

CHAPTER 3

As I finally gathered myself, I pushed away from the wall and shot a sharp glare at my stepmother. "What the hell is your problem, Martha?" I snapped, the frustration boiling over as I glared across the hallway at her.

"You are!" she shot back, her voice rising with indignation. "Do you have any idea what time it is?"

"Of course I do! You're the one who insisted I take that stupid job. So why the hell are you directing your anger at me the second I walk in?" I retorted, my tone harsh, defensive.

"Because it's way past midnight, and you always come home like you're drunk or something!" she fumed, her arms crossed tightly over her chest.

"If you don't want me waking up the whole damn house when I come in, then fix the damn step at the front door! Maybe I won't trip over it every time," I shot back, my patience already stretched thin.

"You've been living here for a year. You should know it's there!" she snapped, exasperation painted across her face.

"Yeah, but I can't see it in the dark!" I growled, locking eyes with her in a tense standoff, the silence thick with unspoken irritation. I ignored the fact that I could probably see that step even in pitch-black darkness—still, it didn't stop me from tripping over it every time.

"Hey! Don't you dare talk to your mother like that!" My father, Peter, thundered from down the hall, his worry clear as he rushed toward us.

"First of all, she's *not* my mother. Secondly, *she* started it!" I shot back, standing my ground, feeling the frustration rise in me.

"Why is her lip bleeding?" Dad asked, his eyes darting between us, his voice now tinged with concern.

"Because that b***h just punched me!" I yelled, fury boiling inside me.

"I've told you time and again not to speak to her like that," Dad scolded, jabbing a finger in my direction, his face flushed with a mixture of anger and worry.

"Honestly, screw both of you," I snapped, the weight of the argument crashing down on me. I stormed past them, slamming my bedroom door behind me with a force that shook the walls.

I dropped my bag onto the floor next to my bed and collapsed onto it, taking deep breaths to steady myself.

*Just once, I thought, I'd love to punch that b***h back.* But I knew Peter would never let me get away with it. He'd have me dealing with some mess from the Alpha, and while the Alpha wasn't a bad guy, I wasn't part of the pack, and they all knew it. He was loyal to them, not me.

I pulled my phone out of my bag and snapped a photo of my swollen lip before it could heal. Then, I dumped my books onto the bed and tried to distract myself with homework. It helped for a little while.

Before long, I heard them at the far end of the hallway, heading to their room. Peter was trying to calm Martha down, like I was the one who caused the problem. All I did was walk through the door.

I worked through my homework for a while, but once I finished, I grabbed some clean clothes and headed across the hall to the bathroom. I took a quick shower and slipped into my pajamas.

I didn't even check the clock when I finally turned off the light and crawled into bed, but I knew it was late. I fell asleep almost immediately, too exhausted to think about anything else.

That was until my alarm blasted at 6 AM, dragging me from a sleep that felt like it lasted five minutes. I could hear Peter and Martha getting ready for work. I stayed in bed, letting them leave first.

Once they were gone, I got up, dressed, and pried a loose floorboard up to stash the tips I'd earned the night before. I had to be careful—Martha had rummaged through my room before, looking for anything to spend. She wasn't supporting me in any way, so there was no way in hell I was handing over my hard-earned cash for her to blow on whatever.

I couldn't wait for the day when my mom called and said I could come home. But if this place became too suffocating before then, I knew the Alpha would let me rent a place in town. Honestly, I was starting to consider asking for that more and more each day.

After getting dressed, I stood in front of the mirror, brushing my long, snow-blond hair that cascaded down to my waist. I put on just a bit of makeup—not enough to look overly done—and tried to tone down the brightness of my piercing blue eyes, though they always stood out no matter what I did.

By the time I packed my bag and made my way to the front door, I noticed a note pinned to it from Martha.

If you get home after 10pm tonight, I will lock you out of the house.

I knew I could slip away unnoticed—she never gave me a key, but my window didn't even have a lock. It didn't bother me at all.

As I walked past the kitchen, I glanced inside and saw all the cupboards were padlocked. It was just another way Martha tried to control things. I stepped out the front door and headed into town.

When I reached the diner, I ordered breakfast. The manager himself brought it over, as he always did. They never charged me when I came in before school. They understood why I showed up every morning, considering the atmosphere at home. Martha's open disdain for me was no secret. She'd made her feelings clear long before I moved in, and it only got worse once I did.

It was sad, really, how my father just went along with whatever she said. I never expected him to be such a pushover, especially with how she treated me.

After leaving the diner, I arrived at school, where Dante was waiting out front, like he always did. I wasn't sure why he thought we were close friends—I certainly didn't feel that way—but whatever. We walked into school together.

"How was your night?" he asked, his eyes lighting up with curiosity.

"Just the usual," I replied with a weary sigh. "Work was endless, training was brutal, and when I finally got home, I ended up in another shouting match with that b***h. I waited until she stormed out this morning before I even left my room. Another day in my life." I could hear the soft chuckle escape him.

"I love that you don't sugarcoat things," he said with a smile tugging at his lips.

"I've never seen the point in sugarcoating anything," I shrugged. I've always believed in being brutally honest, no matter how harsh it might sound.

"Yeah, I've noticed," he said, a hint of admiration in his voice.

When we reached my locker, I opened it and began sifting through my books for the first classes of the day. Suddenly, the locker door slammed down on my hand, making me cry out in pain. I had a sinking feeling my fingers were probably broken.

I freed my hand and turned to find Holly standing there, laughing with her friends.

"Well, you just made one hell of a mistake," I said, my voice low, steady, and laced with menace.

"And what if I did? Your hand's broken. You can't do anything to me," she taunted, smirking with confidence.

"You broke the wrong f*****g hand," I replied, my glare cutting through the air like a knife. The realization washed over her like a gathering storm cloud—she had shattered my less dominant hand. The subtle twitch of her brow betrayed the doubt creeping in as the weight of my words settled between us.



Comments



Vote

LUCK DRAW >