

Chapter 12

Rue

I step up onto the front steps of my family's mansion. My hand is firmly wrapped around Reece's as he bounces around with nervous energy. I know my nerves are fueling his as I also want to bounce on my toes to release some of the energy pulsing from my belly. Reece pulls my hand to his cheek, looking up at me, "Do you think he will like me?"

My chest snapped tight with the need to hurt the person, making my child feel unworthy. I knelt down to my son's level, cupping his cheek to reassure him, "How could he not? You are the most amazing child in existence."

My son smiled and nodded. I stood back up and rang the doorbell. A maid I'd not met before opened the door and ushered us in when I told her our names. She guided us to my father's office. It smelled and looked the same as when I was a child. The dark wood contrasted with his light tan leather furniture, but everything felt warm, comfortable, and welcoming. I breathed in the smell of leather and cigars, leaving me wondering if he had given the habit up.

My father stood up from behind his walnut desk and buttoned his suit jacket with shaky fingers. Was he as nervous as I was for this reunion? I wanted to start this introduction on good terms, so in the most congenial tone I could muster, I started with, "Hey, Daddy."

With those two words, my father's alpha mask shattered, and the tension vanished with a silent pop. My father, Steve Sinner, walked around the

desk and embraced me in an incredibly tight hug. His voice was shaky when he said into my hair, "My daughter! I missed you."

I wrapped my free hand around his back, cupping his shoulder, and sniffled back the tears and snot that threatened to run down my cheeks. As soon as my father pulled away, his attention went to my son. "Dad, this is my son Reece."

Our reunion didn't change all the trauma and conflict from our past, but this hug felt like a step in the healing direction. Dad hadn't kicked me out or cruelly shunned me; he welcomed me back with open arms. I hesitated to drop my guard as my stance on everything was the same, but this was a start—a beginning for the open conversations I've wanted since my mother died.

My father peered down at his grandson with watery eyes. He crouched down to the boy's level and stuck out his hand, saying, "I'm Alpha Steve Sinner, but you can call me Grandpa."

I held my breath, wondering what my son would say and what kind of relationship they would have. Reece firmly took the man's hand and said, "I'm Maurice Channing, but you can call me Reece."

My father's eyes flicked up to mine, "You named him after my father?"

I nodded, "yes, I felt it was a good name to continue. Though I call him Reece because Maurice is an old man's name."

My dad chuckled and squatted down to Reece's level. Reece put his hand on his shoulder and said, "Grandpa, this is a very serious question."

"I'm all ears." My father looked a little apprehensive.

"Do you like cars and trucks?"

My father's face softened, and my heart melted at the love there. I couldn't remember the last time I saw love in my father's expression. "Of course. Do you like them?"

Reece's know-it-all voice rang out, "Yes! I want to build a model with Momma, but she hasn't had time yet."

"Your momma never did like to sit still." My father teased. "If you want to, we can build models together."

Reece grinned, nodding enthusiastically.

I gave Dad a relieved smile, thanking him for excluding our past from his interactions with my son. My father called to one of the servants, "Why don't you take my grandson to the model room, and he can pick out whichever one he would like?"

"Dad, you don't—"

"Enough, Rue; we have things to discuss." My father waved in a dismissive gesture. I bit my cheek to avoid a shouting match. Open and honest communication is the goal here. Reece looked to me for permission, so I gave him a reassuring smile. The maid offered her hand, and my son took it, following her out. My father moved behind his desk once more, and I sat in one of the two seats in front of it. "It was a happy surprise that you are home."

I bit my lip to hold back a sarcastic remark, instead saying, "Yes, it is wonderful to be home, and with my job at the training center, I'll be able to support Reece and me without issues."

My father bridged his fingers and lay them over his rounded beer gut. I hadn't noticed how rounded and pudgy he had gotten in the last six years. I wondered if this was also a side-effect of that deep depression he went into after my mother died. "I'm glad to hear that. You have raised a magnificent boy, Rue."

This time, I didn't hold back, "Great compliment from the man who wanted me to abort him and exiled me from my own pack."

My father's expression was filled with regret. He took a shaky breath. "I'm sorry. I was not very supportive or understanding of the situation back then."

I gulped back my mean retort, surprised that he owned it. I lounged back in the chair, relaxing slightly, "No, you weren't."

"I've had time to reflect on my choices, and my biggest regret is driving you and the boy away." He says. "We were just at a very vulnerable time with the pack and couldn't have any scandals surrounding us. I let my mind be clouded and treated you poorly."

It was as close as I was ever going to get closure on this matter. My father wasn't asking for forgiveness; he just understood that he did what he thought was best as an alpha. My understanding didn't change the hurt or betrayal of my father's inability to believe me over my stepfamily. I looked at him, "So what now?"

Suddenly, my Stepmother barges in through the office doors, "Stevie, my love. I saw a new vehicle in the driveway. Do we have guests?"

She stopped short when her eyes fell on me. A look of disgust contorted her medically stiffened expression. At that exact moment, Reece came barreling into the office with a large car model and ran straight up to my father. He was grinning madly and, in a voice that was too loud, announced, "Grandpa! This is the car I want to play with!"

My father smiles and motions for the boy to set it on his desk, but my Stepmother lets out a disapproving scoff. She ignores the glare and sashays her hips over to the desk. I wait on bated breath, ready to snap her neck if she even attempts to hurt my son. She gives a saccharine smile that barely moves, "Hello, young man."

Reece glances at her. His pale blue eyes narrow with more skepticism than I've ever seen on his face. The authority in his stare halted all of us before he replied, "Hello."

"Did my Stevie say you could play with his model cars?"

Reece nodded and glanced at my father and me before looking back at my Stepmother. She gave his head a sharp pat, and I almost intervened: "Wouldn't you be happier if you ran off and played with your father?"

"That's enough, Amber." My father bellowed. He put his hand protectively over my son's head.

"Reece, baby. This is your grandma, Amber." I gently say.

My Stepmother gasped, offended by the name, "I'm not this bastard's

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 +15 Coins

Grandma."

I stepped forward, pulling Reece to me. My father snarled. Reece looked up at me, confused, "Mom, didn't grandma pass away? This lady is old but not dead."



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