’ve seen how you work harder than anyone here, I have seen you push through everything when anyone else would have quit weeks ago. You’re perfect. You’re such a hard worker, I mean, it’s actually brilliant.”

+15 Borus

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 134

Her hand moved from my cheek to the back of my neck. She was pulling me toward her, her body angling in until there was no space left between our chairs.

I had never been with a woman. The thought flickered through my brain like a dying lightbulb, but I couldn't find the energy to care. Everything about her was just so soft. Her skin, her voice, the way she smelled like expensive vanilla.

She was looking at me like she actually liked what she saw. And I was so tired, so drained of every ounce of fight, that I just stayed there, frozen. Her praise felt like a warm blanket on a freezing night, and I was starving for it

She leaned in. I could see the genuine softness in her eyes as they fluttered shut, and for the first time in my life, I felt someone's admiration. It wasn't about what I could do for them or how well I could hide my flaws.

Her lips were inches from mine, and I found myself leaning forward, craving that gentleness. I wanted to know it her kiss would be as kind as her words. Just as the feather-light touch of her lips brushed against mine, sending a spark through me that was so much better than the TENS unit, my own eyes drifted shut...

Ahem.

The dry sound of someone clearing their throat was like a bucket of ice water.

We both scrambled backward, the chairs screeching violently against the floor. Aileen stood up so fast she nearly knocked over the workstation, her face flushing a deep, panicked crimson.

I turned toward the doorway, and there he was. Raphael stood framed in the entrance, his hands shoved deep into his pockets. He looked perfectly composed, though his eyes were like two chips of flint.

"Aileen," he said.

"Mr. Capone," she stammered, smoothing down her skirt with shaking hands. "I was just... Gianna was upset, and I was-"

"I have eyes, Aileen. I don't need a play-by-play of the HR violation I just witnessed," he interrupted. He stepped further into the cabin space, the click of his expensive shoes echoing off the glass walls. His presence made the small room feel cramped and airless. He didn't even glance at me at first, he kept his gaze fixed entirely on his

secretary.

“I believe the employee handbook is very clear about the policy regarding intimate relationships between staff members,” he said, his tone as professional as if he were discussing a tax audit, “Especially when one party is in a position of seniority over an intern. It creates a liability I’m not particularly fond of.”

Aileen’s head dropped, “I’m sorry, sir. It won’t happen again.”

“See that it doesn’t,” Raphael said. He finally shifted his gaze to me, his eyes trailing over my face. There wasn’t a hint of warmth in them. “The ledger, Gianna. Is it finished?”,

I swallowed hard, my throat feeling like it was full of sand. “Yes.”

Raphael didn’t look at Aileen as he spoke, his eyes were now pinned on me like I was a specimen under a microscope.

“Aileen, you’re dismissed,” he said, “Go home. We’ll discuss your lack of professionalism in the morning.”

Aileen didn’t even look back at me. She grabbed her bag with trembling fingers and hurried out of the glass cabin, her footsteps echoing rapidly across the floor of the main office until the doors of the elevator slid shut.

Raphael straightened his posture, stepping back into the darkened space of the executive floor.

“Bring the files,” he ordered, his voice echoing in the empty workspace, “My office. Now.”

+15 Byro

Janedoewritings Author

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 135

Gianna

The heavy doors to his office clicked shut with a sound that felt like a trap springing into place. I followed him The files and my laptop were hugged so tight against my ribs that the corner dug into my skin.

He wasn’t sitting behind his desk. He went to the floor-to-ceiling window, looking out at the city lights. The fabric of his dress shirt stretched tight across his broad shoulders as he moved, the white cotton crisp against his

skin.

I walked toward him, my reflection falling onto the glass windows right next to him. My brain was a messy soup of flickering numbers, dancing letters. I was feeling dizzy, as if the world was tilting slightly to the left, but I had one goal. I wanted him to see.

I put my laptop onto his desk. My hands were shaking, the red marks on my knuckles from the ruler standing out like angry warnings. I pulled out the printed sheets and flipped open my laptop, the screen glowing bright enough to make my tired eyes ache.

“It’s done,” I said, “The final ledger. Every entry is digitized, cross-referenced, and audited. I finished it tonight. That’s ahead of the deadline you gave me.”

I pushed the laptop toward the center of the desk and laid the papers out in a perfect row. I wanted him to see the work. I wanted him to see that while he was laughing in that meeting, I was putting hard work into it. I had drowned myself in a sink and shocked my own skin to get these words right.

Raphael didn’t even turn around. He didn’t look at the screen. He didn’t look at the papers I had stayed awake for days to perfect. He just stood there.

“Is that so?” he asked.

“Yes,” I said, my frustration bubbling up through the exhaustion, “I worked through the night. I skipped my lectures. I mapped everything so there wouldn’t be a single question. It’s all right here.”

He finally moved. He turned slowly, his hands still in his pockets. He didn’t look at the desk. He looked at me. His eyes scanned me with a look that made me feel like I was wearing nothing at all. He took in my messy hair, my puffy eyes, and the way I was leaning on the desk for support.

He leaned against the edge of his desk, crossing his arms over his chest. The fabric of his white shirt strained against his shoulders, and for a second, my brain betrayed me. I noticed the way his sleeves were rolled up, showing the dark hair on his forearms and the veins that branched like maps across his skin. He looked powerful. He looked like he could snap me in half, and for some sick reason, the thought made my breath hitch.

He ignored the laptop entirely. He walked right past the data I had bled for and leaned his hip against the desk, way too close to my hands.

“Tell me,” he whispered, his eyes dropping to my mouth for a split second before snapping back to mine, “Is that what you want? Aileen?”

I froze. “What?”

Raphael didn’t even glance at the screen.

He didn’t look at the numbers I had sacrificed my sleep for. He didn’t look at the hard work that was making my head throb with pain. Instead, he reached out, his long fingers slowly closing the lid of my laptop. Click. The light

vanished.

“I don’t care about the files right now, Gianna,” he hissed.

The anger in my gut flared up, hot and stinging. “You told me to bring them! I skipped my classes. I spent forty- eight hours drowning in those pages so you wouldn’t be ’embarrassed’ by me. Look at them, Raphael. Look at what I did!”

He didn’t move. He just stared at me, his eyes dark and swirling with something that wasn’t just boredom anymore. It was something sharper... something much darker that made the hair on my arms stand up.

“You seemed very busy when I walked into that cabin,” he whispered. He stepped closer, entering my personal space until I could feel the heat radiating off his body. He was so tall I had to tilt my head back just to see his jawline, “Tell me, Gianna. Was that you working?”

I felt my face heat up, a mix of shame and fury. “She was being kind. Something you wouldn’t know anything about.”

The truth was, I didn’t even know why I’d let Aileen get that close to me. I had never done anything with a woman in my life. But my brain was so fried, so broken from the lack of sleep and the constant Zaps of the TENS unit, that I had just clung to the first bit of softness offered to me in years.

Raphael let out a short, dry laugh that sounded more like a snarl. “Kind?” he hissed, and I could smell the dark expensive scent of him, and it made my stomach flip in a way I hated, “Is that what you want? Someone to hold your hand and tell you everything is okay just because you’re a little overworked? Are you really that weak?”

The word weak hit me harder than anything. It snapped something deep inside me that had been frayed and sparking for weeks. The exhaustion, the hunger, the throbbing in my knuckles, and the cold water in the sink, it all rushed to the surface at once.

“Weak?” I spat the word back at him, “You think I’m weak because I let someone be nice to me for five minutes?”

He clicked his tongue mockingly, “You want someone to be nice to you? Aw. Welcome to the real, fucking world, stepsister. You don’t get rewarded with kisses and praise for doing your job.”

Something hot and volatile surged up my spine.

“Grow up!” he added.

“I finished the work,” I snapped, stepping forward until there was barely any space left between us. “I did exactly what you asked, faster, cleaner, better than anyone else and you don’t even look at it because this-this is easier for you, isn’t it? Tearing me down instead of admitting I did something right.”

He finally moved his arms, uncrossing them slowly. He leaned down, his face so close to mine that I could see the dark, mocking swirl in his eyes.

“Is that what you told Aileen?” he whispered, “Did you tell her how hard you work while she was petting your hair? Did you tell her you needed someone to be ‘nice’ because big, bad Raphael is too mean to you?”

“She saw the work,” I shot back, my throat tight, “She actually sees what I do. You just look straight through me.”

Raphael’s gaze dropped to my mouth, and for a second, the anger in the room shifted.

“You’re so desperate for it, aren’t you?” he murmured, “You’re starving for someone to tell you you’re doing a good job. To give you all those soft, sweet things you think you deserve for doing the bare fucking minimum at your desk. If that’s how this works, I’d have to spend my whole day kissing and hugging every employee in this building.”

! “What I want is respect,” I whispered, though my voice lacked the bite it had a moment ago.

“No,” he snapped, as he reached out and traced the line of my throat with the back of his knuckles, “You want to be taken care of. You want to be held. Isn’t that right? Is that what you need, Gianna? Do you need me to be ‘kind’ to you? Do you need me to show you exactly how soft I can be?”

The way he said the word soft felt like a threat.

Raphael’s hand didn’t move from my throat. Instead, his fingers curled slightly, his thumb resting right against the pulse that was jumping under my skin. He could feel it. He knew my heart was trying to beat its way out of my chest, and he liked it.

“Soft,” he repeated, “Did she tell you that you were a good girl? Did she tell you that your hard work made you special?”

Before I could breathe out a response, his other hand shot out, his palm slamming against my waist. He didn't just touch me, he gripped me. His fingers dug into the soft skin above my hips, and with one sudden jerk, he lifted me off my feet.

I let out a small, choked gasp as he hoisted me up, my back hitting the cool, hard surface of his desk. The laptop I had worked so hard on, the papers I had bled for, they were all shoved aside, sliding across the wood to make room for me.

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Raphael stepped forward, his heavy leather shoes clicking against the floor until he was standing right between my knees. He used his thighs to push my legs apart, forcing me to open up for him, to let him settle into the space he had just claimed.

The heat coming off his body was like a furnace. I was trapped between his chest and the desk, my legs draped over his hips.

"Is this what was missing, Gianna?" he murmured, leaning down until his lips were just a breath away from mine. He didn't kiss me. He just hovered there, tormenting me with the distance, "A little attention? A little reward for being such a hard worker?"

He reached out and grabbed my chin, forcing me to look up into his dark eyes. There was no kindness there. There was only a cold fire.

"You did a good job," he whispered, his voice mocking and sweet all at once. "You finished your little papers. You stayed up all night. You were such a good, obedient little girl for me, weren't you?"

The words hit me right in the center of my chest. It was exactly what I wanted to hear, and yet, coming from him, it felt like a poisoned gift. I felt a shameful, desperate ache start to bloom low in my belly. I wanted him to keep talking. I wanted him to keep telling me I was good, that I was enough even if he didn't mean it.

"You're so hungry for it," he hissed, his thumb tracing my lower lip, pulling it down just enough to show my teeth, "You want me to hold you. You want me to tell you that you're perfect. You want someone to finally give you the hug you've been crying for since the moment you walked into my house."

He leaned in closer, his chest crushing mine, the fabric of his shirt rough against my skin.

"Does it feel good, Gianna?" he asked, his voice vibrating against my lips. "Having me this close? Having me look at you? Is this the 'kindness' you were looking for in Aileen?"

I reached out, my hands trembling as I gripped the edges of his desk. I should have pushed him away. I should have screamed. But all I could do was stare at his mouth, my mind a foggy mess of old hurts and new, terrifying

needs.

I felt small. I felt seen. I felt like a little girl who had finally been caught doing something right, and the power he had over me in that moment was absolute.

“Tell me,” he rasped, his hand sliding from my chin to the back of my neck, his fingers tangling in my messy hair. He pulled my head back, exposing my throat to him, “Tell me you want me to tell you what a good girl you are. Tell me you want a kiss.”

I swallowed hard, a tiny, broken sound escaping my throat. I was drowning, and for the first time in my life, I didn’t want to pull my head out of the water.

His hand that was already tangled in my hair, tightened until my scalp burned. He yanked my head back further, exposing the curve of my throat to the dim office light, and then he slammed his mouth against mine.

He was kissing me.

The man who called me an embarrassment, the man who treated me like a stain on his floor, was crushing his mouth against mine.

Raphael Capone was kissing me.

The taste of him flooded my senses. He moved his lips against mine with a hungry force that felt like he was

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trying to swallow me whole. I reached up, my fingers clawing at the crisp white cotton of his shirt, bunching the fabric into my fists as I tried to pull him closer and push him away all at once.

His teeth grazed my lower lip, sharp and stinging, and I let out a muffled whimper into his mouth. The sound only seemed to make him wilder. His tongue pushed past my teeth, dominating me, claiming every inch of my mouth like it was territory he had just conquered.

Then, his hand moved.

His large, heavy palm slid down from my hair and wrapped around the front of my throat. I felt the heat of his skin, the rough texture of his calluses, and then he squeezed.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 138

The air in my lungs stopped.

My eyes flew open, my vision swimming with dark spots as the pressure increased. He was holding me so tight I couldn't swallow, couldn't gasp, couldn't do anything but feel the terrifying power in his arm. My heart hammered against my ribs, and the panic rose up in my chest.

But I didn't fight him.

I leaned into the pain, my fingers digging into his shoulders, my body arching off the desk and toward him. I was drowning again, but this time it wasn't in a sink. It was in him. The black spots in my vision started to dance, and my head felt light, floating away from the aching reality of my life.

He groaned deep in his throat, a sound of pure, raw want that vibrated through my own chest. He kissed me harder, his lips bruising mine, his tongue lashing against mine while his thumb pressed into the soft dip at the base of my neck.

I could feel the pulse in my own throat thudding against his palm. My lungs were screaming, a fire spreading through my chest as I ran out of oxygen, but the pleasure filled pain felt even better than the Zaps of the TENS

unit.

He was taking everything. My breath, my pride, my anger. He was crushing it all out of me, leaving me hollow and

open.

Just as my world started to go grey at the edges, just as the strength left my arms and they began to slip from his shoulders, he suddenly loosened his grip.

He didn't let go, but he let the air rush back into my throat.

I gasped against his lips, a broken, sobbing sound, my chest heaving as I sucked in the scent of his cologne and the cool office air. He pulled back just an inch, his forehead resting against mine, his eyes black and wild as he watched me struggle to breathe.

"Is that it, Gianna?" he whispered, "Is that what you needed?"

Raphael's hand stayed locked around my throat, not crushing anymore, but as a reminder that he owned the very air I was trying to suck back into my lungs. He pulled his head back just enough to look at me, his eyes dark and blown out, scanning my face.

His gaze dropped to my mouth. My lips felt swollen, humming with a dull ache that made my head swim. He leaned back in, but he didn't kiss me this time. He sank his teeth into my lower lip.

I let out a whimpering gasp as the sting flared through my nerves. He didn't let go. He backed away slowly, his teeth stayed clamped on the soft flesh, stretching my lip out between us. The stretch was agonizing, a thin line of pain and heat that made my toes curl against the wood of the desk.

Just as the sting became too much, he released me. My lip suapped back, stinging and throbbing, and I felt a tiny drop of copper-tasting blood bloom on the surface.

He didn't look sorry. He looked hungry.

He leaned down, his nose brushing against mine, his hot breath ghosting over my wet skin. His hand on my throat tightened just a fraction, pulling me upward until I had to arch my back, my chest straining against his.

"Look at you," he murmured, a dark, twisted smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth, "So much fire in that little body, and all it took was a little bit of the right kind of attention to turn you into a puddle."

He tightened his grip on my waist, his fingers bruising the skin above my hips, pulling me even harder against the front of his trousers.

"My beautiful little mess," he breathed against my skin, "Is this enough attention for you? Is this the reward you were looking for? You worked so hard, didn't you? Well, here I am."

The fog in my head didn't just clear, it shattered. The heat that had been clouding my vision vanished, replaced by a cold horror that made my blood turn to lead. The scent of his expensive cologne, which had felt like a drug seconds ago, now made me feel sick.

I looked at him and saw the sharp line of his jaw, the cruel curve of his smirk, and the dark, predatory look in his

eyes.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 139

I wasn't in a dream. I wasn't at the club. I was in an office, pinned to a desk, with my hands bunched in the shirt of the man who shared a home with me. The man who sat at the dinner table. The man whose father had married my mother.

My stepbrother.

A violent shiver racked my body, but it wasn't from pleasure this time. It was pure revulsion.

"Let go," I choked out, my voice sounding like it belonged to a stranger.

Raphael's smirk didn't fade, but his eyes narrowed, his grip on my throat lingering for one heartbeat too long, What was that?"

"I said let go!"

I shoved at his chest with everything I had left. My heels scraped loudly against the desk as I scrambled backward nearly falling off the desk in my haste to get away from the heat of him.

I stood there, gasping for air, my hand flying to my neck where the ghost of his palm still burned. My lip was throbbing, the metallic taste of blood sharp on my tongue. I looked at the laptop, then at the files, and then back at the man standing in the shadows of the office.

The reality of what I had just done... what I had wanted... crashed down on me. I felt like I was going to throw up.

"Gianna-" he started, his voice regained that bored, icy edge, but I didn't let him finish.

"Don't," I hissed, my voice shaking with a mix of rage and self-loathing, "I'm done. The work is finished. I'm leaving, Raphael. I quit."

He stood there in the dim lights, his shirt rumpled from my hands, his eyes dark. He let out a short, cold breath that might have been a laugh.

"You can't quit, Gianna," he said, his voice returning to that bored, icy tone that made my skin crawl. He adjusted his cufflink as if he hadn't just been crushing the air out of my lungs. "You signed a contract. You have months left on your internship. You don't just walk out because we had a moment of poor judgment."

“Poor judgement?” I stepped back toward him, my finger pointing at the desk. “We just... you just put your hands on me. We just did that. You’re my stepbrother, Raphael! Our parents are married. We live under the same roof. What we just did... it’s sick. It’s a line you don’t cross, and you jumped over it like it was nothing.”

“You didn’t seem to mind the crossing,” he murmured, his eyes dropping to my swollen lip.

“Yes, exactly,” I whispered, “That is the problem. That is why we are both sick. That’s why this has to end. Right now. That’s why we need to stay away from one another.”

The reality of the house, the family dinners, the shared hallways, the way our parents looked at us with pride crashed down on me.

“I can’t go back to that house and look at them,” I said, my voice breaking, “I can’t sit at that table knowing what your hands feel like on my neck. It’s disgusting, Raphael. We are a family, even if it’s just on paper. This is a crime against everything we’re supposed to be.”

I snatched my laptop and scrambled to gather the rest of my things, my fingers fumbling against the desk. My face burned with a deep, stinging heat, a flush of pure humiliation that crawled up my neck and stained my cheeks a dark, angry red.

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“Stay away from me,” I warned, my voice tight with a sudden, freezing clarity. “Since I won’t be setting foot in this office again, you stay away from me in that house. If you see me in the kitchen, you turn around. If you see me in the hall, you go the other way. I will do the same. We will be strangers to each other. And we will pretend this never happened.”

Hey,

Janedoewritings Author

Even when I’m struggling and feel like I’m sinking, some of you stay. That means more than can say. Please... take today’s update however it comes.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 140

Raphael

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Vincenzo sat in the high-backed chair, the light from the fireplace casting long shadows across his face.

To my left, Luca was mindlessly stripping down his Glock, the clicking of metal parts.

Across from him, Dante was leaning back, his eyes fixed on a stack of legal briefs, his brain already finding the holes in the state laws we were about to break.

Adriano had the map of the tri-state area stretched out over the table. His finger traced the border of Indiana, moving toward the heart of the next territory we were going to bleed dry.

“We take the docks first,” Vincenzo stated, “Then we squeeze the unions, and their warehouses. We start at the bottom. We choke their supply until they beg us to take over.”

I leaned back on the couch, my laptop resting on my thighs. My fingers danced over the keys, setting up the encrypted servers we’d need to ghost their local police frequencies. To my brothers, I was the one who built the invisible fences that kept us safe. I was the logic.

But my logic was currently screaming.

Underneath the glow of the screen, my mind wasn’t on signal towers or street crews. It was on the shape of Gianna’s waist in my hands. I could still feel the way her pulse had thrashed against my palm when I squeezed her throat. I could still taste the copper of her blood on my tongue where I’d bitten her lip.

“Raphael,” Vincenzo’s voice snapped through my thoughts, “The surveillance on their port authority. How long?”

“Six hours,” I said, my voice flat and bored. I didn’t even look up from the screen. “I’ll have their internal comms mirrored by sunrise.”

“Hm,” Vincenzo nodded, pouring himself another drink.

Vincenzo had a very specific vision for our legacy. To him, the family name was a holy thing. “Fucking the stepsister” wasn’t a headline he would ever tolerate. It was low-class. If he knew that two hours ago I had pinned our stepsister to my desk and drank her breath like it was water, he wouldn’t just be disappointed. He’d put a bullet in the back of my head and call it a cleanup job.

And yet, I sat there, surrounded by my brothers, feeling the burn she’d left on my skin.

I looked at Luca, who was focused on his weapon. I looked at Adriano, who was focused on the war. They were hunters, sure. They chased men through the streets and broke bones to get what they wanted. But their hunts were easy. Their prey was predictable.

Gianna was the only hunt that mattered now.

She was the forbidden fruit hanging from the lowest branch in this house, and I had always been the brother with the most dangerous appetite.

She thought she could quit. She thought she could stay in her room, lock the door, and I'd forget all about it. She thought that by telling me to stay away, she was setting a boundary.

She had no idea that for a hunter, a boundary is just a starting line.

"We move on the streets first," Adriano said, "I say, we hunt the ones at the top of their food chain."

I leaned my head back against the sofa, my eyes closing for a brief second. I would wait. I would watch the way her eyes skipped over mine at the dinner table tomorrow. I would listen for the sound of her breathing when I passed her in the hall.

I'd wait until she was so starved for the "attention" that she'd crawl back to the only person who gave it to her.

Every time she looked at me, she was going to remember the way my teeth felt on her lip. She was going to remember the way it felt to have the air stolen from her lungs. She was the most difficult prey I had ever tracked, and I wasn't going to stop until she realized that every time she ran, she was just leading me exactly where I wanted to go until I got what I wanted.

"Raph?" Vincenzo's voice broke through the dark hum of my thoughts, "What happened with Ciro? Why is he scrubbing filth at the docks? He called me whimpering like a beaten dog, saying you threw him out there."

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