

# LITTLE STRANGER

## - Chapter 1 Olivia

Mommy holds my hand as I bounce on my sparkly pink dolly shoes excitedly. The airport is very noisy from all the people rushing around, crowds running with their suitcases ready to go on the big plane!

"Is he here yet?" I ask with a huge grin, pulling Mommy's hand and bouncing some more.

"Not yet, sweetie," she replies, glancing at my daddy. He doesn't seem as excited as me and Mommy, but I did overhear them talking this morning, and he's looking forward to finally meeting him.

My new brother. He's a year older than me, and from what I heard by listening in to my parents, he's been abused, a word they used when they adopted me too.

Daddy places a hand on top of my head to stop me from jumping up and down. He doesn't like it when I do that. He usually hits my butt then sends me to my room.

"Stop being erratic. Do you promise to be on your best behavior, angel?" I nod enthusiastically and grin, raising my pinkie. "I promise."

He doesn't hook his pinkie with mine, and I drop my hand and pout.

But then my mommy squeals and leans down to me. "Sweetie, this is your new brother. Remember when me and Daddy rescued you from that evil place? We rescued him too!"

A boy walks towards us with a plastic bag-where is his suitcase? He's taller than me, with black hair and the bluest eyes like the color of my favorite doll's hair.

The lady holding his hand rolls her eyes and mouths, "Good luck," to Mommy then hands some papers to Daddy. "Sign all of these. The last page is about his therapist-please keep that one and scan it over once you've read it all and agree for him to attend each session." Daddy huffs. "Are you sure about this? Have you considered his report?"

He's looking at Mommy, who narrows her eyes at him. "Yes, Jamieson. You're the one who showed me his case in the first place, so either put a smile on your face or I'll do this myself."

Daddy smiles.

I flap the tulle of the princess dress I wore to surprise him. I want him to be as happy as I am, but he isn't grinning or clapping like me. He looks... sad. Mommy said I cheer her up when I talk to her, so I step forward.

"Hi!" I say with a huge smile. "My name is Olivia. I'm seven!" I hold up seven fingers. "Do you think I look like a princess?" I gesture to my dress.

The boy stares at me, taking one step closer, making me look up at him. He's like the fireman who took me out the burning house-a big, walking, human tower!

Why isn't he saying hello? Doesn't he like my dress? Instead of speaking, he tilts his head a little-watching me.

My smile drops. "You don't like my dress?" It has pink sparkles to match the ribbons in my hair. Mommy even let me wear some of her juicy lip gloss to make my lips sparkle like twinkling stars.

He does something with his hands, and I narrow my eyes then look at Mommy. She's talking to the lady, and my daddy is writing on pieces of paper. I turn to the boy, and he does the thing with his hands again.

"Was it scary on the plane? I always cry when it goes really fast and

shoots off into the sky! Daddy always makes us go on one. He's your daddy now too!"

He just stares at me, lifting his hand to the back of his neck then messing up his curly black hair. I go to turn to my parents again and gasp when the boy takes my wrist, making my eyes snap back at him. He's moving his hands again, and I blink at him.

Confused, I tilt my head like he did a minute ago, making my brown hair cover my eyes.

He points to the revolving doors then offers me his hand. Mommy and Daddy are still talking to the lady, so I let him take my hand, and we run towards the door. Maybe he wants to play hide-and-seek? I'm really good at finding great hiding places.

I giggle as my dolly shoes hit the ground, my hair flying around crazy.

When I was at the other house, the girls and boys always played games- the boys would chase us, and if they caught us, we had to go to jail. There were so many of us. I had loads of friends! But then Mommy and Daddy came and found me and brought me to their home.

It's so big, and my mommy said I could get a dog for my birthday if I behave. It will be my first birthday with them, and I can't wait to get my first ever present.

"Where are we going?" I ask when he keeps pulling me through the airport, dodging all the busy people way taller than us. I trip up, and I squeal as I tumble forward, but the boy catches me, dragging me back to my feet.

We run again, and I start to laugh again. The boy stops at a door and looks around us, then pulls me inside. I gasp and try to get back out when I see we're in a bathroom full of boys.

Grabbing me to make me look up at him, he does something with his hands again then points at himself. When I still have no idea what he's doing, he points to his mouth and shakes his head then points to my mouth and nods.

"You can't talk?"

He shakes his head again, and my eyes widen. "That's okay. I couldn't talk for so, so long! I can teach you."

Annoyed, he rolls his eyes. That's so rude!

He points at me again then presses his palm to his chest, and there's something scary in his eyes as he comes closer to me; I want to go back to our parents. But before I can ask what he's doing or scream real loud, Daddy throws open the door, and my mommy snatches me up into her arms.

"I told you not to be trouble!" Daddy yells at me.

My eyes shut, and I wait for him to yell some more, but he doesn't.

"And you," he snaps at the boy. "You're on a strike, little man. Two more, and your ass is going to another new home. You're Malachi Vize now, and

the Vizes don't step out of line, so get used to it." My lips curl into a smile. I'm a Vize too. We aren't afraid of anything.

Except spiders-they creep me out.

The boy lowers his head and circles his fist against his chest.

"He's saying he's sorry, sweetie," Mommy whispers to me. "He communicates with sign language."

"What's that? I want to do it too!"

She chuckles and kisses my forehead. "I'll teach you. We'll teach the whole house."

"Even the house helpers?"

She nods and tucks a lock of hair behind my ear. "Yes. We'll ensure the chefs, maids, and security guards know how to sign. Malachi will be comfortable in our home. He's one of us now."

My new mommy is nice. She never yells at me or scares me like my daddy. She always braids my hair and paints my nails and sings with me in the car.

I like my mommy.

In the car, Malachi sits next to me and stares at me the whole drive home. It's a little weird, and he's making me a little nervous. I smile at him anyway, but he only slants his head, as if he's studying me. He keeps staring at my hair. Maybe he likes my ribbons?

When we get to my room, the one we now share because our mommy thinks it will be the best way for us to "bond," he sits on his bed opposite mine and watches me show him my new dollhouse. He doesn't laugh when I make a joke, or when I make my Barbie talk to him, and when I give him one of my dolls so he can play with me, he pulls the head off and makes my eyes widen.

"No!" I yell, snatching it from him. "You don't do that, Malachi!"

He points at me again then lays a palm on his chest.

"What does that mean?" I ask, popping the doll's head back on and hiding her in the wooden house. "Can you teach me?"

All he does is smirk, then he reaches for a strand of my hair, rubbing it between his fingers.

"Do you want to smell it? It smells like strawberries!"

He brings my hair to his nose and inhales, closing his eyes. I freeze when he pulls me in for a hug. It's a big hug. He's holding the back of my head to his chest and sniffing my hair. I giggle when he brushes his fingers through it. He pulls back and does something with his hands again, and I grab some paper and hand him a pack of crayons. "Can you write? If not, I can teach you that too."

I watch him take the black one and write down one word that makes no sense.

MINE.