

Walking on the pavement. . everything and everyone around her felt surreal!

Too much !

The strangers seemed like people she knew. The sun was shining brighter than usual. The birds were chirping higher than regular days.

What a day it was to be alive!

Her pace slow, her heart leaping in her throat, all she could think about was- oh my God!She got the job?!

Or did she?

She didn't even ask the elegant woman about the whats and whys. She had merely nodded like the pea brain she was and then Diana had asked her to come on Monday.

Fingering the strap of her sling bag, she bit the inside of her mouth. . . realizing how dumb she had been.

Insanelydumb !

Emma didn't ask the details of her job or the timings. Or wherewould she report to? And the salary? Would it be enough for her? Enough to rent out an apartment?

The high she was on was slowly dissipating. .the happiness simmering down and reality making itself known by clearings it's throat.

The dreamy mist around her had vanished . . leaving her bare with questions she held no answers to. Emma could feel the knots in her stomach tightening.

Taking deep breaths , she tried to stomp down on her anxeyty. .she got the job right?

That's all that should matter. .right now.

Not the ifs and buts.

She had gone as far as making up her mind for sleeping on the Santos kitchen floor if need be!! Anywhere but here. .the place her mother called home. Sad how it would neverbe her home. .

The second she reminded herself , why she went all the way for the interview , she clenched her fists. Her chin raised up in defiance and her eyes turned fierce.

Someday I'll have you.

His sure tone had hit her hard. Forcing her to step into uncharted water.

She would not let a predator harass her into thinking life isn't worth it or people aren't worth it.

Mrs Bagshot had been worthit. Feeding her when everyone watched. Clothed her when she was drenched to the bones.

Diana Santos had been worthit although Emma had never met the woman before and yet. .she felt an instant connection with her . As if she was a long lost friend or a sister. Some people are strangers and yet so familiar. . maybe good souls recognize good souls. .

Yours, Daddy.

It definitely wasn't the time to break down or cry over . Nope.

It was time to break out of the cage!

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Standing in front of the o white door, she checked the door mat first. It was a habit she was forced to repeat.

The small muddy footprint was visible on the dirty mat.

Emma breathed a sigh of relief.

It meant her mother was home. She never bothered stepping over the mat. She always walked over the mat with her muddy shoes on.

Pushing the door open, Emma slipped in the box like house.

"Mom, I'm home!" She called out, taking o her bag and shoes.

Emma didn't hear anything back but she could hear the cling and clang of pot and spoon.

With a tired smile , she was glad her mother was home. It meant she will get to hug her without being taken advantage of.

Rubbing the side of her sore neck, she moved towards the tiny kitchen and walked in.

Her walk hurried and brisk for she couldn't contain the pride and joy in her for nailing a job all on her own!

Sticking her brown head in the humble kitchen, her brown eyes bright. . .

"Mom, you won't believe what just—"

But the rest of the words died on the tip of her tongue. The glow in her eyes going out, the joy in her fading down fast as she watched her mother flipping an omelette with a huge smile on her face and him watching her as if . . .as if he actually was what he portrayed himself to be.

Trustworthy.

Gentle.

Faithful.

Emma swallowed down the i got the jobwhen she felt his eyes slithered from her mother towards her. . noticing the shi in his beady eyes. .the predator in them coming to life . .his eyes watching her unabashedly. Unapologetically.

Emma felt naked!

"-you know , I keep asking Em to stay back at home while I work. At least you can have lunch before you go o ."

A wolfish grin spread on his ruddy face , his eyes not leaving Emma.

"It's okay, honey. Someday I'll surprise her by coming back early . She should know how much Daddy cares for her."

Her mother chuckled, turning the stove o .

"I'm so lucky to have you, Jack. Em loves you too."

"I know. I love her more than she can ever think of." His eyes darkened and Emma felt her skin crawl with disgust. Instantly, she turned around and sprinted towards her room.

Her heart beating wild like the wings of a bat. Flapping fast . Against the wind. She didn't stop until she stepped in her room. With shaking hands she latched up the door . . . failing twice . . she leaned against the door. .her palms flat on the wood. .

"Don't you dare, Em. .don't you-" she slapped a hand over her mouth. . smothering the sudden sob wrenching out of her chest.

Shutting her eyes , her shoulders shook . Her entire being shivered like a leaf . .

How can it be? How did he get her every single time? Wasn't she used to it? Didn't people say the catch phrase of get use to it? Why did it stillbother her?

Because. .she wasn't used to it. No girl could ever get used to it. No girl could let a man roam all over her body without her consent.

Maybe it was time she should get used to it. Be numb. Like how people acted as if nothing was happening. Everything was normal. .

But why did normal seemed like a faraway idea? A foreign word she wasn't familiar with? She knew herself. Knew she would never play the damsel in distress card but she wanted to. .every cell in her body wanted to be it!

If only she had the kind of strong unflinching support behind her . .a strong presence having her back. .

As strong as that man-

As soon as the thought filtered in her head, the tears stopped immediately.

What the. .

Where did that come from?!!

But deep down. .she knew the answer.

His aura had it all. The sense of intimidation. The sure strides. The cruel cut of his mouth. .eyes that held surety in them . Emma had a feeling. .that man wasn't familiar with the word no . .

And. . .

He was everything she wanted to be.

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