

And Then There Were Four by Lilith Carrie

Chapter 2: Chapter 2: Welcoming Committee

"Where is my dad?" I asked firmly as I approached them both, dragging my suitcases behind me. Their dark eyes looking down on me took me by surprise, and I couldn't help but notice how well they looked from the photos I remembered.

They had definitely been working out.

"Ivy?" The taller one with tattoos on his left arm that appeared below his sleeve questioned. His black hair messy on his head as if he had just gotten out of the shower and couldn't be asked to do anything with himself.

"Yeah. That's me." I retorted, pulling myself from the gaze I was in. "My dad?"

The man rolled his eyes, ignoring me, and quickly grabbed my suitcase, dragging it behind him towards the doors. "Sorry, Ivy..." The other said with an apologetic smile. Damian doesn't say much to many people. I'm James."

"Ivy!" Kate squealed from behind me as she came walking over. "I told you I knew the bag was somewhere. Glad I caught you before I got my cab. I just wanted to say thank you for keeping me company on the plane."

"Oh. It's fine. I enjoyed it." The idea she was taking a cab didn't sit well with me. She was a nice girl, and had treated me fairly while venturing here. "Don't take a cab. We can drop you off at campus. Isn't that right, James?"

The look I gave him as I said his name had him speechless. It took him a moment to grasp what was going on and then he smiled. "Oh yeah, of course. The campus is only, like, 10 minutes away. It's no problem at all."

"Awww, well thank you so much, sugar!" Kate squealed as she threw her arms around me, causing me to stiffen uncomfortably in the hug.

Pulling back, she looked at me slightly confused, "not a hugger?"

"Not really." I replied with a chuckle, "but it's okay. Don't worry about it." My eyes shot to James and a smirk played upon his mouth as if he found my reaction amusing.

"Here I will take those from you, and we will get on our way." James replied to Kate as he his eyes gazed over my body one last time.

Following James outside the last thing I expected was for Damian to throw a fit about us dropping Kate off. But after my firm placement on the matter, he gritted his teeth and agreed. "Get in the fucking car."

His reply irritated me but Kate and I didn't wait for him to ask us again. As soon as we were loaded up, the car began to move towards the campus where we would both be taking classes for the next four years.

The trees and brush passed by on the sides of the road, flying as if they had nothing in the world that could stop them. One thing I had been excited about coming to Idaho was all of the nature that would surround me. I had the urge to get lost within it, and explore things people never considered seeing.

Growing up, mom and I were considered free spirits, and tended to beat to the sound of our own drum. And just because she wasn't with me right now didn't mean I was going to stop. My particular ancestry would be heartbroken if I stopped doing what I was doing just because I moved across the country.

Eventually, turning off the main highway, we moved towards a more symmetrical designed street that held loads of vegetation and historical buildings.

"This is amazing—" Kate whispered looking out the window.

"Welcome to the University of Idaho." James chuckled, causing Damian to scoff in annoyance.

As soon as we pulled up towards an area that looked like apartments, Damian came to a quick stop, slamming on his breaks, jolting me forward. "Ouch." I replied in irritation as he turned and looked at me.

"Pay attention next time then." Damian snapped before jumping out of the vehicle, and making his way towards the back where James was helping Kate pull out her luggage. Groaning in irritation, I hopped out and walked towards Kate, "Do you have it from here?"

"Oh definitely. Thank you again for the ride." She called out as she waved, "I will see you Monday."

"Sounds great, I will see you at orientation." I called out before Damian yelled to James to hurry up and get in the damn vehicle.

I had not even been here that long, and Damian was already proving to be the biggest asshole I had ever met. That would be my luck though.

“Do you have to be so rude?” I asked as we pulled back out onto the highway, headed towards my dad’s home. I wasn’t going to allow him to act like this towards me or anyone I associated with. It wasn’t needed nor welcome.

I watched as he looked at me from the rearview mirror, his eyes darkening as he glared. Most girls probably would have looked away and shrunk back from him but me... I would never.

Raising my eyebrow in question, I lifted my hand and gave him the middle finger, causing him to smirk. “You have a lot of fire in you for someone who doesn’t know anything about this place.”

A scoff escaped me as I rolled my eyes, “they are all the same in the end. One pathetic excuse of a home after another.”

James laughed, shaking his head, “I like her attitude.”

“No one fucking asked you.” Damian growled, catching me by surprise. His eyes went to mine again as if realizing what he did. “Don’t get comfortable here.”

“I wouldn’t dream of it. I’m simply passing through.” I replied, rolling my eyes. James seemed welcoming, but Damian definitely wasn’t. It made me curious to know what the other two were like.

Were they going to be just as warm and welcoming as the welcome committee that met me at the airport or perhaps would they try to devour me like, little red riding hood?

With tension in the air, and awkward silence, the vehicle finally pulled into a driveway guarded by tall large black iron gates. Through there, it wound through miles and miles of trees until a clearing approached in the distance, and I realized that the property was more than I had expected.

Multiple houses sat scattered over miles of landscape while the one Damian was heading for was tall and elegant against the bright blue sky. “This is the house?”

James looked over from the passenger seat and smiled at me, “yeah, haven’t you seen it?”

“No.” I sighed, “my father was never forthcoming and he never cared for me anyways.”

James’ brows furrowed in confusion at my statement, “huh?”

As Damian parked the car, he didn’t bother to wait for me or help for that matter. He simply climbed out, slamming the door and ran inside to get as far from me as he could. At least James stayed outside with me, maybe one of them would actually want to get a long with me.

Slowly opening the door, I closed it and moved towards the back where James was pulling out my luggage. " Thank you."

"For what?" His confusion over why I was saying thank you confused me, before I watched him close the back and walk off.

"You're not going to help me?" I called out to him, watching as he turned to me with a smile.

"Your dad said to get you here alive and to the house. He never said once I got here I had to continue helping you. I'm sure you'll figure it out."

So much for being nice. He was just as much of an asshole as Damian was.

Groaning, I pulled the handles on my two large suitcases and threw the backpack across my back. It wasn't going to be easy getting them inside, considering how heavy they were, but I would find a way to manage, I suppose.

As I stepped through the front door, I came face to face with my step mother. Her brown eyes narrowed at me and a fake smile plastered on her face. "Ivy. I was wondering what was taking you so long. We don't waste time in this house. We are all adults here now, and need to remember punctuality is important."

"Sure thing, Alice." I said flatly, watching as she glared at me harder.

"It's Allison." Her gritted tone switched from pleasant to angry faster than a hellcat could shift gears.

"Right. Where am I staying?" I asked as I looked around the massive two story home, curious to think how I would get my bags upstairs.

"Oh you're not in the main house, Ivy. We made the cottage at the back of the property ready for you. We figured you would like your own space." Allison seemed more than pleased with the notion of keeping me as far from her and my father as possible.

"Sounds perfect... care to point the way?" The fact that her words didn't affect me seemed to irritate her, but instead of arguing with me, she simply turned and I followed. As we reached the back door, she opened it and pointed to a small brown and white cottage at the far end of the massive property.

It sat delicately next to the woodline, and something about it almost seemed magical. Ignoring Allison, I let my feet guide me towards the home. My bags no longer felt heavy, and the irritation from my welcome committee quickly left me.

I wasn't sure what about this place seemed like home, but I was pleased to know that I was going to be able to live my own life here.

Close to nature and far from drama– or so I hoped.