

# In Love With My Evil Stepbrother Chapter 61

## In Love With My Evil Stepbrother

### Chapter 61

In Love With My Evil Stepbrother By sparklytwinkle Chapter 61

Chapter 61: Nails Fight I agree to move in together with Eason, but we haven't really nailed down the details yet. At first, I thought I would be moving into his penthouse, but later he told me that we were going to get a new apartment.

"But why? Your penthouse is well furnished and it's not very far from school," I ask confused.

He shrugs, "I've been living in that apartment for almost three years. It's about time to make some changes. I want a brand-new start with you in a brand-new place."

He speaks like tossing away some old clothes. I simply can't understand his lavish lifestyle. "You seem worried babe. What's the matter?" he studies my face and asks.

I sigh, "I'm simply worried that mom and Mr. Ramirez will find out about this if we make such a fuss about moving...and plus, what about the cost?"

I know it's probably stupid to worry about money now since I'm dating the billionaire's son. But I don't want the beginning of our relationship to be an unequal one.

His face is full of surprises when he heard me asking. Then, he bursts into laughter, "You are worried that we can't afford it?"

I'm a little offended by his reaction, "You should always keep in mind that you are not dating a rich girl, so excuse me for being concerned about money."

Seeing I'm seriously pissed, He quickly kills the laugh and apologizes, "I'm sorry you are right. You should be allowed to contribute as well. How about this? I'll pay the rent and electricity, and you can pay for our parking and network."

So he is still thinking about getting a new house. I hesitate for a second and decide to back down. It's not fair to ask him to alter his way of living completely. I guess we will have to meet each other in the mid-way.

"OK. Have you decided on the house yet?" I ask.

“Not yet. But I have a few options in mind. You are busy with school stuffs lately, right? So you just worried about your own business, and I’ll take care of the rest.”

It feels nice to be taken cared of like this. I can’t stop smiling, and then warn him again, “But no luxury apartments. Somewhere nice and cozy?”

He takes my hand and plants a kiss on it, “Got it.”

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When he’s out there taking care of the apartment, I start to feel anxious about college applications. The summer is ending, which means that the first wave of deadlines and college interviews is quickly approaching.

Yet the worst thing is, I seem to be the only one left who don’t have a clear plan about future yet.

“What did you mean you get an offer already? I thought the application season just started!”

I cry out during lunch time at the cafe, so loudly that people are actually turning their heads to stare. But I ignore everyone else and just stare at Katherine with wide eyes.

She spreads her hands, “I applied for Early Enrollment and got admitted. Why? What’s the matter?”

I’m too shocked to say a single word. And then Eddie, who is also sitting at the same table with us, joins the conversation and asks her, “Sweet. Which school?” “Princeton,” she smiles, and I immediately feel a lump at my throat.

“That’s really nice! But you will be so far away from home,” Eddie says. “I haven’t fully decided yet. My family set me up with a someone. And if things go well, I may not leave the city at all...” I am not listening to them anymore.

I’m not jealous of her of course. She is the only girlfriend I have in this school and she’s such a sweetheart who always cares about me so much. But I guess I’m just a bit dismayed by the fact that her life is so perfect and settled while mine remains a complete mess. I swallow down those sore emotions and turn to Alex and Eddie, “What about you two?”

The boys exchange a look of awkwardness before Alex mumbles, “Well actually

No way. They too?

“Well, OK, that’s just...just perfect,” I suck in a deep breath. “I’m sorry but I think I need some time alone.”

I stand up to leave the table, but Alex grabs my hand, "Nat don't be like this. You just went through a lot lately with your family and it's not too late to start preparing anyway."

He is right. But I know if I keep sitting with them, the peer pressure will crush me down. So I murmur a few words of excuses and break free from his grip to leave. But then, I bump right into someone. "Hey watch it!" A squeaky female voice roars. "Areyou fucking blind??" I look up and not surprisingly...it's my arch enemy Valerie. A vein on my forehead starts to pop. She picks the wrong day to fight. I've got too many grievances and nowhere to vent them.

"What do you want?" I ask, staring into her eyes. She is a little stunned at first, but quickly puffs her chest and replies, "Don't you know how to apologize?" "I do," I say. "But I'm not apologizing to a mean bitch who's been pestering me for too long. And yes, you are that bitch."

A tide of low gasps comes from the nearby crowds. Students in the distance are standing on their tiptoes to watch. Valerie takes a small step back, covering her chest in disbelief and glowering at me furiously.

"You freak!" she yells and smashes her tray of food to the ground. "Your life is so sad and pathetic, and your mom! You two are like pests sucking the Ramirez family's blood! You and your mom should just disappear in people's lives and that's better for everyone!"

I can't take this anymore.

The next second, I grab the strap of my bag and take a full swing and hit her head with it. She stumbles back letting out a sharp scream, as I jump forward grabbing a handful of her hair.

"Apologize!" I shout to her ears. "Take your shit back now!"

"Ahhh! Get the fuck off me you bitch!!"

She struggles violently, taking me down to the ground together with her. And then we start to roll around on the floor attacking each other with our fists and nails. Her nails are longer, so I get a few brutal scratches on my face, but I manage to pay her back with a few solid punches. People are streaming with horror around us. Soon enough, someone comes forward and separate us forcefully.

I pant roughly. My mind is so clouded by fury that it takes me a second to realize that Alex is holding me in his arms.

"Calm down Nat," he says urgently. "It's not worth it."

I snort coldly, "I know. But I need to get that out of my system. You can let go of me now."

He releases me reluctantly. At the same time, Valerie gets up from the floor with the help of her minions. She's covering her nose and moaning, "Oh god my nose... I think my ribs are broken..."

"For god's sake just drop the act!" Katherine says, unable to stop herself. "You scratched her face too! What about that?"

Amidst chaos, heavy footsteps are approaching and the next second our headmaster Ms. Dave pushes through the crowd and comes forward to us. "What is going on here?" she snaps. "Someone gives me an explanation now!"

Valerie acts quickly and points a finger at me, "She hit me and broke my ribs! Someone call 911 and I want my lawyers!" Katherine makes a loud fake cough, "Bitch." I feel anger arise in me again, "Just shut your hole and stop lying!"

"Language!" Ms. Dave hisses. "This is not acceptable. Both of you, in my office, now!"

She escorts both of us into her office and closes the door behind her to block away curious gazes. Then she comes around the desk and sits down behind it, "I don't care what you have to say. But this is an elite school for elite students. We do not indulge nails fight and hair pulling-".

"Not all elites," Katherine snorts lowly. "Definitely not her."

Ms. Dave's cold eyes travel over her, "...what I'm saying is that you should be ashamed of your own behaviors, young ladies."

"But she started it!" Valerie huffs. "We were just talking, and she just hit me!"

Fucking liar! I raise my voice, "You insulted my mom!"

"But you took the first punch!" Valerie shoots me a vicious glare and turns to Ms. Dave. "You are right, Ms. Dave, this is unacceptable! I want to call my mom and dad. I want her to be suspended!"

Ms. Dave narrows her eyes slightly, as if she's weighing the situation. After a short pause, she directs her gaze to me, "Miss Moore. I have to say, I'm very disappointed in you."

...What?

I can't believe my ears. Then I hear her continues, "We must not let violence control us at any time. I'm afraid that you need to hold responsibility for this incident. I will give you a detention this time"

"Are you serious?" I grit out. "What about her?!"

Ms. Dave announces coldly, "Miss Vale is the victim here—"

"Victim my ass!" I jump up yelling. "Her nail marks are still on my face! She is faking the injury! Can't you see? Or are you just pretending to be blind so you can protect the rich kid here?!"

Anger flashes across Ms. Dave's face as she stands up to face me, "Careful with your words and false accusations Miss Moore. You don't want to get suspended right?"

"But it's so not fair—".

Suddenly, our argument is interrupted by a knock on the door.

"Not now!" Ms. Dave snaps at the door.

"Ms. Dave?" a familiar voice comes from outside the door. "It's Eason Ramirez. My sister is in there.

May I come in?"

## **In Love With My Evil Stepbrother Chapter 62**

### **In Love With My Evil Stepbrother**

#### **Chapter 62**

Chapter 62: First Home

Hearing his voice, Ms. Dave frowns as a quick look of awkwardness comes into her eyes. I suddenly feel a burst of courage, so I go answer the door before she gives me a permission. And there he is, standing outside the door and looking at me with a gentle smile on his face.

"You OK?" he asks in a low voice, lifting his hand to touch those scratches on my face. I nod and step aside, making way for him to come in.

Ms. Dave stands up from her seat and says in a cold voice, “Mr. Ramirez, I don’t see why you should come in here. Please wait outside till—”

“Till you blame everything on my sister and get her suspended? I don’t think so.”

He walks directly pass Ms. Dave’s table and takes his seat beside me. He is totally ignoring Valerie. I notice that Valerie’s face is twisting with anger and disbelief, which gives me an immense sense of pleasure.

“Carry on please?” Eason looks round the room. Ms. Dave takes in a deep breath and sits down with an icy face. She is probably weighing the situation and thinking if she should ignore Eason’s challenge to his authority.

Eventually, she speaks up slowly again, “As I was saying, based on the severeness of Miss Vale’s injury, I think it’s fair to give Miss Moore a detention this time”

Eason interrupts her immediately, “Severeness? She’s standing right there without a scratch, whereas my sister’s face is covered in blood. Are you not seeing this?”

Ms. Dave’s chest rises and falls quickly, as if she is trying very hard to contain her anger. “Miss Vale has a broken rib.”

“Is that so?” Eason lets out a cold sneer. “So if I drag her to down the hospital and do a medical examination on her to prove the injury now, she’ll also be fine with that?”

I want to laugh, but suddenly Valerie lets out a sharp cry. She springs out of her seat and yells, “Eason! H-how can you do this to me!”

Eason stares at her up and down critically and chuckles, “With this kind of agility I’d say your rib is perfectly fine.”..

“I am your girlfriend!” Valerie screams, blushing furiously. “She is not even related to you! What on earth got into your head?!”

Eason stands up from his seat as well and faces her, “You are never my girlfriend Valerie. You know it perfectly well. I only chose to ignore your stupid act because I didn’t want to bother myself with all the screaming, hysteria and explanation. But now, I’m tired of it. We are done.”

Valerie’s eyes widen, as her body shakes like a leaf in the wind. She clenches her fists and murmurs hysterically, “No...no I don’t believe it. Everyone in the school knows...that we are a perfect couple! No one deserves you, except me!”

But no one is listening to her anymore. Eason turns to Ms. Dave and asks, “So?”

Ms. Dave sighs, "Fine. If Miss Vale doesn't want to press this anymore, I guess you are free to leave."

I let out a sigh of relief.

Thank God.

If Eason hadn't gotten here on time, they would have skinned me alive for sure.

But Eason stands here still, "Ms. Dave, I hope you can get one thing straight. You and Valerie made a false accusation against my sister and hurt her feelings. I'm not letting this slip away this easily. You will hear from our lawyer within three days."

What? Even I can't believe my ears.

He is threatening the headmaster?? Is it even possible?

Ms. Dave's face is contorted with rage now, "Eason, there's no need to make a fuss about this and involve your lawyer."

"I'll be the judge of that," Eason replies coldly and offers his hand to me. "Come, Nat."

I immediately place my hand in his palm and let him take me away. Before we exit the door, he stops and looks at Ms. Dave again.

"Oh and just to remind you, Ms. Dave. Sometimes because of Natalia's last name, people tend to forget that she is a Ramirez...but she is. So I hope you can treat her with the respect she deserves in the future."

That is...so incredibly inspiring and touching.

My mind keeps replaying those words he said as he takes me out of the building

"Wait," I stop before we enter the parking lot. "Where are you taking *me*?"

"I don't think you are still in the mood for school after this?" he looks back and smiles. "I'm taking you somewhere else, to cheer you up."

I can't help but smile with him, "And where is that?"

"What do you say, we take a quick tour to our new apartment?" "It's ready?" I gasp, "So quick? I thought it'll take you months to find a suitable apartment."

"But we don't have months, do we?" he holds me in his arms. "We'll both go to college soon. And who knows how long we'll stay here?" Oh yes. College.

My heart sinks a bit thinking about it.

My future hasn't even settled yet, and I didn't even ask him about his plan. Maybe he wants to go to Europe for college and that'll leave us

only a few months to be together. We have lesser time than we realize. But now hardly seems like a proper moment to launch such a heavy topic. So I swallow back my thoughts and follow him into his car. Half an hour later, he stops the car in a quiet and nice neighborhood and says, "OK we're here."

"This is it?" I look through the window, a bit surprised. He smiles mysteriously, taking my hand and leading me upstairs.

I've asked him not to choose an overly expensive apartment. But knowing his way of living, I didn't expect him to follow my requirement faithfully at all.

Yet this apartment turns out to be exactly what I wanted: cozy, nice, not very large but is perfect for two people. I instantly fall in love with the living room, which has a huge glass window to allow enough sun light into the room. I can already picture us lying on the wooden floor on a lazy afternoon, falling asleep bathed in the sunshine.

"You like it?" he wraps his arms around my waist from behind, resting his chin on my shoulder.

"Oh my god...yes!" I take in a huge breath, nodding non-stop. "I love it. I absolutely love it!"

He laughs out, picking me up and carries me to the couch. I raise my head to kiss him the moment he puts me down. We sit there quietly and kiss each other. I've never felt this happy and peaceful in a long time.

After a while, he slightly detaches from my lips and whispers, "You know...I just realized that this is my first home." "Nonsense," I laugh. "You have lots of houses and apartments." His long finger coils a lock of my hairs, "Yes, but those are like real estates, not home. Mom and dad grew apart for years, so our house never felt like home to me. I got more freedom after I moved out, but I felt lonely from time to time."

I tease, "Not even with all your girlfriends' accompany?"

His face darkens a bit, "I feel like you are going to use it against me for a very long time. Give me a number so that I can be prepared." "How about ten years?" I giggle. He gives me peck on the forehead, "shorter than I expected. I can live with that."

My heart swells with happiness as I lie on the couch side-by-side with him. I know he has been lonely for a long time because of his parent's unhappy marriage. So I've always wanted to fix things for him, to make things right.



“You know...I have a confession to make,” I turn my face to him. “I asked the butler for the video.”

The gentle smile on his face immediately freezes, “...you what?”

“Please don’t be mad, OK?” I hold his hand, “The video you made for my mom’s anniversary party? You said something in the video to them, right? I wanted to show it to them, so I asked the butler to send me the video behind your back. I ruined the party, so I should be the one to amend it. Do you think we can find an opportunity to—”

“Have you looked at it yet?” he interrupts me.

“Hmm not yet but-”

He shoves me aside roughly and sits up, then looks at me with a set of cold eyes.

“Who gives you the right to do that!” he growls furiously. “You have no right to meddle with my business. Promise me you will never do such things again!!”

I am so stunned and confused. Why is he so angry? I thought that he might be uncomfortable with this and that’s why I’m giving him a head

– up before showing the video to my mom. But does he need to be so rude???

“What’s the matter with you?” I sit up as well, feeling embarrassed. “I know I shouldn’t have gone behind your back, but I was only doing this for you! If you are uncomfortable with it, I can just delete it. No need to yell, OK?”

His chest heaves and he closes his eyes temporarily to calm himself down. After a short moment, he opens his eyes again and says in a low voice, “You are right babe, I shouldn’t yell at you. I’m sorry.”

I’m still pissed. He sits back down and holds me in his arms, “My history with my parents is very complicated. And it’s going to take more than one video to fix our relationship. I need to take things slow. And I hope you can understand and respect that.”

I bite my lips and nod, “I know...of course I respect you.”

“Can you delete the video then?” he asks.

I guess I can. I take out the phone and find the email from the butler. I hesitate a short second before deleting it, since I really want to see what he said.

“Not even for me?” I beg. “Please, surely I can see it.”

His jaw tenses, "Sorry babe. Please wait till I'm ready."

I sigh deeply and hit "delete." Now I regret not checking out the video first before telling him the truth.

His face lights up again, "Thank you. Are you hungry? You want something to eat?"

I nod, and then shake my head, "Yes...but I don't feel like going out."

"No problem. I'll get a take-out and we can eat here," he grabs his car key and kisses me. "I'll pick up a few things from the penthouse and we can stay here for the night. Can you wait for me?"

I say yes and he leaves.

So except for the drama with Valerie and the short break out, today is aning really well. I stretch my body on the sofa and take out my phone.

Surprisingly, I find a weird message from Jenna:

## **In Love With My Evil Stepbrother Chapter 63**

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#### **Chapter 63**

*Chapter 63:*

Agreement Jenna's POV "Give it back to me, you asshole!" I yell at James, who has taken my phone away from me. "Fuck! You texted her? What did you say?" his thumb scrolls down my phone screen as quickly as possible. "The truth!" I bark "The truth she should have known a long time ago!! Now give it back you filthy, disgusting liar!". I rush toward him trying to snatch my phone back, but he quickly dodges me again. Before I can reach him, he has found my text message to Natalia. "Oh, thank god you haven't told her anything specific," he heaves a long sigh, apparently relieved.

I can't believe how shameless he is.

"You should be ashamed of yourselves! Both of you! Eason is a pure devil to plot against her like this and you are no less! How can you help her to hurt an innocent girl's heart?! Are your hearts made of stones??" I roar, i

An hour ago, when James was in the shower, I took his phone and checked his messages with Eason. I've always sensed that something is wrong with that dude. And their messages proved me right.

Turns out that Eason was going to make Nat fall in love with him first and then before dumping her, and then humiliated her on her mom's anniversary party in front of everyone. My stomach swirls thinking about those messages. Those scums deserve to burn in hell!

"OK, I know you are angry. But hear me out first please?" James gestures me to calm down. "I won't deny that Eason and I did some shitty things in the past. But he has changed. He loves Natalia and they are happy together now. Do you really want to tell her the truth and ruin their happiness?"

"Their so-called happiness is entirely based on lies and manipulation!" My mind is clouded by anger. "I won't argue with you because a scumbag like you clearly can't understand. Now give me my phone back!!"

He takes a deep breath and shakes his head, "No. "What do you mean 'no'?! You can't stop me from giving her the full story—" Suddenly, he raises his hand and tosses my phone into a glass of water. Shocked, I scream and lunge at it, but it's already too late. My phone is ruined already. "Are you crazy?! Are you out of your fucking mind!" I grab him by the collar and roar to his face. "You think this is going to stop me? I will go down there and tell her face to face!" His jaw tenses.

"You can't leave this apartment now," he says in a low voice. "I've told Eason already and he is coming down here. His bodyguards will track you down if you leave and it'll be ugly."

I'm shocked beyond words.

And besides shock, I am also a little afraid.

Bodyguard? Are they really willing to go this far to keep poor Natalia in the dark? I take a deep breath, then suddenly turn to run. My fingers barely touch the door handle when James catches me from behind. He tackles me to the floor and wraps me in his arms.

"Let go of me!" I scream, kicking my legs violently. "No!!"

He pants roughly and his arms tightens, "Jenna, just play along for this one time, OK?! If Eason gets here-if he sees you like this -God knows how he will react?"

What can he do? Have me killed?

I take a hard bite on James's arm. He cries out in pain but still doesn't let go. This piece of shit must be a real supporter of Eason.

While we are still wrestling, the door to the apartment suddenly flies open and a group of people pour in. Someone drags me up and tosses me into the sofa. I climb up breathing fast and find that it's Eason and his bodyguards.

That evil monster pulls over a chair and sits down in front of me. His face is calm, but somehow, I can sense the storm coming my way if I don't cooperate. I swallow and ask him nervously, "...what do you want?"

Eason gives me a faint smile, which is dazzlingly handsome I must admit. I can see why Natalia fell for this guy. But I also notice that his smile did not extend to his eyes, which remains cold and calculating.

His eyes send shiver down my spine.

And then he speaks up slowly, "The question is not what I want, but what you want Jenna. You are Natalia's closest friend, and I take you as my friend as well. But do you want to take away our happiness? After so many things we've been through?" "Liar!" I say with a trembling voice. "Forget it. I'm telling her the moment I step out of this room."

He stares at me and then his face grows dark. He slowly rises up from his seat and sighs, "Then you will not be leaving this room, I guess." My heart almost stops. I take a quick glance at those sturdy bodyguards and then back at him, "w-what do you mean I'm not leaving this room? You can't stop me if I want to leave...you can't hold me against my will!"

"But that's exactly what I'm going to do," he announces nonchalantly. "You are Nat's friend, so I won't hurt you. But you will have to stay here for a while I presume, no cell phone, no food and water, till you agree to board the next flight back to Miami and never speak of the matter to Nat ever again."

I clench my fist so tight that my nails are digging into my flesh. Deep down, I know he is telling the truth. And he is also fully capable of doing those shitty things to me. "But...but even if I agree to leave Boston, I can also text Nat about the truth."

He turns to one of his bodyguards and gestures him to come forward. The man takes out a piece of paper from his suit and places it in front of me.

"This is a nondisclosure agreement," Eason says. "Sign it and you are free to go. Of course, if you say another word about it to Natalia in the future, there will be legal consequences. You major in journalist as I've heard. You don't want to get yourself into any legal and PR troubles before the starting of your career, right?" I'm beyond shock and furious at this point. I feel...absurd, mostly. "... This is how you rich shit buy people off?" I burst out. Eason doesn't even blink. He simply shrugs and replies, "yeah pretty much. And it works perfectly well under most circumstances."

He is so cold, heartless and manipulative.

And most importantly, he is filthy rich. The wealth he possesses basically gives him the right to do whatever he wants. There is no way I can fight against him. Nor Nat.

We are like puppets to this rich brat.

James breaks the silence hesitantly, "Eason there's no need to be this tough. Surely she can eat

—"

"If she makes the decision now, of course she can eat. You can even take her out for a fancy dinner afterwards and that's none of my business," Eason shrugs.

James sighs and lapses into silence again. I shot him a furious glare. That's it? He is so unbelievably weak. I can't believe I slept with this dude. I feel tarnished.

"OK I have to go. Nat is still expecting me at home," Eason takes a look at his phone and says. "Jenna. Please think about it, OK?" He walks toward the door. I stare at his back as rage starts burning in my heart. Before he exits the room, I shout out to him, "You know you can't keep her in the dark forever, right?"

He pauses for a short moment.

"Oh I can," he says slowly. "And I will."

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Natalia's POV

My curiosity is totally aroused by Jenna's message. She texted me an all-caps message and then simply vanished. I tried texting back, calling her, "nothing. Where did she go?"

And she said that she wanted to tell me something about Eason. Did she find out anything about him?

I suddenly become very nervous. It's hard to describe how I feel right now. I don't want to hear anything bad about him since we have been so happy lately; but this happiness also feels like a dream. I also don't want to be kept in the dark I sit on the sofa, waiting for her reply for a long, long time. A few hours later, Eason is back ..

and I still haven't heard back from Jenna yet. "What are you doing there?" he places the take-out on the table and comes to kiss me. "I ordered Thai food." I'm a bit distracted, "I can't get in touch with Jenna. Is she with James?" "I don't know. Probably," he asks casually. "Why do you want to get in touch with Jenna suddenly?" I can't let him know that Jenna was going to tell me something important about him. So I push my thoughts to the back of my mind and sit beside the table with him. He hands me the fork and

suddenly his phone buzzes. He takes a quick look at the phone, then a mysterious smile appears on his lip. "What's that?" I ask while gobbling down the Red Curry Chicken. I'm starving. "Oh nothing. It's just an agreement that needs to be signed. I didn't think that person would sign it but I just heard that she caved in anyway," he smiles. "It's a relief for me." "Agreement? Something to do with the company?" "Yeah something like that. Nothing to bother you with," he reaches over across the table and holds my hand. "This is our first night in this apartment. And there will be so many nights like this to come. Do you know how happy I am?" "I don't. But I can imagine," I look into his eyes smiling. "I love you Eason." "And I love you more, babe." He lands a gentle kiss on the back of my hand.

## **In Love With My Evil Stepbrother Chapter 64**

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#### **Chapter 64**

Chapter 64: The Truth

The next morning, I slowly wake up in his arms. He is already awake. I catch him staring at me when I open my eyes.

"...why are you staring?" I ask sleepily. "What's on my face?"

He holds me tighter in his arms and whispers, "nothing...I just can't get enough you. I can do this all day-watching you sleep."

"Getting a little creepy here I think," I sit up and stretch my back. "Today is Saturday. Do you have any plans?"

He sits up with me, "So I was thinking...maybe we can go get some new furniture? You can redecorate a little."

The idea of decorating my first home definitely seems interesting. So I immediately jump on board.

Since we are trying a simpler way of life now, I thought he would take me to IKEA or Target. But instead, he ends up driving me to a fancy mall with all those luxury designer brands.

When the sales lady welcomes us into the VIP lounge again, I whisper to Eason, "I thought we are buying furniture. What are we doing here?" "They have house products

here. And all decorations you might like,” he gives me a strange look. “Where else would we go?”

I sigh. I should have known that he might not have stepped into IKEA or Target in his entire life. Getting a cheap apartment is the hugest step he has ever taken.

The sales lady sits us down in the VIP lounge and brings us champagne and a set of afternoon tea, all complimentary of course. But if you think about how much money we are going to spend here, the gesture becomes less generous than it seems. “Brings us the brochure and then give us a moment please,” says Eason. Everything seems so exquisite and...pricey. There are only pictures and descriptions listed on the brochure, but no price. I can’t even begin to imagine how much will those cost.

“Finding anything you like?” he asks. “They all seem very nice. But I hope you don’t spend too much on this?” I try to persuade him. “Because you know I can’t even afford a teacup in here.”

“Let me worry about the money,” he gives a gentle peck my cheek. “You just focus on choosing things that you like.”

I sigh and eventually agree. While we are sitting there looking through the brochure and enjoying our afternoon tea, suddenly my phone buzzes. I take a quick, casual glance at it and instantly sit up. It’s Jenna! Who just disappeared for an entire night.

(Jenna: WHERE ARE YOU?!!)

Another all-caps message. What’s the matter with her? I frown and quickly text back:

[Me: Out shopping with Eason @central mall. Why?]

A few seconds later, another message shots into my inbox.

(Jenna: LISTEN. I need you to go downstairs and wait for me at the employee’s exit. I’ll be there in 15 min.)

(Jenna: DO NOT TELL EASON!! Don’t alert him!!)

(Jenna: Tell him you need to use the restroom.) Oh God. She makes it seem so serious! What’s the matter for god’s sake? Why can’t she just tell me? Is she afraid of Eason or anything?

(Me: Just tell me what happened!)

(Jenna: not now. Do as I say. Please.) “What’s the matter?”

Eason asks me all of a sudden, making me jump a little in my seat and almost dropping my phone. Looking up, I find Eason looking at me carefully. "Who are you texting to?" he asks.

In a split second, I hesitate and then decide to listen to Jenna.

"Nothing," I lie and put away my phone. "Mom asks me to run some errands for her. No big deal."

I act all normal, so he doesn't suspect a thing. I keep track of the time and ten minutes later, I stand up telling him, "I need to use the restroom." He points at a hidden door in the lounge, "Sure. It's right there."

...hell.

I bite my bottom lips and quickly think of something else, "I want to get that ice cream downstairs. I'll go to the restroom on the way there. Do you want a scoop?"

"No I'm fine. Do you want me to come with you?" I force out a smile, "I'm not a three-years-old. Be right back." After that, I quickly exit the lounge before he changes his mind. I wait at the employee's exit for Jenna. 5 minutes later, she finally appears, thought she shocked me with her look: an oversized hoodie pulled down to cover half of her face, a black sunglass and a mask.

Is she going to rob the bank?! "What's the matter with you?" I cry out. "Why are you dressed like this!" She makes a sharp stop in front of me and pants violently. After catching up a breath, she grabs my hand and blurts out, "Nat! Eason is a freak! He is fucking insane you need to stay away from him NOW!" ...What?

My mind goes blank. All of a sudden, I find it hard to understand what Jenna is saying.

"What-what do you mean he is a freak?" I ask then suddenly realize my body is shaking. "But he can't be...why is he a freak? What did you say that!" Jenna grabs my arms and stare at me, "You need to calm down. We don't have much time! So here is what he did..."

Then she goes on telling me everything she has found out.

"...and yesterday he even locked me up in James' apartment and forced me to sign a nondisclosure agreement! He said if I didn't sign, I couldn't eat and drink! How insane is that!" she finishes furiously. Oh, the agreement. Suddenly the memory from last night resurfaces. "It's just an agreement that needs to be signed. I didn't think that person would sign it, but I just heard that she caved in anyway," he smiles. "It's a relief for me." I thought he was talking about business. But could it be that...he was actually referring to the nondisclosure agreement he forced Jenna to sign?! And all those things are



happening right in front of my stupid face. But I just didn't see them. Maybe because he covered his tracks too well. Or maybe just because I chose to be blind.

How insanely stupid I am. "Nat?" Jenna looks at me worried. "Say something please?" I suddenly bend down, gasping, coughing, retching. My body is sick. I feel so disgusted by everything happened to me. "Oh my god Nat! Are you OK?"

Tears streams down my cheek as I continue to dry heave. I can't stop myself. My stomach swirls every time I think of his face.

I was so in love with him...I was crazy for him. But why!!

Why did he have to fucking play me like this!!!

"Nat...please," Jenna tries to cuddle me. "You believe me, right?"

I take a deep breath and slowly stand straight. My whole world just crumbled down in front me and I don't know what to do.

"I trust you...yeah I do. Because I guess—" I start sobbing."-I guess some parts of me already knew. I just didn't want to face it."

I'm so stupid. There's no way that a fuckboy like him could ever fall in love with someone. Why was I so innocent to believe that I could be the one to change his heart? I was a puppet to him. That's all.

"God Jenna..." I grab Jenna's hand and busts into tears again. "Help me. I—I don't want to face him. I hate him. I hate him so much! What do I do? My life...my life is so screwed..."

I'm talking nonsense. But Jenna understands. She always does. "Calm down, Nat. Now is not the time to cry. Soon he will discover that I ran away and told you the truth. He will come looking for you."

"Why!" I cry out. "Didn't he have it enough?!"

"He is crazy and paranoid! He threatened my life just to get me sign that agreement! Now we need to get away from him for a while. You need to go back to Miami with me."

...What? Back to Miami?

TTT

My head hurts so much that I can't think straight, "What are you talking about? I just moved here. My mom is here. And my school...how can I just leave?" "You got all credits you need at school already, right? You just need to apply for college. They'll

allow you to take a few days off. And tell your mom that you are visiting your dad. She won't say anything. The most important thing right now is to get you away from that freak as far as possible. You hear me?!" I'm still processing my heart break. I can't make any major decision right now. Before I realize, Jenna already hailed a cab and shoved me in. "To the airport," she says to the driver and then turns to me. "You have your driver's license with you?"

"...yes," I reply numbly. "Good. We'll get you a ticket at the counter," Jenna squeezes my hand. "Trust me on this. It'll buy us time to figure out the rest and escape his craziness." I look through the window and feel so surreal. This morning, I woke up happily in his arms celebrating the first night we spent in our first home; and now, I'm on my way running away from him. How did everything become so fucked up!!! Suddenly, my phone rings. It's Eason. I literally start to panic, "God what do I do? He'll ask me where I've been!"

"You have to answer! He can't know just yet! Just act normal and make something up!"

I hit the answer button with a trembling hand.

And then I hear his voice coming out of the speaker, "... Babe? What's taking you so long?" It's him. The boy I love so much. The boy who has hurt me deeply. I cover my mouth with my hand and cry silently. I know I should say something, but I can't. it hurts too much.

After a short silence, he speaks up again with a strained voice, "Nat are you crying?"

I can't say a single word. "Why do I hear traffic?" his voice becomes low and hoarse. "Nat, where are you?"