Free Chapter 1 of My Brother's Best Friend's Secret Baby

/ Chapter 1

My Brother's Best Friend's Secret Baby by Chloe Laurent - Chapter 1

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Chapter 1 I was nineteen when I saw Aiden King step out of the shower wearing nothing but a towel, water running down his chest as he muttered my name like a curse. I hadn't meant to be there. I'd only gone upstairs to grab my sketchbook from my room when I heard the water shut off. The bathroom door was slightly open, steam drifting into the hallway like an invitation I should have ignored. But I didn't. I stood frozen in the hallway, my heart pounding so hard against my ribs I thought it might break through them. It was late afternoon.

My father and my brother, Jeffery, were on base for a training exercise. The house was supposed to be empty except for me. But Jeffery had called two hours earlier to say Aiden was coming. He explained that his best friend had finally gotten leave after eight months on deployment and needed a place to stay before heading home to see his family. I'd been a complete mess ever since. Aiden King was six-foot-three, toned and bronzed. My brother's best friend ever since they enlisted in the Navy six years ago. Eight years older than me. Completely out of reach.

And the only man I'd ever wanted badly enough for it to physically hurt. I'd met him when I was thirteen and he was twenty-one. He'd walked into our house in uniform, all confidence and sharp angles, and I'd tripped over my own feet. Jeffery had laughed. Aiden hadn't even noticed. He never noticed me. To him, I was just Jeffery's annoying little sister. The kid who interrupted guy time. The girl who didn't exist unless she hid the remote or ate the last slice of pizza. For six years, I was invisible to him... Until three months ago.

I'd gone to visit Jeffery on base, bringing the brownies he'd been begging me to make. Aiden was there too. I was wearing a sundress. It was summer, and I hadn't thought anything of it. But when I bent down to pick up my keys, I caught him staring at my legs, just for a second. His jaw tightened. His gaze darkened. Then he looked away so quickly I thought I might have imagined it. But I knew I hadn't. Something had changed that day. I'd felt it deep in my bones. And now he was here, in my house, using my shower, and I couldn't seem to breathe.

Through the crack in the door, I watched him run a hand through his wet black hair. His dog tags hung against his bare chest. His skin was tanned and marked with scars I'd always wanted to trace with my fingertips. Muscles shifted beneath his skin in a way that looked both dangerous and controlled. Then I heard it. It was barely more than a whisper. "Rosie." My name. He said my name. I stopped breathing altogether. His hand slid down his stomach, disappearing below the edge of the towel. I should have looked away. I should have run. But my legs refused to move.

My entire body felt locked in place, burning. He tensed beneath the towel and tipped his head back. A low, rough groan escaped him. "Fuck, Rosie." My knees nearly gave out. Heat rushed through me. I'd never felt anything like it before. I'd kissed two boys in my life and felt nothing. But hearing Aiden say my name like that made it feel as though I were on fire. He pulled the towel away. I saw everything. Every inch of him. It was thick, hard, and perfect, and his hand tightened around it so firmly that a sound escaped my throat. Then he suddenly turned his head toward the door. Our eyes met.

Time stopped. I saw the exact moment he realized I was there. The exact moment shock gave way to something darker. Hunger. Need. Something that twisted my stomach and tightened every nerve in my body. For three seconds, neither of us moved. Then his expression changed. Hunger vanished, replaced by fury. "Get out!" he roared. I stumbled backward, my shoulder slamming into the wall. My heart was pounding wildly. "Now, Rosalie!" I bolted down the hallway and into my bedroom, slamming the door behind me. My whole body was shaking. My face burned. My thighs were clenched so tightly it almost hurt.

I collapsed onto my bed and buried my face in my hands. What had I just done? What had I just seen? He'd been thinking about me. He'd said my name like it was the only word that mattered. Aiden King wanted me. The thought made me dizzy. But he'd also just screamed at me to leave. He'd looked at me as though I'd done something unforgivable, as though I'd crossed a line that could never be uncrossed. Maybe I had. I lay there for what felt like hours, trying to calm my racing heart, erase the image burned into my memory, and ignore the ache that wouldn't go away. It didn't work.

Around six o'clock, I heard the front door open. Dad and Jeffery were home. Their voices drifted up from downstairs, followed by Aiden's deep voice. I stayed in my room. I couldn't face them. Especially not him. At seven, Dad called me downstairs for dinner. I changed into sweatpants and an oversized hoodie, threw my hair into a messy bun, and tried to make myself look as unappealing as possible. Then crept down the stairs as if I were walking to my execution. They were all there in the dining room. Dad was pulling beers from the refrigerator. Jeffery was laughing at something on his phone.

And Aiden stood against the counter with his arms crossed, watching the doorway. He looked like he was standing guard. The moment I walked in, his gaze locked onto mine. I froze. His jaw was tight, his eyes dark and unreadable. He looked as though he wanted either to kill me or devour me, and I wasn't sure which possibility frightened me more. "There she is," Dad said with a smile. "Rosie, you remember Aiden, don't you?" I nodded,

not trusting my voice. "Of course she remembers me," Aiden said, his voice low and dangerous. "Don't you, Rosalie?" Jeffery frowned as he looked between us.

"You okay, man? You look pissed." "I'm fine," Aiden said, never taking his eyes off me. "Just tired." What a liar. I grabbed a plate and sat as far away from him as possible. But I could feel his eyes on me throughout the entire meal. Every time I looked up he was watching me. Every time I reached for something, his gaze followed my hand. It was torture. After dinner, I helped Dad with the dishes while Jeffery and Aiden went into the living room. I finally felt safe. I thought I could retreat to my room and avoid him for the rest of the evening.

But when I turned to leave the kitchen, he was there, standing in the doorway. Blocking my way out. "We need to talk," he said quietly. My heart stopped.

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