

Claimed And Marked By Her Stepbrother Mates

Chapter 71-The Two Angry Trainers

Chapter 71: 71-The Two Angry Trainers

Helanie:

"Let me handle her," Norman whispered to his brother, hands on his hips. He was wearing a white sleeveless shirt and a pair of gray jeans. His hair, damp yet springy, fell in casual waves across his forehead.

The strands bounced even more as he strode toward me, gesturing for me to step aside so we could speak in private. But I didn't obey his silent instructions, forcing him to stop directly in front of me, his back shielding me from the view of the other students.

"And what are you here for now?" he asked in a low, gruff voice.

"To try my luck one last time," I replied, a bit too eagerly. After all, he would soon be my trainer at the academy. I respect him and want a good relationship with him as a teacher and a student.

"Huh?" He squinted, as though struggling to grasp what I meant. I guess I needed to explain myself better to him.

"I said—" I started to repeat, but he clicked his tongue sharply, silencing me.

"I heard you. Now tell me why you think you'll get another chance when the rules clearly state you're out. The other candidates who lost left already, so why are you still hanging around?" He pointed at the ground for emphasis before placing his hands back on his hips, standing tall and imposing.

I would think twice before provoking him again, especially when he was letting his wolfish side show.

"Because I have this." Stepping back from him slightly and positioning myself within view of the crowd—just in case he tried to snatch it away—I held up the red card.

He stared at it for a long moment, then hissed under his breath.

"What... what is this?" His voice was almost a growl, teeth clenched so tightly I half-expected his jaw to snap.

"My stepbrother gave it to me," I replied without shame, boldly invoking his brother's name, knowing full well he might not approve.

The others nearby leaned in, straining to catch our conversation after seeing the card in my hand. Though they couldn't hear us, they understood what the card signified: one last chance.

"Did you... beg Emmet for it?" Norman ran his hand through his hair, visibly anxious, as if I had somehow stolen his brother's kidney.

"No! He gave it to me himself," I insisted, my tone growing harsher before I quickly softened it, catching the look Norman shot me. He obviously didn't appreciate me speaking back to him so sharply.

Maximus, who had been hanging back, finally gave in and joined us.

"What's going on here? Why does she have that card?" he demanded, striding toward us with a scowl. He echoed the question his brother had asked before. Norman just pointed at the card, sighing as he took small, agitated steps back and forth.

"Emmet gave her his card?" Maximus's voice almost rose until he noticed the students around us. Lowering his tone, he hissed, "And you came here to use it? Have you lost your mind? Do you have a death wish?"

"I want to be part of this academy," I repeated, feeling like a broken record. Each time I mentioned the academy, Norman fixed me with that deadly glare.

"What is your obsession with the academy, anyway?" he scoffed. "It's not like you'll accomplish anything. You don't even have a wolf, and half the classes are combat training." He gestured for me to step away, but I resisted again, refusing to move out of the crowd's sight.

I wasn't about to be isolated. Being alone meant being vulnerable, and I couldn't handle feeling miserable among strangers.

"That's my problem to worry about. If I can just learn to defend myself, I could join the training," I tried to explain, but they didn't want to believe I was capable of anything.

"With that frame of yours?" Norman sneered, wrinkling his nose. "You're fragile and—very manipulative."

"All I know is that I have this card now," I replied, holding it up so the students could see that I intended to use it.

"Did you even see what today's test is about?" Maximus moved in front of me again, blocking my view of the crowd. "And besides, the test is over. We've already chosen the

candidates. Now, if we pit you against an accepted candidate, they'll complain about having to take the test twice, and if we put you up against a failed candidate, everyone will wonder why they're not getting another shot."

Maximus's excuse brought a slight smirk of relief to Norman's face.

"Besides, they're being downright brutal over there," Norman said, his tone softening just slightly. "Remember how it felt when Sydney and Lamar beat you up? This will be worse, and no one's going to rush you to the hospital. Because once you lose—you're just a rogue." He paused, then added gently, "This card might let you try, but it'll only give you Emmet's stepsister's status if you're accepted."

"And you said I was manipulative." The moment I called him out on his changing tone and his pretense of concern, his softened expression instantly hardened, anger flashing in his eyes again.

"Easy!" Maximus stepped between us as Norman squared up, ready to confront me over my remark.

It seemed Maximus had come up with a solution. He faced me, rolled his shoulders, stretched his neck, and then declared, "Since there's no other candidate left, you'll have to fight the trainer."

My heart didn't just skip a beat; it skipped several. I fell silent, waiting for him to add something—some clarification, or even a hint that this was a joke—but he was dead serious.

"Huh? You mean... I'll have to fight you two?" Since he left me hanging, I decided to confirm it myself.

"Yes, or how about just one of us?" Maximus's smirk sent a chill down my spine. My body shuddered in fright.

This was wrong on so many levels. How on earth was I supposed to stand a chance against him?

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 72-The Story Of My Pendant.

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Helanie:

I watched their faces in disbelief. After thinking it over, even Norman gave his brother a nod. The two looked so pleased with themselves after completely unsettling me. It was so infuriating, the way they were changing rules and all. And nobody would complain. Their academy was the best of the best. Even Alpha's were sending their children to the academy.

"But that's not fair. You two are trainers—people who train other Alphas and Alpha Kings! How could a mere girl like me, without a wolf or any training, ever fight any of you?" I wanted to shout and call for Emmet and Kaye, but what could they do? These two were responsible for today's test, and Maximus had specifically chosen it for me.

"Well, if you're so weak, then why try to be a part of our academy?" Norman folded his arms over his brother's shoulders, smirking proudly at his brother for coming up with such a devious plan.

It was beyond unfair. Why were they so determined to crush my dreams? Was it simply because of the academy's reputation, that they didn't want someone "weak" like me in their ranks, or was there some other reason they were treating me this way?

"Hm, but she's not wrong. If everyone hears she had to fight a trainer, they'll agree it's unfair." Norman scratched his chin thoughtfully, making me wonder if he was mocking me or truly reconsidering.

"I know. How about this—" Maximus raised a finger as a new idea sparked in his mind. This time, he stepped back and walked until he was among the students who had been eagerly watching, waiting to find out what was going on.

"If Helanie here can land just one punch—just a single punch within a fifteen-minute match—she's in!" he announced. Norman chuckled.

He walked back to join his brother and spread his arms wide. "He won't even fight back. He'll only defend himself."

The pride on Norman's face was unsettling.

Some of the students began to snicker, sensing how ridiculous it was. There was no way I could land a single hit on this beastly man.

"There's no chance she'll manage," one of the students laughed, joined by a few others.

"Come on, Helanie. What happened to 'I'll do anything to be part of this academy'?" Maximus mocked, not caring that the other students were witnessing a teacher bullying a potential candidate.

At this point, I needed to stop calling myself a student. I wasn't one yet, and with this final test, I likely never would be.

I lowered my head, remembering the faith Emmet had shown in me when he handed me that card. Even if I lost today, I'd stay in the ring for the full fifteen minutes and give it everything I had.

I raised my head and saw the brothers shrug. Norman slipped the card into his pocket, turning to the accepted students.

"You're starting at the academy the day after tomorrow—" He was about to dismiss them, already assuming I wouldn't fight, when I raised my voice, loud enough for everyone to hear.

"I'll do it." As my words cut through the air, everyone turned to stare. Norman took a moment, probably unsure if he'd heard me right.

"What did you say?" he asked, while Maximus rolled his eyes at me.

"I said I'll do it." I put down my bag and walked toward them steadily.

Maximus stepped closer and whispered in my ear, "Don't embarrass yourself. Just leave."

"No!" I took a step back, unwilling to let him manipulate me.

"Even if I don't succeed, I'm ready to give it everything I've got." I adjusted my posture, and gradually, everyone started to step back, making space.

"Fine. Maximus, just do it. It's only fifteen minutes," Norman yawned, glancing at his watch. For them, it was just fifteen wasted minutes, but for me, it meant everything.

I couldn't give up. Even though I knew the odds were stacked against me.

"Alright," Maximus shrugged, and everyone cleared the field. Of course, he wouldn't run around; he'd only need to stay within the white circle.

We faced each other, and the second Norman gave the signal, I lunged at Maximus with my weakest punch. It was laughably easy for him to dodge, and I ended up face-first in the mud. Laughter erupted as I lifted my head, mud streaked across my face. I quickly wiped it off with my sleeve and got back on my feet. Maximus didn't even need to move fast; he just stood there, watching me struggle.

Each time I missed, the laughter grew louder.

I tried to mask my frustration, but my throat tightened, and my cheeks burned. I couldn't land a single hit. Tears began to prick at my eyes, and I brushed them away with the back of my hand. Each passing minute reminded me of that night. This was my only chance to stand up to these Alphas. But now, it felt like I was losing it.

"Is that all you've got?" Maximus's taunt jolted me back to the present. I was covered in mud.

My hand dropped for a second, my heart sinking. They were all having so much fun. They knew I couldn't win and were just waiting for the fifteen minutes to be up. He was simply toying with me.

Just one punch, I told myself.

I threw my next jab a bit harder, hoping it might connect, but he sidestepped with a smug "Too slow!" that sent another wave of laughter through the crowd.

Frustrated, I charged at him, trying to land a punch or even an elbow to his face, but he moved aside so swiftly that I fell even harder, landing straight in the mud again.

This time, as I tried to get up, I felt my pendant brush against my lips. I didn't know why, but it triggered a memory of how this pendant had once gotten me into trouble. Instead of focusing on the fight, I removed it right there in front of all the students and the two mocking brothers.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 73-Not A Weakness Anymore

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Helanie:

My heart raced as I felt Maximus step up right behind me, taunting me with a sneer. My grip tightened around my pendant. It was like a quick decision that I took it off. I am not even sure what I would get from it. My mind ordered and I did it.

"Come on, I'm right here! You can't even hit me once?" His voice cracked slightly, and a frown appeared on my forehead. I slowly stood up, turning to meet his gaze.

I had just taken off my pendant, but he was way too close now. I bet he could sense the shift in my scent, the faint trace of pheromones. It would take some time before the others noticed, but I was exuding such intense anxiety that I wondered how long I could keep it hidden.

And that's when I saw Maximus falter. He tried to keep smirking, but his confidence was clearly wavering. His attempt at mocking me was crumbling. At moments, he even narrowed his eyes at me, as if trying to understand what had changed. But it was too late for him.

I could feel it now—my courage.

I lunged at him.

This time, he dodged, but when I retreated and struck again, he wasn't quick enough. My delicate, seemingly fragile knuckles connected with his strong jaw, drawing a gasp from the crowd. My punch barely moved him, but when I landed a second blow, the shock on his face was unmistakable. The crowd went silent.

Maximus was just as stunned as everyone else. I was amazed that I hit such a scary trainer.

His eyes were wide, and his mouth gaped as he stumbled back, pushing me away. I tripped over my own feet and landed squarely on my butt. But the test was over.

I have done it. I won!

"Maximus!" Norman stepped between us, shoving his brother back, murmuring something in his ear.

"You can't just give her a chance to win by being easy on her and then act upset," Norman said, managing the situation. The crowd nodded in agreement, as if convinced the only reason I landed a punch was because Maximus had gone easy on me.

But I could tell that beneath the surface, they were all a bit shocked, maybe even starting to believe that Maximus hadn't expected me to hit him at all.

Maximus's face flushed with anger at the humiliation. His fists clenched, and I saw a similar expression on Norman's face, though he struggled to maintain control of both the situation and his wounded brother, whose pride had taken a serious hit.

"Step aside, I'm going to kill her right here, right now!" I heard Maximus growl as he tried to approach me.

The other students were murmuring among themselves, but we were the only ones inside the white circle.

"Do you want everyone to remember this and blow it out of proportion?" Norman muttered to him. "It's nothing. You let her win, unintentionally, because you felt sorry for her."

I was in shock as I listened to Norman's words. Was he gaslighting Maximus...or me?

However, I shifted my attention to my pendant and quickly snatched it back, fastening it around my neck while Norman worked on calming Maximus.

In that moment, I realized: my pheromones aren't my weakness. I won't let them be my weakness ever again.

They distracted Maximus long enough for me to land a punch. Oddly, I had forgotten to even get up from the ground. My mind was in a strange, dazed state, and I couldn't tell if I should celebrate or just process how this so-called curse had actually helped me today.

Eventually, Norman managed to pacify Maximus. The two of them faced the crowd again, and this time, Norman gave a diplomatic smile.

"We appreciate her hard work. This is why my brother has decided to give her a chance. She never gave up, even when time had almost run out." I could only imagine how difficult it must have been for Norman to say that aloud.

"I agree. It's...nice to see someone fight so hard to join our academy," Maximus muttered, forcing a faint smile as he walked over and offered me his hand. His eyes were red with anger, and his smile was tight.

I accepted his hand and got to my feet, a smile beginning to form on my own lips.

"Welcome to the Red Vortex Sanctum Academy," he said, his handshake forceful and strained.

But I didn't care. I was just too happy.

"Yeah, welcome! I hope you have a good stay," Norman added from behind his brother, though his tone felt more like a threat.

I was sure they'd remain bitter for now but would eventually forget about me. As future rogue kings, they had far bigger things to worry about.

"Thank you!" I smiled, even though I knew they weren't thrilled with my success.

"Now everyone, enjoy the next two days. Soon enough, the academy life you've all craved will begin," Norman announced, but every time he spoke, it felt like his words were secretly aimed at me, a warning about how challenging academy life would be.

The crowd started to disperse, but Maximus and Norman signaled for me to stay. I ignored them and began to leave ahead of the others.

"I said wait," Maximus hissed, striding briskly in my direction. I slowed my steps, glancing over my shoulder, noticing that Norman was busy assisting others.

I finally turned back to see Maximus, still rooted to his spot, his eyes wide and brimming with anger as he glared at me.

"How did you do that?" Maximus nearly yelled, though his clenched fists seemed to remind him not to draw attention by shouting.

"What did I do? You challenged me to fight, so I did," I replied, uncertain if he would bring up my pendant. I wasn't even sure if he'd noticed that I'd taken it off. But clearly, the pheromones had affected him.

And maybe that was exactly what he was asking about.

"You—you made me lose my concentration!" He advanced toward me, eyes fierce and full of aggression. I took a quick step back, keeping my distance.

"And that's what the match was about. I knew I couldn't win otherwise, so I let you have your moment to mock me—your own ego got you distracted," I replied firmly, determined not to let him learn the truth about my pendant.

"No!" He wagged a finger at me. "That wasn't the distraction. I'm not a child who loses focus from a little banter. You did...something else." He looked away, rubbing the back of his neck, clearly frustrated.

"What did I do? Please, enlighten me," I said, shrugging. I watched as he closed his eyes, trying to control his heavy breaths.

"You are—" He paused, lost, and seeing him look so puzzled was oddly satisfying. He had no idea about my pheromones. Only people from my pack knew, and that was because I developed this condition later in life, after I failed to transition.

"Maximus." Norman appeared, placing a hand on his brother's shoulder. That's when I realized it was just the three of us left.

"And—" Norman turned toward me, possibly to issue some sort of threat, but I was already walking away. I didn't want to stay behind. Remember when I said I'm now afraid of being alone with others? I meant it.

I hurried out, thinking I'd have to find a place to crash or even beg someone to let me stay with them. That's when I saw the warrior standing by the car, waiting for me.

"I heard you did it?" he asked, and I quickly nodded, reaching the car.

"Congratulations." He glanced around cautiously before offering his congratulations. I could only imagine how much the brothers would yell at him if they saw him celebrating my win.

"All set? Should I take you back to your hotel room?" It felt like my guardian angel was finally looking out for me.

But not the Moon Goddess. I didn't believe anything good in my life came from her. She'd sooner ruin things for me than fix them.

"Yes," I said, hastily climbing into the car just as I saw Maximus emerge from behind the trees, moving in my direction.

"Should I stop the vehicle?" the warrior asked, noticing the rogue king standing in the road.

"No! No, he's not here for me. He's just making sure all the students have left," I lied, grateful that the warrior didn't ask any more questions. And since Maximus didn't call for either of us, there was no reason to stop the car.

I watched as Maximus stood there on the road, watching the car speed away. I knew I couldn't avoid him forever, but at least for today, I needed to keep my distance.

I'd bruised his ego, and that thought made me smile.

Today, I had my first victory over a powerful creature. I was beyond happy.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 74-The Cursed Mate Bond Or Our Stepsister?

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Norman:

"Maximus!" I watched him rush after Helanie as she sprinted toward Kaye's car. My muscles tensed at the sight. My brothers were letting her use our resources to defeat us. How the fuck was that okay?

"UGHHHH!" Maximus threw a fit once she was out of sight. As the other students left the ground, I gave them an awkward smile while grabbing Maximus' arm and subtly pulling him away.

I needed to calm him down before he made himself look like a sore loser. I led him to my car, shoved him into the passenger seat, and gestured for the driver to take his car. I got in to drive him home myself.

"What a b****!" he yelled again, his aggression starting to worry me.

"It's not that big of a deal," I sighed, feeling a pang in my chest from seeing my brother so shaken.

"Maximus! Calm down," I urged, growing increasingly concerned as he was losing control. I had never seen him this worked up before.

"How could that happen—" he hissed, slapping his forehead repeatedly until I parked the car on the side of the road to check on him.

He didn't need to take it so hard. Things like this could happen to anyone. I hoped he wasn't letting his ego take the hit.

"So what if she beat you? It doesn't prove anything," I said, taking his hands to stop him from harming himself.

"How—" he grunted again.

"Are you upset because a wolf-less girl beat you? If that's the case, just know this: you lost to a girl. Women are the most powerful and unpredictable creatures. Don't feel bad about it," I said, trying to ease his guilt. I didn't want him to feel this way just because she didn't have a wolf.

You never know when a woman might surprise you.

And although I despise Helanie, today she impressed me. I was honestly speechless at her courage and determination.

"I don't get it—it just—" Maximus looked away, avoiding my eyes, and that worried me.

"Maximus! Look at me; calm down," I urged, trying to turn his attention back to me, but he wouldn't focus.

"Norman! It's not just that she won. It's how she won—I felt...a pull towards her," he finally burst out, turning to face me. My heart skipped a beat.

I couldn't even respond right away, stunned by what he'd just admitted.

"What are you saying?" I asked, needing to be certain I'd heard him correctly.

"Norman, it was strange. Suddenly, I felt this pull towards her. I can't explain it, but it was—" he covered his face with his hands, hesitating before he continued, "and it's not even the full moon."

I could tell he wasn't lying.

I had sensed something too when he did, but I'd assumed it was just his anger. Clearly, it was much stronger for him.

"Uh, there has to be another reason. Maybe you thought it was a pull, but you were just angry—" I tried to come up with some excuse to put him at ease, but deep down, I knew there was no other explanation. He was certain of what he'd felt.

"Norman, I got angry afterward. Before that, I didn't even care if she beat me or not. It wasn't a big deal—until I felt that strange sensation. It has to be a mate bond. And since she doesn't have an active wolf, I don't think I'll ever know what it really was," he said, a hint of frustration in his voice. He wasn't wrong.

"Does that mean...she's my mate?" Maximus's eyes widened, and I felt my stomach twist.

"You didn't hear your wolf call her 'mate,' so that means no," I said quickly, shaking my head to push away any ideas forming in his mind.

He'd said it himself. Helanie didn't have an active wolf, so no one could fully sense a mate bond with her. Since that chance had passed, and he hadn't truly heard it, there was no way she could ever claim they were mates.

At least, not until her wolf awakens.

Still, I need to handle this carefully—before her wolf does awaken, and this time they feel the mate bond fully.

Because how else could we explain that pull?

"It was nothing. It wasn't even a full moon," I said, placing a hand on his shoulder to stop him as he opened his mouth to speak.

"Trust me, it must have been nothing," I reassured him, and he finally relaxed in his seat.

"I was so scared," he murmured. I could only imagine what the thought of discovering her as his mate would have done to him.

But I was concerned, too. It was possible he'd sensed something with her outside the full moon. I just needed to make sure she didn't come forward with any ridiculous claims.

"Now, let's go home and rest," I said, starting the car again. I needed to handle this immediately.

After dropping him off, I headed straight to my office, clutching Emmet's card in my hand.

"I'm not giving Helanie a single chance to change her mind. There's a possibility she might go back to her hotel room and start thinking about the mate bond. What if she decides to claim Maximus as her mate instead of enrolling in the academy as his stepsister?" I said to myself, holding her admission papers tightly, determined to settle this matter.

I am not going to let her reconsider her decision. She must sign and become our stepsister.

No one at the academy would take her seriously if she started claiming her stepbrother as her mate, and she wouldn't be foolish enough to do it, either. After grabbing the admission papers, I set off for that cursed hotel where she was staying.

I wouldn't give her a chance to think or change her mind. She needed to sign these papers as quickly as possible.

Just then, my phone rang, and I saw who was calling. I hadn't spent much time with Jessica lately, and I wondered when she'd finally snap.

But like every other day, I ignored her call and kept driving toward the hotel.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 75-Melons Out And He Is Embarrassed

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Helanie:

I rushed into the hotel, exhilarated as it finally hit me—I had really won admission. Once in my room, I kicked off my shoes and leapt in joy. This has been the happiest I have been after so long.

"I'll watch TV all day and eat whatever I want. Two whole days without stress!" I couldn't believe it—I was still tearing up, but these were tears of happiness. I have longed for this day. And despite having so many obstacles, I did it. Thanks to Kaye and Emmet for it.

I stripped off my clothes and sank into the tub, letting my muscles relax completely. For once, I tried to silence the disturbing thoughts and visions that usually haunted me when I was alone. Pushing aside the sorrow, I focused on my future at the academy.

Yet, a small tension lingered in the back of my mind—anxiety about my health. The constant stress had worn me down. Each day felt like a battle, and every place, a battlefield. I've been feeling weaker lately, with frequent headaches adding to my worries.

After a long bath, I'd barely wrapped myself in a bathrobe when there was a knock at my door.

"It must be room service," I thought as I walked over and opened the door. But the person standing outside made me instantly regret not checking first.

I tried to slam the door shut, but he wedged his shoe in, making it impossible to close. Groaning, he forced his arm against the door, shoving it open as I took a step back in fear.

"What are you doing here?" I growled at Norman, who didn't even respond as he barged inside, scanning the room as if I were hiding something. He checked the balcony, the bathroom, even the corners of the room.

"Take a good look, and don't forget to look under the bed. I might be hiding one of your precious brothers there," I scoffed, slamming the door shut and crossing my arms over my chest. He halted his search and shot me a deadly glare.

Did he really think his brothers were here?

"Here, sign this," he said, puffing out his chest as he extended a stack of papers towards me.

Frowning, I took the papers and began to skim through them. They were the academy admission documents. I didn't understand.

He had been so adamant about keeping me out of the academy, yet now he'd shown up in a rush, practically shoving the papers at me.

"Sign them," he repeated, reaching into his pocket to hand me a pen.

I just stared at the pen, then at the papers.

"What's the delay now? You were desperate enough to do anything to get admitted, and now you're stalling?" His tone was sharp, clearly intended to sound confident and snarky, yet I could detect a slight hesitation in his voice that didn't escape me.

"You actually want me to sign these?" I raised a brow, fanning myself with the papers. I could tell he didn't like it; he probably thought I was being disrespectful to him and his precious academy.

"It doesn't matter what I want. You played the card and passed the test. So sign." His refusal to look me in the eyes only confirmed my suspicions—he had an agenda.

"Hmm, well, I'm still deciding, so I'll sign when I'm ready." I shrugged, extending the papers back to him.

He finally looked directly at me, his face a mix of surprise and frustration.

"You're thinking about it? Weren't you the one who desperately wanted to join the academy?" As he stepped forward, it felt like a giant was approaching me. He was tall and broad-shouldered, as were all his brothers, but his stance was even more imposing.

Every time he moved closer, my body instinctively flinched.

"I told you. I'll sign when I'm ready." Truthfully, I was ready, but I couldn't resist giving him a hard time. Considering how opposed he was to my joining the academy, I was beginning to suspect he had a hidden motive for pushing this now. Annoying him felt like the least I could do.

"Helanie..." He clenched his jaw, pointing a finger at me before balling his hand into a fist and pressing it against his mouth, as though reining himself in. "Don't play games," he warned, trying to calm himself.

"I'm not. But why are you here? I didn't know the trainer was supposed to show up at a candidate's residence just to get a signature." I folded my arms across my chest, only realizing afterward that my robe was slipping, barely staying in place.

"That's because... my brothers want you in the academy," he said, but I could tell he was lying.

"And they know I passed the test. So, what's the rush?" I was succeeding in getting under his skin, just as he had gotten under mine all these weeks.

"Fine." He sighed, shrugging as if in defeat. "I wanted to surprise my brothers with your signature." Could he really not come up with a better excuse? He tried to act cool so he grabbed his phone and unlocked it but I could tell he wasn't doing anything on his phone. He then slipped it into his pocket.

"But I suppose that's fine. I'll just wait here until you've made up your mind and signed the papers." Instead of leaving, he dropped the pen and papers on the table and casually shrugged off his coat.

"Hey, you can't—be here!" I stammered, feeling suddenly uncomfortable. His brothers were tolerable, but he—he was something else. A man filled with vengeance and negativity.

"Why not? My brother's paying for it." He tossed his coat onto the couch and strode toward the raised area. The living room was partially separated from the bedroom by a glass sliding door.

When he dropped onto the bed to rest, my anxiety spiked.

"I'll call your father and—" I started, but before I could finish, he lifted his head from the pillow and shot me a dark look.

"And tell him exactly what? What am I doing?" he challenged.

I leaned over the bed in haste, forgetting my robe until his eyes widened, and he hissed at me.

"Fucking cover your titties."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 76-Aroused!

Chapter 76: 76-Aroused!

Norman:

The way she rushed at me, completely unbothered by her robe slipping open, left me in shock. The fabric fell apart, exposing her body to me. It felt like committing a thousand sins in just a few seconds. My heart sank instantly, and guilt flooded me.

Inappropriate!

Unacceptable!

I'm a disgusting man. I shouldn't even be called a man for seeing my stepsister's body like that. And possibly my brother's mate?

No!

She's nothing to me. She's just my stepsister. That thought only made me feel more revolted with myself.

Her skin was like porcelain, her figure smooth and delicate. Her breasts were full and round, like water-filled balloons that seemed to jiggle with each small movement. And her nipples—they were red, a vivid contrast against her pale skin.

That's when I jerked upright, feeling the urge to punch myself. Why the hell was I even noticing these details?

I shouldn't even be alive for picking on the details like that.

"I didn't know—," I heard her murmur in embarrassment. By then, she had clutched her robe tightly around herself, so I dared to look at her again, fists clenched.

"Why would you—," I bit my tongue and turned away. Although she was now holding her robe securely, her exposed image was burned into my mind. Thankfully, she had been wearing underwear, sparing me further torment.

Could this be called trauma?

I thought she was just some random girl. But her body—

No, Norman! You disgusting fool, she's your stepsister, whether you like it or not.

This shouldn't have happened. I hated every second of the decision to come here. I should have just let her show up to sign the papers.

It was strange. I've never felt like that before. I've seen many she-wolves strip down for transition, and not once did I react this way. This was different—not arousal, but a feeling like I had committed a sin or trespassed on something sacred.

Her body was like a temple and I have seen it without her permission. The feelings I was going through were raw.

"I'll sign the papers. Just leave!" she suddenly yelled, making me stare at her in disbelief. She was acting as if I had caused this.

She traumatized me.

Her cheeks were flushed, like a chipmunk's, with her full, red lips and blushing face.

"You're shameless," I hissed, barely containing my frustration. "You did this on purpose, but trust me, I'm not someone you can sway with your body—or anything else."

"I'm shameless? Why the hell would I want to show you my body of all people in the world? You're the last person I'd ever want to expose myself to!" Every word she spat out made me roll my eyes.

Such a liar.

Or was she really telling the truth? Huh! I am Norman McQuoid. Who wouldn't want me?

But why would I argue with my stepsister over not wanting me. It was not me speaking, but the trauma of seeing her naked.

But the second I tried to get out of bed, I sensed a big problem. Not small—huge. Gigantic.

"What? Leave! I thought you were disgusted," she mocked, clearly remembering my reaction when I'd called her shameless. She went on, yelling, "Go! Leave!"

I wanted to leave, but if I got up now, she'd see my...problem. I couldn't let her notice. I was beyond frustrated and embarrassed. How could I do that?

"I will, just give me a second," I muttered, turning my face away. I had never felt so humiliated in my entire life. This girl was a she-devil. A few seconds in her presence, and I was already dealing with the biggest embarrassment of my life.

"Your seconds are up—leave already," she demanded, trying to sound annoyed, but I was the only one feeling uncomfortable here.

I didn't know why this had happened; it shouldn't have. She was absolutely off-limits. So why, of all times, did this happen now? How could I get up without her noticing the "weapon" in my pants? The thought alone made me want to disappear on the spot.

This had never happened before—never.

"Just turn around, and I'll leave," I pleaded, closing my eyes and keeping my face turned away. I was afraid any movement might reveal everything. My fists were resting on the mattress, my body raised and my knees bent. I couldn't even look down at my pants.

"Why? I'm dressed now," she protested stubbornly.

Why was she so impossibly difficult?

Maybe this was the Moon Goddess warning me to stay far away from a lunatic like her. She had this odd way of making everything revolve around her. I was choosing my words carefully because I refused to believe I could be seduced by her. This was just manipulation—nothing more.

"I don't want you flashing me again. Turn around, and I'll leave," I hissed, my irritation building.

"As if that's my life's mission," she retorted, her tone sharper than ever. Since I was miserable, she seemed to be talking even more. After defeating Maximus in the test, she'd definitely grown a pair of wings. Her words had taken on a bitter edge, too. Sometimes, I expected her to show some gratitude towards us brothers—like when we let her stay in the mansion during that deadly storm. But she didn't once come to thank me. Not even to challenge me or prove me wrong about what I thought of her.

But no! Not Helanie.

She was so full of herself that she didn't even ask, didn't bother to request to stay in the mansion. She always spoke in such a firm tone, never humbling herself, even when she probably should have.

"You want me gone, right? Then just turn around, and I'll be out of your sight," I muttered under my breath, closing my eyes to keep from snapping.

"Fine," she finally relented.

After a few seconds, I cautiously turned my head to confirm she wasn't looking. Once I saw her face turned away, I sprang off the bed and rushed toward the door.

"Just sign the damn papers. I'll send my warrior to pick them up later," I instructed curtly, one foot already out of the room. Before I could hear her response, I was already out of the suite and heading straight for the elevator.

I just needed to get to my car and drive far away. This girl was trouble—a devil who could cause even worse damage. The memory of her robe slipping open made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. I practically flew out of the elevator and hurried across the lobby to the parking lot, thinking I'd finally escaped the embarrassment.

But no. Another surprise was waiting.

"Norman? What are you doing here?" Jessica was standing right by my car, clearly waiting for me.

"I was here for some work," I replied, my gaze fixed on the car. I couldn't help but wonder why I'd never felt this way about Jessica. Not once had I accidentally felt aroused around her. Even on romantic dates, when she'd try to brush her foot against my leg under the table, I barely reacted.

Around her, I was always tense, as if my body was dead, devoid of emotion. But with Helanie today, I felt this strange surge of desire that made me despise myself. It had come out of nowhere, and I prayed she hadn't noticed. As I was lost in these unsettling thoughts, I saw Jessica move to block my path.

I froze, then remembered my "issue" and tried to dodge around her. But she stepped directly in my path, blocking my way.

"What the—who are you here to see?" Her tone shifted as her gaze dropped, and her eyes scanned my pants, filling me with instant dread as she focused on my boner. Oh! I could see why she felt the need to question me. I would not get aroused by her. I even told her maybe it was because I had so much on my mind all the time.

"What do you mean?" I frowned, attempting to sidestep her, but she blocked me again. I understood she was worried and even disgusted. I would have been too if my girl wasn't feeling me but then came out of a hotel all wet down there. But the embarrassment I felt was so strong that I failed to come up with a proper response for her. Instead of giving her an excuse to comfort her, I decided to ignore her.

"What are you doing?" I groaned at her when she didn't let me pass.

"Norman, you've got a...boner. Who the hell is staying in that hotel room?" Her almond-brown eyes brimmed with tears the second the question left her lips.

"There is a woman in there that you came to see. And she —somehow gave you the biggest boner and then let you walk out without easing your tension?" I have never been accused like that. I felt the slap to my ego when she talked like I am some horrible and disgusting man who would cheat on her like that.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 77-My Father Buried Me.

Chapter 77: 77-My Father Buried Me.

Helanie:

"What a jerk!" I groaned, furious that he acted as if I'd flashed him on purpose. Even though it had been almost two minutes since he left, I still couldn't settle down.

"I should have just signed the papers," I sighed, slumping onto the couch and staring at them from across the room. My thoughts were interrupted by a phone beeping nearby.

"I don't have a phone," I muttered, glancing over at the coat beside me.

"Oh!" Realization dawned quickly—he'd left his coat in his hurry to leave, and in his coat pocket was his phone. But why did he act like he was the one embarrassed? I was the one who got exposed! What exactly was going on with him?

I shook off the thought as the phone buzzed again. I wasn't usually nosy, but Norman was a strange man, always involving himself in my business. Maybe I had the right to see who was blowing up his phone—what if it was something urgent? Or maybe he was calling himself, trying to locate his phone.

After convincing myself with every excuse possible, I slipped my hand into his coat pocket. Instantly, I was hit by the strong, hypnotic scent of his cologne, intoxicating in a strangely unsettling way. I held my breath and pulled out the phone, realizing that he hadn't even locked it before putting it away.

What a rookie mistake.

My heart was pounding as I held the phone in my hand. Technology is dangerous; these days, our entire lives are stored in these little devices. One glance could reveal everything. That's exactly how I felt as I looked down at his unlocked screen. Seeing that he had no screen lock timer made it worse.

My fingers hovered over the notifications, where I saw multiple missed calls from someone named Jessica.

Who was Jessica?

Then there were messages from his brothers, his father, and one other person. For some reason, that last contact grabbed my full attention. It was because of the brief message snippet that showed on the screen.

Joe: Her name is Helanie—

That half-sentence made my heart skip. Was he talking about me? But why, and who was this person he was talking to?

Without thinking twice, I clicked on the conversation. What I found in those few minutes made me want to die a thousand times over.

The conversation was between Norman and a guy named Joe. Norman had instructed—or maybe reminded—Joe about a task he'd given him.

Norman: Get me her data.

Joe: Her name is Helanie Niles, and she's from a pack called The Vicious Banes Pack.

I barely had a moment to catch my breath before another message popped up, revealing even more information.

Joe: She was in a big scandal a few weeks ago. Apparently, she'd had relations with a bunch of rogues, and when she was caught, she accused the alpha's son. She claimed he was her boyfriend, that he took her to the station, and that she lost her virginity to him. Her lies caused an uproar, and she was meant to be executed, but her father claimed he had done it himself and buried her in a grave he dug. From what I've gathered, he was even rewarded for it.

Joe: May I ask why you're interested in her, Your Highness? Because, from what I know, she was a messy individual, a liar, and a traitor so everyone was relieved when she died.

Tears streamed down my face as I absorbed what had been said and done behind my back. So they told everyone I'd slept with rogues? And my father lied about killing me and burying me himself?

I wanted to scream, to tell this man that it was all a lie—that I had been gang-raped by some jacket-wearing alphas, and then my own family refused to believe me. They were ready to kill me.

All this time, I'd thought of my father, wondering if he might be grieving, maybe feeling guilty for abandoning me. Sometimes I hoped he wondered where his little Helanie was, if I was safe, if I was being cared for.

But no!

He was apparently rewarded for claiming he killed his own daughter. So no, I don't think he ever cared.

Now, I needed to do something about this. The image my pack had painted of me for this man would make Norman feel justified in taking me back to my pack to face the execution I'd escaped.

No!

What should I do? I was panicking, losing my mind. Sweat was beading on my temples. I didn't want to think about that night ever again, but here I was, dealing with its aftermath.

A knock at the door snapped me back to reality. I realized it must be Norman, coming back for his phone.

With trembling hands, I started typing on it.

Norman: Oh no, not that Helanie. I'm asking about Helanie Miles!

I didn't know if my plan would work, but I couldn't risk getting caught.

Joe: Oh! There's no such Helanie in the records. She must be a rogue, or maybe she didn't live a significant enough life to be remembered by pack members after she left.

Norman: Yes, I'm talking about the rogue one.

Joe: There's no concerning information on any Helanie who went rogue. So I guess she's harmless.

Since Helanie Niles was officially dead, it didn't seem like he cared about the other one being dangerous.

I deleted the parts of the conversation that might expose me. Now, the chat just looked like Joe was messaging Norman after his reminder, letting him know that Helanie was likely a rogue without a criminal record, which would explain why her name wasn't on any list of pack members or criminal lists.

Once I was sure Joe had finished delivering the information, I slipped the phone back into his pocket, leaving the chat open to make it seem like it had been left that way all along and that is why the texts were automatically read.

I hurried to the door, quickly wiping away my tears, and opened it for the person waiting outside, clearly anxious for me to respond.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 78-Something Fishy

Chapter 78: 78-Something Fishy

Kaye:

"What? I was here for some work. Get out of my way," I watched Norman shout at Jessica, his back facing me, while Jessica stood directly in front of him, fully in my line of sight.

I never thought I'd witness my brother yelling at his fiancée. My brother rarely breaks his calm and collected demeanor, so something serious must have happened between them to spark this public argument.

But why here?

What was my brother even doing in this place?

I tilted my head up, glancing at the building, and worry began to creep in. Helanie was staying here, and I knew how much my brother despised her. Did he have a fight with her? She must be crying alone.

As Norman's car pulled away, Jessica's eyes drifted over to me, and she quickly began wiping her tears. I felt so odd facing their personal banter.

"Hello, Kaye! What are you doing here?" She greeted me in her usual gentle, polite voice. The fake smile on her lips couldn't deceive me.

"I was here for some work. What about you—what happened?" I asked, sliding my hands into my pockets and keeping my tone soft.

"Oh! What work? What are you brothers doing here?" she let out a small, awkward laugh.

I gathered what had happened. She was likely upset that Norman was here, and instead of answering her questions, he had lashed out and left. Now, she wanted answers from me.

"We had a meeting here. I arrived late, as usual," I tried to joke, but she shook her head to dismiss my comment.

"Kaye! You're a very responsible person. Don't joke like that," she insisted, and I realized she must have picked up on my insecurities from conversations with my mother.

I always felt like I wasn't good enough. My mother must have mentioned it when they met for dinner to celebrate Jessica and Norman's engagement.

"Right, well, you should talk to my mom. She'll tell you just how badly I mess up all the time," I tried to joke again, but it came out miserably, and I hated how pathetic it sounded.

"I don't need to listen to anyone else. I know you, and I've heard about your accomplishments. Do you know what people in our pack ask for whenever they're really sick?" She was so warm and kind, almost treating me like a younger brother, and it made me realize just how much we both cared about Norman.

"They ask, 'Is this the medicine made from Kaye's herbs?' They only trust your remedies, Kaye," her words genuinely lifted my spirits.

I felt a sudden wave of acknowledgement, and it was amazing. But now, I wanted to comfort her in a way my brother had failed to do.

There weren't many people I felt comfortable opening up to, and Jessica wasn't one of them. I always spoke to her with respect, mainly because of how kindly she treated me.

"Thank you. By the way, don't mind Norman. He's been working non-stop lately—handling academy duties and even training in the woods all by himself today," I said, making up an excuse on the spot. Truthfully, I had no idea why my brother was here today.

"Maybe that explains it. He probably needs rest...and maybe me," she chuckled softly to herself, a small smile tugging at her lips as she seemed to drift into thought.

I wasn't entirely sure what she was implying.

"Um, did you drive here, or would you like my driver to drop you off?" I offered, already itching to go see Helanie.

I'd heard about what happened at the grounds today, and as usual, Helanie had surprised me.

"Oh no, I drove. I'll be heading out now. Thank you so much for letting me know about Norman," she said, giving me a reassuring nod before walking to her car.

Finally, I was free to go see Helanie. As I took the elevator up, a feeling crept over me: maybe Norman had come here to confront her.

'Maximus must be so upset,' my wolf stirred awake, sharing my thoughts.

'I know. I hope he realizes it's not a big deal,' I thought, not wanting my brother to be upset.

'You'd be worse if it happened to you,' my wolf replied with a pointed tone. 'The only reason you're not so riled up is because it's Helanie we're talking about.'

His tone threw me off. I hadn't even realized he had an issue with Helanie.

"What's wrong with you?" I asked him, puzzled.

'Nothing. And nothing should be wrong with you, either. I know why you're being so nice to Helanie—you think she's our mate because of that dream? Let me remind you of something: we're not her mate. Remember what Runes said? He claimed you don't have a wolf. So, how could you have felt a mate bond when I wasn't even awake at the time?' My wolf snapped, as though he'd been holding this in for days.

A chill ran down my spine as the elevator doors opened. I'd wondered about the mate bond myself, but my wolf had a good point.

I shook my head, trying to clear my mind and focus. I was already at Helanie's door, but she didn't answer immediately. When she finally did, she looked so lost and dazed that I couldn't bring myself to speak for a moment.

"Have you... been crying?" I blurted out. What a softie I am.

"No!" she replied quickly, but her gaze shifted away, her eyes avoiding mine. I knew she was lying.

"Did my brother come here?" I asked. Now that I saw the redness in her eyes, I was certain Norman had been here.

"He did, but I'm not crying. I'm fine. Did he send you to collect his things?" she murmured, glancing down. "I just realized he left his coat and some other stuff here."

While I wanted to believe nothing serious had happened, I couldn't ignore the way she was clutching her robe.

My brother left his belongings here? I couldn't help but wonder if something happened between the two of them.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 79-He Thinks I Am Sleeping With His Brother

Chapter 79: 79-He Thinks I Am Sleeping With His Brother

Helanie:

"That's his stuff," I stepped aside to show him Norman's coat. I didn't know what it was, but the way Kaye was reacting seemed a little off.

"Oh, so he came here and..." Kaye narrowed his eyes at the coat, "...got a bit too comfortable?" It seemed like he was talking more to himself now.

"What did he come for?" he asked again. I glanced around and spotted the papers on the table.

"He came for a signature," I replied, pointing at the documents.

Kaye walked over to the table, picked up the papers, then slowly turned back to look at me.

"He came here to ask for your signature personally and then just left his coat behind? Since when did he get so comfortable—," he paused, as if he were unraveling some hidden conspiracy.

"I don't know. He was refusing to leave until I had signed," I responded, still holding the robe in my hands.

It didn't strike me at first, but I noticed the way Kaye was examining me before he turned away to pick up his brother's coat.

I was trying my best to understand what was going through his mind, but his behavior was odd.

"Hmmm," Kaye muttered, pulling his brother's phone out. His expression grew even more tense as he looked at it. He was probably reading an open chat.

He scrolled through it, then let out a grunt.

"Did he ask you for anything?" His tone was cryptic, but I quickly shook my head, hoping to dismiss any bizarre thoughts he might be having.

"Do you think he came here to try to threaten me into backing down?" I asked, and he sighed.

"I'm certain he didn't come here to make you back down, especially since he brought the papers. Did he propose some kind of deal? Was there any chance he thought that if he somehow made Maximus lose—" he trailed off when he saw my frown.

"You think—I won because I offered your brother something?" I finally understood what he was insinuating.

He gave my robe a quick glance, almost as if to confirm my question, then adjusted his shirt and responded, "It wouldn't be your fault. You didn't have a choice. I'm not blaming you—"

"Oh heavens! You think I slept with your brother to win this round of the test? You actually think I would sleep with my stepbrother and then accept the card to officially be called his stepsister?" I covered my face in frustration, realizing just how far Kaye was taking this.

"Then explain how you could have beaten Maximus! And then—Norman coming here after hours with these papers for a signature? And he leaves his coat...his phone with your chat open, and he was looking into your background—" Kaye couldn't seem to finish a single thought, jumping from one point to the next.

"Oh no! That's why his girlfriend thought—" Kaye frowned, pacing anxiously as he muttered, "Norman and you—"

At that, I felt a surge of anger. I couldn't hold it in anymore.

"Your brother and I hate each other. Do you want to know why he came here?" I was done playing along. I could piece things together just as well, and I was ready to prove I had no interest in that jerk of a man he calls his brother.

Kaye turned to face me, his eyes sharp and demanding answers.

"He came here because he wanted me to sign Emmet's card quickly and officially become your stepsister. He hates that you and Emmet care about me and probably thinks I'll end up sleeping with one of you—just like you thought I slept with him to get admitted in the first place. Norman wasn't even close to Maximus in the ground. I won because I used my brain, not my body. And your brother left in such a hurry because he found it inappropriate to be here with me in a bathrobe," I snapped, watching his expression soften slightly.

"That makes sense, too," he muttered under his breath.

"He'd want you as our stepsister rather than..." Kaye stopped mid-sentence, lost in thought. I didn't know what was going on between him and his brother, but I hated even the thought of being in a situation where I'd have to deal with Norman in that way.

Now that his suspicions seemed to settle, Kaye turned to me, and his eyes widened slightly when he saw the anger still lingering in my gaze.

"I am—I don't know. I just saw you in a robe, then my brother's coat, and it's... unlike him to visit someone so...", he grimaced, and I noticed how anxious he looked. He could barely get his words out. He was all over the place, stuttering and fidgety.

"It's okay. It's not like you really know me, or I know you. I just hope you'll ask me directly next time instead of jumping to conclusions. I'm not perfect, Kaye, but I know my boundaries. My stepbrothers are where I draw the line." The moment I said that, his face went pale.

I don't know much about men or how they react to certain things, but his expression was so conflicted.

"So, you've accepted us as your brothers?" There was a hint of sadness in his voice.

But I was sure of my answer. "I have."

He gave a slight nod, stepping back. "Alright then, sis! Congratulations."

His tone was dripping with sarcasm, and I couldn't understand why he'd be upset that I accepted him as my stepbrother. Was he doing all this for some other reason? Did he not want me to see him as a sibling?

"Kaye—the thing is—" I felt an urge to explain why I had to accept him as my stepbrother, but why did I feel that way? It wasn't like any other relationship could happen between us.

"No! I understand. Thank you for clearing things up. I'll be on my way, and I'll leave these here. Just sign them." He wouldn't even look me in the eye as he turned, grabbed his brother's belongings, and dashed out of the room.

The moment he was out of sight, I felt a wave of nausea. I barely made it to the bathroom before I started throwing up.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 80-Character Assassination

Chapter 80: 80-Character Assassination

Helanie:

After he left and I threw up, I went to bed to rest. Honestly, I wasn't feeling well. My head was pounding, and everything around me seemed to spin.

The thought of being accused once again of something I didn't do had taken a toll on me. On top of that, the embarrassment of accidentally flashing Norman and finding out what people back at the pack had been saying about me just added to the mix.

The next day felt different. I refused to sit around doing nothing. I needed a job. Emmet had covered my admission fees and other expenses, but he couldn't pay for everything. I didn't want anyone to feel like I was using them or that I relied on their money.

"Hello, I was looking for a job and heard that this pack doesn't require any specific qualifications for hiring--" I tried to speak softly to the woman behind the counter.

It was a small café, and I felt surprisingly comfortable there. The moment I stepped in, I just knew I could work here.

However, while she was all smiles with the other customers, her expression changed the moment she looked at me, hardening.

"A rogue?" she raised an eyebrow. She appeared to be in her late forties, with piercing blue eyes and short, curly blonde hair.

"Yes," I said, choosing my words carefully. "I saw the ad, and it said even rogues are welcome to work here."

I didn't want to anger her, but something in her energy felt off, almost like she was silently judging me.

"How old are you?" she asked, and I straightened my posture before replying.

"Eighteen."

"Why are you a rogue?" For someone whose ad welcomed rogues, she was asking some pretty tough questions.

"Umm--my father didn't want me after he divorced my mother," I explained, noticing her head tilt slightly.

"Where is your mother?" She tapped her fingers on the counter, making me feel anxious, as if I were being evaluated. I noticed her name tag, Benita, and then took a deep breath.

"She moved on and wanted me to start my own life. Anyway, I've been accepted into the Vortex Academy," I added quickly, noticing her expression shift. There was now a hint of respect on her face.

"Oh, why didn't you say that before? Welcome aboard," she said, quickly removing the plank to let me in.

"So, what can you do?" she asked, placing a hand on my back and giving it a quick pat.

"Um, pretty much anything. I can bake really well," I replied, glancing at the menu. It was full of baked goods, and I had done a lot of baking back when I lived with my father.

"Great! But can you manage time? No offense, but we don't usually get a red-jacket holder coming here to ask for work."

"If you're a rogue, how did you manage the admission fee? That academy isn't cheap," she continued, and I felt my chest tighten.

"It was just luck, I guess," I lied, noticing her look a little dissatisfied.

"But can you commit? The café requires workers to be here from nine to five," she said, folding her arms as I looked off into the distance.

"Um, is there any way I could do shorter shifts?" I asked, and she shrugged before shaking her head.

"You know what--actually, it's fine. We're not hiring right now. But I'll let you know if we have any openings in the future." Her tone had changed abruptly. She was now on her phone, acting as though she hadn't just invited me behind the counter a moment ago.

"Um, is this about the admission fee?" I ventured, trying to understand what had triggered her sudden disinterest.

"You know where you got the money from," she replied coldly. "A girl wearing an old dress, looking like she hasn't been eating well, somehow pays for a pricey academy and then comes here looking for a job for rogues?" I noticed her expression and realized what she was implying.

"We don't really hire *those* kinds of girls. You should stick to whatever job paid you that admission fee," she said, outright accusing me. Before I could defend myself, she added, "I remember seeing you on a bike with some guy a few weeks ago. You were headed to your job."

The way she said it made my face go pale. My cheeks flushed as I recalled that night.

She must have seen me with Lamar. That's why she thinks I'm some sort of escort, assuming that's how I paid for my admission.

"And you're probably wondering how I remember you?" she continued, her eyes narrowing. "When a girl who looks like a porcelain doll, with long light ash blonde hair and gorgeous eyes, heads to a place like that, trust me, we remember. I remember thinking, *Wow! That guy's getting a huge commission for bringing in such a doll.*"

I didn't know whether to feel flattered by her "compliment" or mortified that she recognized me from that night.

It was sad that anyone who got to know me seemed to think of me as some girl who was either sleeping around or doing whatever she could to get a man's help.

"Okay, thank you for the assumption, but I don't work there, and I've never worked there," I said, and then I left. I couldn't keep dealing with people judging me.

I was desperate for money, but not that desperate anymore. When I initially agreed to work for Lamar, it was because I was devastated and lost. Even now, as lost as I feel, I know that if I try, I can do anything. And I will.

I walked out and returned to the hotel. Sitting down, I held the pen in my hand and looked at the papers in front of me.

Why hadn't I signed them already?

Was it because I was hesitant to accept my mate as my stepbrother?

And what about Kaye? He hadn't checked on me since that last time.

With a heavy heart, realizing that my life isn't like everyone else's and that I need to focus on my goals first, I signed the papers.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 81-Stepbrother Or A Sugar Daddy?

Chapter 81: 81-Stepbrother Or A Sugar Daddy?

Helanie:

"Thank you so much for taking care of my needs all this time," I said, expressing my gratitude to the warrior as I bid him farewell. He had just dropped me off at the entrance of the academy. It was my first day in the hostel, and a mix of excitement and apprehension bubbled within me as I wondered who my roommates might be.

"It was a pleasure. Let me know if you ever need anything," he replied with a warm smile. His kind green eyes stood out, and I noticed the streaks of gray in his hair—likely a testament to years of hard work. He appeared to be in his late forties.

"I will, Mr. Henderson." The moment his name left my lips, he froze, his expression flickering between surprise and gratitude.

"You're the first person to remember my name. Most people don't bother," he said, visibly moved by the acknowledgement. It was actually like that. People like him and I appreciated smaller gestures.

"Best of luck," he added before walking away. Taking a deep breath, I turned to face the huge entrance.

The academy's entrance loomed large, flanked by two identical buildings. I stepped inside to complete the formalities, clutching the signed paperwork I needed to submit. Around me, other students milled about, many wearing wristbands of different colors. I could barely see any red.

I entered the office and spotted Maximus, Norman, and Emmet managing the registration process. Or rather, Maximus and Norman were handling the paperwork, while Emmet stood behind them, holding a register with an air of disinterest.

The moment I stepped in, Maximus cleared his throat, and Norman's attention shifted from the documents to me. Their reactions struck me as peculiar, almost as if they were concealing something.

Avoiding their curious gazes, I gave Emmet a polite nod. He responded with a sweet smile, immediately setting the register down to take a seat.

It felt oddly flattering. He had remained uninterested while others submitted their forms, but the moment I arrived, he chose to sit and relax.

"Hello, Helanie. How are you feeling?" Emmet asked, stretching his legs out and resting them on the table. As he crossed them nonchalantly, his two brothers exchanged a disapproving glance. The energy they emitted reminded me of petty cliques.

"I'm fine," I replied with a polite smile and extended my papers to Norman.

He snatched the forms from my hand, his harshness prompting Emmet to shake his