My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 201

I rushed to the dressing room. Mama D, Tasha, Em, Jasmine, and Bri were huddled around a vanity table.

“I’ve got it!” I rasped, “I’ve got the money!”

They all sprang to their feet at once. Tasha was the first to reach me, throwing her arms around my neck so hard I nearly stumbled. Then came Em and Bri, until I was buried in a sea of hugs.

“Oh, thank God!” Jasmine cried, pulling back to look at me, her eyes red from crying, “Gianna, we were so scared We thought we lost you for good after last night.”

“That man,” Mama D said, her voice shaking with a rare kind of anger as she stepped forward. She looked at the bruise on my face and gasped, “That monster. He threatened my girls. He told us to forget your name. He sent his/ men and threatened to burn the Garden to the ground with us inside if we ever asked about you again. He said you were his now.”

A hot, sharp anger flared in my chest. Raphael. He had stood in that room acting like he was helping me while he was busy terrifying the only family I had left.

“He’s not a threat, I’ll deal with him later,” I hissed, “I promise. But right now, none of that matters. We have to get Morgan back.”

Mama D’s face fell. She reached onto the vanity and picked up a heavy envelope, her hands trembling, “We emptied every safe. We pooled everything we had. But Gianna... it’s only forty thousand. We’re still short sixty. We don’t have enough to satisfy Cole.”

“It’s okay,” I said, reaching for Jules’s phone, “I have it. All of it.”

I opened the app, the numbers glowing bright. I didn’t have time for cash or envelopes.

“I’m going to wire it,” I told them. “We can send it directly to Cole’s account. We need to get there now.”

Cole Mercer sat in a tattered booth at the back, surrounded by three men who looked like they enjoyed breaking bones for a living.

My heart nearly stopped when I saw Morgan.

She was sitting on Cole’s lap, dressed in nothing but thin, black lace dress. Her hair was a matted mess, and her eyes were so swollen from crying she could barely keep them open.

“You’re late, Gianna,” Cole said, as he ran a hand over Morgan’s shoulder, and gripped her neck from behind, “I was just about to tell the boys they could have their turn.”

“It’s 11:52, Cole,” I said, “I have the money. Let her go.”

Cole leaned back, a slow smirk spreading across his face. He again ran a hand over Morgan’s arm, and I saw her flinch. My blood boiled, but I didn’t let my face change.

“You hear that, boys, the girls delivered,” Cole drawled, “How did you do it, Denise? How did you get that sum?” he asked Mama D, ignoring me now.

“How we got the money is none of your business,” I replied. I pulled out Jules’s phone and tapped the screen.’ Check your account. I’m sending a wire transfer through a secure business portal. It’ll hit your balance in ten seconds.”

“Sent,” I said. “Confirm it.”

One of his men leaned over with a tablet. My skin crawled as Cole watched me. Finally, the man nodded, “It’s there, Cole. Funds are verified.”

Cole didn’t move for a second. Then, with a bored sigh, he shoved Morgan off his lap. She hit the dirty floor with a sharp cry, her knees scraping against the wood.

“She’s all yours,” he said.

I dropped to the floor, my knees hitting the grime as I reached for her, “Morgan! Morgan, look at me.”

She collapsed into my arms, her body shaking so hard her teeth were chattering. I pulled her against my chest and burying my face in her hair. I squeezed her until she let out a sob.

“I’ve got you,” I whispered into her ear, “I’ve got you, you’re okay.”

“Don’t go throwing a party yet, girls,” he said, leaning over the table, “Don’t think this makes us even.”

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I looked up at him, my arm wrapped firmly around Morgan’s waist to keep her upright.

“That was just the interest and the late f*e for this month,” Cole said, his eyes turning cold and greedy. “You still owe three million dollars. You’ve been paying for two years and you haven’t even touched the first million yet. You’re barely keeping your heads above water.”

He stood up, his tall shadow stretching across the floor until it touched my boots.

I didn’t answer him, I just pulled Morgan closer, guiding her toward the door. The weight of that three million felt like a mountain on my back, but as we stepped out into the cold Chicago night, all I cared about was that she was breathing.

We were alive, and for now, that had to be enough.

The walk back from the dry cleaners felt miles longer than the run there. I had dropped Morgan off at Mama D’s, seeing her tucked into a warm bed with a thick blanket, and that was the only thing keeping me moving.

I found the hidden metal plate near the dumpster. My fingers trembled as I slid it back. I dropped into the dark, damp hole and crawled. The blue cables guided me back, and my hands fumbled until I found the underside of the garage floor. I pushed, the panel lifted, and I scrambled back into the garage, sliding the plate shut with a prayer.

I stayed in the dark corners of the hallways. I didn’t breathe when a guard walked past the end of the corridor. I waited until the sound of his boots faded before I darted up the service stairs.

Finally, I reached my bedroom door. I gripped the handle, turned it slowly, and slipped inside. I slowly closed it until the lock clicked shut with a tiny sound.

I let out a long, shaky breath. I was back. I was safe.

And no one saw me, except for Silvio but he’s cool, so-

“You were gone for a very long time for someone on house arrest.”

The voice came from the corner of the room. I jumped, my heart nearly leaping out of my throat. I spun around, my eyes wide. A single small lamp was on by my bedside, casting a low, golden glow that didn’t reach the corners of the room.

Raphael was sitting in the armchair by the window. He was leaned back, his long legs stretched out in front of him. He was wearing nothing but those low-slung black sweatpants, his bare chest a map of hard muscle and tattoos that I wanted to lick. He looked like he had been sitting there for hours, perfectly still.

“Raphael,” I breathed, my hand clutching at the front of Silvio’s oversized hoodie, “What are you doing in my room?”

He didn’t answer right away. He just watched me, his dark eyes tracking the way I was shaking. Then, he leaned forward into the light.

I saw his hand then. He was holding a small, silver tube. He tapped it against the arm of the chair... Thump. Thump. Thump.

“I went to check on you,” he said, “I thought maybe you were crying. I thought maybe I should bring you something for your face.”

→ +15 Agrius

He stood up, his massive frame blocking out the light of the lamp. He walked toward me, and I felt the heat coming off his skin before he even touched me. He stopped just inches away, his shadow swallowing me whole.

He reached out, his thumb catching the edge of the hoodie’s hood and flipping it back. His eyes landed on the deep purple bruise I had given myself, the one that had swollen even more in the cold night air.

“This doesn’t belong to you,” he said, as he gripped the fabric, “I thought we couldn’t fuck other people, Gianna. Who did you go to see? And why did you come back looking like you’ve been crawling through the dirt?”

Janedoewritings

Author

Enjoy it and let me know what you think

XOXO

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 203

Gianna

“Raphael,” I breathed, my hand clutching at the front of Silvio’s oversized hoodie, “What are you doing in my room?”

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“This hoodie doesn’t belong to you,” he said, as he gripped the fabric, “I thought we couldn’t fuck other people, Gianna. Who did you go to see? And why did you come back looking like you’ve been crawling through the dirt?”

I wrenched my face away from his hand, taking a step back. My back hit the door, and the impact sent a jolt through me that settled straight in my lower stomach. It was a stupid, treacherous reaction... my body hummed every time he got within a few inches of me, regardless of how much I wanted to bite him.

“What’s with the interrogation?” I asked as I pulled Silvio’s oversized hoodie tighter around me, “You remember the deal, right? You don’t get to ask where I go or who I’m with.”

Raphael stood there, his bare chest catching the dim light. He leaned one hand against the door above my head, trapping me in the space between the wood and his heat.

“I’m not interfering,” he said, he got so close that I could see the tiny gold flecks in his dark eyes, “I’m just doing a bit of quality control. I need to know if you’ve already violated our deal.”

I felt my eyebrows pull together as I looked up at him, “Violated? Are you serious?” I let out a laugh, “Raphael, the only person who might slip up and sleep with someone else is you. I’ve only ever been with one man, and that was a long time ago.”

I felt his eyes drop to my mouth for a split second, a knowing look crossing his face. I shoved my hands into the deep pockets of the hoodie to stop them from reaching out and touching the hard lines of his stomach.

“But since you’re so curious,” I continued, tilting my chin up to look him in the eye, “this belongs to Silvio. Your little brother actually has a soul. He saw I was freezing and gave it to me because he’s a gentleman. You should try it sometime.”

Raphael let out a dry sound that was halfway between a laugh and something else. He didn’t look jealous, he looked like he found me hilarious. He leaned down, his lips

hovering just an inch from the sensitive skin of my neck, not quite touching but close enough that I could feel the warmth of his breath.

He reached out with his free hand and gripped the thick fabric of the hoodie right at my waist, pulling me a fraction of an inch closer until our clothes brushed.

+15 Bhus

He tapped the silver tube against the door next to my ear, the sound loud in the quiet room. Thump. Thump.

“You didn’t make a deal with a gentleman, did you now?” he trailed the cool, metal tip of the tube down the side of my neck, tracing the line of my collarbone. I stopped breathing. “I don’t care about your past lovers. I care about your present. And right now, your present belongs to me.”

He stepped even closer, his thigh pressing against mine. He knew exactly what he was doing to my heart rate.

“Now,” he murmured, “Are you going to let me fix your face, or are you going to keep standing there pretending you don’t want me to touch you?”

I looked away from his dark, searching eyes and focused on the wall behind him.

“It’s just a little bruise, Raphael. It’s nothing,” I said, as I reached up and touched the swollen skin myself, wincing slightly, “I’ve had a lot worse. This doesn’t even make the top ten.”

I meant it to sound tough, like a shield I was throwing up to keep him at a distance. But instead, he stilled.

He let the silver tube rest against the door, his eyes narrowing as he scanned my face as if he were reading a map hadn’t meant to show him.

“Worse?” he repeated.

He didn’t move his hand from the door, but he leaned in just a fraction more.

⌴

“What does that mean, Gianna?” he asked, “You grew up in a mansion. Surrounded by guards, money, power,’ his gaze dragged over my face, searching, “So tell me... who the

hell was putting their hands on you hard enough that this–" his fingers hovered near my cheek, not touching, but close enough to burn "-feels like nothing?"

Shit.

I felt it then. That small, stupid slip.

I tried to shrug it off, but with him crowding me against the door, there wasn't enough space to pretend I didn't feel it.

"It's a long story," I said, "And not one you get to hear," my eyes flicked up to his, "We had a deal, remember? told you, when I said 'no feelings,' I meant the whole deck. No sympathy, no checking in, nothing."

I shifted, trying to slide past him but it didn't work. It was like trying to move a brick wall. His hand shot out before I could blink, fingers wrapping around my arm. Enough to remind me I wasn't going anywhere.

"Hey," I started, but the word didn't even finish.

He pulled me. The room spun a little as he dragged me to the bed and pushed me down onto the edge of it. The mattress dipped under my weight, silk shifting under my hands.

"Stay."

I pushed against the bed immediately, trying to get back up, irritation snapping through me, "Raphael, I said I'm fine. Get out of my-

"Shut up, Gianna."

He leaned over me, bracing his hands on either side of my thighs, caging me in without even touching me.

The lamp behind me threw shadows across his face, cutting his features sharper, darker. His jaw was tight, his eyes locked on mine like he was daring me to try that again.

"You're going to sit there," he said, "and you're going to let me fix it."

My heartbeat stuttered... just slightly. It was annoying.

I leaned back on my hands, chin tipping up in defiance, "I remember very clearly telling you not to care," I shot back, "Is your memory that short?"

He tilted his head, watching me like I'd just said something almost amusing, "You told the man who's supposed to fuck you not to care," he said quietly.

His eyes dropped to my parted lips and then back up to my eyes.

“Not me.”

My pulse stuttered.

“What’s the difference?” I asked, even though something in my chest already didn’t like the answer.

“Family.”

The word dropped between us.

C

“We’re family, right?” he continued, softer now, but somehow worse.

His hand finally moved, lifting just enough to brush a stray strand of hair away from my face. It was barely a touch but still, I felt it everywhere.

“Family takes care of each other,” he said, eyes darkening slightly, “That’s allowed, same way Silvio handed you his hoodie without thinking twice.”

My throat went dry.

“As your brother…” he added, and there was something in the way he said it-something off, something that didn’t sit right-“…platonic.”

I let out a small breath, almost a laugh, but it didn’t sound right.

“Platonic…” I repeated.

The word felt strange on my tongue. It didn’t match the way he was looking at me. It didn’t match the way he was standing. It didn’t match the way my body suddenly felt too aware of everything.

I leaned back a little more, putting space where I could find it, even if it wasn’t much.

“Yeah,” I whispered, “Let’s… stick with that.”

His mouth twitched at that, barely there, like he didn’t quite believe me, like he didn’t quite believe himself

either.

“Yeah,” he echoed, quieter.

Then, neither of us spoke, he simply straightened just enough to reach for the silver tube again.

“This is for swelling,” he said.

His thumb flipped the cap open with a soft click.

“And it will also reduce bruising, keeps the blood from pooling under the skin.”

I managed to give him a little nod, “Mhm...”

His fingers touched my chin, tilting my face slightly toward the light, “Hold still.”

His other hand came up, and then the gel touched my skin. I flinched on instinct, breath catching.

“Relax,” he murmured.

Easy for him to say.

His thumb moved slowly, spreading the gel across the bruise, smoothing it in.

“Does it hurt?” he asked.

“Yes,” I said immediately.

His eyes flicked to mine, he smirked and then his thumb pressed slightly firmer against the bruise, just enough to make me wince again,

I glared at him, but it didn’t land the way it should have.

“Try not to touch it,” he said, “It’ll reduce the discoloration by morning if you don’t mess with it.”

“Noted,” I murmured.

He didn’t pull his hand away immediately. His thumb lingered near my jaw, the pad of it resting just below my cheekbone, like he’d forgotten what he was doing.

“You really mean that?” he asked.

“What?”

“No feelings.”

I swallowed, “Yes.”

His eyes searched my face again, slower this time, “That’s going to be a problem.”

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 205

My chest tightened, “Why?”

“Because you’re very bad at it.”

My lips parted, ready te argue, but nothing came out. For a second, I forgot what I was supposed to say. Forgot the rules. The distance. The whole carefully built line between us because he didn’t step back.

His thumb was still there, resting just under my cheek like it had nowhere else to go. The coolness of the gel had faded, replaced by the slow warmth of his skin.

“You’re staring,” I said, because I needed to say something.

His gaze didn’t shift, “You’re letting me.”

I huffed out a small breath, trying to shake it off, “You’re very full of yourself.

“Occupational hazard,” he replied, dry.

But his voice had changed again, lower, rougher around the edges.

His hand finally moved but not away. It slid from my cheek to the side of my jaw, his fingers brushing just under my ear before settling lightly at the back of my neck. My spine straightened without permission.

“That’s not part of the treatment,” I said, quieter now.

“No,” he agreed but he still didn’t move it.

I became hyper-aware of everything, his hand, his breath, the way his body angled just slightly toward mine, like gravity had shifted and we hadn’t caught up yet.

Every breath sounded too loud in my head. Mine. His. The steady tick of the clock on the wall. The faint chirp of crickets somewhere out in the garden. It all pressed in at once like the world had turned the volume up just for

this moment.

“You should go,” I said.

I didn’t sound convincing.

He exhaled slowly through his nose, like he was considering it.

“Probably,” he said.

My fingers pressed into the duvet beneath me, silk bunching under my grip, “Then go.”

His eyes flicked down again to my mouth then back up.

“You keep saying that,” he murmured.

“And you keep ignoring it.”

A faint, almost amused exhale left him,.”Yeah,” he said, “Not my best quality.”

His hand at my neck shifted slightly, thumb brushing once along the side of my throat. It was light. Barely anything.

Still, my breath stuttered and we both heard it. His eyes darkened a fraction.

+15 Bangs

I slid off the edge of the bed when he wasn’t expecting it, standing up too fast. The room tilting for a split second before settling again. I turned away from him immediately, putting space between us, even if it was only a few steps.

I needed it.

Needed my head clear.

“You fixed the bruise,” I said, folding my arms tight across my chest like that might hold something in place, Thanks. You can leave now.”

I glanced over my shoulder, meeting his eyes just long enough to make it clear I meant it this time.

“I’m not in the mood tonight,” I added, “Tonight we’re keeping things…. platonic.”

A slow, arrogant smirk pulled at the corner of his mouth. He didn’t look offended that I’d jumped away, he looked like he was enjoying the view of me trying to catch my breath.

He walked toward the door, but he didn’t head straight out. He stopped and turned back to look at me.

“8:00 AM, Mess,” he said, his voice dropping into that professional tone that reminded me exactly who he was, My office. Don’t be late. I don’t have a ‘platonic’ setting for tardiness.”

I gripped my elbows tighter, trying to look unmoved, “I’ll be there.”

He started to pull the door open, the light from the hallway spilling into the room.

“Raphael,” I called out.

He paused, looking over his shoulder, one eyebrow raised.

“I checked my account when I was out,” I said, “You sent me the ninety thousand I asked for as an advance. But there was an extra ten thousand in there,” I took a breath, standing my ground, “I sent it back. The transfer should be in your account already.”

Raphael turned his whole body around now, leaning against the doorframe. He looked amused, his lips curling into a tiny, arrogant smirk.

“I’m an employee,” I countered, lifting my chin. “Not a charity case. I don’t want your extra money, and I don’t want you thinking you bought anything more than my time at the office.”

He let out a soft, dry chuckle that vibrated in the quiet hallway and felt like a physical touch against my skin.

“So,” he murmured, his dark eyes trailing slowly down my body and back up again, “everything else is free?”

I let a small smile play on my lips.

“Not free, Raphael,” I said, “Just way out of your budget.”

He didn’t say another word, he just nodded to himself, smiling and stepped out. I stood there for a long time, staring at the wood, listening to the sound of his footsteps fading away.

I let out a breath I didn’t know I was holding and slumped back onto the bed, my skin still tingling where his fingers had been.

8:00 AM was going to come very, very quickly.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 206

Gianna

The glass doors of the Orion Vector technologies looked bigger than I remembered. Or maybe it was just the weight of the invisible chains around my ankles. Six months. I had officially sold my soul for half a year, and the devil was waiting for me on the top floor.

I stepped into the lobby feeling like a total outsider. I was wearing my college clothes-faded jeans and a black crop top that showed a sliver of skin every time I breathed.

My real work clothes were tucked away in the black cloth bag hanging over my shoulder. The elevator ride up was quiet. I watched the numbers glow, my heart doing a nervous little dance against my ribs. When the doors slid open to the executive floor, the smell of expensive floor wax and cold air-conditioning hit me.

Everything looked exactly the same, but everything felt different. I wasn't the intern anymore. I was the girl who had quit in a blaze of glory and came crawling back because I had no other choice.

I walked toward the reception desk, my sneakers squeaking on the polished floor. And then I saw her.

Aileen was sitting there, her head down as she typed away on her computer. Her hair was pulled back in a perfect, sleek ponytail, and she looked as professional as ever. My stomach did a painful flip. The last time we were in this building together, we were sitting in the dark, her face inches from mine. Raphael had interrupted us before I could make that mistake, and honestly, thank God for that. But then I'd gone and made a much bigger mistake. I'd kissed my stepbrother, and now I was right back where I started... except this time, he officially owned my soul.

"Hey," I said softly.

Aileen froze. She didn't look up for a long second, her fingers hovering over the keys. Then, she slowly raised her head. Her eyes went wide, jumping from my face to my hair, down to my bare midriff, and back up again.

"Gianna?" she whispered.

"In the flesh," I said, trying to offer a small, lopsided smile that didn't quite feel right. I shifted the heavy cloth bag on my shoulder. "I'm back. Full-time this time. Aileen, can we... can we talk for a second? About what happened the last time we were here?"

Aileen took a deep, shaky breath and glanced nervously toward Raphael's closed office doors. "I think we should probably wait until after you check in-"

"No, I just-I need to say this now," I interrupted, keeping my voice soft. I didn't want a single second of more confusion hanging between us, "Look, Aileen, you're amazing. You really are. But I wasn't in a good place the other day, and I wasn't being fair to you. I've never... I mean, I'm just not into women like that. I was confused and hurting, and I would hate myself if I led you on for even another minute."

I reached out, wanting to touch her hand but thinking better of it, keeping my distance instead.

"What almost happened... it wasn't real," I said as gently as I could, "It was just a messy moment in a really messy week. You're the only friend I have in this place, and I don't want to lose that because I acted like someone I'm not. I'm so sorry if I hurt you."

Aileen stared at me, and for a few seconds, the only sound was the low hum of the office printers. She looked down at her keyboard, her fingers tracing the edge of the space bar. The hurt didn't vanish, but it softened into something quiet.

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"I

"I knew," she said, her voice so low I had to lean in. She finally looked up, giving me a sad, knowing smile, mean, I think deep down I knew. You were hurting, and I was just... It's okay, Gianna. I'd rather have you as a friend than not have you here at all."

I felt a massive weight lift off my chest, though it was quickly replaced by the familiar knot of guilt, "Thank you, Aileen. Seriously. That means everything."

+15 Bghes

She nodded quickly, shaking off the heavy mood, "You should probably go change and check in. He's already gone through two espressos. He's in a mood."

Nodding, I headed straight for the executive restroom. I moved fast, my heart racing. I scrambled into a stall, my heart racing as I pulled off my jeans and crop top. I shook out my work clothes.

The black pencil skirt was tight, hugging my hips and hitting just above the knees. I tucked in a white silk blouse, making sure the lines were straight before stepping out to

the mirrors. My hands were shaking a little as I swiped on a layer of light, neutral lipstick and a bit of mascara. I didn't want to look like I was trying too hard, just like I belonged. Finally, I grabbed a hair tie and twisted my messy hair into a tight, sleek bun at the nape of my neck.

I stepped out of the bathroom and rounded the corner toward my desk, but I didn't even make it to my desk before

I heard the noise.

'Are you kidding me?"

It was Raphael and he sounded like thunder hitting a sheet of metal. I stopped in my tracks.

He was standing in the middle of the open office area, surrounded by three guys in suits who looked like they wanted to melt into the floor. Raphael was holding a tablet in one hand, shaking it at them.

"The beta launch for the security encryption is in six hours!" he roared, "I told you the back-end code had a leak. I told you specifically to patch the firewall before the server sync. And what do I find? You didn't just miss the leak, you deleted the entire recovery log. If the system crashes during the live demo, our clients' data is out in the wind. We lose the contract, and I lose my patience. Do you know what happens when I lose my patience?"

The employees looked terrified. One of them opened his mouth to speak, but Raphael cut him off with a glare.

"Don't. Just get back to the lab and fix it. If that code isn't solid in an hour, don't bother coming back for your stuff.

The guys scrambled away like their shoes were on fire. Raphael stood there for a second, his chest heaving, his tie pulled so loose it was hanging off his shoulder.

Then, his head snapped in my direction. It was like he had sensors for my presence. His dark eyes locked onto me, tracking my outfit, the tight bun, and the way I was trying to look invisible.

"Two-fifteen, Gianna," he snapped, "You're fifteen minutes late on your first day as a full-timer. I don't care how much makeup you had to put on to look human, when I say two, after college, I mean two."

"I was-"

“I don’t want excuses,” he barked, turning his back on me and heading toward his office doors. “Get to your desk. There’s a mountain of data logs on your screen that need to be cross-referenced for errors. If you can move your fingers as fast as you move your mouth, maybe we’ll actually get through the day without me firing everyone in this building.”

He slammed his office door shut, the sound echoing through the quiet floor. I stood there, stunned, my face burning.

Welcome back to the job, I guess.

I walked over to my new desk Raphael had pointed out. It sat right in the corner, giving me a perfect view of the entire executive floor, especially a perfect view of his closed office door.

I sat down, the tight fabric of my black pencil skirt riding up just a few inches. I smoothed it out with a sigh. I logged into the system. Immediately, the screen filled with thousands of lines of data logs. My job was to look at the patterns, find where the AI was hallucinating, and catch the errors before they broke the security encryption.

I leaned in, my eyes scanning the white text against the dark background.

For the first three minutes, I was doing great. I was in the zone. But then, the familiar fog started to roll in. It started with a single line of code. The letters looked like they were shivering. I blinked, trying to clear my head, but it only made it worse.

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My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 208

+15 Banys

I felt that cold spike of panic in my chest. If I messed this up, Raphael would have another reason to look down at me. And he would always see me as the girl from the club, a body to look at, not a mind to respect.

I looked around the office. Everyone was busy. No one was looking at me.

I reached into the hidden pocket of my bag. My fingers closed around a small, black device.

It was my secret weapon.

I took a deep breath and glanced at my legs. I realized then why I wore this skirt in the first place. To use the device properly, I had to press it against the thin skin of my upper thigh, where the nerves were most sensitive

I shifted in my chair, pulling the hem of my pencil skirt up as high as it would go. I felt the cool air of the office hit my skin. I tucked my chin down, hiding my face behind my monitors, and pressed the silver prongs against my bare thigh.

I squeezed the trigger.

ZAP.

A sharp, white-hot bolt of electricity shot through my leg and raced up my spine. My whole body stiffened for a split second. My toes curled inside my heels, and I had to bite my tongue to keep from yelping. It felt like my brain had been unplugged and plugged back in. Everything went white, then grey, then perfectly, painfully clear.

I let out a long, shaky breath, my skin still tingling from the shock. I looked back at the screen.

The letters had stopped dancing for a second. I gripped the mouse, my knuckles white. I began to type, the sound of the keys clicking fast.

But ten minutes later, the words started to shiver again.

Zap.

By the time I reached the final data log, my right thigh was covered in small, angry red marks. They weren't deep, just little circular burns that stung every time the fabric of my skirt brushed against them. My leg felt heavy and twitchy, like it didn't quite belong to my body anymore. But the work was done.

The security logs were summarized, cross-referenced, and ready.

I stood up, and my knees almost buckled. My legs felt like they were made of jelly. I waited a second, gripping the edge of the desk until the world stopped spinning, then I straightened my skirt and headed for his office.

I didn't knock. I just walked in.

Raphael was leaning over a long table covered in blue-printed schematics, his back to me. He was on the phone. He didn't even turn around when the door clicked shut. He just held up one finger, telling me to wait.

I stood there, clutching my tablet to my chest. Every second I stood still, the aftershocks of the electricity rolled through my muscles. My thighs were burning, a pulsing heat that made me want to itch, but I stayed perfectly

still.

I didn’t want him to see me shaking.

Five minutes passed. Then ten. My legs started to tremble from the effort of holding me up. I felt a bead of sweat roll down my neck.

+15 Banys

Finally, Raphael hung up. He sighed, a long, tired sound, and rubbed the back of his neck before turning around. He looked at me, his eyes tracking the way I was breathing just a little too fast.

“Is it done?” he asked, his voice dry.

“Yeah,” I rasped. I walked forward, my steps feeling clunky and weird, and handed him the tablet, “The logs are cleaned up. The errors are highlighted.”

He took it without a word and sat back in his chair. I stood in front of his desk, my legs buzzing so hard I thought he might be able to hear it. He started to scroll. At first, his face was blank. Then, his brow furrowed. Then, he stopped scrolling and just stared at a single page.

“Gianna,” he said softly.

It was the kind of soft that was scarier than shouting.

Janedoewritings

Author

Swipe up!

␣

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 209

+15 Banys

*15 Boys

Gianna

“Gianna,” he said softly.

It was the kind of soft that was scarier than shouting.

“Yeah?”

He turned the tablet around and slid it across the desk toward me. His finger pointed to a string of numbers. “This is the encryption key for the main server. You wrote it as 7-B-4-9.”

I squinted at the screen. To my eyes, it looked perfect. “Yeah? That’s what the log said.”

“No,” he hissed, slamming his palm down on the desk. The noise made me jump, and a sharp pain shot through my burned thigh, “The log said 1-8-H-P. You didn’t just get one digit wrong. You got the entire sequence backward. And here” he scrolled again, “You listed the server downtime as three hours. It was eight minutes. You’ve turned a minor glitch into a total system failure.”

He looked up at me then, his brows pulled together in a hard, tight line. He looked exhausted. He looked like he regretted every second I’d been in the room.

He took off his glasses, pinched the bridge of his nose, closing his eyes for a second, “God, I seriously forgot how bad you are at this job just because you’re so good at gagging on my dick,” he muttered. “I guess I stopped looking at your brain the second you started swallowing.”

The words hit me so hard that I took a tiny step back. I suddenly felt sick. My breath caught, getting stuck in my throat. And I was back in that apartment with my fiancé, hearing his laugh bounce off the walls while he looked at me with that same look of pity.

“Don’t worry about it, Gianna,” he’d told me, his hand patronizingly patting my cheek, “You’ve got a body that’ll keep you fed for life. Girls like you don’t need a brain. Just stay pretty and leave the thinking to me.”

I looked at the floor, my vision blurring. I’d shocked myself until I was scarred, I’d stared at the screen until my eyes bled, all to prove I was good enough. And here was Raphael, saying the exact same thing.

I was back in the box everyone had built for me since I was a kid.

“I… I can fix it,” I whispered, my voice sounding small and broken even to me. I reached for the tablet, my fingers trembling so much I could barely grip it. “Just give me an hour. I’ll stay. I’ll make it right.”

Raphael didn’t even look at the tablet, “Don’t bother. You’ve done enough damage to the software for one day.”

He kicked his chair back. He sat there, his legs spread, making space between himself and the desk. It was an invitation... no, a demand.

“We have a meeting in twenty minutes. And that skirt is... Come here,” he said, his eyes dropping down to my skirt.

I felt a cold shiver run down my spine. The burns on my thighs stung, a reminder of the effort he was currently calling worthless. I tried to force a smile, a desperate attempt to keep some shred of dignity.

“We’re in the office,” I said, “I don’t think we should... you know, HR might have an issue with the CEO’s desk being used for this.”

He let out a short, dark laugh and leaned back, spreading his knees, and looked at me with a calm expression.

“HR?” he repeated, the word sounding like a joke on his tongue, “Gianna, babe, look around. I signed the checks for the people who wrote the handbook. I don’t follow the rules, I am the rules. If I want to spend the next fifteen minutes with my sister on my lap, there isn’t a person in this building who would dare knock on that door.”

I walked around the desk, my knees knocking together. Every step made the burns on my inner thighs sting as they rubbed. I stopped right in front of him.

He immediately reached out, his large hands grabbing my waist with a grip that left no room for argument. He pulled me forward, hoisting me up until I was straddling his lap.

The angry skin of my burned thighs dragged harshly against the rough material of his dress slacks. It felt like a thousand needles pricking the sores all at once. I flinched, my fingers digging into his shoulders to keep from crying out, but he didn’t let go. He held me there, his thumbs digging into my hips, pinning me to the very heat that was making my skin scream.

␣

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 210

c

C + 15 agriss

He looked up at me, his eyes dark and empty of anything but need.

He didn't give me a second to breathe. His hands slid from my waist, one pinning the small of my back against him while the other bunched the silk of my blouse, kneading my breast with a careless pressure. I squeezed my eyes shut, my head falling back as his mouth found the line of my neck.

For a moment, the world outside that chair vanished. The dyslexia, the mistakes in the code, the sting of his earlier words, it all got drowned out by the thumping of my heart and the way he was breathing against my skin. felt myself softening, my muscles turning to honey as I leaned into the touch I knew I should hate.

I forgot that he thought I was useless. All I could feel was his hands and the way my body seemed to recognize his, answering every touch with a desperate, hungry ache that I couldn't control.

His hand came up and he slapped my breast over the silk of my shirt, I let out a broken gasp, my fingers tightening on his shoulders.

Through the thin fabric, his fingers found my nipple, puckered and hard. He pinched it between his thumb and forefinger, a sharp twist of pain and pleasure that made my toes curl and my back arch off his lap.

"So perfect," he growled against my skin.

And for a few reckless seconds, I let myself believe that this was the only place I belonged. I leaned into him.

He licked a path from my collarbone to my ear, before his teeth sank into the skin right over my pulse point. I felt the sharp sting of the bite, followed by the dull, throbbing ache of my burned thighs rubbing against his legs.

The friction was torture. Every time he moved, every time he squeezed, the raw skin on my legs flared with white- hot pain.

"See?" he murmured, his hand sliding up my back to the nape of my neck, gripping, "You're already doing a much better job."

The words were like a spark. I opened my eyes, staring up at the ceiling lights of the office. He was still lost in it, his teeth grazing my jaw, his hand tightening over my chest as if he were trying to claim the very heart he'd just

insulted.

I didn't moan. I didn't wrap my legs around him. I stayed perfectly still for one heartbeat, and then I slammed my palms against his chest.

I shoved him back with every bit of strength I had left. Because he wasn't expecting it, his hands slipped, and I scrambled off his lap.

I stood in front of him, my chest heaving, my blouse wrinkled and my hair falling out of its sleek bun. Raphael sat there, stunned, his lips wet and his eyes dark and unfocused. He looked up at me, his hands still hovering in the empty air where my waist had just been.

"Gianna?" he rasped, his voice thick with confusion.

I didn't answer. I didn't cry. I reached down and smoothed the front of my pencil skirt, tugging the hem back into place.

I looked him dead in the eye. I looked at him like he was a stranger I'd stepped over on the street.

I didn't say I was sorry. I didn't say I was leaving. I just turned on my heel and walked away. I felt his gaze burning into my back, filled with the questions he was too shocked to ask.

Choptor 210

+15 Bahus

I grabbed the handle, pushed it open, and walked out without looking back. I left the tablet on his desk, the errors on the screen, and the man in the chair exactly where they belonged.

Exactly, eighteen minutes later, the doors swung open.

Raphael stepped out, and the shift in the room was instant. He had fixed his tie. His sleeves were buttoned at the wrists, hiding the tattoos that had been pressed against my skin moments ago. His reading glasses were back on.

He looked like a man who had never felt a single emotion in his life, let alone the shock of being pushed away.

All across the floor, the click of keyboards stopped. Five employees stood up at once, clutching tablets and folders, falling into line behind him like soldiers.

P

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 211

Aileen stood too, but she paused, looking at me, “Gianna, grab the Neural-Network Latency Report?” she said, The one with the local server maps? We need a hard copy.”

Nodding, I reached for the folder on the edge of my desk, the report I had spent two hours perfecting between electric shocks.

I stood up, ready to follow them into the conference room. I needed to be there. I needed to show him I could handle the technical questions too.

I had to show him I actually had a brain.

I’m good enough. I repeated it in my head like a prayer. I’m good enough. I’m good enough.

Deep down, a small, dark voice whispered that I never had been. Not to my father, not to my fiancé, not to my mother, not to Jules and clearly not to the man currently adjusting his cuffs.

I took a shaky breath and reached for my notepad, ready to prove my worth.

But I hadn’t even taken a step when Raphael’s voice echoed through the room.

“Aileen, take the file from her,” he ordered, his voice flat.

Aileen hesitated, her hand hovering in the air. “Sir? Gianna is supposed to present the latency findings. She’s the one who ran the simulations.”

Raphael turned his head just a fraction, his gaze cold and dismissive as it swept over me. It was the look you gave a piece of equipment that had malfunctioned one too many times.

“She’s not coming,” he said. He didn’t raise his voice, but everyone on the floor heard him, “She has enough on her plate trying to learn the basics of her job. She has... difficulty with the data. Take the report and let’s go.”

I felt the eyes of the entire team on me, pity from Aileen, confusion from the others. He was essentially telling them I was too stupid to be there. Aileen reached out and gently took the folder from my numb fingers.

“I’m sorry,” she mouthed silently.

I watched them file into the room. One by one, the suits disappeared behind the glass. Raphael was the last to enter. He didn’t look back. He just shut the door.

I sat back down in my chair, the silence of the office pressing in on me. I was alone at my desk, surrounded by data.

So, this was the game.

The anger started as a tiny spark in my chest, right under the spot where his hand had just been, and then it roared into a flame.

Was this how it was going to be for the next six months?

Every time I pushed his hands away, every time I stood my ground or reminded him that I was a human being with a soul, would he just pull the rug out from under my career?

He wanted to bench me. He wanted me to sit in this quiet corner and rot until the silence got so loud that I'd do anything to break it. He was waiting for me to get so hungry for a scrap of his approval that I'd crawl back into his lap, begging to feel like I existed again.

I had played that game once before. I had shrunk myself down, bit my tongue, and tried to be the perfect, empty

Charter 211

+15 Bars

shell a man wanted me to be. I had diminished everything I was just to see a flicker of pride in someone's eyes, and I never got it. No matter how much of myself I carved away, it was never enough.

I promised myself I would never be that girl again. But looking at the closed door of the boardroom, a cold realization settled in my chest.

Raphael wasn't just sotne guy.

He was brilliant, powerful, and accomplished-everything I ever dreamed of being and everything I feared I could never reach. He held the mirror to my greatest failures.

Against a man who actually had the world in his hands, what choice did a girl like me really have?

Janedoewritings

Author

Enjoy!

XOXOI

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 212

Raphael

I tried to focus on the screen at the front of the room. One of my lead engineers was droning on about the new firewall, pointing at charts and lines of code that usually would have had my full attention. But my eyes kept sliding to the left. I kept looking through the floor-to-ceiling glass walls toward the corner desk.

Gianna was there. She was hunched over, her shoulders pulled in as if she was trying to make herself small enough to disappear. She hadn't moved in ten minutes. She just sat there, staring at a screen that was probably still full of the mistakes I'd just yelled at her for.

Something sharp and uncomfortable tugged at my chest. It felt like a physical weight, pressing down every time I saw the way her head hung low.

Why am I looking at her? I snapped at myself, forcing my eyes back to the engineer.

But then I saw her face again in my mind. Not the face of the girl who had just pushed me away in my office, but the face she'd made when I told Aileen to take the file from her. The hurt in her eyes had been so deep. She looked like I'd just kicked a puppy.

And I don't kick puppies.

I kill people who kick puppies.

I shifted in my chair, because I couldn't stop thinking about the way she had looked at me.

Was I too harsh?

I tried to tell myself I was just being a boss. I had yelled at the tech team five minutes before she walked in. I had threatened to fire three developers who had been with me for years just this morning.

I was a hard man; everyone knew that. I didn't give out participation trophies. If you messed up my code, you heard about it.

I treated her like any other employee...

But the lie felt thin. When I yelled at the developers, I was thinking about the stock price.

When I yelled at Gianna, I was thinking about the way she had pushed my chest and walked away.

I had looked for her weakest spot, the fact that she wanted to be seen as smart and I had hammered it until it cracked.

I had compared her value to a sexual act. I wouldn't say that to an engineer. I wouldn't say that to a janitor. I had been cruel in a way that was personal.

I had acted like a petty, desperate guy who couldn't handle a "no," so I'd decided to show her who really ran the world.

I kept waiting for her to look up, to show some spark of that Toricelli fire, but she stayed hunched over. Defeated. Because of me.

And for the first time in my life, the power I held felt like a dirty thing in my hands.

"Sir? Mr. Capone?"

+15 Banys

I blinked, realizing the entire room was staring at me, waiting for a response to a question I hadn't even heard. I cleared my throat, my collar suddenly feeling way too tight.

"Carry on," I muttered.

I looked back at Gianna. She looked so fragile sitting there. I wanted to get up, walk out there, and tell her to come inside. I wanted to take back the words I'd said about her brain. But I stayed in my seat.

The meeting finally dragged to an end. The glass doors opened, and the sound of muffled voices suddenly flooded back into the main office. I stepped out first, and walked the lead client toward the elevators, keeping my voice smooth as we went over the final points of the contract.

"We're looking forward to the demo, Capone," the client said, reaching out to shake my hand.

"You won't be disappointed," I replied.

As the elevator doors slid shut, the lobby went quiet for a heartbeat before the usual office noise started up again My employees began to filter back to their desks, the soft click of keyboards and the low hum of conversation filling the air. I turned back toward the executive floor, my feet moving automatically toward my office.

But as I passed the corner desk, my pace slowed. I couldn't help it. My head turned, my eyes searching for her.

Gianna still hadn’t moved. She was still sitting in the same spot, her back straight and her head bowed over a stack of papers she wasn’t actually reading.

Then, I saw it.

A single, clear drop of water fell from her face. It hit the dark wood of the desk with a tiny splash. It sat there for a second, a perfect shining bead against the surface.

Then her whole body jerked violently, and before I could ask what had happened, Gianna’s hand flew up. With a jerky motion, she swiped her palm across the desk, erasing the wet spot. She did it so fast, so desperately, like she was trying to hide a crime. She didn’t look up. She just tucked her hand back into her lap and stared harder at the paper, her jaw set so tight I could see the muscle jumping in her cheek.

P

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 213

I froze. I wanted to reach out. I wanted to say her name. My hand actually twitched at my side, my fingers wanting to brush against her shoulder just to see if she was still breathing.

I felt the eyes of the other employees on me, and I forced my face to stay blank. I swallowed the apology that was burning in my chest and pulled my shoulders back.

I turned away from her, and went back to my office. I sat at my desk and pulled the tablet toward me.

I went back to the log that had made me lost my shit. 1-8-H-P. She had written it as 7-B-4-9.”

My fingers flew across the glass, pulling up her files from last week. Then the week before. I opened her report on the server downtime. I opened her notes on the neural bridge. I laid them all out side-by-side in glowing blue windows, my eyes darting between the columns of data.

Every time there was a “b,” she had eventually swapped it for a “d.” If a sequence had a “7,” she skipped the next character entirely.

In the bridge logs, she hadn’t just gotten the sequence backward, she had mirrored it.

I pulled up her very first report and there it was again. A “6” turned into a “9.” A “p” turned into a “q.”

I looked at the notes she'd made in the margins. The handwriting was tiny, cramped, and repeated over and over.

The intelligence was there. I could see it in the way she tried to bridge the gaps. She had built her own system to try and catch the mirrors, a balances that no one without a high IQ could even dream up but there was something holding her back.

And then, I moved the screen to myself and did what I always do the best, my finger moved.

I typed Gianna Toricelli.

The cursor blinked waiting for me to hit enter and strip her life down to data points and bank statements.

I could map her entire history in three clicks, every school record, every debt, every secret she thought she'd buried.

I stared at the name for a long heartbeat, then I hit backspace until the screen was white.

For the first time in my life, I didn't want to strip a person down to their data. I didn't want the cold facts or the clean lines of a background check.

I wanted to learn her, not as a sequence of numbers, but as the living, breathing woman standing in front of me.

I wanted to hear the truth from her own mouth, even if she used it to lie to me first.

The internal wiring was screaming at me to stay cold. Logic said do it. But the Capone blood in my veins had a different set of rules.

Once you're under my roof, you're mine. I don't just own you, I'm the wall between you and the rest of the world. If that meant bleeding for her, fine. If it meant burning everything down for her mother or that kid, Jewel, then I'd buy the gasoline.

I'd been pointing my anger at the wrong targets. My father was the real asshole in this equation, not them. They weren't hunting for the Capone billions. Gianna didn't want the money; she had too much pride to ask for handouts.

So, I don't need to hack her life to understand her. I just need to be the person she's finally brave enough to be real with.

I watched her through the glass as she gathered her things. She moved quickly, but her shoulders were still hunched. I didn't think twice, I grabbed my coat and moved.

By the time I hit the lobby, my driver was idling at the curb. I settled into the leather of the backseat, my eyes glued to the elevator bank.

When the doors finally slid open and she stepped out, I felt a tug in my chest. She was walking with that same hesitant, limping way, I'd seen months ago—the night I found her in my kitchen at 3:00 AM, as she made a grilled cheese.

She stepped out onto the sidewalk, her hand diving into her bag. She froze, letting out a frustrated groan that I could almost hear through the tinted glass.

She looked left, then right, her jaw setting in that stubborn line I was beginning to hate and crave in equal measure. Then, she started walking.

I waited until she was a block away, clear of the prying eyes of my staff. I didn't need the gossip.

"Stop here," I told the driver.

I stepped out into the evening air, and I tracked her until I was close enough to talk, "Gianna."

X

get it

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 214

+15 Bangs

She didn't just stop, she recoiled. She looked over her shoulder, "What are you doing here, Raphael?"

I didn't answer right away. I let my gaze sweep over her, taking in the way her blouse was still slightly wrinkled from my hands, the way she looked ready to bolt. I jerked my chin toward the black sedan idling at the curb.

"Get in. We're going home."

"No, thank you," she snapped. She turned her back on me and kept walking, her pace quickening.

I felt the heat rise in my neck, a flash of that dark temper that usually ended in broken bones. I caught up to her in three long strides, my shadow swallowing hers.

“It’s a car tonight, Gianna, not a bike. You aren’t walking miles in those shoes.”

She spun around, her chest heaving, “I don’t care if it’s a private jet, Raphael. I need space. I need you to not be

within ten feet of me.”

I took a deep breath, trying to keep the beast behind my ribs from snapping, “Don’t be stubborn,” I said, “You look exhausted, you’re hurting, and you’re making this harder than it needs to be. Just tell me what the problem is. We can fix it in the car. It makes this easy for both of us.”

She let out a sharp, breathless laugh, her eyes searching mine for a punchline that wasn’t there, “There is not problem.”

I stepped closer, my shadow pinning her against the brick of the building behind her. I looked down at her, though my blood was screaming to just pick her up and force her into the seat.

“Don’t lie to me,” I rasped. “There is clearly a problem, and I’m not moving until you admit it.”

Gianna’s back hit the cold brick of the building. She looked at the sidewalk, her fingers twisting the strap of her bag until her knuckles turned white.

“I just have a headache,” she whispered, “The light in the office... it’s bright. I got confused with the numbers because I’m tired. That’s all. I’ll be better tomorrow.”

“Don’t give me that bullshit,” I rasped. “I spent an hour looking at every file you’ve touched for weeks. I saw the logs, Gianna. I saw the reports.”

She stiffened, and looked away from me, down the busy street, “I told you, I made a mistake. I’m just... bad at the tech side. Like you said. I’m just a body, right? Just leave it at that.”

“No,” I grabbed her wrist, not hard, but enough to make her look at me, “A ‘bad’ employee makes random mistakes. They get lazy. They miss a deadline. But you? Your mistakes have a... pattern.”

Her eyes darted to the side, searching for an exit that wasn’t there, “I don’t know what you’re talking about. I’m just messy.”

“You aren’t messy. You aren’t getting the code wrong, Gianna.”

She flinched as if I'd slapped her. Her face went pale, her pride crumbling right in front of me, "It's just... the font is small. My eyes were blurry from the screen. I just need more coffee, Raphael. I can fix it if you just give me a chance."

"Stop lying!" I snapped, "I'm a coder. I find patterns for a living. It's what I do. What is it, Gianna, please, talk to me. At first, I didn't care enough to actually look at you. That's on me. But don't you dare stand there and tell me

+15 Barves

everything is fine. You're working twice as hard as anyone on my floor just to stay level."

"It was a glare!" she shouted, her voice bouncing off the brick alley. "The screen was too bright, Raphael! I was rushed. I'll go back. I'll stay up all night and fix every single line if that's what it takes to shut you up!"

"You could stay up for a year and it wouldn't change a thing," I stepped closer to her, "I don't want your extra hours! I want the truth! Why do you do this?!"

"I'm fine!" she screamed, shoving my chest, "I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine!"

"I never said you weren't!" I grabbed her wrists, not to hurt her. I held them tight against my chest, right over my heart, "I saw the notes, Gianna! I saw the way you rewrite the same word ten times until the paper tears. Stop lying to me. Stop pretending this is just a bad day."

"Let go of me!" She jerked her arms, "Why do you care? You already told everyone I'm useless! You told the whole floor I'm too slow to keep up! So just let me be slow! Let me be the failure everyone already knows I am! I'll leave after six months anyway."

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 215

"I am trying to help you!"

"I don't want your help!" she shrieked, her voice breaking, reaching a pitch that made my blood cold, "I don't want your pity scripts or your genius brain looking at me like I'm a broken toy! You want to know the pattern, Raphael? You want the real problem?"

She surged forward, her face inches from mine.

"The letters dance! They flip and they spin and I can't make them stop! I'm a mess! I'm a stupid, broken bitch who can't even read a goddamn server log without ruining everything! I'm the girl who's only good for one thing because my brain is a fucking scrambled disaster!"

She let out a sharp, pathetic laugh that made my chest tighten.

“That’s why I was on that stage. That’s why I strip. Because it’s the only thing I’m good for. I love to dance, I’m good at ballet, so I took the only path for a girl with a brain that’s basically a black hole. It would have been better for everyone—especially you—if you’d just looked at me that night and kept on walking. You wasted your time saving a girl who was never worth the effort of being found.”

The silence that followed was loud. She was panting, her chest heaving against my hands, her eyes wide and terrified. She looked at me like she expected me to laugh.

Then came the first sob. It wasn’t loud, it was a small, hitched breath that shuddered through her entire frame.

“I’m dyslexic,” she whispered, “And dysgraphic. I’ve always been... I was born with a brain that just doesn’t work like yours.”

Her hands, still trapped in mine, stopped fighting and just hung there, trembling.

“I’ve always been this way,” she choked out, her voice so small I had to lean down to hear it over the hum of the city, “My brain... it doesn’t see what yours sees, Raphael. I try. God, I try until my head feels like it’s going to explode, but I never win. The letters always find a way to beat me.”

I didn’t say a word. I just stood there like a statue, feeling every shudder that racked her frame.

“My father called me slow,” she continued, her words muffled against my chest, “My teachers told me I was lazy. My fiancé... he told me it was better that I was pretty, because I’d never be smart. And today, in that office... you said it, too. You just confirmed what everyone else already knew.”

She pulled her hands from mine, but she didn’t run. She just covered her face.

“I’m so ashamed,” she whispered, “I’m ashamed of myself, of the real me. I’ve been rejected so many times I stopped counting, and just once.... just once... I didn’t want to be the stupid one. I wanted to be smart. I wanted to be the person my mother and my sister could actually lean on instead of the one they have to carry.”

A self-hating laugh broke from her throat. It was the saddest sound I’d ever heard.

“God, what was I thinking?” she choked out, “I barely scraped through college. I spent four years tricking myself into believing that a piece of paper and a graduation gown would somehow fix me. I thought if I just worked hard enough, the fairy tale would start. I’d be the girl who made it. I’d be... normal.”

She dropped her hands, her face going cold and vacant as she stared at the pavement. The light had completely gone out of her.

“Then I got here,” she whispered, “I saw you. I saw what a real mind looks like, how fast you are, how effortless it

C

+15 Barius

is for you. And the fantasy just... died.”

She looked at me then, her eyes searching mine for a truth I wasn’t ready to give.

“The fairy tale is over, Raphael. I was never going to be the girl who made it. I’m never going to be good enough for anything, am I? Not for this job, not for this life... and definitely not for someone like you.”

Janedoewritings

Author

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 216

Raphael

+15 Bahus

I stepped forward, and reached for her, my hands hovering near her trembling shoulders, but the second I touched her, she flinched.

“Don’t,” she gasped, trying to twist away. Her pride was still fighting, even through the wreckage of her confession, “Don’t touch me because you feel sorry for me. I don’t want your pity, Raphael. Just let me go.”

She scrambled back, her heels slipping on the wet pavement, but I was done with the distance. I was done with the talking,

I lunged, my hand snaking around her waist. She tried to push against my chest, her small hands flat against my heart, but I didn’t budge. I jerked her forward, a sudden movement that stole the breath from her lungs. I pulled her into me so hard that her chest slammed against mine, the impact rattling us both.

I wrapped my arms around her like a vice, pinning her against my body.

“Stop,” I said, “Stop fighting me. Just for one goddamn second, be still.”

At first, she stayed rigid, her muscles tight as wire, her hands balled into fists between us. She was still trying to be the girl who didn’t need anyone. But I didn’t loosen my grip. I held her with a hard pressure, my chin resting on the top of her head, my coat shielding her from the wind.

Slowly, the fight leaked out of her. The fists against my chest uncurled, her fingers clutching at my shirt as if it were the only thing keeping her from drowning. She went small in my arms, her whole body sagging.

I held her through the tremors. I wasn’t a man who knew how to comfort, but I knew how to hold territory. And right now, she was territory that mattered.

“Stop!” she snapped, as she shoved against my shoulders again, “Stay away from me! How many times do I have to say it? I don’t need you to care about me!”

I leaned in, my shadow covering her completely, and spoke one word into the space between us.

“Platonic.”

The frantic tension in her shoulders died. She understood the unspoken contract: I wasn’t asking for her heart, and I wasn’t offering mine. I was offering a truce.

I loosened my grip just enough to see if she’d bolt into the dark. She didn’t move. She just stood there, looking up at me with eyes rimmed in an angry red.

I let my hand slide down the length of her arm until my fingers wrapped around her wrist. I didn’t squeeze, but the message was clear. I started walking toward the car, and she didn’t dig in her heels. She followed, her pride finally exhausted.

She slid into the backseat, her body taking up as little space as possible. I followed her in.

The ride was... silent.

I’m a rational man. I’ve survived this long because I know how to compartmentalize. I can put my feelings into boxes and stack them until they’re out of sight. I knew exactly where she fit now.

I could care for her like family. I could keep her safe, and protect her from the world. I could still want her, that

dark, private lust wasn’t going anywhere but I could keep it separate.

1 don’t love. I’ve never loved anyone romantically, it was too messy, too unconventional for a man like me.

The “no feelings” part of the deal might be a struggle for a woman like her, someone who felt everything so loudly.

I could be concerned for her. I could watch over her well-being the same way I did with Aunt Alessia or my sisters- in-law, Claire and Madeleine. They were under my protection, and so was she. She was part of the fold now.

I glanced at her. She looked so small, so fragile. I didn’t need to love her to own her safety. I just needed to be the only thing she had left to lean on.

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Chapter 217

+15 Barius

Underneath the shame and the anger, I realized what I was actually looking at. She was lonely. In a way that was deep and structural. Despite having a mother and a sister, she was all by herself.

No one had ever stepped up to tell her the simple truth: it wasn’t her fault.

The car rolled up the long driveway of the estate. I glanced at Gianna again. She was staring out the window. She didn’t move until the driver opened her door.

We stepped into the foyer, the family was gathered in the living area, I could hear the low murmur of voices and laughs.

Gianna didn’t stop, she kept her head down, as she walked past the living room, “Hey,” she mumbled, the word barely a breath as she passed the archway where the others sat. She didn’t look at them. She didn’t wait for a

response.

“Gianna?” someone started to ask, but she was already gone. Her footsteps tapping against the marble stairs, growing fainter and fainter.

“Raphael.”

I turned. Vincenzo was standing there, leaning against the doorframe with his arms crossed over his chest. His dark eyes weren’t on the stairs, they were locked onto me.

He didn’t look like a brother right then. He looked like the head of the family, weighing every move I made.

“A word,” he said as he jerked his head toward the privacy of the study, “In private. Now.”

Nodding, I followed him into the room. He closed the door behind us, and turned to face me.

“What happened?” he asked, “That girl looked like she’s been crying for an hour. What did you do to her?”

I looked at the floor for a second, feeling the weight of the rain still on my shoulders.

“She messed up a file at work,” I said, my voice rough. I rubbed the back of my neck, thinking about the look on her face in that office. “And I lost it. I shouted at her. Right there in front of the whole floor. You know how I get when things aren’t perfect. I just… I lost my shit.”

“You lost your shit,” he repeated, “Do you even have a brain in that head, Raphael, or just a bunch of math problems?”

I opened my mouth to say something, but he held up a hand, cutting me off.

“Listen to me,” he stated, “You need to pull back. You need to go easy on her. She has problems. She’s fragile, and you’re hitting her with a sledgehammer. Gianna’s not built for the way you’re coming at her right now.”

“She needs to do her job,” I said, I didn’t let the heat that had been sitting in my chest all day slip, “But I’ll… adjust.”

“Adjust isn’t enough,” he cut in. “Not this time. This isn’t just about her work,” he paused, like he was choosing his words carefully, “It’s Hazel. I got a call from her doctor this morning.”

My eyes lifted to him, “What happened?”

“It’s progressing,” he said quietly, “It’s not staying in her hands anymore. The weakness is spreading. She’s getting tired faster, losing strength in places she used to rely on. Her core’s starting to go… and they’re seeing early signs it’s affecting her breathing.

+15 Borus

A slow breath filled my lungs, then left just as steady, “How bad?”

“They won’t pin it down exactly,” Vincenzo replied, jaw tightening, “But it’s moving faster now. Not the slow drift it was before. Months, Raph. Maybe a year if we’re lucky. But the decline’s picking up speed.”

“Fuck,” I muttered under my breath.

Vincenzo nodded once, like he expected that reaction, “And Hazel hasn’t told her. She’s trying to hold onto this idea of a normal year for Gianna, college, the internship, everything falling into place.”

I scoffed lightly, but there was no humor in it, “That’s not going to last.”

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My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 218

“No,” he said, “It’s not. She’s already struggling more than she lets on. Sooner or later, Gianna and Jules are going to see it. And when they do…” he let the sentence trail off.

I thought about Gianna screaming at me, telling me she just wanted to be someone her mother could rely on.

“We know what this feels like,” Vincenzo whispered, and for a second, the boss disappeared, and I just saw my brother, “We know what it’s like to watch your mother disappear from your life. We know the hole it leaves. Gianna is about to lose the only person who ever truly fought for her, and there isn’t a single thing we can do. All the money in our vaults can’t buy her one more breath when the time comes.”

He walked over and clamped his hand onto my shoulder, his fingers digging into my muscle.

“So the next time she messes up a document or can’t get a word right?” he squeezed harder, his eyes boring into mine, “You shut your mouth. You keep your temper in check, and you act like it’s the smallest thing in the world Understood?”

I nodded, “Yes.”

ran

I sat on the floor in front of the massive glass enclosure that took up half the far wall. Inside, Medusa was moving.

She was twelve feet of pure, cold muscle. Her scales were a pattern of deep browns and burnt golds. She didn't have feelings. She just had hunger and instinct. That was why I liked her.

I reached into the cooler beside me. The rabbit had already been prepared. No pain or struggle. That mattered. I wouldn't have it any other way.

I used a pair of long metal tongs to lift it gently, careful not to jolt it too much. It deserved at least that much

respect.

Feeding Medusa wasn't cruelty. It was nature. She didn't understand substitutes or sentiment. She needed what she was built for.

But that didn't mean I had to be careless about it.

Every meal I gave her was handled the same way, sourced properly, done quickly, without suffering.

It was the only line I allowed myself to draw in a world where I didn't draw many.

I slid the glass door open and Medusa's head rose. Her tongue flicked out, picking up the heat signature of the meal.

I moved the tongs, dangling the rabbit a few inches from her snout. In a blur of motion that the human eye could barely track, she struck. Her jaws unhinged, her teeth sinking in, and then she began the coil. She wrapped her thick body around the prey, squeezing even though there was no heartbeat to stop.

It was a beautiful, honest display of power.

I sat back, resting my elbows on my knees, watching her work. There was something peaceful about the way she lived. Just the cycle of life and the rush of the hunt.

My phone buzzed in my pocket. I reached for it, my eyes still on the snake. It was a text from a girl I'd gone to college with some heiress whose last name was worth more than her personality. We'd moved in the same circles, she religiously attended the parties.

She belonged to a world where sex was a game and people were just toys you played with until they broke. I was part of that world, too, I'd helped build it. But looking at the dark screen of my phone, I didn't know where Gianna fit anymore.

Love and care for my family was easy, I knew the rules for that. Protecting them was second nature. But caring for, and fucking a woman who was supposed to be my family? That was a different kind of math. It was a knot I couldn't untie.

I swiped the notification open.

The picture loaded instantly. She was standing in front of a floor-to-ceiling mirror, completely naked. She had her back arched, her hair tossed over one shoulder. She had one leg pulled high toward the ceiling, holding herself completely open for the camera.

+15 Bitnes

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Had it done just for you, Raph. When is the next hunt? I'm tired of waiting.

I looked at the photo. Most men would have felt a surge of heat but as I looked at her, all I saw was noise. She was trying so hard to be provocative, to be sexy, but she looked desperate.

I didn't reply. I just hit the power button, letting the screen go black, and tossed the phone onto the bed.

Then a soft, hesitant knock echoed in my room. My eyes snapped instantly to the monitor on my desk. I flicked through the feed from the hidden cameras until the view of the hallway pulled up.

It was her. Gianna.

She was standing outside my door, looking small. She looked like she was trembling, her hands hugged herself as she stared at the dark wood of my door.

I walked to the door and pulled it open.

I wasn't ready for what was on the other side.

Gianna stood there, wearing a black silk nightdress that looked like it had been poured onto her skin. The straps were nothing more than threads, showing off the pale slope of her shoulders. The hem hit her mid-thigh, leaving her long, bare legs exposed.

I felt a violent surge of heat hit me, a rush of blood that went straight south, turning my muscles to stone. I'd seen her a thousand times, but looking at her now, messy-haired, red-eyed, and wrapped in black satin, it felt... different.

She didn't look up at first. She was staring at my bare chest, her fingers twisting into the silk at her sides.

"Raphael," she whispered, "I... I couldn't sleep."

She finally looked up, her eyes wide and dark, searching mine.

“I’m sorry,” she breathed, the words tumbling out in a rush, “About the office. About what I said. I shouldn’t have messed up the files, I should have told you when you hired me and I shouldn’t have fought you. I was... I was just so lost.”

I didn’t say a word. If I opened my mouth, I wasn’t sure if I’d kiss or grab her. The contrast was killing me... the sweet, broken apology coming from those soft lips while she looked like a walking sin in that dress.

I reached out, my hand moving on its own. I gripped the doorframe just to keep myself from reaching for her. My knuckles turned white against the wood. I wanted to be the rational man Vincenzo talked about, the one who saw her as family, but looking at her now, the only thing I felt was a need to pull her inside and lock the door.

She took a tiny step forward, the silk shifting over her hips, “Are you still mad,” she whispered, her eyes searching mine, “or can we pick up where we left-”

I didn’t give her time to finish. I didn’t give her time to think.

I reached out, my hand tangling in her hair, and hauled her across the threshold. I slammed my mouth down onto hers, cutting off her breath with a kiss that was less of a greeting and more of a takeover.

She let out a small, muffled gasp against my lips, her body going soft and pliant as she melted into me. Her hands flew up, grabbing the back of my neck, pulling me closer as if she were trying to crawl inside my skin.

I stepped back, pulling her with me into my room. With my free hand, I reached behind me and grabbed the edge

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+15 Bahus

of the door.

I kicked it shut.

I pulled back just an inch, my lips still brushing against the corner of her mouth, an involuntary dark sound that was half-laugh and half-groan left my lips.

“We can definitely pick up where we left off, Mess.”

Janedoewritings

Author

Swipe up for the next update

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 220

+15 Bars

Gianna | Age 11 | Toricelli Estate, Chester County, PA

“The nerve of that whore!” My father’s voice exploded through the room.

He didn’t just drop his phone, he hurled it. The device slammed into the wall, the screen spider-webbing into a thousand pieces before it hit the floor.

I flinched, my small shoulders hunching up toward my ears.

My stepmother, Perla, didn’t move. She sat on the velvet sofa, her fingers stroking the hair of my little half- brother, Gio. Giovanni Jr. was the new prince, the one everyone said would lead the Syndicate one day. Since he was born, I have been pushed to the side.

But even though I was in the backseat now, Daddy still looked at me like I was his most precious prize. He made sure I was perfect, every hair in place, every dress expensive, every need met before I even had to ask.

Sometimes his voice turns harsh. And words that leaves his mouth stings longer than they should.

He doesn’t just call me useless. He says I’m a mistake he can’t correct. That my head is wrong. He tells me I embarrass him. That I make him look weak. That a Toricelli should never struggle with something so basic.

Sometimes he laughs under his breath and asks if the letters are dancing again. If they’re too hard for me to catch. If my brain is too slow to keep up.

He calls me broken. Says there’s something missing inside my head. Something that should have been there but isn’t. I learned to sit still, to smooth my dress, to keep my face the same.

Because later, he would look at me again like I was something precious and I told myself that was the part that

mattered.

“She thinks because she’s with some big-shot politician now, she can do whatever she wants!” Daddy paced the floor, his eyes glowing with a dark heat, “She thinks she can take my child? Mine?”

He stopped and turned to look at me, his gaze so intense it almost hurt.

“I spent four years scrubbing her name out of Gianna’s life. I did everything to get that woman away from her. And now she thinks she can just show up because she’s spreading her legs for a man who thinks he can challenge me? I’ll burn her whole life to the ground before I let her take a single step toward my daughter.”

Perla let out a long, bored sigh. She rolled her eyes, not even trying to hide her annoyance from me.

“Why don’t you just share custody with Hazel, Gio?” she asked, “It’s not like Gianna is the main priority anymore, is she? You have our son now. You have an heir. He’s everything she isn’t. He’s the future.”

The room went deathly silent.

The temperature seemed to drop twenty degrees.

Daddy turned his head slowly. He narrowed his eyes, his face twisting into a mask of terrifying rage.

“What the fuck did you just say to me?” he whispered.

The quietness of his voice was a hundred times scarier than the shouting.

Perla’s face went pale. She let out a small, shaky laugh, her hand trembling as she clutched Gio a little tighter.

+15 Beris

“I... I only meant that she could visit Hazel on the weekends,” she stammered, her confidence vanishing, “I’m sure the girl misses her mother. And since Hazel’s new husband is a Senator... you don’t want a man like that digging into your business, do you? You don’t want him looking for dirt.”

Daddy took a step toward her. He didn’t care about senators or dirt. He only cared about what was his. And in his dark, twisted world, I was the one thing he would never, ever let go of.

Daddy didn’t stop until he was towering over Perla, “You think this is about business?” he asked, “You think I give a damn about a Senator’s ‘dirt’?”

Perla tried to pull her shoulders back, but she couldn’t stop her bottom lip from trembling, “I’m just being practical, Gio. The girl is a distraction for you. She’s... she’s not like us. If her mother wants to deal with her episodes and her crying, let her.”

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My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 221

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“She is a Toricelli,” Daddy snapped, “And no one-not God, not the law, and especially not that woman—takes what belongs to me.”

He reached out, his hand moving fast. I thought he was going to hit her, and I sucked in a breath, clutching my teddy bear to my chest. But he didn’t. He grabbed Perla’s chin, forcing her to look up at him.

“I want to make one thing very clear to you,” he hissed, “Do not ever suggest my daughter is ‘less’ than your son again. They are my blood. And in this house, blood is the only thing that matters. If that Senator wants to dig, let him dig. He’ll find out very quickly that I’ve buried men a lot more powerful than him in shallower graves than he can imagine.”

He let go of her chin like she was something dirty. Perla slumped back against the sofa, her face white as a sheet She didn’t say another word, her eyes darting to the floor.

“If I ever hear you suggest giving my daughter away again even for a Saturday, you’ll find out exactly how much of a ‘priority’ you are to me compared to her. Do you understand?”

Perla looked down at her lap, “I understand, Gio. I’m sorry.”

Then, Daddy’s face changed. He held out his hand, his fingers beckoning me forward.

“Come here, Gianna,” he said, his voice suddenly smooth and sweet, like nothing had happened.

I walked over to him, my legs feeling like jelly. He reached down and picked me up, tucking me into his side. He still picked me up just like he did when I was a baby. He kissed the top of my head, his grip almost too tight, like he was afraid I might float away if he let go for even a second.

“Don’t listen to her,” he whispered into my hair, “You aren’t a distraction. You’re my princess. And Daddy is going to make sure that woman never bothers us again. I’m going

to make sure she stays gone for good this time. Your brother is the future of the business, but you? You are my heart. And I don't let people cut my heart out."

I leaned my head against his shoulder, closing my eyes. As he stroked my hair, I tried to find a picture of mom in my head. I tried to remember her face, the way she smelled, or the sound of her voice when she tucked me in.

But there was nothing.

It had been four years. Four years since she disappeared from this house. Four years since Daddy had taken every photo of her and burned them in the fireplace while I watched from the stairs.

Now, when I tried to think of her, it was like looking at a window covered in thick fog. I knew someone was on the other side, but I couldn't see the shape of her nose or the color of her eyes anymore. She was becoming a ghost, a smudge of a memory that was fading a little more every day.

"Do you miss her?" Daddy whispered, pulling back just enough to look into my eyes. His gaze was searching, looking for any sign that I was still holding onto her.

I looked at the shattered phone on the floor and then at Perla, who was still shaking on the sofa. I knew the right answer. I knew the only answer that kept the house quiet.

"I don't remember her, Daddy," I said.

A slow smile spread across his face. He squeezed me tight, his fingers digging into my ribs.

"Good girl," he murmured, kissing my forehead again. "That's my perfect girl. You don't need her. You have me. I'm the only one who's ever going to stay."

I nodded against his chest, but deep down, in the part of me I kept hidden from him, I missed her a lot.

One of the guards pushed the door open just an inch, "Boss," the guard said, "The doctor is here. He's waiting in his office."

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Chapter 222

The moment those words left the guard's mouth, a cold spike of ice drove straight through my chest. My heart didn't just speed up, it got out of control. My stomach curdled, and for a second, I thought I might be sick right there on Daddy's clothes.

It hurts so bad. I don't want to be in this chair anymore. I try to be a big girl, and I try to stay real still like Daddy wants, but the pain is too big to hide.

When the doctor touches those wires to my skin, I cry and I cry until my throat is sore, and I beg him to please, please stop, but he doesn't even blink. He just looks at his watches and writes things down in his little book. He doesn't have any tears in his eyes, and he doesn't look sorry at all.

But I didn't move. I didn't cry. I didn't let my hands shake. I had learned a long time ago that Daddy loved perfection, and perfection didn't feel fear. I kept my face still.

"Perfect timing," Daddy said. He set me down on my feet, but he didn't let go of my hand. He led me through the house.

We entered the private medical rooms. The doctor was already there, wearing a white coat that looked too bright under the lights.

"Sit, Gianna," Daddy said, pointing to the chair in the center of the room.

I sat. My legs were too short to reach the floor, so they dangled. The doctor didn't say hello. He just began to unpack his bag. He laid the items out on a silver tray.

There were long, thin blades that looked like silver needles. There were black wires attached to a small box... the kind of wires that made your muscles jump and your teeth ache. There were glass vials filled with liquid the color of my bruised skin.

"It's not working, Vance," Daddy snapped, pacing behind my chair, "She still has the fog. She still loses her focus. I'm paying you a fortune to fix her brain, and she's still falling behind. I want her sharp. I want her perfect."

The doctor adjusted his glasses, his eyes staying on the tray. "You have to understand, Giovanni. The human brain has a natural defense mechanism. When the fog hits, it's a shutdown. We aren't trying to heal her, we are trying to bypass the hardware."

He picked up the small box with the wires, the machine letting out a high-pitched whine.

"When we apply the targeted electrical stimulus," the doctor said, "it creates a brief window of neurological hyper – clarity. It's like a forest fire that clears out the brush. For about thirty minutes after the pain peak, the synaptic pathways are wide open. The fog is burned away. She'll be able to read, write, and process data at a level most adults can't reach."

"And the cost?" Daddy asked, stopping his pacing to lean over the table.

"The brain has to be pushed to the edge of its tolerance to trigger the reset," the doctor explained, his fingers tracing a sharp blade. "We call it 'Trauma-Induced Lucidity.' We

want to trap her mind in that tiny window right after the shock, where the pain clears up and everything becomes crystal clear. It’s a temporary fix, yes, but if we do it enough, we might be able to scar the brain into staying that way.”

I stared at the tray. I didn’t know what synaptic pathways or lucidity meant, but I knew the word pain. I knew the word scar.

The doctor walked toward me, the box in his hand. Daddy stood behind me, his heavy hands resting on my

shoulders. He wasn’t protecting me, he was holding me down.

“Do it,” Daddy said. “I don’t care what it takes. I want my daughter to be the smartest person in any room. I want her to be a masterpiece.”

I closed my eyes and gripped the edges of the chair so hard my hands ached.

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My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 223

Zen

The room was very dark and very cold. I crawled under my blankets, trying to find a place that didn’t sting, but it was like my whole body hurt and burned. Every time I moved, the pain jumped.

I bit my pillow so the guards in the hall wouldn’t hear me. I didn’t want Daddy to know I was failing.

I pulled my hand out from under the covers and looked at my fingers in the tiny bit of moonlight. There were small, round marks on the tips, angry red circles that turned into white blisters.

My feet felt like I had walked on hot coals, and the back of my arms were bleeding, like I had fallen on the gravel. I couldn’t even see the marks on my back, but when my pajamas touched my skin, it felt like a thousand tiny needles.

“Please,” I whispered, and squeezed my eyes shut, and the tears just kept coming, hot and salty against my cheeks, “Please, God. Just make me smart. Make it go away so the doctor doesn’t have to use the box anymore. If I’m perfect, Daddy will be happy. If I’m perfect, the pain will stop.”

I curled into a tiny ball, sobbing into the mattress. I just wanted to be like the other girls. I wanted to read the big books without the words dancing away. I wanted my brain to work so the man in the white coat would go away and never come back.

The sound of my bedroom door moving made me freeze. I held my breath, my heart thumping against the bed.

“Gianna?”

It was Leone.

Leone Caruso was the son of my Daddy’s underboss. My Daddy told me that I was promised to him. He said that one day, when we were all grown up, Leone would be my husband.

I sat up a little bit, my breath coming in gasps. The door opened just enough to let him in, and then he closed it

behind him.

“I heard you through the wall,” he said, walking over to my bed.

I tried to wipe my face with the back of my hands, but it hurt to move my fingers. “I’m okay, Leone.”

He didn’t believe me. He never did. He sat on the edge of the bed. He looked at my hands, and I saw his jaw get tight, the way his father’s did when he was angry.

“He did it again,” Leone whispered.

“Daddy says it’s to help me,” I sobbed, and leaned toward him, and he put his arms around me, being very careful not to touch my back, “He says I have to be perfect. But it hurts so much, Leone. It hurts all the time.”

Leone tucked my head under his chin, “When I’m the boss, I’m going to throw that doctor into the ocean. And I’m going to throw his box in, too.”

I clutched at his shirt, my sore fingers shaking. “Don’t tell Daddy I cried. Please. He’ll be mad at me.”

“I won’t tell,” Leone promised, “I’ll stay here until you fall asleep. I’ll watch the door. The doctor won’t come back while I’m here.”

I lay back down on the pillow, my body finally starting to relax. Leone sat right next to me on the edge of the mattress. He didn’t grab my hand because he knew it was sore, instead, he gently held my wrist, making sure his

touch was light so he wouldn’t hurt my burned fingers.

With Leone watching the door, all the scary thoughts of the lightning box finally began to drift away.

Janedoewritings

Author

+15 Barius

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 224

Gianna

All I tasted was his heat, my head snapping back against the door as his teeth grazed my bottom lip. I let out a low moan, my fingers digging into the hard muscles of his shoulders, trying to pull him even closer.

I felt his hand leave my waist, the heat of his palm burning through the black satin. He traced the curve of my hip, his thumb dragging over the fabric with a rough pressure that made my toes curl. He moved up, his touch skimming over my ribs, barely brushing the side of my breast.

Then, his fingers reached my throat.

He wrapped his large hand around my neck, his grip tightening until the world narrowed down to just him. He tilted my head back, exposing the line of my throat to the dim light.

He broke the kiss, but only to trail his tongue down the side of my neck. I shivered, my eyes fluttering shut as he licked a path from my collarbone up to the edge of my chin. He tasted every inch of me like a starving man who had finally found water. His breath was hot and ragged against my skin, sending a violent rush of heat straight to

my core.

He groaned, a deep, animal sound that vibrated against my skin, before he forced his mouth back onto mine. This time, his tongue pushed past my lips, searching for mine.

His other hand bunched up the silk at my thigh, pulling the dress higher and higher until his cold rings bit into the skin of my bare hip. I was trapped between the hard wood of the door and the harder heat of his body, and for the first time since the office, the world was finally quiet.

There was nothing, but the taste of him, and the way he held me.

I felt my feet leave the floor as he hooked his arms under my thighs, hoisting me up like I weighed nothing. I wrapped my legs around his waist, locking my ankles behind his back, clinging to him as he carried me into the

room.

He didn't stop the assault on my mouth. Our lips stayed locked, a messy, wet slide of heat that made my head spin. He was moving toward the bed, but he was moving slow, like he wanted to devour every inch of me before we even got there.

He broke the deep kiss for a second, but he didn't pull away. He began to pepper my face with hard, fast pecks. He kissed the corner of my mouth, then my cheek, then the sensitive spot right under my ear.

"Raph..." I breathed, my voice breaking.

In response, he growled against my skin and buried his face in the crook of my neck. He nipped at the cord of my throat, his teeth grazing me just hard enough to make me gasp, before his tongue licked away the sting. He moved back up, his lips brushing over my jawline, kissing my chin, my nose, and my eyelids until I was shaking in his

arms.

The silk of my nightdress was bunched up around my waist, my bare skin rubbing against his slacks, but all I could feel was the friction of his stubble and the pressure of his mouth. He was eating me alive, and I was letting

him.

He finally reached the edge of the bed. He didn't lay me down gently. He fell with me, our bodies hitting the mattress with a heavy thud, but he never let go of my neck, and he never stopped the fire of his mouth against

mine.

He pinned me deep into the mattress. But as the silk of my dress slid against the sheets, a cold shiver that had nothing to do with him, hit me.

Underneath the black satin, my skin was a map of secrets.

I could feel them even without looking-the faint lines on my thighs where I had pressed my own fingernails in too deep during the lonely nights. The bruises and burns on my skin from the electric shocks. The small, round pale spots on the small of my back and the back of my arms where the doctor's lightning had burned the life out of my skin. I felt a sudden

urge to hide, to curl up and pull the blankets over my head so he wouldn’t see the wreckage.

But then, Raphael shifted.

His thigh forced its way between mine, and I felt the thick, heavy length of him pressing hard against my leg through the thin fabric of his sweatpants. The sheer size of him made my stomach flip, a mix of fear and a wild, dark heat that drowned out the memories of the doctor’s room.

He pulled back, his eyes dark and blown out as he looked down at me. His large hands gripped the top of my nightdress. With one violent jerk, I heard the sharp snap of the thin silk straps. The fabric tore like paper, and he pulled the dress down to my waist, baring me to the cool air and his scorching gaze.

I tried to bring my hands up to cover myself, but he caught my wrists, pinning them above my head with one hand.

“Don’t,” he growled.

He lowered his head, his focus shifting entirely to my breasts. He started with his tongue, tracing the curve of the soft skin that made me arch off the bed. Then, he took one peak into his mouth, sucking hard, his tongue swirling in a way that made a bolt of lightning, a different kind, a good kind, shoot straight between my legs.

He held my breasts together with his large, rough hands, his thumbs dragging over the tips until I was squirming

under him.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 225

“You have no idea how perfect these are,” he rasped.

As he spoke, his hand moved down. Through the thin gray fabric of his sweatpants, I saw the shape of him. He gripped himself, his knuckles white as he stroked the heavy length of his cock over the cloth. He was huge, a rigid rod of muscle that looked like it could snap the fabric. He didn’t look away from my eyes, he was searching for a sign, a look, a tiny nod to tell him I wanted it just as much as he did.

I didn’t give him a nod. I reached down, my fingers trembling. I pushed his hand away from his crotch, feeling the sheer heat and power of him through the cotton.

I hooked my thumbs into the waistband of his sweatpants and pulled. I dragged the fabric down past his hips, and his cock sprang free.

It was beautiful and terrifying all at once. It was dark, thick, and pulsing with every beat of his heart. A single bead of moisture glistened at the tip. I reached out and wrapped my hand around him. He was so big I could barely get my fingers all the way around. I gave him one slow stroke, watching his eyes blow out until they were almost entirely black.

“Gianna,” he choked out, his jaw tight.

I looked him dead in the eyes, showing him I wasn’t the girl from the sidewalk anymore. I took his long, heavy cock and guided it upward, laying the hot weight of it right between my breasts.

The heat of him against my chest made me gasp. I used both of my hands to push my breasts together as hard as I could, squeezing them tight around the thick shaft. I trapped him there, burying him in my soft skin until only the tip was peeking out near my chin.

He stated at his tensed muscle buried deep in the valley of my cleavage. I squeezed him even tighter, my nipples rubbing against his sides, and I saw his whole body shudder.

“Hold them,” he said, a little breathless, “Hold them together for me. Harder.”

I did what he said. I dug my fingers into the sides of my own breasts, pushing them toward the center until the skin was tight and the cleavage was so deep it swallowed almost the entire length of him. The heat radiating off him was incredible, a scorching fever that made my head light.

He gripped my shoulders, his fingers digging into my skin, and then he began to move.

He thrust his hips forward, sliding his thick cock through the tight friction of my breasts. Every time he pushed forward, the tip of him brushed against my chin, and when he pulled back, the base of him dragged over my collarbone.

“Yeah, just like that,” he hissed, his jaw locking tight.

He picked up the pace. I could feel the power in his thighs as he slammed against my chest, his cock rubbing relentlessly against the sensitive inner curves of my breasts. I squeezed even harder, my knuckles turning white as I tried to give him every bit of friction he wanted.

I watched the veins in his neck pop and his brow furrow in a mask of beautiful, crude concentration.

I arched my back, pushing my chest up into him, meeting every hard shove with a sob of pleasure. I was trapped under his weight, pinned by his hunger, and as he fucked the

space between my breasts with a wild, starving energy, I realized I didn't want to be anywhere else in the world.

Raphael suddenly stopped, he stayed pinned against me, his chest heaving. He leaned down, his face inches from

+15 Bangs

mine, and I saw the dark fire in his eyes.

He reached up and gripped my jaw. He forced my mouth open, and then he was kissing me again, harder, deeper, and more desperate than before. His tongue pushed inside, before he bit my lower lip hard.

He pulled back just an inch, his breath hot on my lips. His hands moved down to the waist of my nightdress, his fingers hooking into the silk. He started to tug it down, ready to strip the fabric away and leave me completely bare under the lights.

A cold, sharp shock of reality hit me.

"Wait," I gasped.

I grabbed his wrists, my fingers shaking as I held him back. I swallowed hard, the lump in my throat feeling like a stone. I could still feel the stinging heat on my upper thighs, the fresh, angry burns from the morning.

Raphael froze. He looked down at my hands on his wrists, then up at my face. His brow furrowed, "What is it?" he asked.

I looked away from him, staring at the dark shadows in the corner of the room. My heart felt like it was breaking.

"I... I'm not," I breathed, "I'm not the girl you probably want. I'm not perfect, Raphael. I have... I have things on me."

I squeezed my eyes shut, and a hot tear tracked a wet path into my hair. I thought of Leone. Leone had seen it all, and he had stayed, but Leone was a boy who grew up. Someone like Raphael, who expected perfection in everything, he wouldn't understand.

"I have these marks," I breathed, "They're ugly. They're all over my thighs, like a map of everything that's wrong. I think... I know that if you see them, you'll be disgusted. Can we just... can we turn off the lights? Maybe if it's dark enough, you won't see them."

I felt his body go completely still against mine.

Janedoewritings Author

Swipe up!

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 226

Gianna

+15 Byrius

I felt his body go completely still against mine.

His jaw went slack for a second before his teeth clicked together in a hard, tight line. He stared down at me, his eyes searching my face with disbelief.

“I didn’t want you to go in blind,” I said, a hollow laugh bubbling in my chest. “Like I did to you at the office. If I had been honest about being... you know, an idiot, you never would have let me through the door. I just don’t want you to look at me afterward and feel sick. I can... I can use my hands, or my mouth. We don’t have to go all the way You don’t have to touch the parts of me that are ruined.”

“What the fuck?” he rasped, his voice breathy and filled with disbelief.

Raphael jerked back, his arms stiffening as he pushed himself away from me.

“What the fuck?” he said again.

He stared at the space where my nightdress was bunched at my waist, his chest heaving as if he couldn’t get enough air.

He’s thinking about the scars and he’s already sickened.

I scrambled backward on the mattress, my hands fumbling to pull the torn silk up over my chest.

“I... I understand,” I stammered, I couldn’t look at him anymore. I kept my eyes on the dark blankets, my fingers trembling so hard I could barely grip the fabric. “I should go. I should just go right now.”

I was certain that the disbelief on his face was because he was trying to imagine them, and the image was making

his stomach turn.

“I’ll leave,” I choked out.

I was halfway off the bed, my feet swinging toward the floor when I felt him move behind me. He didn't grab my arm. He lunged forward, his hands hooking under around my waist, and he hauled me backward with a strength that made me let out a tiny, frightened squeak. He didn't let me fall flat. He pulled me up until I was on my hands and knees in the middle of the mattress.

"Wait-"I started, my palms digging into the soft sheets as I tried to crawl away.

But Raphael was already over me, his big body looming above mine, blocking out every bit of light in the room. He leaned down, his weight pressing against my back. I felt so small beneath him.

He reached forward, his long fingers wrapping around my neck. He held me right there, pinning me in place so I couldn't turn around or hide my face in the pillow. I was stuck on all fours, trembling so hard the bed shook beneath us.

He dipped his head low, pressing his mouth right against the shell of my ear. I could feel the hot, damp rush of his breath and the scratchy rub of his stubble against my skin. It sent a shiver down my spine that made my knees feel like they were going to give out.

"You're not going anywhere," he snapped.

The way he said it made my heart stop. It wasn't an ask. He held my neck tighter, forcing me to stay still, forcing

me to listen to the sound of his rough breathing.

He didn't keep me there on my knees for long. He slid his hand from my neck to my shoulder and nudged me. He didn't use his strength to hurt me, he used it to turn me over until I was lying flat on my back, staring up at his beautiful face.

I tried to look away, my chest heaving with those short, shaky breaths that made my throat ache. I wanted to carl up. I wanted to hide the parts of me that weren't smooth or pretty. But Raphael wouldn't let me. He settled his weight between my legs, pinning me down with the heat of his body, and used his thumb to catch a tear before it could get lost in my hair.

"Do you even have a single idea how many scars I have on my body?" he asked.

He took my hand and pressed my palm flat against his ribs. I felt the hard, rigid muscle of his side, but under my fingertips, I felt a long, bumpy line, a scar that felt old and tough. Then he moved my hand to his shoulder, where the skin was uneven and knotted.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 227

“I have scars everywhere, Mess,” he whispered, his lips brushing against mine as he spoke, “I’ve been cut, I’ve been burned, and I’ve been shot. We live in a world that bites, and it leaves its teeth in us. You think I’m going to look at you and see anything other than how much I want you?”

He leaned down, nuzzling his nose against the side of my neck, breathing me in.

“You’re so hot,” he groaned into my skin, “You’re sitting here worrying about lines and spots, and all I can think about is how soft your skin feels. All I can think about is how much I need to be inside you.”

He kissed the hollow of my throat, his tongue flicking out to taste me.

His hands slid back down to the ruined dress, his fingers hooking into the torn silk. “I’m the one who wanted you first, Mess. Not the other way around. I’m the one who made the deal to have you, and I want you just like this. Messy, and real. You’re the most beautiful woman in this house, and I’m not letting you go... not until I’ve had every single inch of you.”

A spark of confidence flickered in my chest, blooming into a heat that made my heart race for a different reason. 1 didn’t hide anymore. I tilted my head back, a small smile touching my lips, and I raised my face off the mattress to meet him.

The second our lips touched, Raphael went feral.

He literally attacked my mouth that made me gasp. It was crazy and frantic motion, his teeth grazed my lips, and his tongue pushed deep, claiming every corner of my mouth with a force that left me lightheaded.

He pulled back for a fraction of a second, his lips still brushing against mine.

“I can’t get enough,” he whispered directly into my mouth, “I can’t stop kissing you, Gianna. I could eat you alive and it still wouldn’t be enough.”

He began to kiss and lick his way down my skin, his tongue wet and rough as he tasted my stomach and the skin of my waist.

His hands reaching for the hem of my ruined nightdress, and he stripped the silk away completely, tossing it into the dark corners of the room.

Without thinking, I clamped my legs tightly together, locking my knees and squeezing my thighs so hard they shook. I wanted him, but the thought of him seeing the fresh, angry marks from this morning made me want to

vanish.

Raphael stayed between my knees, his head dipping lower. He ignored my resistance, his mouth moving to the soft swell of my mound. He kissed me there, his tongue dragging over my skin that made my breath hitch in a broken sob.

He reached for my knees, his hands wrapping around them. He tried to pull them apart, but I shook my head, my fingers clutching the bedsheets until my knuckles were white.

He moved his grip to my inner thighs and used his strength to force my legs open. My muscles fought him for a second, but he pushed my knees back and wide, pinning them down until I was completely exposed to the light.

He went still.

There were the slight, red burns on the tops of my thighs, the ones that still stung with a dull heat. Near them were a few purplish bruises. And scattered across the pale skin were the faint, thin white lines, the old scars of cuts that had long since healed but never really went away.

I squeezed my eyes shut, waiting for the sound of him pulling away. Instead, I felt his warm hands soften their grip on my knees. He leaned in closer, his dark head dipping down.

Slowly, he pressed his lips to the inside of my thigh, right next to the freshest burn. He kissed the reddened skin with a tenderness that made my heart ache, his tongue darting out to lick the marks as if he could taste my pain and swallow it whole. He moved upward, licking a path across the faint white scars and the bruises that were still tender to the touch. He treated my skin like it was sacred, his stubble grazing my inner thighs until I was shaking for a completely different reason.

GET T

+15 Berlus

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 228

“Raphael,” I gasped, my fingers tangling in the sheets as my hips gave a small, helpless twitch.

And then he pressed his face into my core, his mouth sealing over my pussy. I let out a sharp cry as his tongue found me. He was eating me with that same starving hunger he'd used on my mouth.

I was wide open, my legs pinned by his weight, and as he drank from me, the shame finally started to burn away. He was licking every part of me, his nose brushing against my sensitive skin.

He didn't care that I was broken.

He didn't care about the scars.

He was devouring me as if I were the only thing that could keep him alive.

He used his thumbs to spread me even wider, holding me open so he could get even closer. His tongue was flat, moving in long strokes that made my entire body go rigid.

It had been five years. Five years of touching myself with shaking hands just to feel human, and five years of no one ever getting this close. The sensation was so intense I felt lightheaded. Every time his tongue flicked against that tiny, hidden spot, a white-hot spark of light exploded behind my eyes.

I tried to close my legs, to hide from the overwhelming heat of it, but he wouldn't let me. He growled against my skin, his hands like iron as he pinned my thighs down, forcing me to take every bit of the pleasure he was giving.

"Raphael, please," I sobbed, my head thrashing on the pillow.

The friction was perfect. The wetness was everywhere. I felt the tension building deep in my belly, a tight coil that was winding tighter and tighter until I couldn't breathe.

Then, it snapped.

My body jerked violently as the orgasm hit me. It was a hard, toe-curling explosion that made me scream into the room. I felt every single nerve in my body catch fire. For five years, I had been a frozen, and in one minute, Raphael had burned me back to life.

I slumped back into the sheets. I was dripping, shaking, and completely undone. He didn't pull away immediately, he stayed there for a moment, his face pressed against me, tasting my release.

"You taste like a dream, Gianna," he rasped, as he leaned back, licking his lips as if he wanted to catch every last drop, "So sweet. I could stay down here for hours just drinking you in."

He reached out with his hand, his long fingers finding that tiny, swollen clit that was still thrumming from the climax. He didn't just touch it, he began to swirl his thumb over it.

Then he pinched me, a sharp, sudden squeeze of my clit between his thumb and forefinger.

I let out a high, broken cry, my hips jerking upward. The pain was tiny, but the pleasure that followed was a massive, sparking shock.

"That's it," he hissed, his face twisting into a smirk, "Make those pretty sounds for me. You're just a dirty little whore for this, aren't you, Mess?"

He pinched me again, harder this time, while his other hand dug into my hip.

"Tell me," he stated, his breath hot against my inner thigh, "Tell me you want it. Tell me you're my little slut and you need me to fuck the life back into you. Say it, Gianna. Let me hear how bad you need it."

+15 Benus

The shame was gone, replaced by a wild, desperate need to please the man who looked at my scars and instead of asking questions, he simply loved them.

"I want it," I sobbed, my fingers digging into his hair, "Please, Raphael. I want it."

Janedoewritings Author

Swipe up...again!

P

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 229

Gianna

+15 Bars

The shame was gone, replaced by a wild, desperate need to please the man who looked at my scars and instead of asking questions, he simply loved them.

"I want it," I sobbed, my fingers digging into his hair, "Please, Raphael. I want it."

He smiled, pulled his hand back for a split second before bringing his open palm forward.

Smack.

The sound of his hand hitting my wet, swollen skin was loud. I let out a choked gasp, my back arching off the bed. Before I could even catch my breath, he did it again, and then a third time, hitting me from below with an upward force that made my entire body shudder.

“You like that, don’t you?” he rasped, watching the skin turn a soft, angry pink.

He grabbed my hips and hauled me upward, before flipping me over as if I weighed nothing at all. He shoved my chest down into the pillows and yanked my hips high into the air, forcing me onto my hands and knees again.

He settled in behind me, his thighs brushing against mine. I felt the hot, rigid length of his cock press against my backside, a blunt reminder of exactly what was coming next.

He reached around, his fingers digging into my waist. I was wide open, exposed from behind.

He raised his hand and brought it down hard against my cheek, not the one on my face, but the curve of my backside.

I let out a low cry, my fingers bunching the sheets as I tried to hold my position. He didn’t wait for the heat to fade, he did it again.

Then he sank his hands into my flesh. He began to knead my ass, his fingers digging deep into the soft curves, squeezing and pulling as if he were trying to mold me.

“You have such a beautiful little round ass, Gianna,” he hissed, “It’s perfect.”

He leaned down lower, his chest pressing into my spine, “I want to sink my teeth into you.”

He suited the action to the word. He leaned in and nipped at the curve where my thigh met my butt, his teeth grazing the sensitive skin just hard enough to make me gasp.

He pulled back just enough to create a gap between us. The loss of his heat made me feel cold and exposed. I stayed on my hands and knees.

I couldn’t help it, I needed to see him. I twisted my neck, looking back over my shoulder with wide eyes.

Raphael was kneeling behind me, his chest heaving. He reached for the nightstand, and I watched, mesmerized, as he tore open a small square packet with his teeth and roll the thin, latex condom over the length of his cock.

Seeing the sheer size of him again, framed by his thighs, made a fresh wave of heat bloom deep in my belly.

He moved his hands from my waist to my shoulders, pinning me down so I couldn't move as he positioned the blunt head of his cock against me.

+158gra

"Stay still," he ordered.

He pushed, just a tiny bit. I felt the skin stretch, a tight heat that made my eyes snap open. He was so wide, that even the smallest inch felt like he was taking up every bit of space I had. I let out a low, whimpering sound, my fingers clawing at the bedsheets.

"Shh," he whispered, pressing his face into the crook of my neck, "I'm going slow, Mess. Just breathe for me."

He pushed again, another half-inch sliding inside. The feeling of being full was overwhelming. I felt my inner muscles tensing, trying to fight the invasion. He waited, letting my body get used to the size of him, before he pushed a little deeper.

Little by little, he filled me. Each time he moved forward, I felt the skin around him pull taut, a tight sensation that made my hips tremble.

"Fuck," he groaned, stopped when he was barely halfway in, his forehead resting against the back of my head, "f I force any more right now, I'm going to tear you. I'm going to hurt you, and I don't want to break you... not yet."

He began to move, an agonizing slide in and out. Every time he pulled back and pushed in again, I felt the friction of his skin against mine.

"Yes, God, yes," I gasped, as I arched my back to try and pull him deeper, "You're... you're so..."

"I know," he hissed.

The feeling of him moving inside me was a slow-motion storm. I felt every ridge of him, every pulse of his blood. I was stretched so wide I felt like I might split, but the sensation of being finally, truly full after five years of emptiness was a drug I couldn't get enough of.

P

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 230

I wanted more, but for now, I could only hold on as he slowly, carefully claimed the space I had tried so hard to hide.

Raphael seemed to lose the last of his control as my body finally began to ease up to his size. He didn't wait anymore. He reached forward, his hand diving into the mess of my hair. He didn't just grab it, he wrapped the long strands around his palm once, then twice, pulling it tight until my head was forced back and my throat was bated to the ceiling.

Then, he began to fuck me.

He slammed into me with a force that knocked the air right out of my lungs. The slow stretching was gone, replaced by a hard pounding. He thrust in and out, his hips hitting my backside with a loud, wet sound that echoed in the dark room.

"Oh, yes!" I screamed, the sound muffled by the pillow.

He used the grip on my hair to steer me, pulling my head up as he drove himself into me again and again.

He was so deep now, hitting a spot inside me that made my entire world turn white. I couldn't think. I couldn't speak. I could only feel the way he was owning me, the way his hand was coiled in my hair like a leash.

He pushed his pace even more, his body sweating, his muscles bunching and jumping under his skin. He was hitting me so hard my chest was bouncing against the mattress, my hands slipping on the sheets as I tried to hold

He was too big, too fast, and too strong, but I wanted it. I wanted the way he was using me. I wanted the sting in my scalp and the fire between my legs.

I felt the fire in my belly reach a breaking point. I didn't want to be under him anymore. I wanted to see him. I reached back, my fingers finding the hard muscles of his arms, and I gave a sharp tug. Raphael let out a surprised grunt as I scrambled forward, slipping away from his heat for just a second.

I turned around on my knees, and pressed my palms flat against his chest. I pushed, Raphael looked at me with wide, dark eyes as he fell back, his shoulders hitting the mattress.

A memory flickered in the back of my mind-an image of Leone. I remembered the light of the laptop screen in the dark, the way Leone would make me sit and watch those videos he found. "Look, Gianna," he would whisper. " Watch what she does. We can do this too."

I looked down at Raphael, and I wasn't afraid to use what I knew.

I moved over him, my knees sliding on either side of his thighs. I straddled him, my bare skin brushing against his. Raphael looked up at me, his chest heaving.

"Gianna, wait,"

"he rasped, his hands coming up to catch my waist. He shook his head, his hair messy against the pillow, "This... It's going to hurt you like this."

I leaned forward, the long strands of my hair falling over my shoulders. I took two of my fingers and slid them into his mouth, pressing down on his tongue to silence him.

"Shhh," I whispered, my eyes locking onto his.

His jaw went slack, he stopped talking, his hands gripping my hips so hard his knuckles turned white. I reached down between us, my fingers wrapping around the hot, pulsing trunk of his cock.

+15 Barius

I guided him to my entrance, the tip of him poking at the wet, swollen center of me. I didn't rush, I kept my fingers in his mouth, feeling the heat of his breath and the slight edge of his teeth.

Slowly, I began to lower myself.

One inch. I let out a sharp, hissing breath through my teeth. I felt the fullness of him pushing against my walls, demanding more space than I had to give.

Another inch. I watched Raphael's face. His eyes were blown wide, his nostrils flaring as he sucked on my fingers. I moved down again, feeling him filling every empty corner of my body.

I kept going, taking him in bit by bit, inch by painful, beautiful inch. My inner muscles screamed at the size of him, but I didn't stop. I used the rhythm Leone had asked me to learn.

I didn't move all the way down. I stayed right there, with only half of his length inside me, and I began to move.

I remembered the years of dance, the way I could bend my spine until it snapped, the way I could hold my body in the air on just the tips of my toes. I was a ballerina, a creature made of muscle and grace, and now I used that strength to own him. I began to roll my hips in a wide circle.

T

+15 Berus

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 231

The feeling was intense. Because I was only halfway down, the thickest part of him was rubbing right against the entrance of my body, stretching the sensitive skin over and over. I moved like a snake, my spine curving and arching, my hips grinding into his pelvis.

I leaned over him, and pushed my fingers deeper into his mouth, not letting him breathe, not letting him speak. With my other hand, I reached up and fisted my fingers into his dark hair, yanking his head back against the pillow so he had to look at me.

I started to bounce, but it wasn't a clumsy movement. It was controlled. I stayed on the top half of him, rising up and slamming back down, my inner muscles clamping around him. Every time I hit the halfway point, I swiveled my hips, making the head of his cock grind against the spot that made my vision go blurry.

Raphael was losing his mind. I could see it in the way his eyes rolled back, the way his neck corded with thick, straining veins. He tried to lift his hips to meet me, to take more of me, but I used my grip on his hair to keep him pinned. I was the one in control. I was the one deciding how much he got to feel.

"Stay down," I ordered.

I moved faster. My legs were strong, my core tight as I worked him. I was rolling my hips so fast now that the friction was creating a wet, slapping sound that filled the room. I felt the heat between us rising until it was almost too much to bear. Raphael began to twitch beneath me, his hands digging into my thighs, his breath coming in desperate hitches around my fingers.

I jerked my hand out of his mouth, the air hissing back into his lungs. I let go of his hair, but I didn't let him go. I leaned forward until my chest was crushed against his. I reached out and wrapped my fingers around the thick, hot column of his neck.

I remembered this feeling. In the years with Leone, I had learned that I hated being on the bottom. I hated the idea of giving up control, of letting a man decide when I breathed or how I moved. Leone had known that. He had let me take charge, let me be the one with the power because it was the only way I could handle being touched at all.

I squeezed.

My thumb pressed hard against his esophagus, the thick bone of his throat shifting under my palm. I felt the pulse in his neck jumping against my skin. Raphael's eyes flew open, narrowed and bloodshot, as I cut off his air. He didn't fight me. He just stared up at me intensely.

I started to move again, I slammed my hips down onto him, taking all of him now, driving my body onto his massive length until there was no space left between us. I was bouncing and grinding, my fingers tightening on his throat, forcing him to look at me while I took everything he had.

The heat inside me was building into a screaming pressure. I felt the tight coil in my belly start to snap. At the same time, I felt Raphael's body go rigid. His back arched off the bed slightly, his muscles turning to stone beneath me. I felt the hot, thick pulse of him beginning to explode inside the condom.

The feeling of him coming while I held his life in my hand was too much.

My own climax hit me hard. My internal muscles clamped down on him, squeezing him. I buried my face in his shoulder, my grip on his neck finally loosening as my body dissolved into waves of pleasure.

I slumped against him, as I felt the thud of his heart slowing down.

"Now that..." he rasped, he let me stay draped over him, his hands rested on the small of my back, his fingers starting to move, kneading the skin of my sides as if he were trying to feel the bone underneath, "That was the

real Gianna. Not the girl yelling at me on the sidewalk. This one... this one has teeth."

Janedoewritings

Author

And... scene.

Hope you enjoyed that little spicy moment. What do you think about Gianna taking control like that-of him, of the situation, of everything between them?...

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 232

Raphael

I lay flat on my back, my heart slamming against my ribs. Above me, Gianna was a warm weight, her hair falling over us like a silk curtain. I was still buried deep inside her, the

heat of her body tight around me, and every nerve I had was still screaming from the shock of what she had just done.

I stared at the ceiling, my mind racing. I've had women before. I've had many but this was different. No one had ever dared to put their hands on my throat. No one had ever forced my mouth open with their fingers and told me to stay down.

I thought back to the fire in her eyes just a minute ago. That look. That damned look. She looked at me like there d be consequences if I didn't listen to her. No woman had ever dared to touch me like that. No one had ever looked me in the eye and told me to stay down, and then actually had the power to make me do it. And it had made me come so hard my vision went black, a violent explosion that felt like it was tearing through my very soul.

It was a shock to my system.

I closed my eyes, the image of her movement burned into my brain. She had moved like a snake. Her upper body stayed still, but her hips and waist had rolled in those perfect circles.

She knew exactly how to use her flexibility to drive a man insane. The way her spine curved and her hips swiveled... it was hypnotizing.

Gianna let out a long, shaky sigh and began to move. She slowly lifted herself up, her muscles trembling from the effort. As she rose, I felt myself slip out of her. The loss of her heat was like a sudden chill, a wet, sliding sensation that left me feeling empty. She scrambled to the side of the bed, her legs weak, and lay there with her head nuzzled in the pillow.

I sat up slowly, my body aching in the best way possible. I looked down at the condom. I didn't want to make a mess, I liked things clean, organized, and efficient. I reached down and gripped the base of the latex, sliding it off. I tied a quick knot at the top.

I didn't have to get up. I just tapped a small, hidden button on the side of my nightstand.

A few seconds later, a soft, high-pitched hum filled the room. A sleek, circular robot, glowing with a faint blue ring of light, zipped silently across the hardwood floor. It stopped right next to my side of the bed. A small, motorized lid on its top slid open. I leaned over the edge and dropped the used condom into the bin.

The lid zipped shut. The little machine hurried back to its charging station in the wall, disappearing as if it had never been there.

Gianna's head turned slowly, her eyes following the little blue light as it scurried back into its hole in the baseboard.

Then, a small, bubbly sound broke the silence. It grew until she let out a real laugh, a bright sound that seemed to bounce off the walls of my bedroom. She looked back at me, her hair a wild mess around her face, and the corners of her eyes crinkled.

“A robot?” she managed to say, her voice still a little breathless and raspy from the screaming. “You have a little robot butler to take out your... trash?” 1

She shook her head, a stray tear of laughter tracking through the sweat on her cheek.

I leaned back on my elbows, feeling the cool air hit my bare chest. I couldn’t help the small smirk that pulled at my lips.

“Efficiency is everything, Gianna,” I said.

She laughed again, a softer sound this time, and looked down at her hands and found myself staring at the curve of her neck, my mind already wondering what other surprises she was hiding behind.

She glanced at the clock glowing on my wall, and she started to shift, her legs sliding off the edge of the mattress as she looked around for the remains of her dress.

“I have to go,” she whispered, “My mother... she’ll notice I’m gone. She’ll come looking for me if I’m not in my bedroom. She notices everything.”

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My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 233

She reached for the floor, but I was faster. I reached out and clamped my hand around her waist, and I yanked her back toward the center of the bed, making her stumble against the pillows.

“No,” I told her, I sat up, looming over her until she was pinned between my arms, “You’re not going anywhere yet. I haven’t gotten my fill.”

I leaned in close, my nose brushing against hers. Just as he opened her mouth to say something, I crashed my mouth back onto hers. I pulled her body back onto mine, her soft chest pressing against my hard ribs, her legs tangling with mine as I rolled her beneath me.

Every time I pulled back to catch a breath, I Peppered her face with short, hard kisses. I kissed her jaw, the tip of her nose, and that spot on her neck I’d already marked.

My hands wandering over her curves, reminding her of exactly how good we felt together.

While my mouth was busy devouring hers, my right hand moved. I didn't have to look. I reached for the top drawer of the nightstand, my fingers sliding over the smooth wood until I felt the familiar plastic square of another wrapper. I felt her gasp into my mouth as she heard the faint crinkle of the foil.

I didn't let the kiss break. I held her close with one arm, as I discarded the wrapper, the small piece of plastic fluttering to the floor where the robot would eventually find it. I slipped on the condom, and positioned myself between her thighs again.

I didn't go in. I waited, my muscles coiled and ready, watching her. I wanted to see that spark again. I wanted her to try and take it, and this time, I wasn't going to make it easy.

I didn't just give her the lead this time. I hovered over her, my weight supported by my forearms, my chest barely grazing her sensitive nipples. I wanted to see if she would grab for it, if that fire I saw earlier was a fluke or a part of her soul she had finally let out of the cage.

I nudged the head of my cock against her, but I didn't go in. I stayed right at the entrance, teasing the wetness of her, moving in a circle that made her hips tilt upward. I watched her face, waiting for that shift in her eyes, that sharp look that told me that the ballerina was ready to fight.

She didn't disappoint.

She reached down, her small hand covering mine over my cock, trying to guide me inside. I locked my arm, holding my position. I wanted her to fight for every inch. She let out a frustrated hiss and used her legs, hooking them around my waist and pulling with a strength that surprised me.

She arched her back, her hips snapping upward to meet me. I resisted for a heartbeat, savoring the way her muscles strained against mine, before I let her win just a little. I slid an inch inside her, the tight, wet heat of her body gripping me so hard I nearly lost my breath.

She reached up, her fingers digging into the muscles of my shoulders, and she pulled herself up until her lips were brushing mine, when I pulled my face away, she lunged for my throat again, her palm pressing against my windpipe just like before.

The shock of it sent a bolt of white-hot electricity straight to my groin. I fought her for it, trying to tuck my chin, trying to roll her over, but she was like a snake, fast, slippery, and impossible to pin down.

We weren’t having sex, we were a war of who could take more and who could give less. And she was winning, and the more she fought me for the control, the more I felt like I was finally, truly waking up.

I didn’t want to just be inside her; I wanted her under my thumb. I grabbed her hips, my fingers sinking into the soft flesh of her waist, and tried to wrench her over. I wanted to shove her face into the mattress and take her from behind, to feel the power of driving into her while she was pinned flat.

“Turn over,” I grunted, my voice thick with the strain.

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I used my weight to push, trying to roll her onto her stomach. But Gianna used the strength in her legs to lock around my waist, her ankles crossing behind my back to keep me in place. She arched her back, her spine curving like a bow, and shoved her palms against my chest with a sudden force.

She was trying to push me back, trying to make me lie flat so she could climb on top of me again. She wanted to be the one looking down. She wanted the view.

“No,” she gasped, her face flushed and her eyes bright with a wild light.

We tumbled across the bed. I managed to get her halfway onto her side, my knee wedging between her thighs to keep her open, but she grabbed my hair and pulled. The sharp sting made my head snap back, and she used that second of weakness to throw her weight to the left.

I hit the mattress with a thud, and for a moment, she was over me, her hair whipping across my chest but I wasn’t done. I grabbed her wrists and flipped us again, my heart thumping against my ribs. We were rolling back and forth, the sheets twisting into ropes around our legs.

Every time I thought I had her pinned, she used her grace to slip away. She was fast, moving her hips in ways that made me lose my grip, sliding her body against mine until I didn’t know where I ended and she began. I pushed her down, my chest heaving, but she hooked a foot behind my calf and tripped me, sending us both crashing down into the pillows.

The friction of our bodies fighting was almost better than the sex itself. Every shove, every pull, and every time we crashed together made the fire in my gut burn hotter. I was

sweating, my muscles shaking from the effort of trying to hold her, but she just kept coming at me.

We were both gasping for air, our skin slick and red, neither of us willing to give up an inch.

It was a beautiful, dirty war.

Every time I drove into her during the struggle, it was like a lightning strike, a sharp burst of pleasure that made the fight even more desperate.

Then Gianna found her opening, she twisted her torso and used the momentum of our rolling bodies to heave me backward. My shoulders hit the mattress hard.

Before I could recover, she was there. She slid her knees on either side of my ribs, her wet heat sliding perfectly over my length. She was on top, her chest heaving, her eyes glowing like a cat's in the dark.

I didn't stay down for long. I reached up and grabbed the brass headboard, pulling myself into a sitting position while she was still impaled on me.

Now, we were chest to chest, sitting upright in the center of the rumpled bed. I wrapped my arms around her waist, my fingers digging into the soft skin of her lower back to hold her. She responded by throwing her arms around my neck, her fingers deep into the hair at the base of my skull.

We were a mess, our skin red from the friction of the fight, our hair sticking to our foreheads, and we were both out of breath.

"Truce," she whispered, as she leaned her forehead against mine, "I can't... I can't fight you and do this at the same time."

I let out a low chuckle and pulled her closer, my nose brushing against the crook of her neck, "Truce," I agreed, For now."

I could feel the pulse of her heart against my chest, and the way her inner muscles were squeezing me, tight and desperate. I closed my eyes, letting my head fall back as the pleasure started to turn into a ache in my bones.

She began to move faster, her hands moving from my neck to my chest, her nails leaving long, pale tracks in my skin. I groaned, my grip on her waist tightening until my knuckles were white.

The truce was a fragile thing, held together only by the fact that we were both too far gone to care who was winning.

Janedoewritings

Author

Swipe up for the next update

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 235

Raphael

+15 Berus

“You want me to walk you to your door or what?” I rasped, still sprawled out across the sheets.

My body felt like it had been through a meat grinder in the best way possible. I watched her struggle with the ruins of that black silk dress, the fabric was torn, a total loss. After the third time she tried to make it work and failed, she gave up and reached for my black t-shirt.

“What are you, my boyfriend now?” she shot back. She yanked her long hair out from the collar of the shirt, the fabric hanging halfway down her thighs.

She looked absolutely wrecked. Her hair was a bird’s nest, her lips were swollen and bruised, and she looked like she’d just crawled out of a beautiful, violent war. I knew I wasn’t looking like my usual polished self, either, my skin was covered in her nail marks and shined with sweat.

I propped myself up on my elbows, the muscles in my arms twitching. My eyes drifted down, scanning the pale skin of her inner thighs. The marks there were red and angry, blooming against her skin.

They weren’t scars like she told me that they were, they were wounds, fresh, almost as if someone had been torturing for past few days, targeting the same area again and again.

“Speaking of boyfriends,” I started, “What kind of blind, pathetic piece of shit fumbled a girl like you? I mean... considering...”

She stopped right beside the bed, narrowing her eyes at me. She looked dangerous even while wearing my clothes. “Considering... what, Raphael?”

I let my gaze crawl slowly back up her body. I felt a surge of something cold in my chest just thinking about another man ever having his hands on her and being stupid enough to let her go.

“Considering how you just fucking rocked my world, Gianna,” I hissed with the memory of her hands on my throat. “I’ve had a lot of women, but a man would have to be a special kind of fucking idiot to let someone like you walk out his door. If you were mine, I’d lock the fucking house and throw the key in the river just to keep you in my bed.”

“Maybe he didn’t fumble me,” she said. Suddenly, her eyes went blank, like she was looking at something miles away and years in the past. She was standing right there, but her mind was gone, lost in some old memory. “But he was a pathetic piece of shit,” she whispered. Then, the spark snapped back into her eyes as she looked down at me. “But then, all men are... just like you are, most of the time.”

I let out a short, dark bark of a laugh. I sat up all the way, the heavy blankets pooling around my waist while my bare chest caught the cold air. I reached out and hooked my fingers into the hem of my shirt where it hung off her hip, tugging her an inch closer to the edge of the bed.

“You still carrying a torch for your ex, Mess?” I asked. My jaw clamped shut so hard it ached.

I let my fingers graze the dark, blooming bruise on her inner thigh. My touch was light, almost a ghost of a feeling.

She flinched at my touch, a small frown deepening on her face as she took a sharp step back, “No. I mean, I was... for a long time. But not anymore. But I think a part of me will always love him. He was my first, so.... it took me years to get over him. Maybe that’s why I don’t do the whole relationship thing. I don’t do romance. You only get one shot at love, right?”

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A muscle jumped in my jaw. I stared at her, my blood feeling like ice, “I wouldn’t know. I’ve never loved anyone in my life.”

Her frown grew deeper, her eyes searching mine like she was looking for a lie, “You haven’t? Never?”

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My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 236

“No,” I said.

“Well…” she looked away, “I just think that once you love someone, you love them for life. There’s no second chance. If you think you’ve fallen for someone else, it just means you never really loved the first person to begin with.”

I stared at her. That kind of talk-that “one true love” bullshit-it sounded like something out of a book I’d never bother to read. But the way she said it, with that hollow look in her eyes, made it feel like a death sentence.

“That’s a pretty way to stay a prisoner, Gianna,” I said. I didn’t like the way she talked about him. I didn’t like the ghost of some pathetic piece of shit sitting in my bedroom, taking up space in her head.

I reached out again, more forceful this time. I grabbed her waist and hauled her back on my lap, forcing her to look at me. I didn’t care if I was being rough. I wanted her back in the present. I wanted her back with me.

“So what? You’re just done? One guy breaks your heart when you’re a kid and you decide to shut the lights out for good?” I leaned in, my breath hot against the skin of her neck. “That’s a waste of a life. And a waste of a woman who moves like you do.”

She let out a sharp breath, her hands resting tentatively on my shoulders, “It’s not about shutting the lights out, Raphael. It’s about being honest in love. Most people just play pretend. They move from one person to the next to fill the hole. I’m just… not interested in the act.”

“I don’t know shit about love,” I tracked a stray hair away from her face, my thumb dragging across her bottom lip. “But I don’t play pretend. I don’t do ‘romantic.’ I don’t do ‘forever.’ But I’m sitting here, and you’re sitting here, and the way you just took me apart that was… real.”

I slid my hand up under the t-shirt, my palm flat against the small of her back, pulling her flush against my chest. I wanted to burn that memory of her first love right out of her. I wanted to be the one who made her realize that ” once in a lifetime” was just a lie people told themselves to feel special.

“Maybe you didn’t love him,” I hissed, my eyes boring into hers. “Maybe he was just the first person to get his hands on you. There’s a fucking difference, Gianna.”

Her eyes flickered, a flash of pain or anger, I couldn’t tell which. She opened her mouth to argue, but I didn’t give her the chance. I moved my hand up to the back of her neck, pulling her face down until we were breathing the

same air.

“Don’t give some dead memory that much power,” I warned.

My other hand moved down, sliding between her thighs. I didn’t go for her pussy this time, instead, I let my fingers crawl over those dark red marks on her skin and caressed the bruises.

“Especially not in my bed. Or I’m going to make sure that by the time you leave this room, he’s the last thing on your fucking mind.”

She looked down at my hand on her leg, then back at my face. She didn’t pull away this time. Instead, she leaned in, her messy hair falling like a dark curtain between us.

“You talk a big game for a man who was just choking on my fingers,” she whispered, a smirk playing on her swollen lips.

I felt a jolt of heat hit me again, hard and fast. I gripped her hip tighter, my thumb digging into the bone.

“Yeah, and I’d do it again,” I hissed, “But don’t get it twisted, stepsister. I let you take that. I let you see what

happens when I decide to stop being the boss. Don’t mistake my mercy for a weakness.”

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My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 237

Gianna rolled her eyes, that told me she wasn’t buying my “mercy” speech for a second.

“Mercy?” she echoed, her voice dripping with sarcasm. “Is that what we’re calling it now? You looked pretty helpless from where I was sitting, Raphael. For a ‘boss,’ you make a very... very loud noise when you lose.

“I didn’t lose,” I growled, my hand sliding from her hip to the back of her thigh, hauling her so close our chests slammed together. “I explored. There’s a fucking difference. I wanted to see how far you’d go. Now I know.”

“And now that you know?” she asked, “What happens now?”

“Now I’m telling you, don’t roll your eyes at me again,” I hissed, “Unless you want me to show you exactly how helpless I am when I stop playing nice.”

She tilted her head, “Oh, and what do you do when you’re not playing nice, Raphael?”

“First thing I do is call you out on your bullshit,” I said, my voice dropping into a flat tone that she didn’t expect.

She frowned, her body stiffening in my arms, “What bullshit?”

“The bullshit where you talk about your scars,” I said, my hand tightening on her leg, “You call these scars. But they aren’t scars, Gianna. They are perfectly placed burns and bruises. And they look a hell of a lot newer than some old heartbreak,” I let my fingers graze the marks on her inner thigh, “The cuts on your legs... they look exactly like the ones I saw under your feet.”

She went pale instantly, the blood draining from her face, “My feet-”

“I remember patching them up after the hunt, Gianna,” I cut her off, I wasn’t going to let her lie to me, “They were carefully cut. Precise. Just like the marks on your thighs. So tell me... who did this to you recently?”

Gianna’s breath hitched, and she tried to pull away, but I held her tighter. She looked down at the floor, her fingers twisting the hem of my shirt. Her skin turned so pale, it seemed unreal.

“No one is hurting me, Raphael,” she whispered, “I’m just... clumsy. I fall. I trip. It’s nothing.”

I watched her. I didn’t say a word. I watched the way her eyes flickered toward the door, looking for an escape. watched the way she tucked her chin. I saw her hands starting to shake, a tiny tremor she couldn’t control.

I

My mind started working, putting the pieces together. I thought about the cuts under her feet. I thought about the burns on her thighs. They were too clean. They were too hidden. If someone was hurting her, the marks would be on the places where a struggle would happen but these were tucked away. They were private.

Then it hit me.

A cold weight settled in my stomach. I saw the look in her eyes, she was terrified. If I pushed her now, if I forced her to admit it, she would shatter. I’d lose the girl with the teeth and be left with nothing. I wasn’t going to do that

to her.

I let out a long, slow breath and softened my grip. I slid my hand up her back, my palm warm against her spine, drawing her back into the space between my legs.

“Fine,” I murmured, “I’m dropping it. For now.”

She looked up at me, surprised. Her eyes were wide and watery, searching mine for the catch.

“I’m not going to force the truth out of you, Gianna,” I said, leaning in until our foreheads touched. “I have ways of finding things out. I could know everything about you by sunrise without you saying a single word. But I don’t

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want to do that to you. I’m not going to stoop to that level.”

I ran my thumb along the line of her jaw.

“I’ll wait,” I whispered, “I’ll wait until you’re ready to tell me yourself.”

She let out a shaky sigh, her body finally relaxing against mine. She reached up, her fingers grazing my bare chest, tracing the marks she had left there.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 238

+15 Br

“Getting to know each other like this... it wasn’t part of the deal,” she said, her voice regaining a bit of its strength. She looked at me, a small, sad smile on her face, “I’ve already told you things I’ve never told anyone else, Raphael. This wasn’t supposed to be... deep.”

I looked at her, my gaze dropping to her mouth. The hunger was back, a burn in my blood that made the want to pull her back under the covers.

“Platonic,” I hissed, “Real fucking platonic, Gianna. The most platonic night of my fucking life.”

She let out a small, breathless laugh, her own eyes dropping to my mouth, “I feel like you’ve started to abuse that word a little more than I would like...”

“I’ll stop using it the second you stop lying to me about things,” I said, “But until then, it’s my favorite fucking word.”

I felt her body soften as she leaned in toward me. She pressed her lips against mine in a kiss that was slow, and soft. It was a gentle touch that made the hair on my arms stand up. She pulled back just an inch, her breath warm against my mouth.

“I really have to go, Raphael,” she whispered, “The sun is going to be up soon, and I can’t be here when it happens.”

I let my hand drop, my fingers sliding out of those dark messy strands. I nodded once, giving her the space she needed.

She stood up from the bed, my oversized shirt hanging low on her thighs. She looked around the room, her brow furrowing as she looked at the door and then back at me.

“What about the cameras?” she whispered, pointing a shaky finger toward the hall. “There are lenses in every corner. Don’t you think the guards or your family will see me? I’m walking out of your bedroom looking like I just fought for my life.”

I let out a dry, low chuckle and leaned back against the headboard, crossing my arms over my bare chest. A surge of cold pride moved through me. She didn’t get it yet.

“Gianna, look at me,” I said, gesturing to the thin, glowing screens built into the dark walls. “I didn’t just buy some store-bought security. I wrote the code. I built the digital brain that runs every lens and sensor on this entire estate. I own the air in this house. Nobody sees anything I don’t want them to see. Right now, those cameras are on a loop. If anyone looks at the monitors, they see a quiet hallway and a locked door. I’m in here sleeping alone, and you were never even a thought.”

I tapped a small glass panel on the nightstand, watching a green light flicker.

“The path back to your room is looped now, too,” I told her, “I don’t leave my secrets to chance, and I definitely don’t trust some guard with my business.”

She stared at me, a mix of fear and wonder washing over her face.

“Go,” I said, my voice dropping. “The cameras are blind. You were never here.”

She turned and walked toward the door. I watched the sway of her hips and the way my shirt hung off her shoulders. Just as her hand touched the cold metal handle, I spoke up again.

“Gianna…”

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She turned back fast, her eyes wide, “Yeah?”

“Take the day off,” I said, my jaw tightening as I stared at the ceiling, “We both fucking need it. Go spend time with your mother. She loves you, that’s why she’s so overbearing. God knows I’d give everything I own to have mine care about me one more time.”

A crinkle appeared between her brows, a flash of pity in her eyes that I hated, but then she caught herself. She forced a small, soft smile that didn’t quite reach her eyes.

Janedoewritings

Author

Oh, he’s definitely onto her now.

And what do we think about Gianna’s take on love? Comment and let me know what you think!

XOXO...

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 239

Gianna

+15 Burns

I stood in front of the bathroom mirror, the bright lights showing every mark on my skin. I reached for my heavy concealer that could hide anything. My fingers moved fast. I dabbed the makeup over the marks on my neck, blending it until the red turned into the color of my own skin.

I stopped when I got to my cheek. There was a faint, yellow-green bruise there. It was the shadow of where I had slapped myself, right over the spot where my mother’s hand had landed days ago. I decided to leave it. If my face looked too perfect, mom would know. The bruise made the rest of my face look real.

I pulled on a pair of light blue baggy jeans that sat low on my hips and tucked in a tight, white t-shirt and grabbed a pair of white sneakers and headed downstairs.

The house was quiet this early in the morning, until I reached the back of the house. I stopped in the doorway leading to the terrace.

My mother was sitting in a cushioned chair, the morning sun hitting her hair. Salvatore was right next to her. He wasn't looking at the garden or his coffee, he was looking at her like she was the only thing in the world that mattered. He reached over and took her hand, his thumb rubbing circles over her knuckles. My mother leaned her head back and laughed at something he said.

They looked happy, wrapped up in a private world where everything felt soft and safe. It was the kind of peace that made my chest ache because I knew how fragile it was.

I had never seen her look this way with my father. To him, she wasn't a partner; she was just a vessel, something to own. When she dared to find her voice or stand her ground, he would show her exactly who held the leash. He would cut off the food, or lock her away in a room for days at a time. If she still didn't break, he'd withhold water, whispering in her ear that he had all the power and she had none.

That was the lesson she never seemed to learn. You can't give these men the power to be your everything. You can't let them be the ones who feed you, clothe you, or keep the world at bay. Because the second they realize you depend on them for your very survival, they'll start using that need like a weapon.

And looking at her now, leaning into Salvatore's touch, I could see it happening all over again. She was already making the same mistakes, handing over the keys to her life to another man.

I hadn't spoken to her in days. Since that afternoon when her hand had snapped across my face, I hadn't even looked at her. I had been so angry, so full of fire and hurt that I had stayed away.

But watching her now, I didn't feel angry anymore. I missed her.

So, I took a deep breath, adjusted my shirt. I didn't know if the war between us was over, but I knew I couldn't spend another minute being away from her.

I was midway across the polished floor, my eyes locked on my mother, when a sudden smack rang out.

I heard it before I felt it.

The force of it sent a jolt through my entire body. I jumped, a small yelp escaping my throat as my heart hammered against my ribs. I whirled around, my hand flying back to cover my stinging backside.

Raphael was standing right behind me.

I blinked, barely recognizing him as he was back to being on the cover of a magazine. He was wearing a grey suit that fit his broad shoulders perfectly. His hair was slicked back,

and he had a pair of thin reading glasses perched on the bridge of his nose, making him look smart and harmless.

He looked like someone who had never said a dirty word in his life.

“Good morning, Gianna,” he said.

I felt a wave of cold panic wash over me. I looked over my shoulder toward the terrace table. My mother and Salvatore were only twenty feet away.

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My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 240

“Are you crazy?” I hissed, as I stepped closer to him, trying to hide our interaction with my body, “My mother is right there! Salvatore is right there! What is wrong with you?”

I scanned the windows and the garden, looking for any servants or guards who might have seen that. My face was burning hot.

“Don’t you ever do that again,” I warned, pointing a shaking finger at his chest. “You act like a normal person but here. You hear me? Never again.”

Raphael took a half-step forward, closing the small gap between us. He looked over my head, nodded politely to my mother, and raised a hand in a friendly wave.

“Of course,” he murmured, “I’ll be on my best behavior.”

Then, without even looking down, his hand moved. He slapped me again, even harder this time, the sound muffled only by the baggy denim of my jeans. I bit my tongue to keep from screaming, my eyes going wide as the sting bloomed across my skin again.

He pulled his hand back and adjusted his glasses with a perfectly calm expression.

“See?” he said, “I’m the picture of a gentleman.”

I stood there, frozen and trembling, the heat of his hand still burning through my clothes while my mother waved back at him from the table before she went back to talking to Salvatore.

“Raphael, stop,” I breathed, my eyes darting toward the table. My mother was now smiling at Salvatore, their hands still linked. I don’t know whose proximity was making my head spin, theirs or ours, “They’re right there. Please.”

“I like ‘please,'” he murmured. He reached out, and for a second, I thought he was going to straighten my collar like a gentleman. Instead, his hand drifted down, his fingers grazing the center of my chest.

I froze. The thin, white fabric of my t-shirt offered no protection. I could feel the heat of his palm through the cotton, and I knew exactly what he was seeing.

“No bra,” he noted, his voice dropping into a dark, playful rasp that made my toes curl, “In my house. In front of our family. You’re a naughty little thing, aren’t you?”

“I... I was in a rush,” I stammered, my heart racing so hard I thought it might burst through my ribs.

His gaze dropped, focusing entirely on the way the white fabric clung to me. He didn’t even try to hide it. Honestly, for a man who had a genius-level brain, it seemed to short-circuit the second he saw a pair of breasts. In that moment, he looked like he wanted to devour them right there in the daylight. He acted like we were in a bubble where the rest of the world had stopped moving.

Then, his fingers moved, catching my nipple between his thumb and forefinger and pinching it hard through the

soft tee.

I gasped, the sound caught in the back of my throat as an electric jolt of pain and pleasure shot straight through me. My knees buckled for a split second, and I had to grab his forearm to stay upright.

“Raphael!” I hissed, my face turning a deep, shameful red. I looked over my shoulder, certain that Salvatore had heard my sharp intake of breath.

“They aren’t looking,” he said, utterly unbothered. He didn’t let go, he rolled the sensitive peak between his

+15 Bar

fingers, watching my reaction with a look of dark satisfaction, “And even if they were, I’d just tell them I was fixing a loose thread. I’m very good at fixing things, Gianna. You should know that by now.”

He finally released me, his hand sliding down to rest casually in his pocket as if nothing had happened. He adjusted his glasses, the sunlight glinting off the lenses, making him look innocent and studious again.

“Gianna? Raphael? Come sit, the coffee is still hot!”

My mother’s voice drifted over the terrace, but I could hear the hesitation underneath it. She didn’t look at me directly at first. She kept her eyes on her cup, her fingers trembling slightly as she held the porcelain.

I quickly crossed my arms over my chest to hide the way my body was still reacting to Raphael’s touch. I walked over with stiff legs, feeling Raphael’s presence right behind me.

P

15 Bar

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 241

As we reached the small lounge table, my mother finally looked up. Her breath hitched, and she let out a small gasp, her hand flying to her mouth. Her eyes were fixed on my cheek, on the faint, yellow-green bruise I’d purposefully left uncovered.

“Oh, Ginny,” she whispered, “I... I didn’t think I hit you that hard. Did I really do that? I am so, so sorry, baby.”

I felt a sharp sting in my chest. I wanted to tell her the truth, that I had done it to myself, but I couldn’t because that will make her go nuclear on me. I just lowered my head, letting my hair fall forward to hide my face.

“It’s fine, Mom,” I mumbled, sliding into the low wicker chair across from her and Salvatore, “It’s nothing.”

Raphael sat down right next to me. He moved with the grace of a king, his expensive suit trousers pulling tight as he settled in. He was so close that our shoulders brushed, a spark of heat jumping through the fabric of my sleeve.

Salvatore reached out to pat Hazel’s hand, his expression soft, “It was an accident, Hazel. She knows you didn’t mean to.”

Under the table, Raphael shifted, crossing one long leg over the other. I felt the hard, polished leather of his dress shoe press against my calf. He didn’t just bump me, he began to slowly slide the toe of his shoe up and down my leg.

I looked at my mother. She was watching me with such sad, loving eyes, still feeling guilty for a blow she hadn't actually landed.

"We were thinking of changing a few things around here," Salvatore said, as he looked toward the sprawling hedges, "I was thinking of clearing out that old rose garden near the east wall. It's a bit overgrown, and Hazel thinks some white lilies would-"

"You'll do what?" Raphael's voice turned harsher. He didn't look at my mom, and he didn't look at me. He fixed his gaze solely on his father.

"I thought-" Salvatore started, his smile faltering.

"That was her design," Raphael stated, "My mother spent three years choosing every stone and every seed for that corner of the estate. Every flower in that overgrown garden is exactly where she wanted it to be."

Under the table, his touch intensified. His polished shoe stopped its gentle sliding and pressed against my calf, as if he were using me to keep himself from lunging across the glass table.

"Raphael, I didn't mean it like that, it has gotten messy and overgrown," Salvatore said, "It's been a long time, and the roses are-"

"The roses stay exactly where they are," Raphael interrupted.

I reached out, my hand trembling just a bit as I lowered it beneath the table. I found the same leg he had been using to ghost his shoe over my leg, and I pressed my palm flat against his thigh.

"I don't think they need to be changed," I said.

I could feel Raphael's gaze shift toward me.

"Some things aren't meant to be neat," I continued, my fingers grazing his leg, "I think the roses are overgrown because they've been allowed to grow. There's a history in those roots that you can't just replant."

I looked at Salvatore, then back at the man sitting next to me. Raphael's jaw was still set like stone, but the dark

+15 BCT

vibration in his body was starting to fade.

"You don't touch something that was built with that much intent," I said softly. "It's sacred. When someone leaves a mark like that on the world, you don't fix it. You just let it

be. To me, the wildness of the garden just shows how many years have passed. It shows her age, and how beautiful she must be by now, if she were still here to see it."

The pressure of Raphael's shoe against my calf changed. I felt the iron-hard muscles in his leg relax/under my

touch.

Across the table, my mother was watching me. The sadness in her eyes had cleared, replaced by a look of pure, quiet pride. She didn't say a word, but the way she gripped her tea cup told me she felt every word I said.

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GET IT

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My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 242

The silence was broken by the sound of the glass doors sliding open. Madeleine stepped onto the terrace, baby Nero balanced on her hip. The little boy was busy chewing on a plastic toy, his big eyes wandering over the garden.

"Breakfast is ready," Madeleine announced with a warm smile, "The chef has everything laid out in the dining room before it gets cold."

Salvatore stood up first, offering his hand to my mother. She took it, her movements a little slow but her face bright. They began to walk inside, chatting quietly with Madeleine about Nero's new tooth.

I started to stand up, ready to follow them into the safety of the crowd, but I didn't get far.

Raphael's hand shot out, his fingers wrapping around my upper arm. He didn't stand up. He stayed seated, while the others disappeared through the glass doors.

"Raphael," I hissed, my heart starting to jump in my chest. I looked over my shoulder, watching the backs of our parents as they walked away. "What are you doing? They're right there. We have to go."

I tried to pull away, but he didn't budge. He looked up at me through those black-rimmed glasses.

"In a minute," he said.

Panic flared in my gut. I looked inside, where I could see the soft glow of the chandelier and hear the clink of silverware. Then I looked back at him, my eyes wide.

"Everyone is waiting," I whispered, my voice shaking. "If we don't go in now, they'll wonder why. They'll come back out here. Please, let go."

He didn't let go. Instead, he stood up slowly, never breaking eye contact. He pulled me half an inch closer.

He grabbed the back of my neck and pulled me in. His mouth slammed against mine in a kiss that was hard, deep, and heavy. For a few long seconds, the world around us vanished. And the fear of being caught all drowned out under the pressure of his lips.

When he finally pulled back, but he kept his face inches from mine, his dark eyes searching my face behind his glasses.

"I didn't mean any disrespect toward your mother," he rasped, "My fight is with my father. It's always been with him, not Hazel."

I blinked, trying to find my voice. The anger I had felt from him just minutes ago was gone, replaced by something much softer and more serious.

"If Hazel wants white lilies," he continued, his thumb grazing my jawline, "tell her she can plant them. She can fill every other inch of this estate with them if it makes her happy."

I looked into his eyes and saw a flash of something I hadn't expected... respect. He wasn't just being polite because of the deal or because he wanted me. He actually cared that he had upset her. He saw my mother as a real person, not just an obstacle in his house.

A strange, warm feeling bloomed in my chest. It was different from the heat of his touch.

"Thank you," I whispered, the words feeling small in the space between us.

"Don't thank me," he said, his eyes flicking toward my mouth one last time before he finally released my arm. He smoothed the front of his jacket, looking perfectly composed, as if he hadn't just kissed me senseless in the open

air.

My breath was still uneven, and 1 knew my cheeks were flushed a deep, tell-tale crimson. We just stared at one another for a second. I wanted to look away, to run toward the safety of the breakfast table, but his gaze held me in place, pinning me to the spot more effectively than his hand ever could.

Neither of us heard the footsteps. Neither of us noticed the shadow stretching across the terrace until the glass door creaked on its tracks.

“What are you two doing out here?”

The voice was like a bucket of ice water. We both snapped our heads toward the sound, the breath catching in my throat as the world rushed back in.

Janedoewritings Author

I wasn’t planning to update today either since I’m not home, but then I thought, I’ll give you guys a little something. Hope you enjoyed this one!

XOXO

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 243

Gianna

+15 Beras

Neither of us heard the footsteps. Neither of us noticed the shadow stretching across the terrace until the glass door creaked on its tracks.

“What are you two doing out here?”

The voice was like a bucket of ice water. We both snapped our heads toward the sound, the breath catching in my throat as the world rushed back in.

Vincenzo stood there in the doorway, his eyes moving back and forth between me and Raphael. I felt the blood drain from my face, leaving me cold and shaky. My heart suddenly started thumping so hard I was sure he could see it vibrating against my thin shirt.

I felt exposed, like the word guilty was written in neon lights across my forehead. I felt like I smelled like Raphael like my hair was too messy, and like every bruise he had just covered was glowing through my clothes.

Raphael, on the other hand, didn't even blink. He adjusted his glasses and looked at his brother with a face as smooth as stone, acting like we were just discussing the weather.

Then, a hurricane slammed into Vincenzo's back. Claire poked her head out, her arms wrapping tight around her husband's waist. She looked at us with a wide, curious grin.

"Oh, hey!" she chirped, "Work buddies hanging out?"

"We're not work buddies," I blurted out. The words came out too fast, too loud, and way too defensive. I saw Claire's eyebrows shoot up. "I mean... we aren't any kind of buddies, really. We were just... it's nothing. Just talking."

I sounded like a total mess. Every word out of my mouth made it feel like I was screaming, "I just had sex with my stepbrother!"

Claire tilted her head, her eyes narrowing as she looked at my flushed face and then at Raphael's perfect suit," Right. Nothing."

Raphael let out a long, bored sigh, acting like he was tired of the whole conversation, "I was just telling Gianna to take the day off. She needs to spend time with her mother... especially after she messed up so badly the other day."

I cut my eyes at him, my jaw dropping. Fucked up? Was he serious? I couldn't believe his nerve. First, he makes up a story about me getting mugged to play the hero, and now he's acting like my boss who's giving me a pity day off?

Why is he always trying to be the hero in my story? And I hated how good he was at it.

Vincenzo didn't seem to notice the fire in my eyes. He just mindlessly played Claire's hands where they were locked around his middle, "That's actually a good call, Raph. She needs the break. Come on, let's go eat before the food gets cold."

"Yeah, sure. Great idea," I said, already moving. I practically ran toward the door, desperate to put some space between my body and Raphael's heat. I felt like if I stayed near him for one more second, the tension would actually catch fire.

But Raphael didn't let me get far. He used those long, powerful legs to catch up in two strides, falling into step right beside me. He didn't touch me, but his arm brushed mine, sending a jolt of electricity through my skin.

15 Beraus

When we reached the doorway, Vincenzo stopped. He looked at Raphael for a long beat. There was no anger in his face, just a weird, knowing look. He gave a small, quick nod, the kind of nod guys give when they have a secret. Raphael gave a short nod back.

I froze for a split second, my eyes darting between the two brothers. What was that? It felt like a silent conversation had just happened right over my head. My stomach did a nervous flip. Did Vincenzo know?

I didn't wait to find out. I ducked my head, staring at my sneakers, and hurried into the dining room,

"Wait, Gianna," Vincenzo's voice stopped me cold.

My heart dropped to my feet. I looked at Raphael, then at Claire, then back at Vincenzo. What was that nod about? Did he actually know?

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+15 Beras

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 244

"What?" I asked, my voice coming out small and shaky.

"Did you think about it?" he asked, "About signing those papers?"

I blinked, confused, "What papers?"

"To officially change your last name to Capone," he said. He didn't sound like he was joking. "I've been thinking about it. It's the right move for you, and for us, in the long run. If you do this, I can take better care of you. I can protect you properly in case..." He trailed off, his jaw tightening as if he was holding back something.

I felt a chill run down my spine, "In case what?"

"In case something happens," he said, "Life is unpredictable, Gianna. Things change fast. If you're a Capone on paper, no one can touch you."

I stared at him, my mind racing. He was talking like there was a timer counting down that I couldn't see.

I felt a prickle of heat on the side of my face. I didn't have to look to know Raphael was watching.

Slowly, I shifted my gaze past Claire's shoulder to where Raphael stood. He looked perfectly still, his hands tucked into his pockets, but his eyes were sharp. As our gazes locked, he gave me a single, nearly invisible shake of his head.

It was so fast and so tiny that if I hadn't been looking for it, I would have missed it.

He didn't want me to be a Capone. He didn't want the sibling tie that would make what we were doing even more twisted than it already was.

Пlooked back at Vincenzo. I could feel the pride in my own chest, the part of me that didn't want to be owned or protected by anyone. I wasn't ready to disappear into their world completely.

I forced a soft, tight smile onto my face.

"Vincenzo," I said, meeting his dark eyes. "It's a lot to take in. My name is the only thing that's actually been mine my entire life. I just need more time to wrap my head around it." I took a small step back toward the dining room, "I want to make sure that if I do this, I'm doing it for the right reasons. And honestly... I need to figure out if it's something I even want at all."

He gave me a slow, stiff nod, acknowledging my choice without agreeing with it.

"Take your time," he said, "Just don't take too much of it. The world doesn't stop moving just because you're undecided."

He turned and walked into the dining room. I looked over at Raphael. He was still standing there. He still looked cool and relaxed, but I could see the tension in his jaw, and the way he looked at me told me he was glad I'd stayed a guest and not a sister.

We followed Vincenzo and Claire into he dinning room and slid into my seat, squeezing in between Maddie and Claire. I felt a tiny bit of relief when Raphael sat directly opposite me. No matter how long his legs were, they couldn't reach me under this massive table. There was too much wood between us.

The room was loud. The Capones were always like this, breakfast was the only time they all sat in one place. Dinner was a mess of schedules and business, but breakfast was the law.

You showed up or you were dead to them.

15 Bers

Dante was already halfway through a story, waving a piece of bacon around. He was talking to Maddie.

"I'm telling you, it was a nightmare," Dante laughed, leaning back, "Silvio turned eighteen, and we decided the best gift was an entire bottle of moonshine each. We got so blacked out we thought we were birds. We climbed onto the roof of the old warehouse and

just... stayed there. Aunt Alessia spent the whole night crying and Dad kept thinking we'd been kidnapped or killed in a ditch."

He took a bite of bacon and grinned.

"We woke up at noon the next day with the worst sunburns ever, only to find out Silvio had spent the night trying to marry a chimney. He'd even put his promise ring on a loose brick and cried when the brick didn't say 'I do' back.

15 Borus

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 245

Just then, the door swung open and Silvio himself walked in. As he walked past my chair, he reached out and ruffled my hair, messing it up completely. "G-man! Good to see you're alive."

Silvio slumped into his chair next to Raphael, flashing me a big, goofy smile.

"Hi, Silvio," I said, smoothing down my hair with a small laugh.

As I smiled, my eyes drifted across the table to Raphael. The perfect businessman look was still there, but his face had turned into a dark mask. Raphael was staring at me. He had this deep, dark frown on his face, his eyes fixed on the spot where Silvio's hand had touched my head.

"Raph, man, speaking of being trashed," Dante piped up again, "Do you remember that Russian girl from the club in Vegas? The one with the crazy eyes? You were so gone you thought she was a literal spy. Remember the thing you did with the-"

"I don't," Raphael snapped, "I don't remember the girl, and I don't remember the night. Shut the fuck up, Dante.

Adriano started howling with laughter. I looked at Raphael, and he looked murderous. He looked like he wanted to erase that story and maybe everyone at the table from existence.

The breakfast ended in total chaos. The room emptied out as everyone rushed toward their own lives. Raphael left for office without a word. Claire headed out for her art gallery, and Maddie left for college. The brothers vanished to handle whatever dark, illegal business they had planned for the day, and Jules headed off to school.

All that was left in the quiet of the morning was me and my mother.

And we spent the whole day together after ages. I spent most of the afternoon tucked into the corner of the sofa with Mom. I leaned back, resting my head in her lap just like I used to when I was little. Her fingers moved through my hair, that made my eyes feel heavy.

“I’m so happy, Gianna,” she whispered, “I’m so glad you’ve started to let everyone in. Seeing you accept this life, accepting them... it makes me feel like everything is finally falling into place.”

She was smiling widely, but as I looked up at her, my heart pinched. Her face looked a little off. There was a thinness to her cheeks that hadn’t been there a month ago, and her eyes seemed to be struggling to stay bright. I couldn’t quite put my finger on it, but something was wrong.

“Yeah, well,” I said, “It’s not like I have much of a choice, right? You’re like a human magnet. You just drag me wherever you go. I don’t think there’s a single place on earth where I’m safe from you.”

She let out a real laugh then, a bubbly sound that shook her chest, “No, you aren’t. Not a chance, my darling girl.”

She leaned down and kissed my forehead, her lips feeling like a warm petal against my skin.

“You’re my first baby. People always say mothers are obsessed with the youngest, the baby of the family. And I love Jules, but don’t tell her... I have always been obsessed with my firstborn. The day you were born, the world stopped. You were perfect.”

I looked away. I thought about the messy reality of being me.

“I’m not perfect, Mom,” I murmured, “I’m... I’m broken in a lot of places. You know that better than anyone.”

Mom stopped moving her hand. She gripped my shoulders and pulled me up until I was sitting straight, forcing me to look her right in the eye. She looked genuinely offended, her brows drawing together in a fierce line.

“Don’t you ever say that,” she said, “You were born the most perfect thing I had ever seen. You were this chubby little pink doll with those big green eyes and that tuft of brown hair. I remember the nurses at the hospital kept coming into the room just to look at you. They told me they had never seen a baby so beautiful.”

She reached out, cupping my face in both of her hands. Her palms were warm, and she held me like I was made of gold.

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GETIT

15 Bar

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 246

“But-”

“No,” she interrupted, “You are exactly who you were meant to be, Gianna. You are smart, and you are brave, and you see the world in a way most people are too blind to understand. If you feel like you don’t fit, it’s not because you’re broken. It’s because the rest of the world is built wrong.”

She leaned in closer, her forehead touching mine.

“The world is what needs fixing, Gianna. Not you. To me, you are still that perfect girl from the hospital, and you always will be. Anyone who can’t see that is just a fool.”

I looked into her eyes, seeing the pure, stubborn pride shining there. For a second, I almost believed her. I wanted, to believe that the world was the problem and I was just fine. I didn’t say anything else, I just buried my face back into her lap, breathing in the scent of her perfume and trying to drown out the voice in my head that kept telling

me she was wrong.

The clock on my bedside table stared back at me, the glowing numbers mocking how late it was. I lay there in my thin cotton shorts and a t-shirt, the sheets twisted around my legs like a trap. I tossed to the left, then flipped to the right, but my brain wouldn’t shut off.

I let out a long, frustrated breath and sat up, rubbing my face. Sleep wasn’t coming and I had a mountain of college work to do.

I hopped off the bed, my bare feet hitting the cold floor. I grabbed my laptop and a stack of notebooks filled with messy scrawls of neural networks and deep learning models. I shoved my thickest textbook under my arm, the one that explained the complex algorithms I was supposed to be mastering, and snatched up a stray pen.

I needed air.

I crept out of my room, through the dark, silent hallways. I made my way downstairs and pushed open the heavy glass doors to the back terrace.

I walked over to the table where we had sat before the breakfast. It looked different under the moonlight. I spread my things out. I flipped open my laptop, the bright blue light from the screen cutting through the darkness and making me squint.

I sat down and pulled the laptop closer, opening up my latest project. My eyes scanned the lines of code, the Python scripts looking like a foreign language I was slowly forgetting how to speak. I had to finish this model before the week was out, but the math felt like it was dancing on the page. I chewed on the end of my pen, staring at the screen until the glowing characters started to blur.

A soft crunch echoed from the darkness beyond the terrace.

I froze. The sound came again and I looked at the dark wall of the garden, my eyes straining to see past the glow of my laptop.

A flashlight.

I slid out of my chair. My bare feet felt every cold bump of the stone as I crept toward the grass.

I followed the light, and there, in the middle of the tangled rosebushes, was a figure kneeling in the dirt.

It was Raphael.

15 Bern

He was in his white dress shirt, the sleeves rolled up to his elbows, revealing the corded muscles of his forearms. The flashlight was stuck in his mouth.

He was pulling at a thick, stubborn weed that had wrapped itself around the base of a rosebush. He puffed out a breath, his shoulders straining as he tugged. With a sharp rip, the weed came free, and he tossed it onto a growing pile of trash beside him.

He was protecting the roots, clearing the path for the flowers his mother had planted so many years ago.

I stood there in the dark, watching the man who usually ran a multi-million dollar empire get down on his knees in the dirt just to keep a dead woman’s memory alive. He looked so human, so real, that it hurt to watch.

I took a small step forward, and a twig snapped under my foot.

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+15 Beras

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 247

The flashlight beam whipped around instantly, blinding me.

“I can help with that,” I said, as I walked right up to him and pulled the flashlight out of his mouth.

His mouth stayed open for a second, as he looked me up and down. The beam of light was now in my hand, shaking just a little, but he didn’t try to take it back.

“What are you doing out here, Gianna?” he finally asked.

I stepped closer, and pointed the light down at the base of the roses, where the weeds were thick, “Hold the light, “I said, handing it back to him.

I dropped to my knees right next to him, my bare skin hitting the cool, damp earth. I reached into the thorns, my fingers searching for the base of the next weed.

“You’ll get your hands dirty,” he muttered, but he shifted his body to give me room.

“I’m already a mess, Raphael,” I said, giving a sharp tug on a stubborn root, “A little dirt isn’t going to break me.”

We worked in a strange silence for a while. The only sounds were the rustle of leaves and the occasional snap of a weed being ripped from the ground. Every time I moved, I could feel the heat coming off him. He was so close that our shoulders occasionally brushed, a spark of electricity jumping through my skin every time it happened.

Honestly, I probably need to see a specialist about all these shocks I keep getting around him. The last time I felt this much voltage running through me, I was strapped into a chair in a room with padded walls and a doctor who kept yelling at me. It’s a lot less fun when there’s a nurse standing by with a mouthguard, but hey, at least this time the electricity is coming from a hot guy in a dirt-stained dress shirt instead of a wall outlet.

Same vibes, different setting.

I looked at his hands, the same hands that typed out million-dollar codes, as they carefully pushed aside a rose branch to make sure I didn’t get scratched. He was being so gentle with the plants, treating every leaf like it was made of thin glass. It was a weird contrast to how he had pinched my nipple earlier, with that same focused, dark intensity.

“We never let anyone else touch it,” he said softly, but didn’t look up from the dirt. “It’s always been just me, Vince, or Luca or any of my brothers. We’re the only ones who take care of the flowers she planted.”

I went completely still, my heart skipping a beat, “Was I... not supposed to touch them? Am I breaking a rule?”

“It’s alright,” he said, and finally, his gaze flickered to mine. “You can touch them. Anyone else would be dead, but you’re fine. It’s just my father I’m worried about. He wants to pave over everything. He wants to make it look like she was never here, like she didn’t leave a single footprint on this earth.”

He reached out, his fingers hovering over a tiny, pale rosebud that was struggling to bloom in the dark.

“I can’t stop him from moving on,” he whispered, his jaw tight. “But I won’t let him change anything she touched.

“1

I stopped pulling at the weeds and just looked at him. In the dim light, I saw the boy who had lost his mother, the boy who was still trying to protect her memory with his bare hands. My heart actually ached for him.

“She’d be proud of you,” I said softly.

Raphael turned his head. The light from the flashlight hit his glasses, so I couldn’t see his eyes, but I could feel

15 A

them burning into me. He reached out, his hand covered in dark soil, and hovered near my face. He hesitated, his fingers trembling just a fraction, before he tucked a loose strand of hair behind my ear. His thumb grazed my temple, leaving a smudge of dirt on it.

Every breath I took felt like I was inhaling him, the scent of expensive cologne mixed with damp earth. I could feel the heat coming off his body in waves, and even though we weren’t touching, my skin felt like it was on fire.

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My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 248

“What are you doing out here so late, Gianna?” he asked.

He already knew all my secrets, so I didn't bother lying, "I came out to study. Since I lost my phone, I lost the app that helps me... focus. I'm struggling. A lot."

"Do you need a new phone?'

I frowned immediately, "Not from you. Not from anyone. I'll figure it out."

He let out a long, frustrated sigh, "Gianna, don't be ridiculous. I have drawers full of phones. I once burned through a hundred in a single day because I was testing something... something I can't talk about because it's highly illegal and would probably get us both arrested. Taking one isn't a big deal."

I shook my head, my eyes locked on his. The way he was looking at me was making it hard to think.

"No," I said, my voice breathy. "I'm not taking anything from you, Raphael. I'm already indebted to you for the next six months. I'm not adding more to the tab."

"It wouldn't be a debt," he said.

"It would be for me," I whispered.

"Fucking hell, you're stubborn," he muttered. He leaned in, his face so close I could feel his warm breath on my lips.

I gave him a small, challenging smile and turned back to the dirt, my hands shaking as I pulled the last of the weeds. We finished the row in silence. When the last weed was gone, I stood up and dusted my hands off on my shorts.

"Done," I said, trying to act like my heart wasn't trying to beat its way out of my chest.

He stood up slowly, towering over me in the dark, looking like a beautiful, dirt-stained disaster.

"I don't like being in debt either," he said, "You helped me with this. You touched something that isn't for anyone else to touch. You put in the work."

I raised an eyebrow, "It's not a big deal."

"It is to me," he stepped into my space, "I don't owe people things. I don't want to owe you anything, Gianna."

I tilted my head back, meeting his gaze. "So what? You want to pay me for pulling grass?"

He let out a short, dry sound that was almost a laugh, "No. I'm going to help you with your work. That's the deal. I'll be your app. That's the only way we get even."

I felt my heart skip, “You’re going to tutor me? The CEO of Orion Vector Technologies is going to spend his nights helping me with homework?”

“I’m going to make sure you don’t fail,” he corrected, “I’m prideful, Gianna. I don’t take favors, and I don’t leave debts unpaid. You gave me your time tonight. Now I’m giving you mine. Take the deal, or I’m just going to sit out there and watch you struggle anyway.”

The way he said it made my stomach do that liquid flip again. It wasn’t just about the books. It was about him wanting a reason to be near me, a reason to watch me work under the moonlight.

“Fine,” I breathed, the word caught in the back of my throat, “Deal.”

15 Park.e

“Good,” he gestured toward the terrace with the flashlight, “Go back to your books. I’m going to clean up. I’ll be there in ten minutes. Don’t fall asleep.”

As I walked away, I could feel his eyes on my back, tracing the line of my spine. I knew I should have said no. I knew letting him into my head while he was already under my skin was a mistake...

...but I did it anyway.

Janedoewritings

Author

Don’t you just love those soft, nonsexual moments... Enjoy this one, and tell me what you think!

XOXO

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 249

Gianna

15 Bent

I sat back down, but the code on my screen might as well have been hieroglyphics. I couldn’t focus. My skin was still buzzing from being near him in the dark, like it was waiting for something to happen. I pulled my knees up to my chest, hugging them, and stared out into the shadows of the garden.

Then, I saw him walking over to me.

And for a second, I forgot how to breathe. He had washed the dirt off his hands, but he hadn't put his jacket back on. He was just in that white dress shirt, the fabric was thin enough that I could see the hard, rigid lines of his shoulders and the way his muscles moved underneath. He'd unbuttoned the top three buttons, leaving his collan open, and my eyes immediately tracked the golden skin of his throat down to where his chest started.

He was rolling his sleeves up even higher as he walked. The white fabric was bunched up past his elbows, showing off his forearms. I watched the way his tattoos disappeared under his sleeves.

He pushed his black-rimmed glasses back up onto the bridge of his nose. They should have made him look like a nerd, but on him, they just looked dangerous. They made him look like the kind of man who would take you apart piece by piece just to see how you worked.

His walk was what really got to me. He moved with so much confidence, his long legs eating up the distance between us, his body swaying just a little with every step.

As he got closer, the smell of him hit me again. My stomach didn't just flip, it felt like it was melting. I stayed frozen in my chair, my heart hammering against my ribs so hard I was sure he could see it through my t-shirt.

He didn't say anything at first. He just reached the table and stood over me, his shadow falling across my laptop. He looked down at me, his eyes dark behind the lenses of his glasses, and the corner of his mouth gave a tiny,

almost invisible twitch.

"Move over," he ordered and that sent a fresh wave of heat straight to my core.

I scrambled to shift my chair to the side, my movements clumsy and awkward compared to his grace. He pulled up a chair right next to me-way too close-and sat down. His thigh was inches from mine, and even though we weren't touching, I could feel the warmth of him soaking into my skin.

He leaned over, his shoulder brushing mine as he looked at my screen, "Let's see what kind of mess you've made, Mess."

I tried to look at the screen, but the lines of Python were jumping. My brain knew what I wanted to say, but when I tried to type, my fingers felt like they were made of lead, stumbling over the keys and leaving behind a trail of red error underlines.

"The back-propagation is failing," I muttered, my face heating up. I gripped my pen so hard my knuckles turned white. I'd tried to sketch the neural network in my notebook, but

the lines were wobbly and the labels were a jumbled mess of half-formed letters, “I have the logic in my head, Raphael. I just... the bridge between my brain and the screen is broken tonight.”

Raphael didn’t say a word, he simply leaned in.

The heat from his shoulder seeped through my thin t-shirt, making my skin tingle. He smelled so good, like rain and something sharp and expensive and it was making it impossible to remember why I was even holding a pen.

+15 Beraus

He reached out, his large, ink-covered hand moving over mine to grab the mouse. He didn’t touch me directly, but his arm was so close to mine that I could feel the soft friction of his shirt sleeve. He clicked through my tabs, his eyes scanning months of my hard work in seconds.

“You’re over-complicating the loss function,” he whispered, “You’re trying to force the data to be something it’s not. Look.”

15 B41

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 250

He took my notebook, the one filled with my messy, embarrassed scribbles. He didn’t mock the shaky handwriting or the flipped letters. Instead, he flipped to a fresh page. He began to draw.

I watched his hand. His fingers were long, the tattoos on his knuckles shifting as he moved the pen with a grace I could only dream of. He drew a perfect diagram of the architecture I was struggling with. Every line was straight. Every node was precise.

“The math doesn’t care if you see the letters backward, Gianna,” he said, his voice dropping an octave. He looked at me, his eyes dark and intense behind his glasses, “The math only cares about the pattern. You see the pattern better than anyone I’ve ever hired. Stop fighting the words. Start feeling the flow of the numbers.”

He leaned even closer to point at a specific line of code. I could feel his breath on my neck, a warm puff of air that sent a jolt of electricity straight down my spine. I squeezed my eyes shut for a second, trying to remind myself that I was a student and he was... well, he was a problem.

A big, beautiful, dangerous problem.

“Type this,” he said softly.

I reached for the keyboard, my heart hammering against my ribs. Because I was nervous, my fingers slipped. I hit the wrong key, and a string of gibberish appeared on the screen. I let out a frustrated sound, my eyes stinging. “I can’t. My brain is doing the thing where it just... stops.”

Raphael moved his chair even closer, “Deep breath,” he murmured. He reached over, his hand making contact with mine. He didn’t grab it; he just laid his palm over the back of my hand, pinning it gently to the desk. His skin was warm and slightly rough. “Slow down. I’ve got you. Focus on my voice, not the screen.”

What he didn’t understand was that I couldn’t focus on anything but him. My body felt like it was melting into the chair. I could feel the pulse in his wrist against the back of my hand.

“Now,” he whispered, his lips almost brushing my earlobe, “Target the array. One letter at a time. I’ll tell you which ones.”

The screen was starting to vibrate again. The white background of the IDE felt like a spotlight directed straight at my retinas, and the black text was no longer code, it was a swarm of ants crawling over each other.

I felt that familiar, hot spike of shame in my chest. It made me want to crawl out of my skin. My breathing got shallow, and the noise in my head grew louder, a frantic buzzing that drowned out the quiet of the night.

I needed to ground myself. I needed something sharp to pull me back from the edge of a meltdown.

Without even thinking, I reached for the edge of the table. I hooked my palm over the sharp corner and pressed down with everything I had. I wanted that biting sting of pain to cut through the mental fog.

I wanted the physical hurt to give my brain a single point of focus so I could just think.

I leaned my weight into it, my teeth gritted, waiting for the sharp sensation to clear the static.

Suddenly, a large, warm hand clamped over my wrist.

Raphael didn’t say a word. He didn’t gasp or ask me what I was doing. He pried my hand away from the stone edge. Before I could protest, he guided my hand over to his lap. He pressed my palm flat against his thigh,.the muscle there was hard as a rock under the expensive fabric of his trousers and he kept his hand heavy on top of mine, pinning me to him.

+15 Bras

He didn’t look away from the laptop screen. His other hand stayed on the keyboard, his long fingers flying across the keys as he began to reformat my messy, scrambled blocks of text. He was doing it for me, but he wasn’t just fixing it, he was organizing it in a way that my brain could actually process.

15 B