

Five

“Hello! I wasn't expecting this!” the lady at the door said. I stared at her maybe a little too long because she stared at me right back, furrowing her eyebrows, “Is there something on my face, dear?”

“No, no, no, that's not it at all. You're just...very...beautiful.”

She was indeed. Her long, flowing golden brown hair, her baby blue, almost white irises, with green streaks coming out the pupils, her perfect pearly white teeth, and full pink lips. Her complexion was a perfect shade of tan, and her clear face, with defined cheekbones. I've never seen such a beautiful woman in my life. She had to be in her late 20's.

The lady smiled, placing her hands on her heart, as if she was flattered. “Thank you so much, dear. You are so sweet.” She opened the door wider, gesturing me and Bugaloo to come in. “Come in, come in. I love visitors.” I walked in slowly, Bugaloo behind me. The room was small and tight, lit by a small fluorescent light hanging from the ceiling on a wire. There was a small love seat and a recliner across from it, both a light burgundy color. The walls were brown, a small portrait of a man hanging over the love seat. There was a door on the far right corner, and a small archway leading to what looked like a kitchen.

“So, I'm guessing you're Harvey?” I asked, looking over to the woman. She shook her head. “I'm Eve. Harvey is my brother. He left a few hours ago to see Marco. He'll be back soon, promise. In the meantime, sit down, relax, you look exhausted.”

“I am,” I said, sitting down on a small recliner. The cottage may have looked a little run down outside, but the inside was very cozy and nice. It was kind of like my apartment.

“So,” Eve sat down across from me on the love seat, “what brings y'all over here?”

“The child has nowhere to sleep,” Bugaloo quickly said, before I can say anything. Eve nodded understandingly. “Are you asking if she can stay here?” Eve looked over to me, as if she wanted me to answer. But once again, Bugaloo answer before any words can come out of my mouth.

“Yeah, I am. Can she?”

Eve smiled with delight, and clapped her hands. “Oh of course! She can absolutely stay. What's your name?”

“Marlee.” I said. Eve’s facial expression suddenly changed. It was like she was...shocked. Her eyes widen a bit, and her breathing hitched.

“Marlee?”

“Yeah. My dad tells me it was my mother’s idea. She loved that name.”

Eve weakly smiled. “That is a beautiful name.” I smiled, but didn't say thank you for some reason. I felt like it wasn't necessary.

Bugaloo cleared his throat, getting our attention. “Look, I'm tired. I better leave.” He was standing in the same place when we got in, his arms folded on his chest. He then turned around, grabbing the handle of the door.

“Bye Bugaloo. I'll tell Harvey you came by,” Eve said. He grunted. “If you want.” He slammed the door shut, leaving the room silent for a split second. Eve immediately starts talking.

“Are you hungry? Do you want to go to bed right now? Oh my, you look dead tired. Maybe you should just go to sleep. Unless you *are* hungry. What's your favorite meal? Would you like me to make you something?”

I smiled, shaking my head. “I'm not hungry, thanks. I'm just tired.” I said. To make it more obvious, I yawned, making Eve immediately sit up. “Come, come. You can sleep right over here.”

She walked to the far end of the room, where the bedroom door was, and opened it, revealing a large queen size bed. The room was painted a bright blue, which was really pretty to me. The bed frame was an ivory color (a little too yellow to be white), and the bed sheets were blue as well as the room. There was a small white dresser on the far left corner of the room, and a white vanity next to it. It was a very nice-looking room.

“It's my room, but I don't think Harvey and I will mind sleeping on the couch for the night. You make yourself at home.” Eve rushed over to the dresser, opening the top drawer (there was three in total). She pulled out a pair of pink pajamas, which I instantly fell in love with. She placed it on the bed. “Is this alright?”

“For me to wear?”

She nodded, “Yes.”

“Yeah, that’s alright.”

She smiled, “Good to hear.” She then left the room, closing the door behind her. I sighed, looking down at the pink pajamas. My backpack was on my shoulder, so I dropped it on the floor, and then quickly slipped on the pajamas. I couldn't believe this was happening. That this was reality. Dad is at home, going ballistic as to why I'm not there. Bailey and Shawn were somewhere, I'm not really sure. The thought of everyone killed me. It made my heart come to a halt. It

suddenly had a pain in my chest. Anxiety, fear. Whatever it was, it probably will haunt me for the rest of the night.

I hope everyone is okay.

Six

I didn't remember much of last night. When I woke up that morning, there was a smell of burnt toast, which made me grimace. My curly hair was flat, and the strands of my hair lay gently on my shoulders. I rubbed the sleep out of my eyes, then swung my feet on the floor and sat up, almost falling. I stretched my back and yawned before opening the bedroom door and looking around the small living room. Eve was already up, reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She looked up and smiled weakly when she saw me, scanning her eyes up and down my body.

"How was your sleep?"

"Fine," I said, looking over to the sleeping man next to her. He had dirty blond hair and tanned skin, just like me, which made me look at Eve with confusion. She smiled wider. "What?"

"He kind of looks like me," I said, pointing to the man. Eve looked over at him and laughed. "He does, doesn't he? He's my brother, Harvey," she said. I nodded understandingly. It was so weird though. He looked almost *just* like me.

Eve smiled, and then sat up, walking over to the small archway at the other side of the room. It led to the kitchen like I thought when I first came. She switched on the light, revealing a small plate with a stack of pancakes and toast, probably the toast I smelled from earlier. She grabbed the plate and handed it to me, "Breakfast is served." I smiled, taking the plate and mumbling, "Thanks," before walking away to the bedroom. I sat quietly on the bed and stared at the pancakes. Dad used to make pancakes every Saturday in honor of Mom. She loved pancakes, and made the best ones, Dad used to tell me. I can't really judge of how it tasted, because when she died I was only 2 years old, and probably never had a pancake in my life. Mom died on a Saturday, which is why we have what we call "Flap Jack Saturday". Because mom loved pancakes and she died on a Saturday, we thought we'd have a day just for her...and of course her pancake obsession.

I stared down at the breakfast and my eyes started to burn with tears. I tried to hold it in, but the tears spilt out anyway, covering my pancakes with salty tears.

Guess I won't need any syrup.