

Claimed And Marked By Her Stepbrother Mates

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

head disapprovingly. I was kind of trying my best to forget about Norman being in my hotel room and seeing me in that state. However, he must have taken it more seriously because his mood looked worse today.

"So, you've signed everything. I assume you've purchased your uniform and supplies too?" Norman asked, skimming through the pages without meeting my gaze. It was his way of mocking my living condition and also the fact that I was jobless. That was another issue. I had nothing.

While other parents came with their kids to the academy's hostel, I came by myself. Not even a wolf by my side.

Maximus, meanwhile, kept his eyes fixed on me. His rigid posture and piercing stare made me feel uneasy.

"I forgot. You don't do anything yourself, do you?" Norman added, his tone dripping with sarcasm. "You just have other people pay for your things. So, has one of your sugar daddies bought everything for you?"

His words landed like a slap across my face, stinging far more than I cared to admit.

I despised the way Norman spoke to me. He always found a way to belittle me, treating me like some kind of gold digger. I badly wanted to give him back the way he was trusting me. But then I remembered I will have to face him everyday in the training ground. So I just didn't say a word.

"Maybe you convinced someone's mate or a rich—" Norman continued, his tone sharp and mocking. I swear, when he noticed the tears welling up in my eyes, a fleeting smirk of triumph flashed across his face.

I immediately dropped my gaze, biting my tongue to stop myself from reacting. This was my academy now. If enduring their cruelty would mean they'd tire of it sooner, I was willing to play along. I just wanted to live here peacefully, without any trouble.

"Actually—" Emmet's voice cut through, interrupting his brother, "I'm glad you brought that up. I've actually bought her some stuff."

My head snapped up in disbelief as Emmet rose from his chair and walked to the locked cupboard.

"You did what?" Maximus spoke for the first time, his voice low and incredulous.

"Stuff," Emmet shrugged, nonchalantly opening the cupboard and retrieving a black bag.

"You can't be serious, Emmet," Norman said, his tone thick with disappointment.

I blinked, and a single tear escaped, tracing a warm path down my cheek.

"Why? You were worried if someone bought stuff for her. And now you are upset that someone did?" Emmet raised his thick brow to his brother in sarcasm, displaying a clear hint that he wasn't pleased with his remarks.

"Is this how she convinces you to do things for her?" Norman sneered, noticing my tears. I hastily wiped my face with the back of my hand, swallowing the lump in my throat.

"She didn't say anything to me and neither has she asked me to buy her anything. You need to stop thinking like we brothers are God and people beg before us in order to get anything. As for me, I know what I need to do and what I should buy for my stepsister," there was such a harshness in Emmet's voice that he left me shocked.

I didn't want the brothers to be pinned against each other because of me.

"Here!" Emmet said, walking back and holding the bag out toward me. "A gift from your elder stepbrother for qualifying for admission." His voice was light, but his eyes searched mine as he held the bag patiently.

I hesitated, my gaze darting to Maximus and Norman. Norman's judgmental headshake was enough to make me shrink back.

"I can't accept this," I murmured, shaking my head. "But thanks for thinking of me." With that, I rushed out of the office, my heart pounding.

I didn't want his brothers thinking I was some lowlife rogue taking advantage of their kindness. I wanted to prove myself, not give them more reasons to ridicule me.

Briskly, I stepped outside, gulping down the cold evening air. The weather had turned somber—dark clouds gathered ominously, and the sharp breeze whipped at my face. I didn't hear footsteps behind me; I thought I was alone. I was too lost in my swirling thoughts.

"And where do you go from here?" Emmet's voice came suddenly from behind me, startling me. I spun around to face him, my heart skipping a beat.

The wind tousled his long hair, making it flow in the storm like something out of a painting. His calm demeanor, however, stood in contrast to the wild weather.

"You ran off like you had somewhere important to be," he remarked, a hint of amusement in his tone. His words referred to my hasty exit—and the fact that I'd rushed out without even collecting my hostel key.

"Oh," I muttered, unable to meet his gaze. Embarrassment crept into my chest, squeezing my lungs. I just wanted to dig myself a grave and hide it from everyone's eyes.

"Helanie, are you really going to let them control your life like this?" he asked, his voice soft but heavy with meaning. A sigh escaped his lips as he waited for me to respond, the weight of his question settling over us both.

"By letting them make decisions for you, you're only proving them right—that by bullying you, they can shape you however they please," he said, his words laced with quiet wisdom. I watched his face closely as he spoke, noticing the spark in his eyes and the strength in his veiny hands, one holding a bag and the other clutching a folder. The bag was huge, what did he buy?

"Did you have breakfast?" he asked. I shook my head slightly.

"Well, I haven't either. How about you come with me to a café in a nearby pack? We can talk more once we sit down."

There was no question in his tone; he was simply telling me I was coming with him. I didn't want his brothers to think they could control me, yet I also couldn't think of a reason to refuse. So, I followed him to his car.

"In the passenger seat, Helanie—I'm not your driver," he teased, his face still serious, but he held the door open for me. I slipped inside, trying to understand why he was always so kind, seemingly without any flaw.

Once I settled in, he took the driver's seat, hands firm on the steering wheel. I sensed he truly had something important to discuss with me.

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

Chapter 82-The Stepbro I Needed

Chapter 82: 82-The Stepbro I Needed

Helanie:

"They have the best coffee," Emmet said as he placed an order for both of us. He ordered a variety of dishes, making it clear he was ready to devour them all.

He had casually rolled up his sleeves, even the cuffs of his coat, without a second thought about ruining the sharp creases.

The weather was pleasant. This pack was a small one but I believe they had some affiliation with the rogue king.

"I'm sorry for not accepting that bag. I just don't want your brothers to think I'm a gold digger," I said, initiating the topic myself. Sitting across from him made my cheeks flush with heat.

"Why do you care what they think?" he asked, his gaze steady. "You see, they've realized that by calling you a gold digger, they can manipulate you. The moment you stop accepting help, they win. Tell me something."

He leaned back in his seat, awkwardly trying to adjust his legs under the small table without touching mine. The space was cramped, and his tall, broad-shouldered frame made it even more challenging.

"Have you always been this quiet? Always so concerned about what others think of you?" he asked. His question made me nod instinctively, without hesitation. That was exactly how I had lived my life until now.

Every day, I'd feel self-conscious when delivering baked goods to the pack members, overhearing their whispered remarks. If someone commented that my dress looked too tight, I'd starve myself to loosen it because I couldn't afford to buy new clothes.

It happened often.

I'd even change my hairstyle just to avoid giving the pack members any reason to criticize me.

"And how did that go?" he asked gently. "Did it make you everyone's favorite?"

Tears pricked my eyes as I shook my head, unable to respond.

"I see. Then why try so hard?" he continued, his voice softer now. "Instead of living to please others, why not just focus on doing the right thing? I'm not asking you to lose your mind or act recklessly, but you don't need to let your world revolve around what others think of you."

The more he spoke, the more memories of my time in the pack resurfaced, each word cutting deeper.

"Helanie, let me give you a simple example," he said, his tone taking on a reflective quality. "Imagine two brothers. One tries desperately to be perfect—always punctual, always doing whatever he thinks will earn him approval from his parents. The other just acts like himself. He works hard, does the right thing, but doesn't linger around for praise or worry about what people think."

He paused, his eyes drifting as if lost in thought. Adjusting his collar with long, slender fingers, he continued, "Now, when the first brother—the perfect one—makes even the smallest mistake, everyone pounces on it. They say, 'Ah! The mask slipped. See, we knew you weren't so perfect after all.' But when the other brother, who doesn't even care about impressing anyone, does the smallest kind gesture, everyone appreciates him. They say, 'See? We knew he was good at heart.'"

He finished speaking and focused on my face, studying me to see if I understood his point.

"My point is, no matter what you do, people will always find a way to criticize you. If you're perceived as bad, they'll constantly remind you that you're capable of doing good. But if you're too good or seemingly perfect, they'll search for flaws in you. So, do things for yourself, not for the approval of others. Don't be entirely selfish—do good, but not for the reaction it will get."

He gestured to the bag sitting on the chair beside him. "That's why I'm telling you this. I bought all this for you as a gift for your first day at the academy, and I want you to keep it."

I glanced at the bag, then back at him, flashing a small smile. He was so cool.

"You explain things so well," I complimented him. He shrugged, brushing off the praise as the food arrived.

"Please, help yourself," he said, pointing at the dishes. Clearly, he had no time for more conversation once the food was in front of him. He began devouring sandwiches one after another. I was astonished to see how a large sandwich disappeared in just two bites.

Well, I should've known. For someone his size, food was clearly fuel.

"How can someone be so perfect?" I asked absentmindedly, and he immediately burst into laughter, mouth full. It was the first time I'd seen him laugh so hard.

"See? You're doing it too," he said, grinning, which made a frown form on my face.

"I'm not perfect. Helanie, I don't even care about what people think. But somehow, they still say I'm good and perfect." He was clever, effortlessly weaving his own advice into the situation.

No wonder he was the best professor at the academy.

After finishing the meal, he paid the bill, and we got back into his car. He handed me the key to the hostel and dropped me off at the main entrance.

"Thank you," I said, leaning down to speak through the window.

"Let me know if you need anything, okay? And don't let anyone pick on you. If they do, remind them you're my stepsister."

The fact that he didn't care about the gossip that might follow—about his father's new wife and my connection to him—showed how confident he was in himself.

I nodded and watched as his car drove away. The bag he'd given me was heavy, but I clutched it tightly and headed inside. Other students were arriving too, dragging their luggage behind them.

My room was on the eighth floor. There were elevators available, but most of the students were taking the stairs. Maybe it was their way of sneaking in a workout, but I wasn't about to join them. I chose the elevator.

The moment I stepped in, I felt the stares of the others. Their eyes were full of judgment, and for a fleeting second, I considered taking the stairs instead.

Then I remembered Emmet's words.

Straightening my back, I pressed the button for the eighth floor.

As the elevator ascended, I stared at the glowing red buttons, noticing that the 10th floor indicator kept blinking.

"I didn't press 10," I muttered to myself, puzzled.

With that thought nagging me, I pressed the 8th floor button again. Then once more for good measure.

I wasn't particularly familiar with elevators. I had only used them occasionally—mostly during my hotel stay—and this was one of my first real experiences. But this elevator was unusually large, its walls adorned with intricate patterns that felt oddly out of place.

My breathing quickened unexpectedly as the temperature inside began to drop. Anxiety crept in, tightening its grip on me, and I could feel my nerves stretch taut when I saw the elevator bypass the 8th floor entirely and continue straight to the 10th.

I swallowed hard, feeling an unsettling chill. The elevator seemed to have a mind of its own. *I pressed 8. So why the hell is it stopping on 10?*

And then came the strangest part. As soon as the elevator reached the 10th floor, the doors slid open, and the lights went out.

"Shit! What the heck!" I hissed, staring at the pitch-black hallway before me.

The corridor had windows lining both walls, but the view outside was unnervingly dark. Why is it so dark outside? It was broad daylight—last I checked, anyway. What could have happened?

Curiosity gnawed at me, overpowering my sense of caution. Against my better judgment, I stepped out of the elevator. I shouldn't have, but something compelled me to.

I approached one of the windows, peering outside to get a better sense of the situation. Maybe a storm had rolled in? That could explain the darkness, right?

But no.

It wasn't just overcast—it was an abyss of blackness. So profound, I couldn't see a thing beyond the glass.

"Ahhhh, a rape victim!"

A voice echoed through the hallway, and my heart plummeted into my chest.

"Who's there?" I shouted, my voice trembling as I stared into the distant darkness.

"Who is it?" I called out again, louder this time, but it only seemed to amplify the eerie silence.

A sinister laugh broke through the void—low, mocking, and chilling.

"Hahahahaha! Where was all this anger when your father was kicking you in that pantry?"

My breath hitched, and tears began to well up in my eyes. My body trembled, paralyzed by fear.

"I—I don't know who you are," I stammered, my voice barely audible. "How do you know me?"

My mind spiraled into chaos, grasping for answers. Was this real? Or was I trapped in some kind of nightmare? That had to be it—a dream, a terrible, suffocating dream.

"Just tell me your name," the voice growled, deep and guttural, like something otherworldly. "And I shall take away your pain."

I instinctively stepped backward, inching toward the elevator, my feet dragging as if weighed down by invisible chains. Desperation clawed at me as I tried to focus on the voice.

It was heavy—inhuman. A sound that resembled the growl of a phantom, resonating through the darkness.

"Tell me your—,"

As he continued again, I ran back into the elevator and started pressing the button over and over again. The minute I raised my head, fear engulfed me entirely.

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

Chapter 83-Roommate With A Monster

Chapter 83: 83-Roommate With A Monster

Helanie:

As soon as I lifted my head, I watched the elevator door shut. The lights were on and I was still standing beside the bag like before. I quickly checked time and it seems like barely any seconds had passed.

Did I hallucinate or what?

"Of course I zoned out," I slapped my forehead. It has been a difficult time for me. I wasn't able to hold food down either. After that night, I would get such weird

hallucinations and nightmares. I stared at the 10th floor button and then fixed my posture.

The elevator was unlike anything I had ever seen. It felt as though I had stepped into a world of fantasy. The subtle blue and gray tones, combined with the intricate carvings on the walls and the ornate frames of the mirror inside, were breathtaking.

Every passing moment in this place reminded me that everything I had endured to be a part of this academy was worth it. Every minute of torment and sacrifice had finally paid off.

As the elevator ascended, I felt the weight of the bag Emmet had given me. It was heavier than I expected, and I couldn't help but wonder what he had packed inside. I was excited, to be honest. No one had ever given me a gift before, and knowing Emmet, I was sure it would be something thoughtful—something I would use every day.

The elevator doors opened, and I stepped into a hallway that left me awestruck. The layout was simple but stunning. Rooms were positioned opposite each other in pairs, followed by an open stretch of hallway with tall windows on either side. This pattern repeated until the very end of the corridor, where a single room stood alone, its door framed by elegance.

The hallway itself was a masterpiece. The arched windows were almost ceiling-high. Each window was set between delicate columns that supported the arches above, casting soft reflections on the smooth marble floor in muted shades of gray and lavender. Warm light from chandeliers and wall sconces complemented the daylight, giving the hall a serene and welcoming glow.

Under one of the windows, a wooden bench with a teal cushion sat, with a small plant on the side. At the far end of the hallway, double doors of a single and last too caught my eye. My heart skipped a beat as I realized that the room at the end of the hall—Room R-56—is the room I will be sharing with two strangers.

The door was flanked by two lamps that matched the ambiance of the hostel perfectly. Yet, as I climbed higher through the building, I noticed it growing colder. The open windows likely allowed the wind to sweep through, carrying a crisp chill from floor to floor.

"Room number R-56," I read aloud, staring at the plate on the side of the door. Taking a deep breath, I inserted the key, ready to unlock my new space. However, to my surprise, the door was already ajar. My roommate was clearly inside.

Bracing myself, I pushed the door open, a small pang of dread creeping in. I hoped I wouldn't find myself paired with someone difficult or unpleasant.

The moment my eyes landed on her, though, all my fears vanished. It was none other than Lucy.

Oh my fate had blessed me with her sight on the first day here.

A bright smile spread across my face as recognition hit me. She turned from her bed, her expression lighting up when she saw me. Without hesitation, she rushed toward me, wrapping me in a tight hug.

"Lucy!" I exclaimed, my voice filled with joy as she lifted me off the floor and spun me around.

"I can't believe it's you!" she squealed, setting me down only to pull me into another hug. We both laughed, our excitement bubbling over as we hugged again and again, cheering like maniacs.

I felt so incredibly blessed in that moment.

"I was so scared. I thought I'd end up with the two sisters," Lucy said, rolling her eyes as she held my hand. I glanced around the room, a wave of relief washing over me.

She was not wrong. I was frightened of being with a stranger or a bully myself.

We both had the same fear. I had dreaded the possibility of opening the door to find Salem and Sydney as my roommates. If that had happened, I might have walked right out. Ever since my win, I'd had a gut feeling they would do everything in their power to make my life here difficult.

"I'm so glad you're here," Lucy continued, her smile widening, "but—you lost the last test, didn't you? So..." Her hand moved to scratch her scalp awkwardly, and I realized she didn't know what had happened after that.

"Umm, yeah. I got a card and then had to take one final test," I explained vaguely, avoiding details. I knew she would bring it up again eventually, but for now, I wanted to steer the conversation elsewhere.

"The room is beautiful," I said quickly, changing the subject. Thankfully, she didn't seem to notice the hesitation in my voice. She was so happy that she overlooked it completely.

The room truly was stunning—a perfect blend of gothic and neoclassical design. The walls featured subtle paneling and delicate carved moldings that gave the space an air of understated luxury.

"It really is. Take a good look around," Lucy said in a dreamy tone, her voice barely above a whisper. She was just as captivated as I was.

The tall, arched windows were a masterpiece, their intricate frames giving the room a fairytale-like charm. The space was designed with thoughtful symmetry: two of the beds were positioned parallel to each other with an equal gap between them, while the third bed was placed to the side, directly facing the room door. Each bed faced one of the grand windows, which framed the breathtaking view of the sky and the swaying branches of tall trees outside.

Small nightstands with table lamps stood between the beds, providing just enough separation to balance practicality with the room's cohesive, elegant atmosphere. The beds themselves were luxurious, with soft mattresses and thick, cozy comforters that spoke of wealth and comfort.

I have never stayed in a place like that. I mean, I had stayed in a hotel suite but that wouldn't be called home.

Now this is what I can call my home. The home I've worked so hard for and nearly died too. But it was all just so worth it. I was so happy and proud of myself for not giving up in that moment.

"This place is amazing," I murmured, running my fingers over the smooth surface of one of the nightstands.

"It really is. You can pick whichever bed you want, but I think the two that are parallel to each other would be perfect for us," Lucy said, gesturing to the beds positioned near the bathroom door. "I'm not sure who our third roommate is, though."

She walked over to the bed directly facing the door and pointed to it. "I'm taking this one," she said decisively.

"I'll take this one," I said, choosing the bed next to hers. It was perfectly positioned by the windows, offering a fairytale-worthy view of the trees and sky outside.

Even the faraway mountains could be a perfect view but then the deep hill down would be scarier at night.

I walked over, lightly touching the cool, intricately carved frame of the window. It felt surreal to be here, sharing this beautiful space with Lucy. I smiled to myself, feeling the weight of all my fears and doubts begin to lift.

"It doesn't matter who is the third person sharing a room with us. As long as we are together—," I took a deep breath and then exhaled, explaining how comfortable I felt here.

"We will be fine," she finished for me with a bright smile covering my lips from her response.

"We even have our very own balcony! But it's so cold right now that I don't want to check it out," Lucy said, hugging herself and pouting slightly. "Oh, and we have a walk-in closet with three walls full of shelves—one for each of us!"

She explained how we could divide the space to avoid arguments and misunderstandings. It was thoughtful, and I appreciated how she was already trying to make things comfortable for all of us.

That's when the door opened, signaling the arrival of our third roommate. We both turned to face the door, hoping to welcome a pleasant person.

It felt as though someone had shown us a perfect haven, only to throw in a monster to ruin it.

A tall guy stepped inside, a bag slung over his shoulder. He looked just as shocked as we were when he realized he'd be sharing the room with us.

"You've got to be kidding me," he hissed, tossing his bag onto the solitary bed and shaking his head in disbelief.

It was Lamar.

Lamar Freaking Baker.

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

Chapter 84-Teen Crush Or A Crushed Teen!

Chapter 84: 84-Teen Crush Or A Crushed Teen!

"No! I'm roommates with girls—one of them is—" Lamar had already dialed a number to complain about us. Our moods soured the moment we discovered he was our roommate.

"At least give us a third girl in the room with us," Lucy whispered under her breath and he grumbled, still avoiding looking in our direction. Without another word, he walked straight to the balcony door, heading to his side of the bed. The minute he saw it was us, especially me, his face turned pale. I wasn't very happy either.

Sharing the space was going to be difficult—both the bathroom and the balcony doors were on his side of the wall.

We awkwardly stayed silent as he opened the balcony door and stepped out in a rush.

"Gosh! This is so frustrating. Why him?" Lucy slapped her forehead, her disappointment written all over her face.

"Did Gavin—?" I started, worried about whether he had been able to settle in. We should have talked about him already.

"He did, but he's not my roommate. I thought we'd get someone nice," she said, looking utterly dejected. I understood why. Having Gavin as a roommate would have been amazing compared to Lamar—the infuriating troublemaker.

I hated him so much, and now I'd be forced to see his face every single day.

"And you know—I can guide and scold Gavin, but Lamar? I just hope he doesn't leave the bathroom a complete mess all the time," she added, sitting on the edge of her bed, stomping her feet anxiously as if her thoughts were spiraling out of control.

"Which room is he in?" I asked, happy for Gavin that he'd gotten a spot but sad for Lucy that they wouldn't be sharing one.

"He's on the fifth floor," she said, checking her phone and frowning at the screen. "With some girl named Jenny and her brother Penn."

I wasn't sure how to console her. Before I could think of anything, Lamar came back in, stretching his shoulders and arms. Then, he cleared his throat, clearly about to address us.

"It's no secret that we don't like each other," he began, his tone flat and disinterested. He wasn't even looking directly at us.

"Yeah, because you were always arrogant to everyone—and then you tried to kill me," I snapped, folding my arms across my chest.

"Right. I did that too. So let's just not talk to each other and stay out of each other's business," Lamar shrugged. I couldn't argue with him—I didn't want to communicate with him either.

"But we wanted to befriend you so badly—" Lucy, who usually struck me as a gentle and caring soul, rose dramatically from the bed, placing her hands over her heart in mock sincerity.

Even Lamar seemed taken aback by the sudden shift in her demeanor.

"Annoying!" he hissed before swiftly escaping the room.

"Well, I guess it won't be too bad. Boys don't tend to hang around their rooms for too long," Lucy commented casually, as if her sudden change in attitude hadn't just startled us both. Perhaps being accepted into the academy had given her a newfound boost of confidence. Apart from that, she wasn't wrong though. Lamar never stayed in the shelter either. He was always out and about. Besides that business of bringing hostesses to the bars, it kept him occupied most of the time.

"By the way, you should start unpacking. I'll bring my stuff in gradually and then start setting it up," she added cheerfully, her enthusiasm unmistakable.

I glanced at my single bag, still untouched. I hadn't even bothered to open it yet. I nodded at her suggestion, noting that she'd already unpacked one of her own bags neatly into the closet.

"Oh, and is anyone coming to meet you this Sunday? It's a family meet-up day. I'm so excited to have my family around!" Lucy placed both her hands on her heart and sighed dreamily.

"Umm, let's see." I quickly looked away, pretending to inspect the room as though I hadn't already taken it all in. Truthfully, I just wanted to avoid this topic.

"Hey, I forgot you're a rogue. But that doesn't mean you don't have a family, right? You're so young, and—you live in the wild. I just assumed you had someone with you," she said, watching my face closely for a reaction.

"If you don't want to talk about it, we can drop it. We'll discuss it whenever you're ready. As for this Sunday, you can join my family for the feast. You're going to love them, and I know they'll love you," she added with a cheerful giggle.

I couldn't help but feel happy for her. She was lucky to have such a loving family—and to love them just as much in return. Unfortunately, I couldn't say the same about my own.

Gosh, my father. He had told the alpha he killed me and buried me, just so he could avoid admitting I had run away. He didn't want to lose the money he got from the pack. He probably thought his daughter would die in the wild anyway, so why not save himself the trouble?

"Hey, did I upset you?" Lucy's soft voice broke my spiraling thoughts. "I really need to watch what I say. Gavin always tells me I talk nonsense, and I think I finally realized it today."

She gently rubbed my elbow, trying to comfort me. I didn't blame her. It wasn't her fault that even a passing mention of family could ruin my mood.

"It's not your fault," I said, forcing a small smile. "I was just thinking about something else. Why don't you bring Gavin here? I'd love to meet him and congratulate him on joining the academy."

I struggled to keep up the fake smile, but pretending to be okay was exhausting. Memories of my past always left me paralyzed—trapped in a pit of depression I couldn't seem to escape.

"I'll go get Gavin to meet you!" With a snap of her fingers, she excitedly uttered and dashed out of the room.

Now, it was just me and the bag.

I dragged it into the closet, noticing how spacious it was. The two walls facing each other were lined with shelves, leaving the wall opposite the door for Lamar's things—a decision we'd silently agreed upon.

Sitting down on the floor, I unzipped the bag. Inside were two brand-new uniforms, shoes, a few casual outfits, notebooks, stationary box, and some tracksuits—all practical items I'd expected to need.

But then I froze.

At the bottom of the bag was a phone box.

"He got me a phone?" I murmured, staring at the sleek packaging. My hands trembled slightly as I picked it up, realizing it was one of the most expensive models on the market.

I hesitated to turn it on. Accepting such an extravagant gift didn't feel right. Was this really okay?

I kept staring at the phone before finally picking it up. He'd already charged it and even set it up for me. That was thoughtful of him, especially since I'd never owned a fancy phone like this before. Operating it made me nervous—I was terrified I'd break it.

Then, a message popped up on the screen, and a huge smile spread across my lips.

Prof. Emmet: Sorry for adding my name to your phone list. Let me know if you're adjusting well.

Prof. Emmet: I just found out who your roommate is. Don't worry; I'll see what I can do about it.

My smile grew so wide that my cheeks started to hurt. Was he thinking about me?

He must have been. He'd gone back to the office just to check who my roommates were.

Me: It's alright. You've already done so much. I don't know how I can ever repay you.

For the first time in so long, I sat holding a phone, grinning like a teenager with a crush. But that wasn't the case with me. He was just someone who made me feel alive.

Prof. Emmet: By staying happy and safe.

I nodded to myself like an idiot, his words echoing in my mind. I was so absorbed in the moment, sitting in the closet, that I didn't even notice someone entering the room until the closet door slammed shut.

I jolted upright, staring at the door in confusion. Was it just a strong gust of wind?

I quickly got to my feet and tried opening the door, but it wouldn't budge. That's when it hit me—it wasn't the wind. Someone had locked me in.

"Hey!" I shouted, banging on the door with my fist. "Who the heck locked this? It's not funny!"

Laughter echoed from outside, and my blood boiled. I hated it. Why? Why did people always have to ruin my moments of happiness?

I kept pounding on the door, shouting, until it finally swung open. Standing outside was a concerned couple—Lucy and Gavin.

"Hey! Who locked you in?" Lucy asked, immediately pulling me into a warm hug. Gavin, meanwhile, scanned me anxiously, his worry evident.

"I saw Sydney and Salem running downstairs," Gavin muttered, shaking his head in frustration.

So, they'd already started?

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

Chapter 85-The Second Girlfriend

Chapter 85: 85-The Second Girlfriend

Helanie:

"It's alright. I'm fine now," I said, holding Lucy's hand to stop her from chasing after those girls and risking getting bullied. I tried to reassure her, even though my voice felt unconvincing.

"But you threw up because of them," Lucy said, sitting down on my bed. Her hand gently rubbed my back, her concern evident.

She wasn't exaggerating. I had actually thrown up when the closet door opened. The overwhelming emotions got to me.

"Yeah, but I'm okay now," I nodded, trying to sound steady. Then I turned to someone I'd unintentionally ignored. "Hey, Gavin!" Guilt tinged my voice. The twins had scrambled my thoughts so much that I hadn't even greeted him properly.

"Hey! I heard about what happened," he replied in a hushed tone as he took a seat on Lucy's bed. "You seriously won against Maximus."

He whispered it with a bright smile, his voice barely audible but filled with excitement. Lucy tightened her grip on my hand, silently demanding more details. As for Gavin, of course he didn't know much since he wasn't present at the ground but he got the main news.

"Yeah, I didn't want to talk about it and risk getting into more trouble," he admitted, lowering his voice. "The final test was for Helanie to land a single punch on Maximus... but she ended up throwing two. Everyone at the backup tests was talking about it, but they kept it quiet," Gavin explained, his tone conspiratorial.

His hushed voice made me wonder just how afraid they were of the brothers. It also made me worry whether Maximus was still angry about it.

"Anyway, be cautious around Lamar," Gavin advised, his expression growing serious. "If he tries anything with you two, let me know." He gave us a reassuring nod, his gentle smile a small comfort.

"Oh, and by the way, tomorrow's the first day," he added. "The second day is when they'll be handing out bracelets for ranks. Just in case—"

I cut him off before he could finish. "Just in case the bullies want to identify who's at the bottom," I interjected, rolling my eyes in frustration.

It was disheartening because I already knew how it worked. The Alphas would receive the highest-ranking ribbons, while the rest of us would be categorized with lesser colors.

The thought transported me back to the memory of that night—the Alphas' wrists adorned with blue ribbons.

"Helanie!" The snap of fingers in front of my face pulled me from my spiraling thoughts.

"Yeah?" I blinked, focusing back on their faces.

"Go freshen up," Gavin said with an excited grin. "Tonight's our first official dinner in the academy hall."

I hadn't fully processed it—I was now part of this place, part of their traditions. All students were required to stay at the academy, only allowed to return home during vacations. It was a strange, overwhelming realization.

I nodded silently and stood up, choosing a purple dress Emmet had bought for me. Lucy, ever the helper, braided my hair, leaving soft strands to frame my face. She wore a matching purple dress, her pixie cut now grown to the nape of her neck, accentuating her delicate features.

Gavin was dashing in a tailored suit he claimed he'd been saving for a special occasion. The three of us were ready to leave, and thankfully, we didn't run into Lamar until we were already outside the dorm.

He hurried back to his room to get ready. Without sparing us a glance, he sprinted inside.

"Seeing his face makes me want to puke," Lucy joked, pretending to gag dramatically. I elbowed her and laughed along.

I won't lie—my life has changed drastically. I never used to have friends. The only person I knew outside my home was Altan. Just thinking of his name sent chills down my spine, goosebumps prickling over my skin.

But I didn't have time to dwell on those thoughts as I made my way out of the hostel toward the academy. The campus was filled with students. Some faces I recognized from the last test, while others were clearly seniors.

We were all led to the second floor, where a stunning yet enigmatic hall awaited us. The interior design matched the bedrooms and hallways of the hostel, with a cohesive color palette and elegant window frames.

The hall featured three long tables with rows of chairs, and on a raised platform at the front was a round table decorated far more lavishly. Its intricate designs and beautiful chairs suggested it was meant for someone important.

Gavin and Lucy chose seats next to each other in one row, while I ended up sitting across from them with a group of other students. The hall grew increasingly crowded as servers prepared elaborate meals in the large kitchen to the side. The mouthwatering aromas were so tempting that my patience began to wear thin.

That's when a girl slid into the seat beside me, her friend sitting next to her. They seemed to have arrived together.

"Hey, Gavin!" the girl next to me called out suddenly, interrupting him as he leaned toward Lucy, whispering something that made her giggle. They looked like they were catching up before the interruption.

"Oh, Jenny!" Gavin greeted her with a smile. It took me a second to remember where I'd heard her name before—Lucy had mentioned that Gavin was sharing a room with Jenny and her brother, Penn.

The two siblings were unmistakably twins, with matching black hair and hazel eyes.

"You left your closet an absolute mess," Jenny said, tilting her head playfully.

I noticed Lucy's hand instantly tightened around Gavin's.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" Gavin replied with a sheepish grin. "I'm pretty clumsy when it comes to unpacking."

Lucy straightened in her chair, her posture stiff. I wondered how long Gavin would take to introduce her, and soon he did.

"Oh, by the way, this is my girlfriend, Lucy, and my best friend, Helanie."

Wow! Me, someone's best friend? It felt strange but good at the same time.

I gave Jenny a polite nod, which she returned with a small smile.

"And these are my roommates, Penn and Jenny," Gavin added.

"How rude!" Jenny pouted, feigning offense. I saw Lucy take a deep breath, clearly trying to keep her cool. It was obvious—she was jealous of Jenny.

I mean, who wouldn't be? If your mate was sharing a room with a gorgeous girl, you'd probably feel uneasy too.

Jenny leaned closer, her voice suddenly taking on a sharper edge. "I'm just your roommate?"

Her tone made me freeze. I turned slowly to observe her body language, which seemed oddly... suggestive.

"Are you afraid to tell your girlfriend that I'm also your girlfriend?"

The moment the words left her mouth, my heart sank, and my head whipped toward Lucy. She looked pale—like she'd just seen a ghost.

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

Chapter 86-Not Their Family

Chapter 86: 86-Not Their Family

Helanie:

The tension hung heavy in the air as Gavin shook his head at Lucy, his tone firm. "That's not true."

"Really? But she just admitted to it!" Lucy yelled, her voice carrying across the room and drawing everyone's attention to us.

"Lucy, let's not do this here." I extended my hand to rest it against hers, hoping to calm her down, but she quickly pulled her hand away from mine.

"Jenny, what are you saying?" Gavin gave her a harsh and confused look.

"Hey, hey, I was just joking," Jenny interjected before the situation could spiral further. She hissed the words at them, then plastered an awkward smile on her face to assure the onlookers that everything was fine.

It was mortifying. Thankfully, the servers emerged from the kitchen, balancing large trays laden with food, providing a much-needed distraction.

"What?" Lucy snapped at Jenny, her tone sharp.

"I didn't realize you'd take it so seriously or that it would escalate like this. I'm sorry—I shouldn't have joked like that," Jenny replied, her voice laced with genuine regret.

"Well, you shouldn't joke about things like that—" Lucy leaned over the table to whisper harshly, but before she could finish, Penn slammed his hand on the table, startling everyone.

"That's enough," he said, his voice as rigid as his posture. "My sister made a joke and apologized. Move on."

The suddenness of his outburst silenced the table. Penn's reserved demeanor only made his rare displays of emotion more striking.

"I'm sorry," Jenny whispered again, her eyes darting toward Gavin and Lucy, who now sat uncomfortably in their seats.

"Stop apologizing," Penn grunted under his breath, though I heard it clearly. Jenny bowed her head in shame.

The awkwardness lingered as our plates were filled with an array of extravagant dishes. The atmosphere was tense, but the arrival of food provided a small relief.

Suddenly, a voice rose above the clinking of utensils. "Hi, everyone. I'm Sage Milan, the top senior. It's great to have you juniors here for your first dinner." Her tone was polished, and she carried herself with the air of someone used to commanding attention. "The trainers and the Rogue King will be joining us shortly, so please hold onto your forks and wait for their arrival."

I recognized her immediately. She was the same girl I'd seen when I first stepped into the academy, clutching the pamphlet that promised new beginnings.

I had guessed it right—she was special. I noticed her wearing two bands, one red and the other black. The black band signified her status as a top senior, while the red indicated her alpha rank. Tonight, she wore a sleek black branded dress, her blond and pink ombre hair styled in voluminous curls.

"Thank you very much," she said graciously before taking her seat among the other four top seniors. She seemed especially giggly around the guy sitting to her right—a blond, effortlessly handsome figure who resembled the stereotypical popular bad boy from a teen movie.

I couldn't help but notice the way every junior seemed mesmerized by him, their gazes practically dripping admiration. Even Salem had been staring at him for a while, her attention clearly captivated.

But then, my focus shifted. The brothers and their father had arrived. My breath hitched when I saw someone unexpected—my mother. She walked beside the Rogue King, her red gown gleaming under the chandeliers and adorned with dazzling diamonds that graced her neck and hands.

Charlotte, on the other hand, wore a stunning golden dress and looked radiant standing next to her mother. They seemed to be living the perfect life.

I exhaled deeply and lowered my gaze, feeling a wave of emotions wash over me. When I glanced up again, the brothers were making their entrance.

Emmet and Kaye walked in first. Their black tuxedos were immaculately tailored, and both carried themselves with distinct poise. Emmet looked more polished than usual tonight—his damp hair tied back in a man bun with a few loose strands framing his sharp, sculpted features.

Kaye, as always, maintained his rigid demeanor, his posture straight and his movements restrained, offering little in the way of gestures.

Then came Maximus. He wore a gray shirt beneath his black suit, his playful smirk already drawing the attention of many admiring eyes around the room. His confidence was magnetic, as if he thrived on being the center of attention.

Finally, the last to enter was Norman. Broad-shouldered and clad in a commanding black suit, he exuded power and intimidation. His eyes landed on me immediately, and his expression darkened. The hostility in his gaze was unmistakable before he turned away to join his family on the stage.

"That girl is Charlotte. She lives with them. Can you imagine being that blessed?" Lucy whispered to Gavin, though I overheard her clearly.

Yeah, right.

I had stayed in that mansion before, and it was far from a blessing—at least, for me.

"Hello, everyone," Lord McQuoid addressed the room as he took the stage. "I welcome you to my academy. I hope you will work hard and achieve your goals. Now, let's enjoy the feast."

With that, he sat down, and the banquet began. The chatter among the guests grew lively as they ate and socialized, yet none of them even glanced my way. My gaze kept drifting back to my mother.

Did she know I was part of the academy?

If she did, wouldn't she have tried to find me?

Or perhaps I was overthinking. The woman who had thrown me out of her life would hardly be searching for me now.

"Helanie! Why are you eating so little?" Gavin's voice interrupted my thoughts. He must have noticed how I was pushing the food around on my plate without actually eating. The steak and other other dishes remained untouched.

"Here, start eating." Lucy reached over toward my plate, but before she could add anything to it, Jenny stepped in, piling food onto my plate without hesitation. Though she did it casually, I caught Lucy grumbling under her breath, her lips forming a pout.

This wasn't good. These two were never going to get along.

"There you go," Jenny said with a cheerful smile, doing a little shoulder wiggle.

"Thank you," I replied quietly, hoping to avoid upsetting Lucy.

"You have such pretty eyes," Jenny commented, her tone light and bubbly. I forced an awkward smile in response.

"You know, I could eat all this food by myself," she continued, chatting away like a wind-up doll. I didn't mind her energy, but Lucy clearly did.

"Hey, Jenny!" Lucy drummed her fingertips on the table, her tone sharp enough to cut through Jenny's chatter. "Helanie likes to eat in silence."

Mortified, I wanted to dig a hole and disappear. I hadn't even said that, but now the spotlight was on me. Desperate to diffuse the tension, I started shoveling food into my mouth, hoping to avoid further confrontation.

"Oh, I didn't know. Sorry!" Jenny's voice didn't lose its enthusiasm, though, and in a way, that was a relief.

We eventually finished eating, though my attention remained divided between the brothers and my mother. None of them acknowledged me, and they left without even hinting to the students that one of their family members was among them.

I felt a heaviness in my chest—a sadness I couldn't entirely explain. Maybe it was because, deep down, I still missed being part of a family.

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

Chapter 87-The Guilt!

Chapter 87: 87-The Guilt!

Helanie:

The night was so peaceful that the moment I lay down in bed, I fell asleep instantly, as if I'd slipped into a coma. But in the middle of the night, I woke to the sound of someone slamming the balcony door.

Groaning, I sat up and looked toward the balcony. It was Lamar.

He had shut the door after stepping outside to smoke. Through the glass, I could see him pacing back and forth, a cigarette in hand.

He looked restless.

If it had been anyone else, I might have checked on them, but it was Lamar—the guy I hated the most.

So I decided to lie back down.

Closing my eyes, I hoped to fall asleep again. But then I heard the balcony door creak open and footsteps approaching my bed.

My heart skipped a beat as realization struck me.

I bolted upright, my mind racing with fear that he was about to do something awful. But when I looked, there he was, standing at the edge of my bed with his head bowed.

"What are you doing? You freaking scared the life out of me," I hissed under my breath.

"I wanted to apologize," he said, his voice heavy, thick with emotion. Was he... sniffing? Was he crying?

"Okay," I muttered, trying to avoid further confrontation at this ungodly hour.

"I didn't mean to... I just thought you'd be fine since werewolves heal quickly. I know you don't have a wolf, but I didn't realize how slow healing could be without one. I swear I was going to come back for you once the test was over."

He rambled excitedly before pausing, as though he realized how messed up it all sounded.

"That doesn't make me sound convincing, does it? But that was the plan. I messed up," he admitted, his words faltering.

I frowned, confused about why he was bringing this up again.

"Okay... so what do you want from me now?" I asked, pulling my blanket closer to shield myself from the cold.

"I want you to stop it," he whispered, his tone so low it sent a chill down my spine.

"Stop what?" I murmured, narrowing my eyes at him in confusion.

"Ever since—" he stopped mid-sentence, moving to sit on the edge of my bed. I instinctively leaned back, putting some distance between us. "Ever since I hurt you, you've been appearing in my dreams. You chase me, and then... you brutally kill me."

He paused, his voice trembling. "The worst part is—it hurts. Every hit you land on me feels so real. And sometimes, when I'm in a happy dream, you suddenly show up, screaming or crying. I just want it to stop—you need to stop it, please."

He placed his hands near his ear, wincing as he accidentally grazed a burn from his cigarette.

I watched him flinch and then abruptly stand, as though waking from a trance. His gaze flicked from the cigarette in his hand to my face, his expression unreadable. Without a word, he straightened up and bolted toward the door.

I didn't even get the chance to ask him what he was talking about before he disappeared from the room.

Letting out a shaky breath, I lay back down, unwilling to dwell on what had just happened. Before long, sleep pulled me under again.

Lucy's alarm woke me the next morning. She had been busy planning everything the night before—our uniforms, shoes, and even our accessories were laid out neatly.

Thankfully, Lamar had gotten ready long before us. Maybe he was trying to avoid any interaction again.

Lucy, ever organized, let me use the bathroom first. She didn't bother me until I came out, which I appreciated. I didn't take much time either, though the warm water from the shower was so comforting that I almost stayed longer.

At least our uniforms were cute.

It was a red checkered skirt, white shirt, and then a red coat or sweater with a red tie. The red shoes were so cute.

We stood together in the elevator, the silence thick as I found myself recalling that strange 10th floor.

"Um, I thought the building was fully occupied?" I asked, clearing my throat to start a conversation without directly bringing up the oddity and potentially freaking her out.

"Huh? What do you mean?" she replied, adjusting her hair with a frown. I could tell she wasn't happy with her new hairstyle.

"The 10th floor," I said, trying to sound casual.

She turned to me with a confused look, as if I'd just told a bad joke.

"What floor?" she asked, her frown deepening.

"The 10th floor. What's the deal with it?" I pressed, watching her squint slightly, as though searching for the right response.

But before she could say anything else, the elevator doors slid open, revealing a sight that immediately grabbed our attention—and not in a good way.

It was Gavin, dressed in the academy's uniform: a crisp white shirt, a red tie with white vertical stripes, and black pants. But it wasn't just him that shocked us.

It was the fact that he was fixing Jenny's hair.

"Lucy!" I watched as Lucy stormed forward, clearly ready to confront Jenny. Quickly, I grabbed her arm and shook my head, silently reminding her to keep her composure. There were others around, and Gavin might not take kindly to her making a scene. After all, he had already been upset last night when she yelled at him without giving him a chance to explain.

"I can't believe this," Lucy muttered under her breath before storming past Gavin without another glance.

"Hey, you two! We've been waiting for you!" Jenny called out, rushing toward us with Gavin trailing behind her.

"Morning!" Gavin greeted, trying to sound cheerful.

Lucy ignored him entirely, her pace quickening.

"Whoa, what's going on? Is her mood still sour?" Gavin asked, falling into step beside me as I slowed down to look at him.

"Did I do something?" he added, genuinely confused.

I couldn't understand why he was acting so nonchalant, as though it was perfectly normal for him to be this close to Jenny.

Some might call Lucy insecure, but let's be real—if she were the one acting this friendly with some other guy, Gavin would've lost it.

"Let's just get through the first day and leave the drama for later," I said in a hushed tone, hoping to diffuse the tension without adding fuel to the fire.

Lucy, still visibly upset, didn't want me talking to anyone else, so we walked in tense silence all the way to the academy.

Once we arrived, the top senior, Sage, greeted us and led us to our first class on the third floor.

The classroom was loud with activity, filled with so many students, all exuding an air of confidence.

But the way they looked at the ones weaker than them was unnerving—almost predatory, like they were eyeing fresh meat. It was clear that bullying was not just expected from the seniors.

As we stepped into the room, Lucy grabbed my arm, dragging me toward the back of the class. We found seats, with me by the window and her right next to me. Gavin sat down beside her, leaving no spot for Jenny.

Jenny gave a small shrug, her lips curling into a pout. Lucy didn't acknowledge her, but her straight posture and composed demeanor told me she was fully aware of the situation—and didn't care.

I glanced at Gavin, catching a flicker of embarrassment on his face. He and Jenny must've talked about sitting together in the front, where there were four seats, but clearly, that wasn't happening now.

Jenny didn't seem too upset, though. Her brother appeared just then, hands stuffed in his pockets, moving with an easy, confident stride. Without saying a word, he took her arm and guided her to a seat in the second row.

And then, right before our eyes, came the infamous Demon Twins.

Sydney and Salem Combs were hard to miss, and naturally, they'd found a way to make their uniforms stand out. But today, they weren't just dressed to impress—they seemed downright giddy. Sydney had her hair pulled into a sleek high ponytail, while Salem wore hers loose and curled.

"I don't think we need an introduction, but—hello! I'm Sydney Combs, and this is my twin, Salem Combs," Sydney began, her voice dripping with exaggerated cheerfulness.

"We're the royal beta's daughters from the Blood Hunters Pack," she added with a gleaming smile.

"We're happy to announce," she continued, "that we've decided to take you all under our wings. If you have any needs, we'll be here to... help."

Her tone was sweet but fake, her words edged with mockery.

"And we'll also protect you all from bullying," Salem added, her tone just as sugary.

The class erupted into cheers at her words—but not everyone joined in. Those aspiring to become Alphas or royal betas remained silent. Even the warriors kept quiet, their pride unwilling to accept protection from another junior.

"Apparently," Lucy whispered in my ear, "bullying here is brutal. It's considered part of the training, so the authority figures don't really intervene."

A shiver ran down my spine as her words sank in.

"But," Sydney continued, her smirk widening, "if you want our protection, you'll have to come to us. And after we save you, you'll owe us a favor."

Her tone was sly, dripping with amusement. It was clear she intended to have plenty of fun with this new arrangement.

"Anyway," she said, stepping back, "we'll let the first class begin now."

With that, the twins returned to their seats, naturally taking spots at the very front of the room.

As they moved aside, the teacher walked in, and my heart stopped.

It was Professor Emmet McQuoid.

He was breathtakingly handsome, dressed in a sharp black suit with a perfectly tucked white shirt. He looked nothing like I'd expected—no hint of drunkenness. His hair, still damp, was styled impeccably. A single strand fell across his forehead, while the rest was tied back in a man bun.

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

Chapter 88-Not An Ugly Duckling

Chapter 88: 88-Not An Ugly Duckling

Helanie:

"Hello class, I'm Professor Emmet McQuoid, your class teacher, and I'll be the one to teach you the history of wars, werewolves, other creatures, as well as herbs and weapons. Physical training, however, will be conducted by my brothers," he said, tossing the papers onto the podium, then quickly grabbing his glasses and putting them on.

I had never seen him wearing glasses before. I turned to check on Sydney and Salem, who were both exchanging glances—constantly looking at each other before finally turning to Emmet.

"So, let's get started with the first class," he said, quickly adjusting his tie before lowering his head to begin flipping through the pages of the book he had brought with him.

As his head was down, I noticed him briefly raising his eyes, his eyebrows furrowing for a moment. His gaze landed directly on me, and then he quickly looked away as if he just wanted to confirm I was there.

He started the class by giving an introduction to the academy and explaining how and when it was established. The academy was actually built long before Lord McQuoid took over. In fact, it used to be an abandoned building, so they had to renovate it. But from what I gathered, most of the interior was kept the same when they added the furniture. The way he delivered his wisdom was quite captivating, and strangely enough, everyone was focused.

"That'll be all," Emmet announced, slamming the book shut and giving us one last glance. His eyes lingered on me for a moment longer before he nodded and gathered his things to leave.

"I can't believe this hunk spoke for five hours, and none of us got bored," Lucy remarked, perfectly capturing what everyone was thinking.

It was true. Five hours had flown by, and we'd written down so much. All the materials were in the vintage black-and-orange notebook Emmet had given me in the bag the other day—a thoughtful touch. Lucy and Gavin both complimented it too.

"Let's head out and grab something to eat, what do you say?" Lucy smiled, getting up and then immediately turning around to face someone at the front. "Why can't this bitch leave us alone?" she muttered under her breath.

As Lucy mentioned, I looked over her shoulder and saw Jenny standing by her seat, waving at us.

"Maybe she just wants to be friends with us since Gavin is her roommate," I thought, not the kind of person to judge someone right away.

"Stop taking her side, Helanie," Lucy snapped. "She's seducing my mate. She's not a good person." As she grabbed my hand and tried to pull me away from our spot, I felt like rolling my eyes. Why the heck would she say that? There was no proof. But I didn't want to upset her, so I just stayed quiet. Gavin followed us in silence, clearly unwilling to talk.

"Guys, are we headed to the canteen?" Somehow, Jenny didn't pick up on the fact that none of us wanted to hang out with her.

"Hey, Jenny!" Lucy suddenly stopped walking and turned to face her. The two would have bumped into each other had Jenny not stopped midway. She looked a little shocked too.

"Why don't you go accompany your brother? Isn't it wrong to leave him alone?" Lucy forced a smile, trying to sound sweet, but it was clear she was trying to push Jenny away. The look of embarrassment on Jenny's face made me feel guilty.

"But he hangs out with his friends," Jenny mumbled, sounding drained. That's when Gavin, who had been awkwardly standing behind us, stepped forward.

"It's okay. You can come along with us," he said with a cheerful tone. Lucy, clearly irritated, turned just slightly and shot him a look.

I swear Jenny saw it. She watched them for a moment before forcing a smile.

"Actually, you guys enjoy yourselves," she said quickly. "I just remembered I have to sit with someone else." I could tell she was lying to avoid any further awkwardness.

"Oh, shoot. Well, what can be done in that case, right?" Lucy said, acting disappointed, though I could tell she was relieved that Jenny backed down.

Jenny walked away, and I couldn't help but wonder whether she was trying to befriend Gavin or just wanted to fit in with us girls. It seemed like she was more focused on being part of our group.

We headed to the cafeteria and took the seats at the back while the seniors grabbed the better spots.

It didn't matter much to me. I was just happy to be part of this academy. If things had gone right, I would have gone home and told everyone that I wasn't entirely useless. The things they had told me—about not being able to do anything with my life—bothered me so much that I cried myself to sleep every night.

I wanted to prove myself to them, but I couldn't, because I was a coward and a weak person back then. And if I cried over any of their hits or abuse, they would call me weak and pathetic, not understanding that the abuser should be the one who gets the hate.

While I sat with my friends, my food in front of me, lost in thoughts about my life back home, I didn't realize I had become a target for the top seniors.

"So, people—we have a special student here," a voice suddenly interrupted my thoughts. I snapped back to reality when my food tray was snatched right from in front of me.

"Hey!" Gavin stood up, facing the guy who had taken the tray.

The guy, wearing a blue and black wristband, stood facing Gavin. He was a top senior—and probably not a friendly one. His hazel eyes radiated a threat to anyone standing up to him, and the smirk on his lips proved he hadn't come here to be checked.

I knew it wasn't going to be easy for me to leave this cafeteria without any trouble today.

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

Chapter 89-The Juniors Vs The Seniors

Chapter 89: 89-The Juniors Vs The Seniors

Helanie:

"Gavin—," Lucy got up and steadily pinched the sleeve of her Gavin's shirt, trying to remind him that they shouldn't be going too far when confronting these bullies.

They had even snatched her plate away.

"Ah! That bitch is your mate?" I noticed the name tag on the guy's shirt: Arlo James. His brown hair was styled so perfectly that one might confuse him with one of the good guys.

"She's ugly as fuck, bro." The minute he said that, I watched Lucy's confidence shake. She looked around, and strangely enough, her eyes fell directly on Jenny, who was sitting with some random students from our class. Jenny didn't seem to be mocking her or anything, but Lucy's fists clenched.

"How fucking dare you! She is not for you! So it doesn't matter how you see her," Gavin yelled, grabbing the senior's collar. That's when whispering began, and gasps erupted in the air.

I guess no junior had ever responded to the top seniors this way before.

"Easy!" Arlo clenched his jaw but kept the fake smile on his lips.

"Nobody wants her ugly ass. You can have her all to yourself." Arlo licked his lips and turned to look at the other top seniors, who were busy laughing at his jokes, while Sage was engrossed in her phone. I looked around and saw all five of the top seniors. They seemed just as bad, if not worse, than Arlo—except for Sage. She wasn't part of the laughing game; instead, she was so busy with her phone that she barely looked up.

But then, before Gavin could respond, Arlo grabbed him by the shirt and tossed him over the table. It all happened in such chaos that Lucy started screaming until a top senior with the name tag Riri jumped in. She pushed Lucy back into her seat, placed her foot between Lucy's legs on the seat, and leaned over her, pointing a finger at her.

I looked around for help but found no one. Gavin tried to break free from Arlo's grip but failed as Arlo kept pinning him down.

Now I felt like I needed to step up. Although I wasn't going to be much help, I needed to stand up for my friends—or at least get beaten up alongside them.

"Fucking let him go," I got up, smashed the bottle, and held it up to Arlo's neck. I did it so quickly that no one saw it coming.

Silence filled the air.

It was as if everyone was now excitedly anticipating what would happen next.

"You—," it wasn't him getting riled up, but there was a strange excitement in his eyes as he leaned his body closer to the shard in my hand. He then hunched down until the broken glass was in contact with his neck and added, "Cut it through. Come on!"

There was no fear in his eyes. My hands were visibly shaking, and so were my knees.

"I will do it if you don't let go of my friend," I tried to raise my voice, but it came out a little shaken.

"Really?" he mocked, while others laughed behind him.

"Then do it, because I ain't letting your friend go," he whispered the words, almost like mouthing them.

"Do it, do it," the cafeteria was filled with the seniors chanting those words. The juniors remained tight-lipped, not even uttering a word.

"Hey, that's not very nice. If she does it now, you'll accuse her of attacking you on the academy's grounds," that was none other than Jenny, rushing toward us.

She came and stepped between us, also trying to free Gavin from Arlo's grasp.

"And look at another junior thinking she can fight us," Arlo turned to Jenny and then smirked. "And a very pretty one too. How is it that you got an ugly bitch and such gorgeous ones defending you?" Arlo asked Gavin, pointing at Lucy when mentioning the "ugly one" and then at me and Jenny when mentioning the "pretty one."

I instantly felt my stomach tie into a knot, just the way Lucy's mouth opened a little. I can only imagine the defeat she must have felt, being called lesser than the girl she was jealous of.

And that, too, in front of everyone.

"The ugly one must be after him, and he's after the pretty one," the top senior yelled in the most annoying voice.

She was giggling a lot, and it angered me.

"Says the one who look so rugged," I yelled back, causing everyone to gasp.

"Ohhh! Feisty!" Arlo let go of Gavin, who jumped off the table to check on Lucy. When Jenny was about to give him a hand to get up, he clearly ignored her to make a point that he would choose Lucy no matter what others said.

"What are you? A porcelain doll? An untouched beauty who thinks she can talk big to anyone and get away with it because she's gorgeous?" I don't know what it was, but his words made me feel disgusted.

There was no pride in getting compliments from such nasty creatures.

"How dare she—" The top senior rose from her chair and pouted angrily, but Arlo gestured for her to stay back, as he intended to handle it himself.

"How about—" He kept coming at me, and I kept backing down when someone intervened.

"How about you leave them alone?" It was Penn. He came with his friends, a junior, but he had many friends who would end up sticking up for him.

"Ahh! The alpha's son and the most arrogant one," it seemed Arlo already knew of him. As the two faced each other, I felt this weird twist in my stomach.

I wanted to throw up, but I refused to do it here. So, I started walking away when the top senior I had yelled at got in my way.

Her name tag said Riri. She was the one who was enjoying this fight the most. She came in to push Lucy and then went back to sit in the audience, only to come back again to bother me.

"Please step out of my way," I tried to be humble, but she shook her head.

"Not until I make you beg before me for forgiveness," she pushed me, standing broad before me.

Shit!

I was not able to hold it in anymore.

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

Chapter 90-There Is No 10th Floor

Chapter 90: 90-There Is No 10th Floor

Helanie:

"Let me go—" I gestured for her to step out of my way, but she kept coming at me. If only she listened to me, she would have saved herself from the upcoming disaster.

"What if I don't? What would you do then?" she asked, coming so close that I had no choice. I didn't do it on purpose, but it happened.

The disgusting feeling of throwing up made me gag even more, and before I knew it, I blurted it out, spitting everything on her.

In short, I threw up all over her perfectly pressed uniform.

"Eww!" she screamed, while I coughed and continued to throw up. Chaos erupted throughout the cafeteria as I knelt down, feeling dizzy.

"Get her out of here, someone!" I heard someone scream in disgust.

That was exactly what I wanted to do—to leave!

But this girl had the audacity to step in my way and stop me.

"Hey, let's get you out of here," a familiar voice said. I couldn't even make out the commotion around me as I kept my head down, but Jenny had already wrapped her arm around my back to help me stand.

She helped me rush out, but someone suddenly slapped her hand off my back. I was dizzy and didn't have the energy for any argument.

"Aren't you too pretty to be helping someone?" Lucy's voice was filled with hurt, and I knew she would take the comments too seriously. But honestly, it wasn't her fault. Jenny did nothing wrong. She even stood up to defend us.

"I'm so sorry, but Lucy, you shouldn't focus on what they're saying right now. Helanie nee—" Jenny tried to continue walking, but Lucy interrupted, freeing me from her embrace and wrapping my arm around her own shoulder.

"You don't need to tell me how I should take care of my friend," Lucy groaned, pulling me away. At this point, I just wanted them to stop arguing and let me go.

Thankfully, Jenny didn't follow us, and we managed to get out of the academy without further incident. The moment the fresh air hit my face, I felt much better. But now, I had to clean up, and the pounding headache wasn't helping.

"You feeling okay?" Lucy asked, rubbing my back gently.

"I feel terrible, Lucy. I don't know how I'll ever go back to the academy again," I muttered, feeling like I wanted to disappear in that moment.

That Riri girl wouldn't leave me alone now.

"It wasn't your fault. Anyone would gag with such ugly people—apart from me, being mean to you," she said, her words making me frown.

I had my body bent over, hands on my knees, taking deep breaths.

"You are not ugly. Don't listen to them. They were just trying to get a reaction out of you," I said, trying to make her understand the cruel reality of the world we live in. People don't really like to see others happy.

"Then why only me? They didn't try to get a reaction out of anyone else, Helanie. Let's just admit it—I'm not very pretty, definitely nothing compared to Jenny," she said, her voice tinged with sadness. She made me feel so bad for her.

"You're comparing yourself to her for no reason, honestly. Gavin loves you—clearly, he loves you only. Jenny just seems to want to be close to us. Not to Gavin," I said, trying to explain what I had observed. I understood why Jenny might be trying so hard to fit in with us. Being Gavin's roommate, maybe she wanted the group to expand, making things more peaceful for everyone.

"I don't know anymore. My confidence has really gone down, Helanie. After what happened today, I feel like I'm not good enough," she said softly. I can understand her emotions.

I knew this would happen. Those bullies didn't just attack our emotions or bodies—they were torturing us mentally.

"That's not true. You are more than enough. Look at yourself in the mirror and tell me you're not pretty, you are gorgeous. Those bullies are the worst—don't let them get to you," I said with a sigh, feeling a little better myself.

But she didn't seem to budge. The way she shook her head, barely moving, made me feel even angrier at Arlo for his comments.

For a moment, I thought about going to Emmet to tell him what had happened in the cafeteria. But then I remembered how things worked around here. The bullies were seen as a way to "test" a person's strength—how they responded, reacted, and fought back.

If I kept running to Emmet for help, I'd be labeled weak. I didn't want to act like a child going around complaining.

"How are you feeling now?" she asked, changing the subject and checking on me.

"I'm not entirely okay. Maybe once I change and get into my comfy bed, I'll feel better," I said softly.

Thankfully, Lucy understood. We really needed to get away from here. I wasn't sure if the bullies would come after us, and it wasn't just the top seniors—they weren't the only ones doing the bullying. Even some of the other seniors were actively targeting the juniors.

"Anyway, let's get you to your room. You should change and rest," Lucy said, holding my arm and starting to walk me to the hostel.

I was in a really bad state, feeling weak as if I might throw up again.

"Come on, you'll be fine. We'll get you some soup—and even candies! Candies and chocolates always work for me," Lucy said, trying to sound cheerful. I knew she was faking it, but I let her.

I did intend to have a conversation with her later and remind her how special she is.

As we walked into the elevator, I noticed Lucy take a deep breath. She usually took the stairs like the rest of the students, so this must have been her first time using it. I felt the need to warn her about the buttons though.

Last time, I had accidentally pressed the button for the 10th floor, and the hallucination that followed made everything so much creepier. I will be lying if I say I haven't thought about checking that floor myself to see if it was indeed just a hallucination. Something just told me it was more than just that.

"Be careful with the buttons. Don't press the 10th floor," I sighed, barely able to keep my eyes open. I remembered the last time it happened—the weirdest hallucination had left me shaken.

Later that evening, when I returned from dinner and took the elevator alone, since Gavin and Lucy had taken the stairs, arguing the whole way, the 10th floor button had kept blinking, as if asking to be pressed.

"Huh? Don't worry, I won't land you on the 9th floor," Lucy said quickly, pressing the right button before turning back to support me.

"No! I'm talking about the 10th floor," I said, taking a deep breath, my voice trembling. My vision was blurred by tears, though I tried to make it seem like it was just because I wasn't feeling well.

I wasn't feeling well—there was no lie in that. But the truth was, I was also hurt and worried.

"Helanie! What are you talking about?" Lucy's voice had a hint of playfulness, but I couldn't bring myself to smile.

"The 10th floor... it just clicks by itself. And then—I don't know—the elevator doesn't actually go to the 10th floor," I said, struggling to piece together my thoughts. Was it real? Should I ever check it out? I mean, if there is a floor, there must be students there in the dorm rooms.

"Um, there is no 10th floor. The building only has nine floors," Lucy said matter-of-factly.

The minute those words left her mouth, I opened my eyes and turned my head, raising it from where it rested against the wall of the elevator. I stared at her, suddenly alert. She didn't seem like she was joking.

Quickly, I glanced at the buttons. Sure enough, there was no 10th-floor button.

"Huh? But I saw the button—" I trailed off, confused. I clearly remembered seeing the button before. Even after the hallucination, I had seen it. So, it wasn't just in my head.

But now... there was no button at all?

"You must have mistaken it for the 9th floor," Lucy said gently, rubbing my arm in an attempt to comfort me.

"No, Lucy. I know what I saw. There was another floor—" I stopped myself, unsure of what I was saying. What if I was wrong? What if it was a hallucination?

What if there was never a button?

"Yeah, you're probably right. I'm just not feeling well," I mumbled under my breath, rubbing my face with my hands to calm myself.

The elevator door opened with a soft ding, and Lucy helped me out, guiding me toward our room with so much care it made my chest ache.

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