My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 951

Gianna

The room was dark except for the faint light coming through the curtains.

Raphael was asleep beside me.

I turned my head toward him and smiled.

He looked different when he slept. There was none of that sharp focus he carried when he was awake, none of the constant calculation behind his eyes. His face was relaxed, his breathing slow and even, one arm resting across the mattress between us.

I watched him for a while.

He could sleep through almost anything.

Because, when Raphael decided his body needed sleep, it simply shut everything else out. I reached over and carefully brushed a strand of hair away from his forehead.

He didn’t move.

I leaned over and pressed a soft kiss to his forehead, and he didn’t even give me a twitch. I settled back against the pillow and stared at the ceiling.

I tried closing my eyes. For maybe thirty seconds, I managed it, then my mind started again.

I opened my eyes. I turned onto my side, then onto my back, then onto my other side but nothing helped.

The restless feeling that had been sitting quietly inside me earlier began spreading through my body. It wasn’t pain. It wasn’t fear exactly. It was the feeling that something was unfinished, something I needed to do before I could let myself rest.

I looked at Raphael again. Carefully, I slipped out from under the covers. The mattress shifted slightly, but Raphael only breathed out and turned his face deeper into the pillow.

I stood beside the bed for a moment, pulling my nightdress down over my thighs before reaching for the robe hanging over the back of the chair.

I slipped it on and tied the belt around my waist.

My hair had become a complete mess, so I gathered it with both hands and twisted it into a loose bun. A few strands fell around my face, but I left them there.

There was no point trying to look presentable at three in the morning.

I glanced at Raphael one more time. He was still gone somewhere deep in sleep. I smiled to myself before quietly walking around his bedroom. I walked slowly, my bare feet making almost no sound against the floor, until I reached where Medusa's enclosure was kept.

A soft light was already on inside.

I stopped in front of the glass.

Medusa was curled beneath the warmth of her enclosure, her long body folded over itself. For several seconds, she didn't move.

I rested my hand against the glass, "Hey."

Medusa remained exactly where she was. I pulled the chair closer and sat down in front of her. For a while, I just watched her, then the words came out before could stop them.

"I want to see my mother."

Medusa's tongue slipped out for a brief second.

I lowered my eyes, "I keep thinking about it," my fingers played with the end of my robe, "I told myself I wouldn't go until I fixed things with Jules. I thought that was the right thing to do. I can't face my mother until everything with Jules is alright."

Medusa shifted slowly, one coil sliding over another.

"I don't know if I'm doing the right thing anymore." I looked toward the glass, "I want to go see her but what am I even going to say to Mom? She died, and I went straight to Dad. I didn't stay for Jules. I didn't give myself time to say goodbye properly. I just... left. She would be furious with me."

A tiny laugh escaped me.

"She'd probably be waiting up there with her arms crossed, asking me what the hell I was thinking.'

Medusa moved again, her head slowly lifting from the coils. I smiled through the ache in my chest.

“I disappointed her.”

The words sat between us.

I swallowed and looked away.

“She trusted me to look after Jules. And I wasn’t there. I left her because I thought I was doing what I needed to do. I thought I had to get away from everything.”

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Chapter 952

Medusa stayed still. I rubbed my thumb against the edge of my sleeve

“I want to see her so badly.’

For a moment, I imagined Mom sitting across from me. Her smile, her voice. The way she used to look at me when she knew I was lying.

I missed her so much it felt almost physical.

“I want to tell her everything. About Jules. About Raphael. About Dad. About what happened at the facility. About the children.”

Medusa’s head tilted slightly.

I sighed, “Come on, Medusa. Give me something.”

She slowly moved along the glass, her body following the curve of the enclosure.

I watched her, “Should I go?”

She kept moving.

“Or should I stay?”

She took another slow turn.

I narrowed my eyes, “You’re really bad at this.”

Medusa stopped and I waited. She stared at me and then flicked out her tongue.

I nodded seriously, “Right. That’s what I thought.”

Another tongue flick.

I laughed quietly, “Thank you,” I stood from the chair, “That’s exactly what I needed to hear.”

Medusa had not, in fact, said anything but somehow, sitting there talking to her had made the decision feel less frightening.

I looked at her one last time, “I’ll go see her. I’ll apologize. I’ll tell her everything. I won’t hide the ugly parts either. And then I’ll come back.”

Medusa lowered her head back onto her coils.

I smiled, “Good talk.”

I turned toward the door anyway, feeling a little lighter. Behind me, Medusa remained curled beneath the warm light, completely uninterested in the emotional crisis she had apparently helped solve.

I picked up my slippers from beside the chair and slipped them on. Then I quietly opened the bedroom door.

The hallway was empty.

I closed it behind me and made my way downstairs. I walked through the back doors and into the garden.

Cold air brushed against my face. I pulled my robe tighter around myself and started walking.

The garden stretched far behind the mansion, leading toward the older grounds beyond it. I knew where I was going.

The Capone cemetery.

I walked down the stone pathway. Trees stood on either side, their branches shifting gently in the wind. The mansion lights slowly disappeared behind me until all I could see were small patches of light through the trees.

I kept walking. My slippers made a soft sound against the ground. I didn’t know how long I had been walking when the iron gates finally appeared between the trees.

They were tall and black, with the Capone crest worked into the center.

I stopped in front of them. My hands were cold as I reached for the handle and pushed. The gate opened with a low metal groan. I slipped through and turned around to close it behind me.

The sound echoed through the quiet cemetery, then I faced the graves.

My steps stopped.

There she was.

My mother.

I stared at her name carved into the stone, and something inside me gave way. My eyes filled so quickly that the letters blurred. I lowered myself onto the grass in front of her grave.

For a few seconds, I couldn't speak.

My hand reached out and touched the cold stone, "Mommy..."

The word barely came out as my lips trembled.

"I'm sorry," I pressed my palm against the stone, "I'm so sorry. I should have listened to you. You told me to stay away from him. You told me not to let Dad pull me back into everything. And I didn't listen."

I wiped at my cheeks, but more tears replaced the ones I had cleared.

"I thought I knew what I was doing. I really thought I was making the right choice," I looked down, "But I wasn't. If I had listened to you, maybe Jules wouldn't hate me."

The thought hurt so much that I had to stop.

I took a shaky breath, "Maybe she wouldn't look at me like I'm a stranger. I left her, Mom."

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Chapter 953

The confession came out in pieces.

"I left her when she needed me. I left you, too. And I know you didn't want that for me," I bowed my head, "I know."

For several seconds, there was nothing except my crying, then I looked back at the stone, “But I don’t regret saving those children. I can’t lie to you about that. I would do it again. And I know you’d want me to.

My voice softened.

“And I got them out,” a painful breath left me, “I got them out, Mom.”

For one tiny moment, pride tried to push through everything else, then the weight returned.

“But why does it still hurt this much? I don’t understand,” I pressed both hands against my chest, “I want to be okay. I really want to be okay, for you, for Raphael, for Jules.”

I bent forward, my forehead nearly touching the stone. My eyes squeezed shut.

I shook my head, tears falling onto the grass, “Jules refuses to see me and I need her, Mom. I need my little sister. I just want her to talk to me.”

My shoulders shook harder.

“She doesn’t have to forgive me yet. She doesn’t even have to love me right now. I just want her to open that door and let me sit with her,” I dragged my hands down my face, “I’ll take anything. Her yelling. Her being angry. Her telling me she hates me. I can take it. I just can’t take her silence.”

The words hung there. I reached for the stone again and held onto it as though my mother might somehow reach back.

I swallowed through another wave of tears. My forehead rested against the cold stone. I stayed there, crying against the grave, “I’m sorry, Mom. I’m so sorry. I should have listened,” I closed my eyes, “I love you and I miss you so much.”

The cemetery gave me nothing back. Only the wind moving through the trees but I stayed.

Something moved beside me.

At first, I thought it was the wind passing through the trees, then I heard the soft scrape of a slipper against the grass.

I turned my head and gasped as Jules stood a few feet away.

Her hair was loose around her shoulders, and she had pulled a sweater over her pajamas. She looked small standing there in the darkness, but the expression on her face made her seem older than eleven.

“Jules?”

She didn’t answer right away. Her eyes moved from me to Mom’s grave, “I came to see Mom,” she said quietly. “I thought you’d be asleep by now.”

I wiped my face quickly, even though there was no point hiding the tears anymore.

“If I’d known you were here, I wouldn’t have come,” she said sternly.

“Jules, I’m sorry.”

She looked at me like she didn’t believe me.

“I really am.”

Her face didn’t soften, “I don’t need you to say that.”

I lowered my eyes, “I know.”

“And I don’t need your apologies. I want you to leave so I can spend some time with my mom.”

That hurt, but I nodded, “Okay.”

I pushed myself up from the grass, brushing bits of dirt from my robe. I didn’t want to force her into accepting my apology, Jules gets real stubborn if anyone tried to force her into something. 1

“I’ll give you some time. I’ll leave you alone with Mom if that’s what you want.”

“That would be great.”

I nodded, “Okay.”

I took one step toward the gate, then another. I had almost passed her when fingers closed around my wrist, and I stopped.

Jules was holding me.

I looked down at her hand and then back at her.

She didn’t let go, “You should beg me instead of just leaving.”

I frowned slightly, “What?”

Her eyes were wet now, even though she was trying very hard not to cry, “You should beg me to forgive you.”

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Chapter 954

My heart broke. I dropped to my knees in front of her, “I’m sorry.”

Jules stared down at me.

“I’m so sorry,” my voice shook, “I’ll never leave you again. I promise. I should have been there. I should have stayed with you. I should have never left you like that, you needed me and I—”

The next second came so quickly that I didn’t even understand what was happening.

Her fist struck my cheek.

My head snapped sideways, and I lost my balance, falling back onto the grass.

For a second, I simply stared at the sky.

Then Jules was on me.

“Jules-”

Her small hands grabbed my hair, “Why did you leave me?”

She pulled hard. I winced and reached for her wrists, but I didn’t push her away, “I’m sorry.”

She hit my shoulder, “You left me!”

“I’m sorry.”

Another hit landed against my arm.

“I’m sorry.”

Her voice broke, “You weren’t there when I needed you!”

“I know.”

She grabbed my hair again and pulled, tears finally running down her cheeks. She hit me again, more from grief than strength, her fists landing wherever they could reach.\

“You went away!”

“I’m sorry.”

I covered my face when another swing came, but I still didn’t stop her. Jules climbed higher onto me, crying so hard that her words came out unevenly.

“You were supposed to be my sister!”

“I am.”

She pulled at my hair again, “You weren’t!”

I let my hands fall back into the grass, “I wasn’t.”

That made her stop for half a second. Her face was red from crying.

I looked up at her, “You’re right, I wasn’t the sister you needed.”

She hit my chest with both hands, “I hate you!”

The words came out like a scream as I coughed hard from the blow.

My voice barely came out, “Okay.”

Jules stared at me, breathing hard. I reached up slowly and wiped one of her tears from her cheek. She slapped my hand away.

I immediately pulled it back, “Okay.”

Her face crumpled. She hit my shoulder once more, but this time there was almost no strength behind it.

“You have no idea what it was like thinking I’d lost you forever when I’d already just lost Mom!”

She sat there on top of me, crying. I didn’t try to move her. I didn’t try to defend myself. I didn’t tell her that I had been hurting too. I didn’t tell her that I had been scared.

Norle of it mattered right now.

I had missed her eleventh birthday, the first one she had to face without Mom. There was nothing I could say that would undo that. So I stayed there beneath her and let her cry.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered.

Jules looked at me through her tears.

“I really am.”

Her fists slowly opened, she looked away, “You’ll leave again.”

“I won’t,” I reached for her hand scared she might pull away but she let me take it. I held her little fingers between mine, “I’ll never leave you ever again.”

Jules didn’t answer. She just looked down at our hands and I waited. Then her fingers tightened around mine and her face crumpled.

And before I could say anything, she threw herself at me.

I caught her.

Jules wrapped both arms around my neck and held on so tightly that I nearly lost my balance. Her face disappeared against my shoulder, and the sob that came out of her sounded like she’d been holding it inside for months.

I hugged her just as hard, “Oh, Jules…”

My arms went around her small body, pulling her against me while my own tears started falling again.

“I’m here.”

She cried harder, “Please don’t leave me again.”

“I won’t.”

She held on tighter, “Please.”

“I won’t, Jules. I promise.”

Her fingers twisted into the back of my robe, “I love you so much.”

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Chapter 955

My eyes squeezed shut, “Hove you more.”

She shook her head against my shoulder, “I love you the most.”

A broken laugh came out between my tears, “No chance.”

She gave a tiny sob that almost sounded like a laugh, “I love you more. So much more.”

I don’t know how long we stayed like that. All I could feel was my little sister’s arms around me and the tears soaking into my robe.

And then the thought hit me so suddenly that I almost couldn’t breathe.

This was the first time.

The first time since Mom died that Jules and I had actually held each other like this.

We had cried separately.

But never together, not like this.

I pressed my cheek against her hair, “I’m sorry,” I whispered again.

This time she didn’t tell me she didn’t need my apology. She just held on. Eventually, her crying became quieter. My own breathing slowly settled with hers.

When Jules finally pulled back, she kept one arm around me as though she wasn’t ready to let me completely

I wiped the tears from her cheeks with my sleeve. She did the same to mine.

Her eyes were swollen and red. Mine probably looked just as bad.

She sniffed, “You look horrible.”

I stared at her, “You just punched me.”

“You deserved it.”

I touched my cheek and winced, “Yeah, probably.”

A tiny smile appeared on her face. It disappeared almost immediately, but I’d seen it. Jules looked toward Mom’s grave, then back at me.

“Do you want to eat something?”

I blinked, “Right now?”

She nodded, “I’m hungry.”

Despite everything, I smiled, “Yeah.”

She stood and brushed the grass from her pajamas. I got to my feet beside her, pulling my robe closed again. Jules slipped her hand into mine. I looked down at our joined hands and we simply started walking.

The cemetery was quiet behind us as we made our way back toward the mansion. The iron gates came into view, and Jules walked beside me instead of ahead.

When we reached them, she pushed one open. I held it while she passed through, then I followed and pulled it closed.

The path back through the garden felt different somehow, lighter, happier. By the time we reached the back doors, Jules was yawning. I opened the door quietly and followed her inside.

We walked through the dark kitchen, and Jules immediately headed for the cupboards.

I leaned against the counter and watched her search, “What are you looking for?”

She opened another cabinet, “Cookies.”

“That’s your midnight snack?”

“Yes.”

I opened the refrigerator, “I think we have cake.”

She stopped searching, “Cake?”

I nodded. She looked at me and I looked at her, “Mom would’ve said no.”

Jules smiled, “And we wouldn’t have listened to her.”

She climbed onto one of the kitchen stools while I pulled the cake from the refrigerator, and somehow, between the two of us, we ended up eating the entire thing.

By the time we finished, I felt different.

Jules was sitting beside me, laughing with a little bit of cake still on her cheek, and I didn’t feel like I was carrying the whole world on my back.

My sister was here.

She was talking to me again.

Maybe things weren’t perfect yet. There were still so many things I had to face, so many wounds that would take time to heal but tonight, something had finally moved back into place.

I felt like I could breathe again.

Everything wasn’t fixed.

But maybe, just maybe, I was finally finding my way home.

Janedoewritings

Author

Swipe up for the next update.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 956

Gianna

By the fifth session, I didn’t have to be convinced to walk into the room.

I actually wanted to be there.

That felt strange enough that I almost laughed when I sat down.

The same chair was waiting for me. Same quiet room. Same little table between us. Even the plant in the corner looked exactly the same, although I was pretty sure one of its leaves had turned toward the window since my last visit.

My therapist smiled when she saw me, “How are you today?”

“Good,” I smiled, “Actually, really good.”

There was a small pause before she picked up her pen, “That sounds different from the last time.’

“It is,” I sat back, then leaned forward again because I suddenly had too much to say, “I did something.”

Her eyebrows lifted, “Tell me.”

“I’ve been talking to the doctors and some of the people helping with their care. I started making notes.”

“About what?”

“Everything. Medical care, education, therapy, legal documents, families, housing... all of it,” I could hear the excitement in my own voice, “I want to build a place for them. Not an orphanage.”

I shook my head immediately.

“I hate that word for them. They’re not a group of children who need somewhere to sleep until somebody decides what to do with them. They need a beginning.”

The thought had been growing in my head for days.

“I want a recovery and learning center. A real one. I got a big inheritance from my Dad but half of it went away in covering his debts. So, small at first, but designed properly. Somewhere with doctors and therapists, classrooms, a library, a play area, gardens, bedrooms for children who can’t go home yet, and private spaces for therapy.”

I started counting the ideas on my fingers.

“And every child gets an individual plan, not just a medical file. A real plan.”

My therapist watched me closely.

I kept going, “And education starts while they’re recovering. They shouldn’t have to wait until their bodies are better before they’re allowed to be children again.”

My voice softened.

“I want teachers there. Different learning methods. Art. Music. Games. Computers. Whatever helps them learn without making them feel like they’re back in that place,” I paused, “And I want the school part to be built differently.”

“How?”

I smiled, “This is going to sound crazy.”

“Try me.”

“I want technology that learns how each child learns.”

She put her pen down.

I leaned forward, “Not something that grades them and tells them they’re behind. Something that watches where they’re struggling and changes how it teaches them. If a child understands something better when they see it, show it. If they need to hear it, read it aloud. If long instructions confuse them, break them into smaller parts. If they learn better by doing something, let them do it.”

My fingers moved as I spoke, like I was already building it in my head.

“And every child gets their own learning profile, not a label, not a diagnosis slapped on their forehead. Just a way for teachers to understand what works for them.”

She smiled, “You’ve thought about this quite a bit.”

“I haven’t stopped,” I laughed, “That’s the problem.”

“Is it?”

“No,” a grin spread across my face, “I don’t think it is.”

I didn’t feel embarrassed about how quickly my mind was moving.

Usually, when too many ideas came at once, I tried to catch them before they escaped. I worried about whether they made sense. Whether I was saying them correctly. Whether someone would think they were stupid.

“I don’t want anyone deciding who they are supposed to become, not their doctors, not their families and not me. I want to give them tools and then let them choose.”

She studied me for a moment, “And where do you see yourself in all of this?”

I smiled, “Building it.”

She laughed softly, “I assumed you’d say that.”

“I mean it,” I sat back, “I want to build the technology too. Maybe not all of it myself, obviously. But I want to understand it. I want to work with people who know things I don’t know. I want to make something that actually works.”

There was a spark in my chest that I hadn’t felt in years.

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Chapter 957

“I think I could do it.’

“You sound very sure.”

“I am,” then I laughed, “Okay, maybe I’m seventy percent sure.”

She smiled, “That’s still progress.”

I nodded, “It feels good. I feel so good.”

She didn’t rush to respond.

I looked around the room, “I don’t remember the last time I said that.”

“What does good feel like?”

I thought about it for a moment, “Light. Like my brain isn’t fighting me anymore. I write now, a lot, and I don’t second-guess every word. I used to draw lines instead of writing because I was so afraid I’d get the words wrong. But now… I don’t feel that pressure anymore.”

My hands moved as I tried to explain.

“I was in Raphael’s office, and we were working, and suddenly I had all these ideas. I grabbed a marker and started writing. My handwriting was horrible but I didn’t stop.”

I didn’t feel like crying.

I felt like laughing.

“I spent so much of my life trying to prove I wasn’t stupid that I never stopped to see if I was actually good at something.”

My therapist picked up her pen again, “And now?”

I smiled, “Now I think I might be.”

She smiled back, “I think that’s something worth exploring.”

I nodded, “I want to.”

There was no fear behind the words this time.

I wanted to see what happened when I stopped trying to become the person everyone else thought I should be.

My therapist glanced at the clock, “We’re almost out of time.”

I looked at it, “Already?”

She smiled, “Yes.”

I shook my head, “I actually don’t want to leave.”

“That may be another first.”

Chapter u

Ismiled, “Yeah.”

I stood, picking up my bag. At the door, I stopped and looked back at her, “I think I understand what you meant now.”

“About what?”

“That I don’t have to fix everything at once,” I smiled, “I just have to keep moving.”

She nodded, “And you’re moving.”

I opened the door, “Yeah…” 3 W &.

I didn’t sleep much that night, but for once it wasn’t because I was scared or trapped inside another nightmare. My mind simply wouldn’t slow down.

By the time the sun came up, I was sitting at the dining table with my laptop open, a mug of coffee beside me and my hair tied into the worst bun I’d ever made.

I looked terrible, but I didn’t care.

The screen was filled with notes from the night before. I’d opened one document, then another, then another, pulling up old university work, research papers, saved projects and things I hadn’t looked at in years. Some of it came back immediately. Other parts took longer, and there were moments when I had to stop and read something twice before it made sense.

That bothered me for about thirty seconds.

Then I kept going.

I didn’t need to remember everything. I could learn it again.

That thought felt strangely freeing.

I opened one of my old machine-learning projects and immediately covered my mouth when I saw the code, “Oh my God. What was I doing?”

There were comments everywhere, variables with terrible names and entire sections I had clearly written at three in the morning. I scrolled further, still smiling at the mess, until something made me stop.

Underneath all of it was something I recognized.

I had actually built something.

It wasn’t perfect, and it certainly wasn’t impressive by today’s standards, but I’d created it when I was younger, at a time when I was still trying to prove to everyone around me that I could understand things they had already decided were too difficult for me.

I leaned closer to the screen.

Maybe I hadn’t lost that part of myself. Maybe I’d simply stopped using it.

I opened a blank folder and typed Gianna – Projects into the name field. I stared at it for a second before smiling. It was such a small thing, but I liked seeing my name there. There was no family name attached to it, no title, no expectation.

Just mine.

I created another folder called Research, then another called Ideas, followed by one for Builds.

I sat back and looked at the screen, “Okay,” I murmured. “Let’s see what you can still do.”

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Chapter 958

I started with something simple, not because I couldn’t handle something harder, but because I wanted to remember what it felt like to build something without someone standing over me, waiting for me to get it right.

I chose a problem involving pattern recognition and started reading.

One research paper led to another, and then another. Soon I had several tabs open, a notebook beside me and more questions than answers. Why did one model perform better on certain types of data? Where did it fail? Which assumptions had the researchers made? What happened when the data became messy? Could a system explain why it had reached a conclusion instead of simply giving an answer? More importantly, could it recognize when it was wrong?

That last question made me stop.

I wrote it across the top of the page.

HOW DOES THE SYSTEM KNOW WHEN IT DOESN'T KNOW?

I stared at it for a while before opening another document.

I compared different approaches, went back through old notes, checked research I had forgotten about and started making connections between things I'd learned years apart. My handwriting became messier as I tried to keep up, and a few words were crossed out when I changed my mind halfway through a sentence.

Normally, I would have looked at the page and felt that familiar pressure building inside me. Instead, I left it alone.

The words didn't need to look perfect. They needed to make sense.

Hours passed before I realized I hadn't checked my phone once. I hadn't worried about whether I was doing something correctly, whether my handwriting looked childish or whether somebody else would read my work and decide I wasn't smart enough.

I was simply working.

And I loved it.

The realization came quietly, almost in the middle of a paragraph. I loved sitting there with a problem that didn't have an easy answer. I loved getting stuck and having to figure out why. I loved finding something that didn't work and wanting to understand what would make it work.

My coffee had gone cold, my back hurt and my hair was slowly falling out of its bun, but I was still smiling.

I hadn't felt that kind of satisfaction in years.

It wasn't the feeling of someone praising me or the relief of finally doing something somebody expected from me. This belonged to me, and nobody had asked me to do it.

I opened a new document.

At the top, I typed:

What do I Want to build?

I stared at the question for a long time before my fingers finally moved.

I want to build something useful.

Something difficult.

Something that matters.

Something that doesn't need my family's name to make people pay attention.

Something that belongs to me.

I want to work in AI. Not just use it, but understand it deeply enough to build things that solve real problems. I want to work with people who are smarter than me and learn from them, while still being confident enough to challenge them when I think they're wrong. I want to make mistakes and learn from them instead of treating every mistake like proof that something is wrong with me.

I stopped typing and read it again.

That was the first time I'd written about my future without filling it with somebody else's expectations.

I didn't know what my company would be. I didn't know what product I'd eventually build, who would work with me, how much money I'd need or whether anyone would care about what I created.

And for once, I was okay with not knowing.

I didn't need my entire life figured out.

I needed the next step.

So I opened another document and wrote 90-Day Plan at the top.

I divided the page into sections: refresh my technical skills, study current AI research, build one working project, build another, identify the areas where my knowledge was weak, speak to people already working in the industry, find someone willing to mentor me, learn the business side of technology, understand funding and intellectual property, and figure out what it actually took to turn an idea into a company.

The list kept growing until it filled most of the page. I looked at it and smiled.

It was a lot.

gent

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 959

I wanted something that would make me work.

After saving the document, I leaned back and looked around the empty room

I wasn’t planning how to escape anymore. I wasn’t trying to fix my family, punish my father or prove that I was worth loving. I was thinking about what kind of life I wanted to build when nobody else was deciding for me.

My phone buzzed on the table.

I picked it up and saw Raphael’s message.

R: Where are you?

I glanced at the laptop.

Me: Working.

His reply appeared a few seconds later.

R: On what?

I smiled before typing back.

Me: Something for me.

There was a short pause before his next message arrived.

R: It’s ready. Are you?

For a second, I just stared at the screen. Then I sucked in a quiet breath, my smile spreading before I could stop it.

He was talking about the hunt.

It was finally ready.

After all the planning, all the conversations, all the time we had spent putting everything together, it was finally time.

I typed back immediately.

Me: I've been ready for days.

The typing bubble appeared almost instantly this time.

R: Then get your sweet little ass here.

A laugh escaped me, but the heat that followed it had nothing to do with humor.

Me: That sounds suspiciously like an order.

R: It is.

Me: And what happens if I don't obey?

R: You know exactly what happens when you make me come looking for you.

Me: Is that supposed to scare me?

R: No.

Another message appeared.

R: It's supposed to make you hurry.

I bit the inside of my cheek, trying not to smile again.

I stared at the screen, warmth crawling up my neck.

Me: Five minutes.

R: Three.

Me: Four.

R: Two.

Me: I like making you wait.

The typing bubble appeared, disappeared and appeared again.

R: You keep testing my restraint like you don’t understand what happens when it finally runs out.

I stared at the screen.

Another message arrived before I could answer.

R: I’ve been patient with you, Gianna.

R: Don’t mistake patience for permission to keep provoking me.

Heat rushed straight to my face.

Me: And what exactly are you going to do about it?

His reply came almost immediately.

R: Come here and find out.

I still took my time getting ready.

The shower ran hot enough to fog the entire bathroom, and I stood beneath it longer than I needed to, letting the water wash away the last of the tiredness from my skin.

I turned the water off, wrapped myself in a towel, and stood in front of the mirror while steam slowly disappeared from the glass.

Tonight wasn’t the night for one of my usual dresses.

I opened my wardrobe and reached past the clothes I normally wore around the house until my fingers found black fabric.

The dress was simple, but there was nothing innocent about it.

It fit close to my body, falling smoothly to my thighs. The neckline was low enough to make me pause when

I looked at myself in the mirror, and the thin straps left most of my shoulders bare. I slipped it on and adjusted the straps before turning toward the mirror.

My eyes traveled over my reflection, then I smiled

I sat at the vanity and started my makeup.

A little concealer, and enough blush to bring some color back into my face. A little shimmer caught the light whenever I moved. I finished with a dark rose lipstick, pressed my lips together, and leaned toward the mirror.

My hair slipped over my shoulders in loose waves. I ran my fingers through it, separated a few strands around my face, then left the rest alone.

I looked at myself again.

There was still the same girl underneath all of it. The same girl who had spent years being told she wasn't enough but she wasn't hiding tonight.

I slipped my phone into my purse, grabbed my heels, and headed downstairs.

A black SUV waited outside.

One of Raphael's men stood beside the rear door. I walked outside, the cool night air brushing against my bare shoulders. The driver opened the door for me, and I climbed inside.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 960

For most of the drive, I watched the city disappear behind us. The road narrowed as we moved farther into the woods, the headlights cutting through the trees while branches passed across the windows. I knew where we were going.

The Void.

As we came through the final stretch of trees, I saw lights between the branches.

Then more.

The car slowed, music reached me before the gates opened.

There were cars everywhere.

And they were not parked neatly in rows either. Blacked-out SUVs, sports cars, motorcycles, trucks. Men stood around outside with drinks in their hands, talking loudly over the music. Someone had a fire going farther down the property, and the orange glow moved across the trees.

The party was already in full swing.

The driver stopped near the main entrance and came around to open my door. I stepped out. The moment my heels touched the ground, several conversations nearby slowed. Ignoring a few whistles, I adjusted my purse on my shoulder and walked toward the entrance confidently.

The music grew louder as I stepped inside.

People filled almost every part of the enormous room. Men stood around tables, some playing cards, others drinking and laughing. A few familiar faces turned toward me, and I caught pieces of conversations as I passed.

Then I saw him.

Raphael stood in the middle of a group of men near the far side of the room and I forgot whatever I had been thinking.

And after so many days, he finally looked like the part of him that belonged to the Void, the part that made me forget any morals I ever had.

A black compression shirt stretched across his chest and shoulders, following every hard line of his body without hiding much. His baggy commando pants sat low on his hips, tucked into heavy tactical boots. His sleeves were nonexistent, leaving his arms bare.

And his tattoos-

God.

I had seen every one of them before.

I had touched every one of them before.

I had kissed every one of them before.

I knew exactly where they disappeared beneath his clothes.

But seeing so much of them at once, surrounded by a room full of men who looked like they belonged in a war zone, did something unfair to my brain.

I actually forgot to breathe for a second. My gaze traveled over him before I could stop myself.

Broad shoulders.

Strong arms.

Ink covering his skin.

That familiar scar near his side.

The way he stood with one hand tucked casually in his pocket while several men spoke around him.

After everything that had happened, I still couldn't bring myself to go all the way with him, not the way we used to. No matter how hard Raph tried to distract me, there was always some dark thought waiting somewhere in the back of my mind, ready to ruin the moment before I could lose myself in it.

But tonight, all he had to do was breathe, and somehow my entire brain forgot what it was supposed to be thinking about.

I watched him from across the room, completely distracted by the man himself, and then a sudden thought hit me.

Wait.

Was I ovulating?

And then suddenly, Raphael's attention shifted straight toward me.

Our eyes met.

He stopped in the middle of whatever he had been saying.

The man beside him continued talking for another second before realizing Raphael wasn't listening anymore.

I watched Raphael's gaze travel over me slowly. He looked at the dress, then my bare shoulders, then my hair, and then my neckline.

When his eyes returned to mine, something in his expression had changed.

I felt heat rush into my face. Suddenly, I wasn't nearly as confident as I had been thirty seconds ago.

His mouth moved slightly, and I lifted one eyebrow.

What?

He didn't answer. He simply kept looking at me. One of the men said something to him again. Raphael finally glanced away long enough to answer him with a few quiet words, then his attention returned to me.

This time, there was no mistaking the look that made me wonder whether coming here dressed like this had been a very good idea...

or a very bad one.

These chapters are very, very unedited. I've been ridiculously busy lately, but I really want to finish this story as quickly as I can. I don't want to keep you guys waiting anymore, so I'm choosing to get the chapters out now and I'll come back and clean everything up properly later.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 961

Rephael

I had been listening to the men around me for the better part of ten minutes, discussing the last details before the hunt, but the moment Gianna walked through the door, every other voice became background noise.

She stood among everyone in that black dress like she had no idea what she'd just done to the room or maybe she knew exactly what she'd done.

The fabric was pulled tight over her tiny waist, making her hips look flared, and ready for my hands. Her long, smooth legs went on forever beneath the short hemline, shapely from all those years of dancing, the exact same legs I loved spreading wide across my chest.

Then my eyes moved up to the deep, plunging neckline. It was cut down to her belly, spilling her breasts out for anyone in the room to see. Her nipples were visible beneath the thin cloth, perked up and pushing against the fabric, practically screaming for my mouth to suck them wet.

Her dark hair was down, falling in messy waves over her bare shoulders, and those lips made my blood run instantly hot. All I could think about was dragging her into the nearest dark corner, tearing that dress right off her frame, and burying my face between those legs until she was screaming my name.

I had spent years learning how to control myself. I knew how to walk into a room full of armed men and remain calm. I knew how to sit across from an enemy and make him uncomfortable without raising my voice.

None of that training had prepared me for my girlfriend deciding to walk into the Void looking like that.

One of the men beside me said something.

I didn’t hear it.

Our eyes met.

Her chin lifted slightly, and the corner of her mouth moved as if she already knew exactly what was going through my head.

That confidence nearly made me smile.

I leaned back against the table and let myself study her for another moment.

“Are we finished?” I asked the men around me.

The conversation stopped. A few of them looked at me, then toward Gianna, and one of them gave me a knowing grin.

I ignored him.

“The rest can be settled once everyone is outside,” I said. “I’ll see you at the hunt.”

They nodded and started moving.

One of them passed me with a quiet laugh, “Good luck.”

I gave him a look. He wisely kept walking. My attention returned to Gianna. I started walking towards her and People moved out of my way without being asked.

I didn’t need to hurry.

She wasn’t going anywhere.

By the time I reached her, the noise around us seemed farther away. I stopped directly in front of her, close enough that she had to tilt her head back to look at me.

She did.

Confidently.

No nervous glance toward the floor. No attempt to pretend she hadn’t dressed for this moment.

Just those eyes looking straight into mine.

I looked down at her, and her lips curved. I let the silence sit between us. She knew what I was doing. I could see it in the way she tried not to smile.

My gaze dropped briefly to the dress before returning to her face, “You wore that here.”

She glanced down at herself and then back at me, “I did.”

“Interesting choice.”

“Do you not like it?”

I stepped a fraction closer, “I didn’t say that.”

Her smile grew. She had learned exactly how far she could push me and had apparently decided tonight was the perfect time to find the limit.

My hand settled at her waist, firm enough to make my intention clear without turning it into a spectacle for everyone around us. She didn’t move away. Instead, she came slightly closer.

I kept my hand at Gianna’s waist as I guided her through the room.

A few conversations stopped when we approached the first group of men. Most of them already knew who she was, but knowing her name and meeting her properly were two different things.

“Guys,” I said, drawing their attention toward her, “This is Gianna,” I looked down at her for half a second before adding, “My girl.”

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Chapter 962

at earned a few smiles.

The first man stepped forward and offered his hand, “Eric.”

Gianna shook it, “Nice to meet you.”

“Likewise. We’ve heard plenty about you.’

She glanced at me. “Hopefully nothing terrible.”

Eric laughed, “Mostly that you keep him human.”

A few of the men laughed.

I shook my head and guided her toward the next group. I had never told them a damn thing about her. She was far too valuable to me to share details about her with other men. He had only said it because of the way my entire demeanor changed whenever she was around.

These weren't random men I'd picked up for the hunt. Most of them had known me since college. They built companies of their own, inherited businesses, sold them, bought others, and made enough money that they could spend their weekends doing things most people would never understand.

"That's Julian," I said, nodding toward a tall man holding a glass.

Julian looked Gianna over with an amused smile. "So you must be Gianna."

Gianna smiled politely, "Nice to meet you."

"Raphael has been unusually difficult to reach lately."

Gianna laughed, "We've been busy..."

We continued around the room, and with every introduction, Gianna became more comfortable. She asked questions, remembered names, laughed at their stories, and gave as good as she got when someone teased me.

Then the sound of a low warning tone suddenly rolled through the room. Every conversation stopped, the music cut out.

Then the siren sounded.

The mood in the room changed instantly, glasses were set down, chairs scraped back. Men checked their watches and moved toward the doors.

The hunt was about to begin.

The siren had barely faded when I took Gianna by the hand and led her through the rear doors.

The noise of the party followed us for a few seconds before the heavy doors shut behind us. Outside, the air was colder, carrying the smell of damp earth and pine. Beyond the lights of the estate, the forest stretched into darkness.

Men were already moving toward the equipment tables. No one needed instructions. This was a ritual hey had repeated enough times to know by memory.

Masks came out first.

Some were black and plain. Others covered the whole face, leaving only narrow openings for the eyes A few men pulled them on while walking, their voices changing slightly as the material settled over their faces.

Gianna watched them with open curiosity, “I was so scared the first time I came here.”

I glanced at her, “And now?”

She looked toward the trees and a slow smile appeared, “Now I like being the fox...”

I stopped walking. She turned back toward me, clearly pleased with herself. I remembered the last time she’d taken that role.

The memory arrived far too quickly, along with the image of her looking at me with that same fearless expression, completely aware of what she was doing to my self-control.

My attention stayed on her for a moment longer than it should have then I gave her waist a brief squeeze before letting her go, “Go choose your equipment.”

That got her attention. We reached the tables. Gianna immediately picked up the bow we’d designed together.

She ran her fingers along it, checking the frame and the attached systems before lifting it properly. She tested the controls, examined the arrows beside it, then she saw our initials engraved in the metal, “You gave it our initials.”

“I did.”

She laughed then, out of pure happiness, then she looked over the remaining equipment, “Choose yours.

I glanced across the table. There were several options available. I picked one of the compact firearms and checked it before securing it in place.

Gianna watched me, “That’s your choice?”

“For tonight. I just want to get this over with so I can take you to your surprise...”

She nodded and then she reached for a red bandana. She folded it once and tied it around the lower half of her face, covering her nose and mouth. Her hair remained loose, dark against the black dress, while the red cloth stood out against everything around her.

She looked toward me, “Aren’t you wearing a mask?”

I shook my head, a small smile tugging at my mouth. “I don’t need one. I want them to see my face so they know better than to come anywhere near you.”

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 963

Before she could answer me, the second siren sounded. Every man around us stopped moving. A digital timer mounted near the edge of the clearing lit up.

Ten seconds, everyone moved. Men disappeared between the trees, taking their positions. Gianna adjusted her grip on the bow.

The forest ahead was no longer empty as the preys were released.

White lights appeared between the trunks, moving through the fog that had begun crawling low across the ground. The beams cut through the darkness in slow sweeps, making the woods look almost unreal

Gianna glanced at me. I stepped behind her.

My hand settled briefly at her waist as I leaned down and pressed a slow kiss against the back of her neck, just above the edge of the red bandana. She shivered.

I smiled against her skin, “Ready?”

She turned her head enough for me to catch her eyes, there was no fear in them now, only excitement.

She tightened her grip on the bow, “With you,” she said, “always.”

I released her.

The men vanished into the trees.

The moment the timer hit zero, Gianna took off.

I followed half a second later.

Her laughter carried through the trees as she ran, the sound completely out of place in the dark forest. Branches brushed against her arms, her hair flew behind her, and the red bandana covered half her face while her eyes stayed bright with the kind of excitement I had learned to recognize.

She looked back at me, “Try to keep up!”

I almost laughed, “You’re already losing.”

“Keep dreaming.”

She turned forward again and pushed deeper between the trees. I let her have the lead.

For now.

forest had changed since the last hunt. White lights moved between the trunks, fog drifted across the ground, and distant signals marked the positions of the other players. Somewhere ahead, one of the targets triggered a sensor, followed by a sharp electronic tone. 1

Gianna immediately changed direction.

I watched her do it.

She wasn’t running blindly. She was paying attention, reading the sounds and lights around us, using the equipment exactly as we’d designed it.

She glanced back at me again, a playful smile already forming, “Want to make this interesting?”

“What are you betting?”

Her grin widened, “Whoever gets the most kills wins.”

I raised an eyebrow, “And what exactly does the winner get?”

She started walking backward, watching me with that look she knew would get under my skin. “The pleasure of deciding what they want to do to the other person.”

I stopped.

She stopped too, still smiling.

“You really think you’re finally ready for that?” I asked.

She gave a small shrug, holding my gaze with a teasing little smile, “Maybe. Are you willing to find out?”

I smiled. It was probably the wrong expression to give her, “Gianna, I’ll beat you in under a minute.”

Her eyes widened, “In a minute?”

“Less.”

She rolled her eyes, “You’re unbelievably arrogant.

“Because I’m usually right,” I stepped closer, lowering my voice, “Also, remember that you wanted this bet, don’t complain when you lose.”

She stared at me for a second, clearly trying not to smile. She looked pleased with herself, then she raised her bow, “Ready?”

I checked my weapon and glanced toward the trees, “Always.”

She moved first.

This time, I didn’t give her a head start.

We ran side by side through the trees, ducking beneath branches and moving between patches of white light. Gianna laughed when I passed her, then sped up and nearly caught me before I changed direction.

+15 Bonus 5 Bonus

“You’re cheating!”

How?’

“You know this place better!”

“That’s not cheating.”

“It’s absolutely cheating.”

“You agreed to race me.”

“I agreed to beat you.”

She made an annoyed sound and pushed harder. I could hear her laughing even while she tried to overtake me.

She ducked beneath a low branch, her dark dress inching higher around her legs, showing off those long, pale thighs with every stride. Her bow was already up, resting in her grip, her fingers hooked around the string.

An electronic beep chimed near the edge of a ravine ahead. A sensor had been tripped.

I slowed my pace to let her take the front, but Gianna didn’t wait for my permission. She dropped low, creeping around a thick tree trunk.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 964

Through the white fog, a tall man in a grey jumpsuit was stumbling over a root, panting, his face pale with terror as he ran.

Gianna raised the heavy black bow, clicked the small tracking button near the handle, and pulled the string back to her cheek.

Thwack!

The arrow flew through the dark air, striking the man square in the center of his chest. The force of the customized tip knocked him straight onto his back. He let out a choked gasp, writhed once on the damp ground, and went completely still.

Gianna turned back toward me, a wicked, victorious grin stretching across her face beneath her red bandana. She held up one finger, “One!” she whispered loudly.

“Beginner’s luck,” I answered, stepping up behind her.

Before she could answer, I reached down, grabbed a handful of her ass cheek where her dress had hitched up, and gave it a hard, stinging slap.

“Ow! Raph!” she squeaked, jumping forward with a gasp, her hand flying back to cover her sore cheek.

“You’re trying to distract me, baby,” I murmured near her ear, my mouth brushing against the soft skin of her neck.

She narrowed her eyes at me, her cheeks flushed bright pink. “You are so dead when we finish this,” she hissed, but her eyes were dancing with pure excitement.

She turned and sprinted deeper into the woods, her short dress bouncing with every step. I followed right on her heels, my blood pumping hot, completely mesmerized by the view in front of me.

Another shadow broke through the mist to our left, two men this time, running together, trying to find a hiding spot behind a giant boulder.

“Mine!” Gianna called out.

She didn’t even stop running. She raised her bow, fired one arrow into the neck of the first man, immediately pulled a second arrow from her quiver, and fired again before the second guy could even turn around.

Thwack! Thwack!

Both men dropped like heavy sacks of flour into the mud.

“Three!” she cheered, turning to face me while walking backward through the trees. “Three to zero, Raph! How does it feel to be completely embarrassed by your girlfriend?”

I shook my head, pulling my compact gun from my holster, “Don’t get comfortable.”

I raised my arm, aimed past her shoulder without looking, and pulled the trigger once. The shot echoed through the night. A fourth man, who had been creeping up behind a bush to our right, collapsed instantly with a bullet between his eyes.

ne,” I said, stepping past her.

Gianna rolled her eyes, but a loud beep from her wrist console interrupted us. Three white dots flashed on her screen, moving toward the lower creek bed.

“Oh, no you don’t!” she shouted, taking off at a full sprint.

I chased after her, laughing softly under my breath. Watching her hunt was the sexiest fucking thing had ever seen. The fear that used to live in her eyes was completely gone, replaced by a fierce, dark fine.

She was taking back her power, one piece of trash at a time, and she was doing it while looking like absolute sin in that black dress.

When we hit the creek bed, she took out two more with rapid-fire shots to the chest.

“Five!” she yelled, stepping on top of a fallen log and looking down at me like a queen.

I stepped up onto the log beside her, wrapped my arm around her waist, and pulled her body flush against mine. Her small back pressed tight into my chest, her breath coming out in short, sweet pants.

“You’re cheating with that bow,” I whispered, sliding my hand down her waist, resting my palm flat over her stomach.

“It’s not cheating if I designed the tracking code with you,” she teased, tilting her head back against my shoulder.

I leaned down, pulled the bandana down with my teeth and captured her lips in a hard kiss. She moaned into my tongue, her body melting against mine for a brief, crazy second before she pulled back, breathless.

“Stop trying to distract me!” she laughed, shoving my chest.

“I’m not distracting you,” I whispered, giving her ass another firm squeeze, “I’m rewarding you.”

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 965

For the next twenty minutes, it was absolute chaos. I took down five more men with clean headshots, bringing my total score to six. Every time I hit one, I made sure to give Gianna a smug look, but she was completely unstoppable tonight.

She moved through the dark woods like she owned them, using her bow to pin men to trees, drop them from forty yards away, and take them down before I could even raise my barrel.

Eight... nine...

She ducked behind a thick tree, spotted another target running through the fog toward the boundary fence, and drew her bow back. She released the string. The arrow zipped through the air with a high- pitched whistle, striking the man directly in his forehead. He crashed into the dirt and didn’t move again.

Just then, the final siren tore through the forest, signaling that the hunt was over and there were no remaining prey to find. Gianna let out a loud, breathless laugh as she lowered her bow, still catching her breath from the chase.

“Ten!” she screamed out, spinning around to face me. She threw her arms up in the air like she had just won a championship, “Ten to six! I beat you! I actually beat you!”

I stopped in front of her, holstering my weapon, letting my hands rest heavily on my hips as I looked down at her. She was practically glowing, her cheeks red, her hair a messy, beautiful disaster around her shoulders, her eyes shining brighter than the stars above us.

“Ten to six,” I repeated, letting a dark, slow smile creep onto my face.

She walked right up to me, pressing her chest against mine, poking my sternum with her pointer finger. “In less than a minute, was it? You said you’d beat me in less than a minute, Mr. Arrogant.”

“I let you win,” I lied smoothly.

Gianna burst out laughing, the sound ringing through the quiet, foggy forest, “You did not! You tried your best and you lost!”

She stepped closer, wrapping her arms around my neck, tilting her head up so her green eyes locked straight onto mine.

“And do you remember what the winner gets, Raphael?” she whispered, her voice dropping into a sweet murmur against my lips, “The winner gets to decide exactly what they want to do to the loser.”

I grabbed her waist, lifting her off her feet until she was level with my face.

“I remember,” I murmured, my thumb brushing gently over her still-wet lower lip, “But before we do that, aren’t you going to ask me about your surprise?”

Her eyes lit up immediately. She already knew the surprise had something to do with Vance and Leone. We’d spent enough time talking about it for her to have an idea of what tonight meant, but she hadn’t seen what I’d actually prepared.

Chapter

I didn’t lower her to the ground. I shifted her weight in my arms, pulling her tight against my chest as I mned and started walking deeper into the trees.

Gianna wrapped her legs tightly around my waist, her arms looped around my neck. My boots breaking twigs and crunching through the damp, fallen leaves.

We moved past the standard boundary markers, past the warning signs that marked the restricted zone of the Void-a place where no one was allowed without my personal key code.

The fog grew thicker here, clinging to the tall pine trees that stretched high into the dark sky.

I set her down on her feet when we reached a wide clearing surrounded by massive, ancient trees.

Gianna looked around, her eyebrows pulling together as she took in the quiet space, “Raphael... what is this place?”

I pulled my phone from my pocket and unlocked the screen. I swiped down on a custom security app and pressed the red button in the center of the display.

A heavy, grinding mechanical sound suddenly roared through the air, shaking the quiet woods. High above us, hidden in the thick canopy of the giant trees, metal chains began to uncoil with loud clangs.

Gianna gasped, stepping back as she looked up.

Two massive iron cages descended slowly from the darkness, swaying slightly in the air before stopping ten feet above the ground.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 966

Inside the first cage was Vance. His face was a swollen, bloody mask of purple bruises and broken bone, completely unrecognizable from the slick, smug man he used to be. His clothes were torn, soaked in old blood, his body hanging limply against the cold bars.

In the second cage sat Leone. His eyes were wide with a frantic, animal terror, his pale lips trembling as he stared down at us through the steel mesh.

Gianna went completely still. Her eyes widening as she stared up at the two men who had ruined so many lives.

Before she could speak, I tapped another command on my screen.

All around the clearing, high-definition monitors mounted securely to the tree trunks flickered to life. The sharp, bright blue light cut through the thick fog, illuminating the dark forest.

The screens began displaying thousands of photos. Clear, heartbreaking images of the children, both those who had died at the hands of Vance and Leone, their small faces pale and bruised, and the three hundred eighty-seven children we had rescued from the medical facility.

Then, the audio kicked in.

The quiet forest was suddenly drowned out by the agonizing sound of children screaming, crying for their mothers, pleading for mercy in tiny, terrified voices that I got out of the system of that place. The audio loops played scene after scene of the horror those men had inflicted on the innocent.

Gianna’s whole body began to shake. Her shoulders stiffened, her posture straightening as the blood drained from her face, replaced by a dark, burning rage. Her hands clenched into tight fists at her sides, her chest heaving as she stared at the screens.

I stepped up behind her, placing my hands on her shoulders, leaning down so my voice was right next to her ear.

“An endless hunt,” I said softly, “Just like we planned.”

Gianna turned her head slightly to look at me, her dark eyes swimming with tears of anger.

“Their hands and feet are tied securely to the cage bars,” I explained, pointing up at the iron structures, “They cannot move enough to hit their heads, break their necks, or commit suicide. They are completely trapped.”

I pulled a small black control tablet from my coat pocket and handed it to her.

“I installed the specialized systems we built in the basement,” I continued, my thumb brushing the back of her trembling hand. “The weapons that deliver maximum, unbearable pain without causing permanent damage or death. The controls show the exact target areas on the human body to shock, burn, and disorient, guaranteeing they remain fully conscious for every single second.”

Gianna looked down at the screen in her hands, then back up at the men in the cages. Vance let out a weak, pathetic groan, while Leone began to weep quietly, shaking the bars of his cage.

“They are staying here for the rest of their lives,” I told her, my arm wrapping around her waist, pulling her flush against my chest, “They will never see the sun outside these trees. They will die here of natural old age, and not a second sooner.”

I leaned in closer, my lips brushing the shell of her ear.

“Every single day, anyone who holds a gold hunt ticket can come into this clearing,” I whispered darkly, “They can step up to these consoles and make these two monsters feel the exact pain, fear, and agony they caused to thousands of innocent souls.”

Gianna stood frozen for a long moment, listening to the screams echoing from the screens, watching the two men cower in their high iron perches.

Slowly, I could feel when the weight in her chest lifted. The tension in her shoulders vanished, replaced by a sense of justice. A slow, dark smile curved her lips as she looked down at the tablet in her hand, her thumb hovering over the first control button.

My Stepbrother's Dirty Little Secret

Chapter 967

Raphael

Gianna’s thumb pressed down flat against the digital touchscreen.

High above us, a harsh voltage surged directly into the iron bars of the lower cage. Leone's spine snapped straight as his body jerked violently, a long, shrill scream tearing out of his throat. His legs kicked against the metal mesh while the current burned through his muscles, leaving him weeping and gagging for air the second she lifted her finger.

She didn't stop there. Gianna tapped the secondary control, targeting Vance's cage. A low-frequency sound wave blasted directly into his ears, making him thrash against his restraints, his swollen, bloody face twisting in sheer agony as his brain flooded with pure pain.

She watched them both squirm for several long minutes, her beautiful green eyes were cold, calm, and completely unbothered by their cries.

When she was finished, she hit the reset sequence. Vance's cage began its slow ascent, grinding upward until it disappeared high into the dense, dark canopy of the trees, far out of reach from the ground.

Gianna walked over to the tree trunk and slotted the tablet back into its metal housing. She turned around to face me, a dark smile lighting up her face.

"This is perfect," she said, "This is everything I could have ever asked for, Raph. Everything and more."

She stepped closer, closing the small distance between us. Her hands flew up to grab my collar, her fingers pulling my head down as she crushed her lips against mine.

The kiss was wild and ravenous. Her warm tongue pushed deep into my mouth, tasting me with a intensity that made my entire body go rigid. I wrapped my arms around her, returning the kiss with equal heat, swallowing her breathless moans while the cold night air burned around us.

Then she used her small frame to push me back, slamming my shoulders hard against the rough bark of the massive pine tree. I let her do it easily, yielding to her control, my eyes locked onto hers as she stood right in front of me, flushed and panting.

She turned her body around, pressing her back flat against my chest. I immediately snaked my arms around her waist, pulling her hips back until she was locked tightly against the hard length of my body.

I slid my palms over the thin fabric of her tight black dress, my fingers digging into her narrow waist before gliding down over the curve of her hips.

I hitched the short hemline up her thighs, my palms cupping her bare skin, feeling the tremors running through her legs.

Up in the remaining cage, Leone was sobbing uncontrollably. His bloodshot eyes were fixed on us, his hands trembling against the bars as he begged in a ruined, raspy voice. “Please... Gianna, please... let me down... have mercy...”

Chapter

Gianna tilted her head back against my chest, her eyes looking up into mine while my fingers stroked the sensitive skin of her inner thighs, pushing the fabric of her dress higher and higher.

“Do you know what he told me?” Gianna said, her voice dropping into a low murmur that made the hair on the back of my neck stand up, “When I stole his phone back at the medical facility?”

My hands stilled for a second, my thumbs digging into the sides of her hips as I looked down at her painted lips, “What did he say, ballerina?”

“He told me that he wanted to fuck me,” she whispered, her hips rolling back against my crotch in a slow grind, “He said he wanted to make you watch.”

A dark heat flooded my veins, making my vision go completely red. My hands gripped her ass tight, pulling her dress all the way up past her hips, exposing her bare skin and thin lace to the cold air.

Gianna looked back up at me, a wicked smile spreading across her face as she pointed up at Leone’s crying face.

“And now that I have won the hunt,” she murmured against my jaw, “I think we’re going to make his dream come true... but the only catch is... he will be the one watching us.”

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My hands dug deep into the soft flesh of her hips, my thumbs pressing hard into her skin, keeping her tight against my groin. Leone’s pathetic, choked sobs echoed from the cage above, but my entire focus narrowed down to the woman pressed against my chest.

“He doesn’t get to look at you,” I whispered low in her ear, “That piece of shit doesn’t deserve to see a single inch of your skin, Gianna.” 1

Gianna let out a soft, breathy laugh. She tilted her head back against my shoulder, her eyes flashing up at me, “Oh, but I want him to look, Raph,” she whispered, “I want him to watch every single thing you do to me. I want him to see who I belong to, and I want him to know he could never touch me again.”

Her hips rolled back against mine again, grinding her soft ass flat against the thick, rock-hard length trapped behind my pants.

Days of holding back, days of keeping my hands gentle, of controlling every dark, wild impulse inside me while she healed, shattered in a single second.

The tight leash I kept on myself snapped clean in half.

I grabbed her hair at the base of her neck, pulling her head back just enough to crush my mouth over hers, my tongue thrusting deep into her mouth, claiming her, swallowing her small, helpless gasp. My hands tore at the fabric of her tight dress, bunched around her waist, my palms rough against her bare skin as I squeezed her hips until I knew it would leave marks.

“I fucking love you,” I rasped against her lips.

“And I love you...” she countered.

Before I could drag her up against the tree, Gianna gripped my wrists, her grip surprisingly firm, and pushed back. She stepped out of my hold and sank slowly to her knees right in front of me on the cold, damp forest floor.

My breath locked in my throat.

She knelt between my boots, her hair falling in messy, gorgeous waves over her shoulders, the tight black dress hitched up past her thighs. She looked up at me through her lashes, knowing she was completely in control of the space.

She reached out, her hands sliding up my calves to my knees, then higher, smooth palms gliding over my thighs until her thumbs settled at the thick ridge tenting the front of my pants.

She cupped the hard length through the fabric, her fingers squeezing gently, feeling the intense heat pulsing. She leaned in close, bringing her face right to my crotch, and pressed a slow kiss directly over my erection through my pants.

A sharp, electric shock ran up my spine, making my hips twitch forward involuntarily.

“Gianna...” I choked out.

She hummed softly against my pants, the warm vibration of her voice sinking straight into my groin.

She stroked her cheek along the hard line of my cock, her hands moving down to grip the back of my highs, holding me still while she set the pace. She pressed another lingering, open-mouthed kiss.

“Look at him, Raph,” she murmured, her hot breath soaking through the cloth as she looked up at me with those bedroom eyes, “Look how hard you are for me... right in front of him.”

Gianna’s quick fingers reached for the button at the top of my pants. She popped it open, then yanked the zipper down.

She reached inside my boxers, her soft fingers wrapping tight around my thick, pulsing cock. She pulled me free into the open air. I was rock-hard, swollen, and dripping wet at the tip.

She leaned forward, opening her mouth wide, and slid her warm, wet tongue right over the flat top of my head.

“Fuck, Gianna!” I gasped, my head slamming back against the rough bark of the tree behind me.

She took the thick tip into her mouth, her lips wrapping tight around me like a hot ring. She began to suck hard, making deep, wet swallowing sounds that echoed through the forest.

My hands flew down, burying my fingers deep into her hair. I wanted to take control, I wanted to push her head down and drive myself deep into her throat, but Gianna kept the power. She set the pace.

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She slid her mouth down further, taking inch after inch of my heavy shaft into her hot, tight throat. Her tongue swirled around the underside, licking up every drop of pre-cum leaking from the tip, while her hand gripped the base, pumping in fast, tight time with her mouth.

Gianna hummed loudly against my cock, the warm vibration shooting straight down to my roots. She pulled back until just the head was in her mouth, flicking her tongue wildly over my sensitive tip, before, taking me all the way back as much as she could in one deep swallow.

My hips twitched helplessly against her face. The pleasure was too sharp, too hot, burning through every single piece of restraint I had left.

“Gianna... baby... stop,” I choked out, “Stop or I’m going to come right down your throat.”

She pulled her mouth off with a loud, wet pop, leaving my skin glistening in the dark light. She looked up at me from the forest floor, her painted lips wet, her eyes flashing with challenge.

Before I could grab her and pull her up, she shifted lower on her knees. Her hands slid further, cupping my aching sack. She pressed her open mouth directly against my skin, sucking one of my balls into her warmth while her tongue swirled around it in slow, wet circles.

A sharp, violent shiver tore through my body, “Holy fuck!”

Gianna kissed the sensitive skin underneath, her tongue flicking up and down my shaft in long, dragging strokes that made my vision blur. She pressed a soft, lingering kiss right to the weeping tip of my cock, before wrapping her lips tight around the thick head once again.

She started pumping her hand up and down my length. Every time she pushed down, her throat swallowed me deeper, taking every single inch until she couldn’t even breathe anymore.

High above us, the iron bars rattled violently. Leone started to curse Gianna, calling her a whore, but neither of us gave him a single glance. Our entire world had shrunk down to just both of us.

“Gianna...” I choked out, my hips bucking forward on instinct, “Baby, I’m right there... I’m going to blow.”

And that made her suck harder, her cheeks hollowing out as she pulled me deep into her throat with a wet slide, her hand stroking the base in fast jerks.

The last shred of my control snapped into a million pieces.

My legs locking straight as a blinding flash of pure heat rushed from the base of my spine straight to the head of my cock. I gripped her hair with both hands, holding her steady as my body locked up.

I came hard, a rush of seed shooting straight down her throat. I groaned her name out loud into the dark forest, my hips twitching and driving forward into her mouth as wave after wave of intense release tore through me.

Gianna swallowed every single drop, her throat working around me, taking it all without pulling away, her eyes locked up on mine through the dark mist.

I reached down and grabbed Gianna by her waist, hauling her up off her knees.

Before her feet even settled on the ground, I pulled her tight against my chest and smashed my mouth over hers. She let out a soft, breathless gasp against my lips, her arms wrapping tightly around my neck as I kissed her like a starving man, completely out of my mind with need.

I spun us around, my fingers hooked into the sides of her thin lace underwear. I pulled hard ripping the fabric right down the center with a satisfying tear, tossing the ruined cloth into the leaves at my feet.

I leaned down, hooked my hands under her thighs, and hoisted her up into the air. I hoisted her upper body high above mine, taking her long, smooth legs and throwing them squarely over my shoulders. She was lifted completely off the ground, her chest resting against the trunk of the tree while her lower half hung wide open, completely exposed right at the level of my face.

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idn’t wait, buried my face straight between her thighs.

My tongue shot out, dragging a hard stroke straight up from her entrance to her swollen clit.

“Raph!” Gianna shrieked, her fingers digging wildly into the tree bark above her head.

I latched onto her peak, sucking her clit deep into my mouth while my tongue swirled around it in circles

I licked her like a man fucking possessed, swallowing every drop of her moisture, my hands gripping her round ass cheeks tight to hold her still over my mouth while I ate her out standing up.

High above us in the swinging iron cage, Leone went completely insane.

“You fucking bitch!” Leone screamed, “You filthy, fucking whore! Look at yourself! I hope you both burn in hell!”

She turned her head slightly, looking up toward the swinging cage, and threw Leone a cold, slow smirk.

“Curse me all you want, Leone,” she said, still catching her breath, “Nothing you say can touch me anymore.”

My hands locked onto her hips, digging hard into her soft skin to hold her steady over my face.

I buried my mouth deeper between her legs, my tongue dragging straight up her center. I latched onto her swollen peak.

“Raph!” she screamed into the night.

I licked her up and down, biting gently on her inner thigh, making her skin sting before my tongue returned to devour her open folds.

While my mouth stayed locked over her clit, I shoved two thick fingers straight up inside her tight, dripping entrance.

Gianna’s whole body snapped back, a gasp tearing out of her chest as I filled her completely.

I started pumping my fingers in and out of her with aggressive thrusts, curling them upward to hit her sensitive spot again and again.

“Fuck, you’re so wet for me, baby,” I choked out against her skin, my voice was completely wrecked.

I added a third finger, stretching her wide open, ramming my hand deeper into her while my thumb stayed glued to her clit, grinding down.

I sucked, licked, and worked my fingers inside her like a man possessed by her taste, driving her higher and higher until her entire body was shaking wildly over my shoulders.

“Raph, oh God-Raph!” she shrieked, her thighs clamping tight around my neck.

I gave her one last upward hook with my fingers, sucking her peak deep into my mouth as hard as I could.

+15 Bonus Bonus

A violent wave of pure pleasure crashed over her. Her inner walls clamped down tight around my ingers, pulsing in heavy spasms as a long, breathless scream tore from her throat.

Her hips bucked helplessly against my face, her body flooding over my hands and lips while I held her high, drinking in every single drop of her release until her legs went completely limp over my shoulders.

I lowered her down just enough to shift her weight, but I didn’t let her shoes touch the ground.

I grabbed her under her thighs, hitched her body up, and forced her legs to wrap tightly around my waist.

Gianna gasped, her arms flying around my neck, her fingers digging deep into my back as I slammed her frame flat against the rough bark of the tree.

I reached down between us with my right hand, gripping my thick, throbbing cock. I gave myself three fast, hard strokes against her pussy, smearing her wetness all over my broad tip until I was glistening.

I didn't give her a second to breathe. I lined the head up with her tight entrance and shoved myself forward.

Gianna let out a high, choked cry, her head snapping back against the tree bark as my width stretched her open.

I filled her so completely that her inner walls clutched around my shaft in a tight, desperate squeeze, fighting to accommodate every single inch of me.

"Raph... oh God," she whimpered into my neck.

I stayed buried deep inside her for a brief second, letting her body adjust to my size. My hands clamped down on her ass cheeks, holding her body pinned against the trunk so she couldn't slip off me.