My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 61

Ciro.

I answered right away, “Hello?”

“I’m outside,” he said.

My heart jumped, “Like... outside outside?”

“Yeah,” he said, “Front driveway. Come down before someone decides to ask questions.’

“Okay. I’m coming.”

I hung up and grabbed my small bag from the dresser then I slipped out of the room. My sneakers barely made a sound on the floor as I moved toward the front doors.

One of the guards glanced at me when I stepped outside but he didn’t stop me, he just nodded once.

Ciro was waiting beside a car parked near the driveway, a dark gray Toyota. He leaned against the hood with his arms crossed, and then he saw me and his posture changed immediately.

His eyes moved slowly from my sneakers... up my legs... to the shorts... the top... my face.

“Well damn,” he said under his breath.

I walked closer, “What?”

He straightened up, shaking his head like he was trying to recover, “You look...” he paused, searching for the word, opening the passenger door for me, “You look good. Like really good.”

I wanted to tell him that I can open my own doors but I bit my tongue tonight and slid into the seat, “Thank you.

He leaned against the door for a second before closing it, still looking at me through the open window, “I mean it,” he added, “That top? Those shorts? Someone’s going to start a fight tonight.”

“That’s reassuring.”

He grinned and finally walked around to the driver's side. The gates slowly opened in front of us without a question.

My chest filled with excitement. Ciro pulled out onto the road, the mansion disappearing behind us.

"You look happy," he said.

"I am."

Streetlights passed over the windshield one after another as we drove through the quiet roads. The city lights slowly faded, buildings disappeared, soon it was just long dark roads and trees on both sides.

I leaned back in the seat, watching the darkness outside, "Where exactly is this party?" I asked.

"Not far."

He turned off the main road. The car rolled onto a narrow road that cut straight through the woods. Tall trees closed in around us. Their branches hung over the road, blocking most of the moonlight.

The farther we drove, the darker it got and my excitement slowly started to fade.

+15 Bgnus

I sat up a little, "Ciro?"

"Yeah?"

"Why are we in the woods?"

He kept his eyes on the road, "That's where the party is."

The road twisted deeper between the trees, no houses, no lights, just darkness.

A small knot formed in my stomach, "Ciro..."

He glanced at me briefly, "Hey, relax, right? I'm not that kind of guy, Gianna."

The car slowed as the road curved again.

"I work for the Capones," he continued calmly, "If I wanted to do something stupid, I'd already be dead."

I didn’t answer.

He gave me a small sideways smile, “Relax.”

We drove for another minute, then suddenly, the trees ended and something massive appeared ahead.

My breath caught, lights glowed across a huge stone structure rising from the middle of acres of land.

It looked like something out of another century.

» /

There were tall towers, dark pointed roofs, massive stone walls covered in ivy. The long driveway stretched toward iron gates already standing open. Beyond them, the estate spread out across the land, super cars lined the paths. Music pulsed faintly through the night air. People moved across the massive lawn under hanging lights.

The place looked less like a house and more like a gothic castle hidden deep in the woods.

Ciro drove through the gates like he had done it a hundred times.

I stared out the window, wide-eyed, “What... is this place?”

He smiled slightly, “Welcome to the party.”

The car stopped in front of the wide stone steps. Music thumped somewhere inside the massive house. The bass moved through the ground and up my legs like a heartbeat.

Ciro reached for his door but I was already pushing mine open. Cool night air rushed over my skin as I stepped out.

“Hey-“Ciro said with a laugh as he came around the car. “I was going to get that.”

“I can open a door,” I said, shrugging.

He grinned, “Yeah. I can see that.”

I looked up at the building again. It was even bigger up close. Ciro touched the small of my back, a light, guiding touch and led me toward the giant wooden doors.

“Stay close,” he whispered, “It gets a little wild in here.”

We walked inside, and the air smelled like expensive perfume, heavy cigar smoke, and something sharp and chemical that made my nose sting.

+15 Banys

I stopped dead. My heart felt like it skipped a beat.

I had never seen anything like this. This wasn’t a party; it was something else entirely.

The room was huge, with gold gold leaf on the ceilings and giant crystal lights hanging down. But it was the people underneath them that caught me off guard.

Men in suits that probably cost more than my university tuition were slumped on velvet couches. Their ties were ripped open. One man was leaning back with his eyes rolled into his head while a woman in a tiny lace mask

rubbed a white powder onto his gums.

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My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 62

In the center of the room, there were large glass cages hanging from the ceiling. Inside them, women with painted bodies danced like they had no bones. They wore nothing but thin gold chains.

I saw a woman sitting on a marble table, her eyes rolled back into her head while a man pressed a small pill against her tongue.

“Ciro,” I whispered, my voice shaking. I felt small. I felt way too clean for this room. “What is this?”

“This is as high as it goes, Gianna,” he said. He leaned in close to my ear so I could hear him over the noise,” These people have so much money that they get bored of being human. So they come here to act like animals.”

I watched a man in a silver suit grab a girl by the hair and he forced a drink into her mouth while he laughed with his friends.

Gold plates were filled with white lines of drugs. People leaned down, breathing it in, then stood up with wild, shaking eyes.

I saw a man in the corner with three girls draped over him like blankets. He looked at me, his eyes dark and hungry, and I felt a chill go down my spine. I moved closer to Ciro.

“I think I made a mistake,” I said, my heart hammering against my ribs, “I want to leave,” I said as I grabbed Ciro’s arm, my fingers digging into his sleeve, “Ciro, I want to go. Now.”

Ciro looked at me. The light from a spinning gold ball on the ceiling hit his face, and he looked truly sorry. He looked at the girls dancing in the cages and then back at my terrified face, and I could tell he finally saw how wrong this was.

“I’m sorry,” he said, leaning in close so I could hear him over the thumping music. “That was stupid of me. I shouldn’t have brought you here. I’m so used to this place that I forgot... I forgot this isn’t normal. This is too much for you.”

He looked around the room, his eyes scanning the crowd like he was looking for someone. He pulled me toward a dark corner near a large stone pillar. It was a little quieter there, away from the dancing bodies and the spilled

wine.

“Listen to me,” he said, “I have to do a quick job for the boss. It’s just a drop-off. It will take me ten or maybe fifteen minutes, and then we are out of here. I promise.”

I looked at the exit, then back at him, “Can’t we just go now?”

“I can’t leave until this is done, Gianna. It’s my job,” he said. He pointed to the floor right where I was standing, ” Stay in this corner. Do not move. Do not talk to anyone. If someone looks at you, look away. I will come back right here to find you.”

He paused, looking at my small top and my bare legs. He looked worried.

“Actually,” he said, reaching into his pocket for his car keys, “Maybe you should go wait in the car. It’s safer. I can lock you in from the outside.”

The fear in my stomach flared into a quick spark of anger. I didn’t like being told where to hide. I didn’t like the idea of being locked in a dark car like a dog.

“I am not a child, Ciro,” I snapped, straightening my back. I stepped away from the wall and looked him in the eye. “I can take care of myself. I’ll stay in the corner because I want to leave, but don’t try to lock me in a car.”

Ciro sighed, but he nodded, “Fine,” he said. “Just... don’t move. I mean it.”

He gave my shoulder a quick squeeze and then vanished into the crowd. I watched his dark head move through the sea of silk and gold until I couldn’t see him anymore.

I was alone.

I backed up until my shoulders hit the cold stone of the pillar. I tried to make myself small. I watched the room through the gaps in the crowd. A man with a silver mask walked past, his eyes lingering on my face for a second · too long.

A wave of noise washed over the crowd. It wasn't the usual laughter. To my left, a group of women began to scream in excitement, jumping up and down and waving their arms. On the other side of the room, men started to howl like wolves, banging their glasses against the marble tables.

Clink. Clink. Clink.

Every person in the place was looking at the center of the room. I followed their eyes, and my heart jumped into my throat.

My eyes went wide. I felt the blood drain from my face as I saw my stepbrothers.

Janedoewritings

Author

Swipe up for the next update

hapter 1

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 63

Gianna

+15 8gnus

I stared at the man in the center of the room. My brain felt slow, like it was trying to solve a puzzle with missing pieces. I looked at him for a long fitne, but I felt like I didn't even know who he was.

I thought about the Raphael I saw at the office. That man wore suits that cost thousands of dollars. His hair was always combed back, every strand in its perfect place. He spoke with big, cold words and stood as straight as a pole and wore his glasses. He was polished. He was clean. He was a perfect businessman.

The man standing there was a stranger.

He wasn't wearing a suit. He had on a black leather jacket and under the jacket, he wore nothing. His chest was wide and bare, and it was covered in dark ink. I saw wings, skulls,

and snakes that moved over his skin every time he breathed. The tattoos were everywhere, crawling up his neck and disappearing under the leather.

His hair was a mess. It fell over his forehead in dark, tangled strands, like he had been running his fingers through it all night. He had thick silver rings on almost every finger. One of his hands held a glass of dark liquid, and the other arm was thrown carelessly around a woman's shoulder.

She was beautiful, wearing a thin dress that showed everything. She leaned in and pressed her lips to the side of his neck, kissing the skin just below his ear.

He didn't even look at her.

He was busy talking to a man standing nearby. He looked like the leader of a gang, not the boss of a company.

1 felt my heart skip a beat. I looked at the bridge of his nose. There it was. The red mark. The cut I had given him.

This version of him made the office version look like a lie. This man didn't follow rules. This man looked like he broke them for fun. He looked raw and wild, like an animal that had been let out of a cage.

I felt a new kind of fear. The Raphael in the suit would fire me. This Raphael? This Raphael looked like he could do much worse... like murder me or something.

I wanted to run, but I couldn't move. I just watched the way the ink moved on his chest as he laughed at something the other man said.

I stepped back before any of them could see me, and my back bumped into someone. Suddenly, a hand grabbed my wrist. Then another hand grabbed my shoulder. I jumped, my heart hitting my ribs. I looked up and saw three girls. They were laughing so hard they could barely stand. They smelled like sweet wine and smoke.

The girl in the middle had hair the color of a neon lime. It was bright green and messy, sticking out in every direction. She leaned in close to me. Her eyes were wide and shiny.

"Why are you over here all by yourself?" she yelled over the music. Her voice was high and bubbly.

"We don't leave friends alone!" another girl screamed. She grabbed my other arm. They didn't wait for me to answer. They just started to pull.

I tried to plant my feet, but there were three of them, and they were strong. They dragged me out of my safe corner and right into the middle of the crowded floor. People were dancing and bumping into us from every side. A wall of tall men and dancing women

blocked my view. My stepbrothers couldn't see me, and I couldn't see them. I was lost in the sea of bodies.

The girls pulled me into a small circle. The girl with the green hair put her arms around my neck. She was warm and shaky.

"You look so lost!" she laughed. She touched my cheek with her sticky fingers. "Is this your first time at the Void, pretty girl?"

I swallowed hard. I looked at the dark ceiling and the cages above us. "Yes," I whispered.

The three of them looked at each other. They let out a loud, high-pitched scream of joy. The green-haired girl turned to the crowd and pointed at me.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 64

"We found one!" she cheered. She looked back at me with a mischievous grin, "A first-timer! Our little virgin sacrifice!"

They were teasing me, poking my sides and laughing.

"Should we give her to the wolves?" one girl asked, her voice thick with drink.

Wolves?

"No," the green-haired one said, pulling me closer until I could see the glitter on her eyelids. "We have to keep her for ourselves first. The night is just starting!"

I felt like I was trapped in a colorful, spinning dream. I wanted to run back to my pillar, but they held onto my hands like I was their new toy. They didn't know who I was. Every time the lights flashed, I thought about / Raphael, and I prayed the girls wouldn't drag me anywhere near his throne.

The girls didn't let go. They pulled me through the crowd, their hands tight on my skin. We bumped into people who were too far gone to care. I felt like a small boat being tossed around in a rough, dark sea.

We reached a long bar made of black stone. Behind the counter, a man with a shaved head and a cold face was pouring drinks. He didn't look like a normal bartender. He looked like he was guarding a secret.

"Give us the band!" the girl with the green hair screamed, slamming her hand on the stone, "We have a new one!"

The man reached under the counter and pulled out a thin ribbon. It was bright, glowing pink.

“Wait, no-“I started, holding up my hands and trying to step back. “I don’t want that.”

Before the words could even leave my mouth, the girls swarmed me. They were all smiles and high-pitched giggles, but their grip on my arms was like iron. They were being so friendly, treating me like a sister, but they didn’t stop.

“Oh, don’t be silly!” the green-haired girl laughed, her breath hot against my ear. “It’s tradition, sweetie. You’re going to look so pretty.”

“I said no,” I gritted out, twisting my shoulders to get away.

I felt my hair being pulled back roughly as they tied the pink ribbon in a tight knot against my skin.

“There,” the green-haired girl whispered, her eyes dancing. “Now everyone knows what you are.”

I looked around the room, and suddenly I saw things I hadn’t noticed before. Every single person was wearing one of these.

I saw a group of women nearby with red ribbons tied around their wrists or woven into their hair. I looked at the men and every one of them had a black band. Some wore them around their necks like ties, and others had them wrapped around their waists. Red for the women. Black for the men.

And I was the only one in the entire room wearing pink.

I felt a cold shiver go down my back. The girls started to hug me, leaning their weight against me as if we had been friends for years. One of them rested her head on my shoulder, her breath smelling like heavy fruit and vodka, You’re so pretty,” she muttered, “They’re going to love you.”

“Who?” I asked confused and terrified.

I tried to pull away, but they just squeezed harder, laughing and dragging me toward a different corner of the massive room. I kept my head down, trying not to look at the pink ribbon reflecting in the mirrors on the walls.

As we moved, the crowd opened up for a second near a dark, private booth.

I stopped walking. My heart skipped a beat. In the corner, under a dim red light, I saw Silvio.

He was pressed against a man with dark hair and a leather vest. Silvio's eyes were closed, his hands tangled in the other man's shirt as they made out. He looked completely lost in it, his face messy and his hair wild. He looked nothing like the brother I saw at the dinner table.

The girls saw where I was looking and giggled, "Don't mind him," the one with the green hair whispered, pulling me along. "That's just how the kings play."

The girls pulled me deeper into the center of the room. I felt the pink ribbon tight against my throat. My skin was hot, and my head was spinning from the loud thumping of the drums.

P

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 65

"Stop!" I said, trying to plant my feet on the slippery floor, "I don't want this. I'm waiting for someone."

The girl with the green hair turned around. She didn't let go of my wrist. She just tilted her head and gave me a wide, messy smile. Her eyes looked like they were seeing things that weren't there.

"Waiting?" she laughed, "In this house, nobody waits for anything. You just take what you want."

"I'm serious," I said, "I don't want to be a part of this. Whatever this 'sacrifice' thing is... I'm not doing it."

I reached up to my neck, my fingers fumbling with the silk knot. But the other two girls grabbed my hands and pulled them down. They were giggling, their faces red from the heat and the drinks.

"No, no, no," one of them whispered into my ear. "The pink is for the ones who haven't played the game yet. You can't take it off. Not until a King decides the game is over."

I looked at them, "A King?"

They all looked toward the high table where Raphael and Dante sat. Then they looked back at me and burst into a fresh wave of laughter.

"Oh, she is going to be so much fun!" the green-haired girl cheered. She clapped her hands together. "Look at her face!"

“She’s so fresh,” another girl said, touching the fabric of my black top. “The men in black are going to go crazy when they see a pink ribbon in the middle of the floor. It’s been months since we had a new one.”

I pulled back, but they just leaned into me, treating me like their favorite new doll. They didn’t listen to a word I said. To them, my fear was just part of the show.

“Don’t be scared, pretty girl,” the green-haired girl said, pulling me back toward the bright lights.

I looked around the room for Ciro, for a door, for anything familiar. But all I saw were red ribbons and black bands.

A low hum crawled through the speakers, deeper than the music, like something waking up under the floor. The girls around me paused.

People slowly turned their heads toward the center of the room. Then the main lights dimmed, not completely but just enough to make the shadows stretch longer along the walls.

A man stepped onto the raised platform near. He wore a dark mask that hid his face, his hands resting behind his back like a priest about to start a sermon. The light from the chandeliers above turned red.

“Ladies... and gentlemen.”

A few drunken cheers answered him, howls and laughter.

“Tonight... we honor an old tradition.”

The crowd reacted instantly, people whistled. Men pounded their fists on tables. The girls holding my arms tightened their grip excitedly.

“The hour has arrived,” the man continued calmly, “Ten minutes. Ten minutes for the lambs to leave the house.”

A wave of laughter rolled across the crowd, my stomach twisted. What is happening?!

“Ten minutes,” he repeated, “to run into the dark and pray the night is merciful.”

Some people clapped slowly, others lifted their drinks.

“Hide well,” the lights dimmed even more as I looked for Ciro, “Because when the bells ring...”

He paused.

“The wolves will follow.”

The crowd exploded this time, cheers, howls, people slammed their glasses together like warriors celebrating before a battle.

I stared at the stage, frozen.

“What-?”

Before I could finish the question, the green-haired girl shrieked beside me, “Oh my God, it’s starting!”

Her friends screamed with excitement. All around us, the people wearing red ribbons suddenly moved, not calmly. They ran.

Men and women shoved past each other toward the massive doors at the back of the hall. Bodies rushed like water breaking through a dam.

“Come on!” the green-haired girl yelled, yanking my wrist.

“Wait-!”

But they were already pulling me. The doors burst open, cold night air rushed inside along with the roar of the

crowd.

Outside stretched the dark forest behind the estate. Huge trees and endless land. Acres and acres of private ground disappearing into darkness. Red lights flickered along the tree line like distant fire.

Smoke rolled low across the grass, curling around people’s ankles as they ran past it. I stumbled down the stone steps with the girls dragging me forward. Every time my feet hit the hard ground, a sharp, white-hot pain shot up my legs. I had pushed myself too far, and the swollen, broken skin on my feet felt like it was bursting against the inside of my shoes. I winced, my breath catching in my throat, but the girls didn’t stop. They just kept pulling me deeper into the dark.

hapter ob

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 66

“Where are we going?” I shouted.

No one answered as the red-ribbon crowd flooded into the woods. Some people ran laughing. Others sprinted like their lives depended on it. High heels were thrown aside. Someone tripped and got pulled back up by a friend. Branches snapped under rushing feet.

The girl with the neon hair gripped my wrist so hard her nails dug into my skin. “Run!”

“But why?!” I yelled back, “What is happening?”

“You don’t want to be anywhere near the house when the wolves come out!” she shouted, as she reached into a small pocket in her skirt and pulled out two bright blue pills. She popped one into her own mouth without blinking. “Run and hide as far as you can. It makes it more fun for them!”

My head was spinning. “What wolves?! What kind of fun?! What is this?! Ciro!”

I opened my mouth to scream his name again, my lungs desperate for air.

“Ci-”

In one quick motion, the girl jammed her thumb against my lips and shoved the second blue pill deep into my mouth.

I gasped in shock, my throat snapping shut instinctively. The small, bitter pill slid down before I could even think to spit it out. I started to cough violently, my chest heaving as the chemical taste burned the back of my tongue. I doubled over, my hands on my knees, hacking until my eyes watered.

“There,” she whispered, a dark, messy smile spreading across her face, “Now the colors will look much better when they find you.”

Behind us, the estate glowed like a dark castle against the sky. Music still thundered through the walls. Above the trees, huge red spotlights slowly turned toward the forest. Their beams sliced through the fog rolling over the ground.

Smoke hissed softly, filling the woods with pale drifting clouds.

It looked unreal, like stepping onto the set of some twisted ritual.

The deeper we ran into the trees, the darker everything became. The red lights followed the paths cut through the forest.

Tall iron lanterns hung from branches, their glass glowed faintly like dying embers. People scattered everywhere, some climbed over fallen logs others disappeared between the trees.

A girl near us laughed hysterically as she ran, clutching her ribbon like it was part of a game.

The green-haired girl finally slowed, pulling me behind a thick oak tree.

My chest heaved, “What is happening?” I gasped.

She leaned against the bark, grinning wildly. Her eyes glittered in the red light, “The Hunt,” she said simply.

More people ran past us deeper into the forest. Someone shouted in the distance. Another person screamed with laughter.

From far behind us, a bell rang.

hapter 66

Once.

Twice.

The sound rolled across the land, the green-haired girl’s smile widened.

“Oh,” she whispered excitedly, “They’re waking up.”

My stomach dropped, I wanted to cry, “Who?”

She turned her head slowly, looking back toward the glowing estate behind the trees..

Her voice dropped to a soft whisper, “The predators.”

“We have to split up!” one of the girls gasped, her face pale in the red light. “The Predators look for groups. They like the noise.”

“But I don’t know where I am!” I shouted.

They didn’t listen. They let go of my arms and vanished into the red fog. One went left into a thicket of thorns. Two went right toward a dark stone shed.

I stood alone in the middle of the woods. Far away, back at the mansion, I heard a horn blow. It was a long, low sound that signaled the end of the head start.

The ten minutes were up.

Janedoewritings

Author

I was going to call this chapter “A Series of Unfortunate Events Featuring Gianna Toricelli” lol

Now... who’s excited for the next chapter? Drop a comment and let me know what you think ~

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My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 67

Gianna

+15 agu

The thin soles of my sneakers did nothing to protect me. Underneath the socks, the skin on my feet was broken. I had done it to myself, the sharp, stinging lines I had carved into my own flesh just days ago. Now, the heavy pounding of my weight against the roots and rocks made the wounds split wide open.

I felt the warm, wet soak of blood inside my shoes.

“Please,” I whispered, “What is this?”

The screams of the other girls had faded into the distance. All I could hear was the thumping of my own heart and the wet, squelching sound of my feet inside my sneakers.

I forced myself to stand up. I had to. If I stayed here, the men in black bands would find me.

I limped forward, my teeth gritted so hard my jaw ached. Every time my left foot touched a stone, a fresh bolt of agony shot through my body. I leaned against a tree, the rough bark scratching my shoulder.

The bell from the mansion rang again. It sounded closer now. The hunters were out.

And my fear didn't stay in the present. It started to bleed into a memory, pulling me back through time until the red mist of the forest turned into the cold, gray rain of a different night.

I wasn't twenty-one anymore. I was sixteen.

I was running then, too. My lungs were burning, and my hair was plastered to my face by the storm. The streetlights were flickering, casting long shadows over the wet pavement. I could hear the heavy thud of boots behind me... many boots.

"Don't let her get to the main road!" a man yelled.

"Check the alley!" another voice screamed, "The Boss wants her back before the sun comes up. Find the Princess!"

I had ducked behind a metal trash can, my breath coming in fast, jagged gasps. I pressed my small hands against my mouth to stop the sobbing. I was shaking so hard the trash can rattled against the brick wall.

Clang,

The sound echoed in the quiet alley.

"There!" a voice boomed, "In the corner! Get her!"

I had scrambled to my feet, my thin shoes slipping on the oily puddles. I didn't look back. I just ran. I could hear them calling out orders to one another, closing the circle.

"Princess! Stop running! It only makes it worse!"

I had tripped over a wooden crate, the rough wood tearing into my palms. I felt the sting of the scrapes, the heat of the blood trickling down my wrists.

Back in the red forest, the memory pressed against my brain until I couldn't tell which night was real.

The pain in my feet from the cuts felt exactly like the stabs of the glass I had run over five years ago. I was still that girl. I was still the one being hunted.

“Find the Princess!” the voices in my head screamed.

I squeezed my eyes shut, “Please,” I whispered to the dirt, “Not again. Please not again.

The boots in the red forest were very close now. They weren’t running like the men in the alley. They were slow. They were patient. They knew I was trapped. They knew I had nowhere left to go.

The memory of the gray rain and the men calling for the Princess shattered like glass.

A high scream ripped through the red mist. It wasn’t a scream from five years ago. It was happening right now just a few feet away from my hiding spot.

A girl in a red ribbon was pinned against a wide tree. Standing over her was a man. He didn’t look like a person anymore. He wore a mask that was split down the middle, half bone-white, half pitch-black.

He didn’t say a word. He reached down and grabbed the edge of her skirt. In his other hand, a long silver knife flashed. With one violent jerk, the blade sliced through the fabric like it was paper. The denim tore away, falling into the wet grass.

My heart stopped. I waited for her to scream for help, to fight, to run.

But she didn’t. She threw her head back against the bark and let out a loud, wild laugh. It sounded like she was losing her mind.

+15 Bahus

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 68

The man in the mask grabbed her waist and flipped her around so her chest was pressed against the tree. He leaned his heavy body into her, pinning her there. He reached around and started to stroke the skin between her legs, his fingers moving hard and fast.

“Yes, yes, Oh God!” she moaned.

The girl’s laughter turned into a loud moans. She arched her back, reached behind her and held onto the same

man.

The man dropped his knife into the dirt. I watched, my eyes wide and stinging, as he entered her from behind. It wasn't soft. It was a hard pounding that shook the girl's whole body.

He grabbed her hair, pulling it back so he could bite the side of her neck. He wasn't being careful. He was taking what he wanted, and she was begging for more.

I had never seen anything like this. This wasn't normal, this was something else. It wasn't sex, it was two animals fighting in the dark. The sound of their bodies hitting each other was loud, a wet, slapping noise that drowned out

the wind.

I felt a wave of sick heat crawl up my throat. I wanted to look away, but I was frozen. I watched the way his muscles bunched under his black shirt, the way her legs shook as he pushed her harder and faster against the bark. They didn't care that someone might be watching.

If that was what happened to the girls in red ribbons, what would they do to the girl in pink?

The sound of the man's heavy breathing and the girl's wild, messy laughs filled my ears until I felt like I was going to be sick.

I turned and bolted into the deep fog.

The trees were a blur of dark brown and blood-red smoke as I ran. I looked back over my shoulder for a split second, checking to see if any man in the mask had heard me.

That was my mistake.

I didn't see the thin, dark wire stretched across the path between two old trees.

As soon as my shins hit the metal line, I felt a sharp snap. A heavy coil of rope and wire hidden under the leaves surged upward with a loud hiss. It wrapped around both of my ankles like a snake.

"Ah!" I let out a choked cry as my feet were pulled out from under me.

The world flipped. I went down hard, my body hitting the forest floor. I landed right on my stomach, the wind knocked out of my lungs in a sharp gasp.

lay there, stunned, my face pressed into the wet dirt and dead leaves. I tried to push myself up, my palms digging into the mud, but the trap was smart. The more I kicked my legs, the tighter the wire bit into my ankles.

I was pinned to the ground like a butterfly on a board. I couldn’t crawl forward. I couldn’t turn over. I was stuck on my belly.

I looked back over my shoulder, my vision blurry with tears. My legs were pulled straight and tight, held by the wire that disappeared into the dark canopy of the trees above.

I was caught.

hapter 68

I was a prize waiting to be collected.

Through the red mist, I heard the slow thud of boots again until it stopped right behind me.

I didn’t have time to look up. A heavy weight suddenly dropped onto my back, pinning me even harder into the mud. A man’s knees were on either side of my thighs, and his large, rough hands began to move over me.

He didn’t start with my face. He started with my legs.

His palms slid up from my trapped ankles, squeezing my calves and moving over the back of my knees. I felt the heat of his skin through the thin fabric of my shorts. He reached higher, his fingers digging into my ass, gripping the soft skin with a hard, bruising strength.

“Found you,” he whispered, “I’ve been looking for the pink ribbon all night. I didn’t think the little rabbit would run this far into the dark.”

I felt his hand move up my spine, his palm flat against the small of my back, pushing me down into the roots and the dirt. He leaned his face close to my ear.

P

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

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Chapter 69

“You’re even hotter than they said.”

“Please!” I sobbed, my face half-buried in the leaves, “Please, let me go! I didn’t know... I didn’t agree to this!”

I tried to crawl forward, my fingers clawing at the mud, but he just laughed. It was a dark, mean sound. He grabbed the back of my black top and pulled, the fabric stretching tight against my throat.

“I don’t care what you knew,” he said. He moved one hand back down, his fingers wandering dangerously close to the edge of my shorts again, “The pink ribbon means you’re a prize. And I’m the one who caught you.”

“No! Stop!” I screamed, my voice breaking. I was shaking so hard the wire rattled against my ankles, “I’m not part of the game! Someone brought me here... I didn’t want this! Please, just let me go home!”

“Everyone here agrees to the game,” he muttered. His hand reached around, sliding under my stomach to pull me tighter against him.

“No! I didn’t!” I sobbed, “I didn’t know about the ribbons! I just wanted to leave the house! Please, just let me go. I’ll do anything, just don’t do this!”

I was crying so hard I couldn’t see. The red smoke was everywhere, and the pain in my feet was a white-hot fire that wouldn’t go out. I felt like I was dying.

I felt like the gray rain from five years ago had finally drowned me.

I was shaking so hard the wire rattled against the trees. I felt his hand move to my head. He grabbed a handful of my hair, but he didn’t pull it hard. He slowly slid the tangled strands away from the side of my face, tucking them behind my ear so he could see my profile in the red light.

Suddenly, the heavy weight of his body went still.

The wandering hand stopped moving. The rough breathing went quiet.

“Gianna?”

The voice was different now. The hunger was gone, replaced by a cold shock.

I froze. I knew that voice. I had heard it in the office. I had heard it in the estate. I had heard it when I was being yelled at for failing a meeting.

I slowly turned my head, my eyes blurry with tears.

Raphael was kneeling over me. His leather jacket was open, showing the dark ink of the tattoos on his chest. His hair was a mess, falling over his eyes, and his silver rings caught the red glow of the forest.

He looked like a monster, but his eyes were wide with a look of pure horror.

“Gianna?” he repeated.

His voice was a low growl now, but it wasn’t for me. It was for the situation.

He looked at the pink ribbon tied around my neck. He looked at my face, covered in dirt and tears. Then he looked down at my feet, where the wire was cutting into my skin.

My heart stopped. I couldn’t speak. I just looked up at him, my bottom lip trembling, as the man who had been hunting me realized exactly who he had caught in his trap.

Raphael didn’t move for a heartbeat. He just stared at my face, his chest rising and falling in fast, heavy breaths. Then, his eyes dropped to the pink ribbon tied around my neck.

A sound came out of his throat. It wasn’t a word. It was a sound of pure rage.

“Who did this?” he hissed, “Who put this on you?”

He didn’t wait for me to answer. He reached into the pocket of his leather jacket and pulled out a folding knife The silver blade flicked out with a loud click. I flinched, pulling my face into the dirt, but he wasn’t looking at me.

He moved to my feet and sliced through the wire. The tension snapped, and my legs fell flat against the ground The pain in my ankles was dull and throbbing, but I didn’t care. I was free.

Raphael grabbed my waist and flipped me over onto my back. He didn’t do it gently. He moved with a frantic, shaky energy. He hovered over me, his hands hovering near my face like he wanted to touch me but something was holding him back.

“Gianna,” he breathed. His eyes were dark, scanning every inch of my body. He saw the dirt on my top, and my face, “Look at me. Look at me right now.”

Chapter 70

I looked up at him, my vision blurry with tears. The red light made the tattoos on his chest look like they were bleeding.

“Who put this on you?” he hissed as he reached out and grabbed the pink ribbon around my neck. He didn’t pull it; he just held it between two fingers like it was filth, “Who gave you this color, Gianna? Answer me!”

“The... the girls at the party,” I sobbed. I tried to pull away, but he pinned my shoulders to the mud. He wasn’t hurting me, but he wasn’t letting me go either.

He was holding me like I was his most prized possession and someone had tried to steal it.

“How did you get here?” he asked, his voice was shaking with anger, “How did you get out of that house? Who brought you to this place?”

I tried to speak, but my throat felt like it was full of sand, “C-Ciro,” I whispered, “He said... he said it was just a party. I was bored. I didn’t know about... this. I didn’t know about the ribbons or anything, I swear.”

Raphael’s face went white. His jaw tightened so hard I thought his teeth might crack. He looked toward the mansion, his eyes turning into cold, hard stones.

“Ciro,” he repeated.

The name sounded like a death sentence.

He reached down and grabbed the pink ribbon around my neck. He didn’t pull it, but his fingers brushed against my skin, and they were ice cold. With one quick tug, he ripped the silk away. He balled it up in his fist and threw it into the red mist like it was trash.

“You are not a prey,” he snarled, “Do you understand? You belong to the Capones. No one touches you. No one looks at you. No one hunts you.”

My breath broke. A sob tore out of me before I could stop it. Everything hit at once.

Fear.

Pain.

Relief.

He reached out and slid his hand into my hair, his silver rings cold against my scalp. He pulled me up until my chest hit his bare, tattooed skin. He held me there, his arms wrapping around me. He was shaking, his heart drumming a fast, angry beat against my ribs.

“I will kill him,” Raphael whispered into my hair. “I will kill him for bringing you here.”

I felt his grip tighten, his fingers digging into my back. He wasn't the boss from the office anymore. He was a predator that was hunting me. He was guarding me. He tucked my head under his chin, shielding my eyes from the red smoke.

"If any man in this forest touched you before I got here, tell me now. I'll figure out who it was..."

I just shook my head, burying my face in his neck.

Suddenly, he reached down and scooped me up. He didn't ask. He just slid one arm under my knees and the other behind my back, lifting me off the ground like I weighed nothing. I let out a small cry as my bloody feet dangled in the air.

Chapter to

He pulled me tight against his chest. His leather jacket was cold against my skin, but his body was burning hot.

He started walking back toward the mansion. He held me so close I could feel the fast, angry thud of his heart against my shoulder.

"If anyone else had found you in that ribbon," he said, "they wouldn't be walking you back to the house. Do you understand how lucky you are that I am the one who caught you?"

I pulled my face away from his neck and looked up at him with tears clinging to my lashes. He looked down at me as he walked through the red mist. I was terrified of him in that moment, but in this screaming forest, he was the only thing keeping the other monsters away.

Janedoewritings

Author

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P

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 71

Raphael

+15 Bgnus

I didn’t look at anyone as I stormed out of the red mist. They saw the look on my face and moved out of my way like sheep running from a wolf. My arms were wrapped tight around Gianna. She was shaking against my chest, her breath coming in tiny, broken gasps that made my blood boil.

I reached the edge of the stone patio where my men stood guard, their hands resting on their holsters.

“Find Ciro,” I ordered, “He’s out on a drop-off for Dante. I don’t care if he’s in the middle of a deal. Drag him back here. I want him on the floor of my study in ten minutes.”

“Yes, sir,” they said in one voice.

I kept walking. I kicked the heavy doors of the mansion open, the wood slamming against the stone walls. The music was still thumping, but I didn’t look at the crowd. I didn’t care about the party anymore.

I carried her up the back stairs, my boots loud on the marble. I pushed into my private study and kicked the door shut behind me. I tossed her onto the deep leather couch. She sank into the cushions, looking tiny and pale against the dark hide.

I didn’t say a word. I dropped to my knees on the floor between her legs. I grabbed her ankles. I saw the way the wire had dug into her soft flesh. My jaw tightened until it ached. I hated that she was hurt. I hated even more that she had been out there for some other animal to find.

I started to pull her sneakers off, I threw them across the room, not caring where they landed. I ran my thumb over the edge of the wire cut, watching the way her skin flinched.

“Raphael...” she breathed.

Her voice sounded different. It wasn’t just fear anymore. It was soft, airy, and strange. I looked up at her. Her eyes were wide, the black centers growing until there was hardly any color left. Her skin was turning a soft, glowing pink.

I reached for her feet and ripped the white socks away. My blood turned to ice. There was tape wrapped around her arches, cheap, white medical tape and it was soaked with fresh, dark spots of red.

“What the hell is this?” I asked.

The hunting grounds were my design. I had cleared every jagged rock and every shard of glass. I had made sure the paths were safe for the women to run. There was nothing out there that could make a girl bleed through her sneakers like this.

I didn’t ask for permission. I grabbed the edge of the tape and peeled it back. My jaw went tight as I saw her skin. The soles of her feet were swollen and bruised. There were deep, angry cuts in places that made no sense. This wasn’t from a trap. This was something else.

“What happened to your feet, Gianna?” I snapped, my eyes lashing up to hers. “There is nothing in those woods that could do this. I made sure of it.”

She looked taken aback, her head tilting to the side as if the room was spinning too fast for her to catch. For a second, she looked lost, but then she blinked and tried to pull herself together.

“Um... ugh... ballet practice,” she said.

Her voice was thin, a lie that didn’t even try to be strong.

1 narrowed my eyes. I am not a man who can be fooled by a girl with wide green eyes. I know what a dance injury looks like, and I know what a blade does to skin.

“Ballet?” I repeated, as I gripped her heels, holding her in place so she couldn’t pull away. “Where exactly do you practice, Gianna? In the middle of a fucking war zone?”

But instead of answering me, she touched the velvet of the couch, her fingers moving slowly over the fabric as if she had never felt anything so soft in her life. Then she looked at me and smiled.

I didn’t like the silence. I didn’t like the way she wasn’t looking at me.

“Gianna. I am talking to you,” I snapped, but she didn’t even flinch at the sound of my voice.

She began to stroke the fabric, moving her hand back and forth, back and forth. She looked mesmerized, hertouch slow, as if the feeling of the cloth was the most important thing in the world.

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Chapter 72

“So soft,” she whispered, “It feels like.. like clouds.”

My blood turned to ice. This wasn’t just fear. This wasn’t just shock.

I let go of her heels and reached up, my hand wrapping firmly around her jaw. I forced her chin up, tilting her head back until she had no choice but to look at me. I leaned in, my face inches from hers, my eyes searching for

the truth.

I saw it immediately.

Her pupils were massive, black ink spilling over her green iris until there was almost no color left. Her eyes weren't focusing on me, they were jumping around. Her pulse was thrumming against my thumb.

She was drugged. Someone had put something in her system.

"What did he give you?" I hissed, my grip on her chin tightening. The image of Ciro flashed in my mind.

A red wave of fury crashed over me. We trusted him to watch over our family. We had told him to keep them safe when we're not there. Instead, he had brought her to a place where men wore masks and hunted women, and he had filled her blood with chemicals to make her compliant.

To make her a better "prey."

"Did Ciro give you a pill, Gianna? Tell me!"

She just smiled, a small, broken tilt of her lips. She reached up, her hand trembling as she touched the cold silver rings on my fingers. "Your hands are so warm, Raphael."

I felt a roar of protectiveness flare up in my chest. I pulled her closer, my other hand landing on the back of her neck, holding her head steady. I wanted to shake her, to wake her up, but there was no use. I don't even know what she took

"I'm going to kill him," I muttered against her forehead.

I looked back down at her mangled, bleeding feet and the dilated mess of her eyes.

I stood up, and went to the black cabinet and grabbed the heavy first aid kit. I slammed it down on the table next to

her.

"Stay still," I ordered.

I knelt back down between her legs. I grabbed a bottle of clear cleaning liquid and some soft white cloth. I took her foot in my hand again. It was small, so small. I started to dab

the blood away from her heels, moving as gently as I could with hands that were made for breaking bones.

But Gianna wasn't staying still.

She let out a long, airy giggle. It was a sweet sound. She started to move on the velvet cushions.

"Raphael," she whispered, "Your hair... it's so messy. I like it."

I didn't look up. I kept my eyes on the red cuts on her soles, my jaw so tight it ached. "I said stay still, Gianna. I'm trying to fix you."

"But I feel so good," she breathed. Suddenly, I felt her small, soft hands land on my shoulders. She didn't just touch me, she gripped the leather of my jacket, pulling herself closer until I could feel the heat radiating off her

+15 Benus

body, "Everything is so warm. You're so warm."

She slid her hands down my chest, her fingers tracing the dark lines of the snake tattoo over my heart. Her weight tipped forward, and I caught her before she slipped off the couch, my hand locking around her waist and pushing her back. A soft sound left her, somewhere between a sigh and something else.

I let go.

She didn't.

Her fingers wrapped around my wrist, pulling my hand back, and pressed my palm flat against her bare waist, right above the edge of her shorts.

"This feels so good," she sighed, her eyes closing. "Do that again. Touch me there."

My blood turned into liquid fire. I felt a surge of heat hit my gut so hard I almost lost my breath. Her skin was hot and soft under my fingers. I could feel her heart racing, her skin humming with the drug that was making her feel everything ten times over.

I should have pulled away. She was high. She didn't know what she was doing. And I wasn't a monster who took advantage of a girl who couldn't see straight.

"Gianna, stop," I said sternly, but my voice lacked its usual bite. I tried to pull my hands back, but she leaned into me, her small body pressing against my chest.

I looked up at her then.

Really looked at her.

”

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 73

The red light from the forest was peeking through the window, hitting the side of her face. Her hair was a wild brown mess, her lips were parted and wet, and her green eyes were dark and deep like the ocean at night.

For the first time, I didn’t see the gold-digging stepsister who had invaded my home.

I saw a woman.

And she looked like an angel that had fallen into the mud and didn’t mind the mess.

I shouldn’t have looked at her twice but I did. Her hair fell in loose, natural waves around her face, light brown Her nose was straight, her lips full, slightly parted like she didn’t even realize it.

My eyes moved before I could stop them.

Down her throat.

The soft line of her neck pulled tight when she swallowed, and my jaw clenched without warning. I dragged my teeth over my lower lip, hard enough to ground myself, but it didn’t help.

I shouldn’t be looking at her like this. I shouldn’t be seeing her like this. My gaze kept going anyway.

Her body wasn’t loud or dramatic. It was... small, soft in the right places. The kind that didn’t need to try. The curve of her chest, the narrow dip of her waist, the quiet shape of her hips...

I swallowed.

No.

She’s your sister.

Step.

Not blood.

Not really.

It didn't matter.

It should matter.

I forced my eyes away, dragging them back up, back to her face like I could fix it, like I could undo the way I had just looked at her.

My breath caught in my throat. I felt a pull in my chest, a dark urge taking over me but I forced my hands back down to her ankles.

"I'm wrapping your feet," I said, wrapping the white bandages around her arches, tucking the ends in with trembling fingers, what the fuck, why were my hands fucking trembling. I tightened my grip slightly, forcing control back into my movements, "Then I'm taking you home, putting you to bed... and then I'm going to find Ciro."

She just giggled again, leaning her head back and baring her throat to me, "You're so serious. Come closer, just for

a second."

I ignored the way my body wanted to move toward her. I finished the last bandage and sat back on my heels, watching her as she writhed slowly on the couch, lost in her own beautiful, drugged world.

Then, I felt it.

Her fingers landed on the bare skin of my chest. She didn't just touch me, she traced the dark ink of the wings that spread across my ribs. Her touch was slow, like she was trying to learn the shape of my soul through my skin.

"So many lines," she whispered, "They move when you breathe, like they're alive."

She leaned forward, her body sliding off the cushions until her chest was inches from mine. I could smell her, the scent of the forest, and the pure, clean smell of her. I stopped breathing.

"Gianna, stop it," I warned.

It was a lie. I didn't want her to stop.

She didn't listen. She slid her palms up my chest, her small thumbs brushing over my nipples. I felt a bolt of white -hot lightning strike my gut.

I reached up, my hand wrapping around her throat. I didn’t squeeze, but I held her there, my thumb resting right over her heartbeat.

Thump-thump. Thump-thump.

She let out a soft, broken moan and leaned into my palm, her eyes fluttering shut. “More,” she breathed, “Touch me more.”

My mind started to scream at me, a loud, warning siren in the dark.

She’s your stepsister.

The thought was a cold splash of water, but the fire in my blood was too hot to go out. I thought of our father, I thought about Vincenzo. He had drawn a line in the sand, deep and permanent. He had told us she was off-limits. She was family, and in our world, that meant she was a sacred thing. We couldn’t break her. We couldn’t own her. We sure as hell couldn’t touch her.

If Dante or Silvio walked through that door right now and saw me like this-kneeling at her feet, my hands mapping her skin-they wouldn’t just be angry. They would kill me. We were brothers, bound by blood and crime, but some sins were too big for even blood to wash away. Touching her was the ultimate betrayal. It was a stain that would never come clean.

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Chapter 74

But as she slid her hand up to the back of my neck, pulling me inches from her face, those rules felt like paper in: a fire.

And right now, she looked like a forbidden fruit, and I was starving.

“I can’t do it,” I told myself, even as my thumb traced the line of her jaw.

But then she reached down and grabbed my wrist, pulling my hand from her neck and pressing it flat against her heart. She arched her back, her small black top straining against her skin.

The sheer wrongness of it made my head spin.

The heat in the room was unbearable. I felt the sweat break out on my forehead. Every inch of my skin where she touched me felt like it was on fire. I wanted to push her back onto the velvet and lose myself in her.

Fuck...

She is my stepsister.

Stepsister.

Sister...

What the fuck was wrong with me? A day ago, I hated the very air she breathed. I wanted her gone. I wanted her out of my sight. And now, here I was, shaking because I wanted to devour her.

I leaned in, my nose brushing against hers. I could feel her lips trembling. I was a man of iron, but she was the magnet pulling me apart.

“You have no idea,” I whispered, “You have no idea how close you are to never leaving this room.”

My eyes dropped to her mouth, watching her lips part, waiting for me to take what I was forbidden to touch. Suddenly, the wall Vincenzo had built between us was crumbling. My hand slid into her hair, pulling her head back just an inch to give me the perfect angle to ruin her.

Then, the world exploded.

A violent pounding rattled the study door. I froze. Gianna’s eyes stayed shut, a soft, confused whimper leaving her throat as the spell broke.

I felt the ice-cold reality hit me.

Raphael, what the fuck are you doing?

I softly pushed her back onto the velvet cushions of the couch. I stood up, my heart still hammering against my ribs, but the heat in my blood was already turning into something much colder.

“Come in!” I ordered.

The doors flew open. Two of my soldiers, walked into the room. They weren’t alone. They were dragging Ciro between them.

“Drop him.”

They let go. Ciro hit the floor with a thud, landing on his hands and knees. He looked up, blinking, looked disheveled, his shirt wrinkled, his breathing fast.

The tension that had been choking me just seconds ago didn't vanish, it transformed. It twisted into a blinding rage that centered right between my eyes. I looked at the man who had taken her out. I looked at the man who had let her wear a pink ribbon. I looked at the man who had put a chemical high in her blood.

"Ciro," I said as I walked over.

Ciro looked from me to the couch, where Gianna sat slumped, and he swallowed hard, his Adam's apple bobbing.

"Boss, wait," he gasped, holding up a hand. "It's not what it looks like. She wanted to go. I was just "

I didn't let him finish. I reached down, grabbed the front of his shirt, and hauled him off the floor until we were eye to eye. The darkness in my soul, the part of me that enjoyed the hunt, finally had a target that deserved it.

"You brought my stepsister to a hunt?!" I hissed, my grip tightening until the fabric started to tear. "And then you drugged her. You put your filthy hands on my family."

I felt the power in my own arms, the urge to snap him in half like a dry twig. Behind me, I could hear Gianna's soft, drugged giggling.

"We let you walk through our halls. We let you sit at our table and hang around our blood. And you thought that meant you could suddenly fuck our women?"

I shook him once, hard enough to make his teeth clatter. I didn't want to hear him talk. I didn't want his excuses or his lies. I wanted to see the light go out of his eyes. I wanted to feel his bones give way under my grip.

"What were you thinking of doing, Ciro?!" I snarled, "Why the fuck did you bring her here?! Why the fuck you put a pill in her mouth and a ribbon around her neck."

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Chapter 75

I pulled him even closer, until our foreheads were touching. I wanted him to see the death waiting for him in my

stare.

"I didn't drug her!" Ciro screamed, he looked over my shoulder at Gianna, his eyes wide with genuine panic, "I swear to God, Boss! I just brought her to the party. I thought she'd like the music and everything, it wasn't my intention to-"

I didn’t give him a chance to breathe another word as I threw him. Ciro flew across the room, his body hit the glass coffee table in the center of the lounge.

The thick glass shattered into a thousand diamonds that flew into the air. Ciro let out a choked sound as he landed in the middle of the mess. He groaned, rolling onto his side, his hands instantly coming up to cover his bloody

face.

I grabbed him by the collar and hit him, again and again until my knuckles were split and raw, but I didn’t feel it.

All I felt was the image of that pink ribbon and the way her skin felt under my hands.

“She’s my family!” I roared, throwing a wild hook that sent him spinning to the floor, “She’s off-limits!”

Ciro scrambled backward on his hands and knees, his breath coming in wet gasps. He spat a thick glob of blood onto my white rug, the red stain spreading.

“Check the footage!” he yelled, his voice cracking with pure terror. “Boss, listen to me! I’d never betray you! Check the security cameras!”

I stood over him, my chest heaving, my knuckles dripping with his blood. I felt like a storm that was just getting started. I looked back at the couch. Gianna was staring at us, her eyes wide and glassy, a small, strange smile on her face. She had no idea how close I was to ending a life right in front of her.

“I didn’t leave her side!” Ciro pleaded, his hands shaking as he held them up. “Not until I had to make that drop for Dante. Someone else must have got to her. Check the tapes before you kill me for something I didn’t do! She’s a friend to me, Raph. Nothing but a friend, I swear on my life!”

The logic in his voice bit through my rage. I am not a fool. I didn’t get to where I am by killing men on a whim. My mind was sharp even when my blood was boiling.

But the anger didn’t go out. It just changed shape. I wanted someone to suffer for the way my skin was still burning from her touch. I wanted someone to pay for the pink ribbon and the blood on her feet.

“You shouldn’t have brought her here in the first fucking place!” I snapped. I kicked a piece of the broken glass toward him, the shard skittering across the floor.

“I know! I know!” he stuttered, his eyes darting toward the door as if looking for an escape that wasn’t there, “I know I messed up. But I consider your family my family. You

know that. You know me. I would never drug her. I would never put a hand on her. I made a mistake, Raph, but I never intended for it to get out of hand like this."

I stared down at him. I looked at the way his lip was torn, the way his eyes were filled with real, honest fear. He looked pathetic. But more than that, he looked like a man telling the truth.

I looked back at Gianna. She was tracing the pattern of the velvet again, her fingers moving in circles.

If it wasn't Ciro, then someone else was still at the party. Someone else had put that pill in her mouth. Someone else had tied that ribbon around her neck while she was high and helpless.

The thought made my vision go dark again.

"Get up," I whispered, "You're not dead yet, but I'm going to check every second of that security feed. If those tapes show me even a hint of a lie, I'll make sure you stay awake for every second of what comes next."

Janedoewritings

Author

First, please drop a comment and let me know your thoughts on today's updates.

Then, swipe up, I have an important note to share with you all!