

1. Forrest

I had no idea what made my idiot and sometimes harebrained mother waste most of our savings and buy a house in an extremely small town that held no interest for me.

I huffed like the teenager I was and crossed my arms, looking out my new bedroom window in a sulk. The room itself was a pale yellow, tiny with a built in wardrobe to my right and all my stuff to the left next to the bedroom door. It was a good thing I didn't have a lot of things or there was no way it all fit. Turning around, I spotted a bag and walked over to it. I unzipped it and sitting on top was a photo of mum and I that was taken on my sixteenth birthday with me looking happy for once.

My father, Saul Morrison, had decided to walk out on us when I was very young. That was the last time I saw him. Mum had used the money that he had to pay her in child support to save up for a house and working two jobs had helped a lot. Otherwise, we would have been in a lot of trouble when it came down to the punch. Mum relied on the help of my grandparents to look after me while she worked her heart out just to put food on the table and money for a home deposit.

Which brings us to this small town Forrest; population: around 170 people. Apparently, the cheapest houses were in this town and we couldn't afford much. Either that or mum didn't have enough money for a better and *bigger* house that might have made me happy about living in this small upon small town.

"Brianna, can you give me a hand with some of this stuff?" mum called down from the living room.

"Just a second," I shouted back.

Mentally I thought that she should do all the work on her own since she dragged me to this place with nothing but force, but she had done enough in her life time and I wasn't that type of person. Everything was dumped everywhere as I walked down the hall way. It was a miracle that I didn't trip and land flat on my face from all the clutter and mess that was everywhere.

“What do you need help with?” I asked when I walked into the room.

“Unpacking all these boxes,” she replied. “They are starting to do my back in and I have to work in the morning.”

“Great,” I muttered, tempted to now fake an injury so I didn’t have to really help, but I wasn’t that type. I was raised to help someone when it was needed.

As I got further down the box; I found an old picture of mum and dad in happier days in a photo frame. Looking at mum in it, I realised that I couldn’t see a single bit of my father in me. I had mum’s almost forest looking green eyes, extremely pale skin complexion with a dusting of freckles, thin nose, pouty lips and auburn coloured hair that everyone thought I secretly dyed to get such a vivid red colour. It was freaky seeing so much of me in a younger looking mum. And that was just looks. I got her 5’5 feet in height, and basically no fat on me.

I knew that everyone thought I had an eating disorder of some sort to be so thin, but I didn’t. I just couldn’t put weight on.

“What are you looking at so intently?” she asked, looking over my shoulder.

The only difference was now in mum that she was older and had laugh lines and dressed for her age. When she saw what I was looking at made her eyes turn hard and tense up. I didn’t blame her.

“I forgot I even had that,” she said and went back to doing what she was doing, trying to forget the pain that the photo brought up.

“He left because I looked so much like you and there is nothing of him in me. He couldn’t handle that his daughter had more Clarkson genes in her than Morrison,” I stated and placed the photo back in the box, where it was going to stay.

“Your father doesn’t realise what he is missing out on now. He didn’t get to watch you grow up into a beautiful girl that you are now and he won’t have anything to do with grandchildren if you have any one day,” mum told me.

She turned her back and started on another box, but I wasn’t finished talking about this yet. Why did she still have this photo for after all these years? Did she still love him? Would she forgive him if he came

begging for a second chance? There were a lot of questions that I had, but I knew that I wasn't going to get a proper answer that I wanted.

"Then why don't you just burn it in the fireplace? You can save yourself from all the hurt and anger that he has caused you over the years and forget about him and everything that has happened with him. You can forget about the past," I said, staring at her back, but got no response from her.

I sighed, trying to find it in my heart to find some love for him, but I couldn't find it. There was another emotion I couldn't place. Anger or hurt. He was the one that missed out on all the good things in my life and was never going to see them again. Most things that I did involve my grandfather to support me. Saul Morrison wasn't my father in my eyes. He was nothing to me anymore.

"I try to find some sort of emotion inside me about him, but I can't. All I can feel is coldness towards him," I told her and clenched my fists.

"He is the one that is going to realise what a huge mistake he has made when it's too late for him to fix the problem. Anyway, you should finish up your room and get to bed. You have school in the morning and I want you refreshed in the morning, not looking like a corpse like you do today," mum said and walked towards the kitchen.

Gee, thanks for the self confidence boost. I really appreciate that.

"It's too late for him to fix the problem now. And I can't I have just one more day off school?" I asked and followed her into the room with a hopeful look on my face.

"Nice try Brianna," she said, smirking at my attempt of getting my way.

Grumbling to myself, I walked back up the hall and into my room. Most of my things were up in place within twenty minutes. A lot of my things were hand me downs, since we couldn't afford much as it was and I was grateful for the things I did have. It was a good thing mum took a job at the chemist in Colac. We needed money so we could save for other things.

After eleven o'clock, I made my way to bed, but I couldn't get to sleep. My mind was active and I was full of dread and worry for school. Since I was going to be the new girl, everyone was going to be in my

face, trying to make me feel welcome and seeing who can befriend the new girl first but not knowing what this redhead was capable of doing or the temper she unleashed when pushed enough. They were going to be all over me like Magpies swooping humans when protecting their young ones.

Morning came around fast and before I knew it, we were on the way to Colac. The whole drive, I looked out the window. I was in no mood to talk. The only time I became alert was when we pulled up to the school. Colac senior secondary college was a light grey brick building. It was two stories high with other buildings that extended out around it.

“Brianna, I know this isn’t going to make any difference but good luck today. I know that you will be fine,” mum said, her eyes tearing up.

“This reminds me of prep. You trying to hold it together for me and for you,” I said and tried to smile.

I didn’t know why I was getting so emotional for. It was just school. It wasn’t like I was leaving for university or something. Grabbing my school bag, I got out of the car and walked towards the main office. I was lucky that you could dress in plain clothes, and not have to wear a uniform. I don’t think I could have gotten use to a uniform for the whole school year.

When I walked into the room, everyone looked at me and started whispering. One thing I hated about small towns; they gossiped. It was like they had nothing better to do with their time. I approached the main desk, clearing my throat.

“Can I help you?” a woman asked at the desk, looking up from the computer monitor.

“I’m the new student that is meant to start here today and I was told to come to the office on my first day,” I said, hoping to jog something in her memory.

“Oh yes of course,” she said and started looking for something.

She handed me a bunch of books and a time table before calling over someone. She had light brown hair with brown eyes and a tan complexion and was a bit shorter than me and looked to be the same weight as me. She grabbed the strap of her school bag and held onto it.

“Hudson could you and I’m sorry, I didn’t catch your name,” she said

and looked at me.

“Brianna,” I told her.

“Could you show Brianna around today since she is in all your classes?”

“Sure,” she replied and looked at me.

I grabbed everything and walked over to the chairs so I could sort out everything so I wouldn’t be pulling my hair out come lunch time.

“So as you know I’m Hudson Mahoney. I’m sure that you have heard about me in Forrest by now,” she said, making me look at her.

“Actually, I haven’t. We only moved there yesterday and I haven’t had the chance to meet the locals or catch up on the local gossip,” I told her.

“Well, I can already see that we are going to be great friends,” Hudson said and smiled warmly at me.

We walked out of the office where she waved at someone. I glanced over before doing another take. The boy was breathtakingly beautiful. He looked about over six foot in height with a lean body. His skin was very pale and from the distance, I could tell that he had features that the girls in Hollywood would crave. How he didn’t have girls hanging off him, I didn’t know.

“Do you know him?” I asked Hudson.

“Yes and you will soon also. His name is Brandon Johnstone and we are currently dating,” she said. “Come on, we have classes soon and we don’t want to be late on your first day. That wouldn’t leave a good impression.”

Taking one last look behind me, I followed. Hudson showed me my locker, which was right next to hers. I looked around me to make sure that no one was close by and opened it up and placed everything inside of it. I didn’t need them knowing what things I had and didn’t have

“You are going to need your English book and pens,” Hudson said.

I nodded and grabbed what she told me. Walking to class, everyone was looking at me. I was started to feel intimidated. I didn’t like all the attention on me and I didn’t know how long it was going to last here.

“So, I hear that you are from Melton,” Hudson said, making small talk.

Well, it was good to know that I hadn't been here for twenty-four hours and already my life story was beginning to show.

"Yes I am."

"What does your father do?" she asked suddenly when we came to our class room.

Crap, was my first thought. How on earth was I meant to answer that? I didn't want anyone knowing about my father and I had planned on keeping it that way. But what made her ask that question? Was that gossip about my father not being around going through the town also?

"I really don't wish to talk about that," I said in a clipped tone.

I pushed open the door and walked inside the classroom. Some students were already there and didn't bother to look up when I entered the room. I noticed the teacher and could tell that she was beautiful. She looked up and I saw that she didn't have any aging lines or anything on her face. Her eyes were a pale blue that were welcoming. She was also wasn't very tall.

"You must be Brianna," the teacher said and walked up to me. "I'm Mrs. Franklin, but you can call me Aubrey."

I smiled and looked around for a spare seat. I didn't want to take someone else's by mistake.

"You can go take a seat next to Alexander as that is the only spare in the class," she said and walked back over to her desk, grabbing a piece of paper.

I was frozen solid in my place. Either I needed glasses or that was my cousin I was looking at. The blonde hair was the same and so was the face. He had my face as he got that feature from his mother. I placed my books down on the table, making him look up and open his mouth in shock when he realised that I was standing there.

"Brianna," he whispered in shock.

"Hello Alex," I said and sat down.

"What are you doing here? I thought Melton was the rage for you and that you had no plans on leaving?" he asked, still in shock that I was in front of him.

"Mum decided to buy a house in Forrest as the memories were starting to get the best of us so we left and you know that I have never

really had a say in stuff that involves this sort of stuff," I muttered.

"I take it that he still hasn't bothered to have a relationship with you yet?" he asked, already knowing what the answer would be.

"I believe that he is counting down until I am eighteen so he doesn't have to pay any more money to mum for me. He has missed everything that has happened in my life, so it's best if I stop trying to find him and just forget about it."

Mrs. Franklin clapped her hands to catch our attention. During my chat with Alex, the class filled up, except the empty seat next to where Hudson was sitting. Hudson kept on looking at the door, before narrowing her eyes and shaking her head. I had a feeling that it involved the person that sat next to her.

"Okay class, before we do anything today, we have a new student, Brianna so I expect all of you to treat her like you do with your fellow classmates and not any differently," she said and looked straight at me.

"That's you, my dear cousin," Alex whispered, earning himself a glare from me.

Everyone's attention was on me, making me slither down the chair until I had almost fell off it. Attention was not a strong point with me and it would never be. Hudson smiled at me in sympathy, but then shot a look to Alex basically telling him to back off and leave me alone. She didn't know that he was my cousin and wouldn't do anything to hurt me. This was going to be an interesting lunch break when it came up.

The classroom door opened and my mouth dropped open. A gorgeous teenage boy walked into the classroom. His skin was paler than mine but flawless, pouty lips with light honey coloured hair. He looked up from the ground and made eye contact with me. He had high cheek bones and light green eyes. They reminded me of emeralds. Another thing I noticed was that he was tall.

I felt my heart rate pick up and couldn't understand why. I mean, he was gorgeous, but why would that make my heart rate speed up? I looked at Alex and saw that his eyes were narrowed at this boy. Straight away I knew that Alex wasn't a fan of him and now I wanted to know why.

"Nathaniel, I am so glad that you finally could join us in learning but

you have missed the introductions and I have no plans on redoing them again to please you,” Mrs. Franklin said, glaring at him and crossing her arms.

“I don’t even want to hear them as you should know that they don’t hold any interest for me,” he muttered, glaring back at her.

He walked over to where Hudson was and sat next to her, but he never broke eye contact with me until he was seated. Hudson whispered something to him but quickly glanced over to where I was and turned her attention back onto Mrs. Franklin.

“Alright, I want you to take out a piece of paper and write down what you got up to in the holidays. You will be having an easy week this week until I throw you into the deep end starting next Monday,” she said, smirking when everyone but Nathaniel and I groaned.

“I hate when she does this,” Alex muttered.

“Why?” I asked.

“Because you can bet that she will have something up her sleeve that we all won’t like,” he replied, shaking his head.

I didn’t say anything in reply. I liked being challenged with things, not like my cousin. Sighing, I grabbed my pen and started writing. The bell rang an hour later, signalling that the class was over. As I was packing my things, Hudson got up from her seat with her bag and walked over, glaring at Alex.

“You couldn’t help yourself, could you Alex? Why don’t you just stay away from Brianna?” Hudson asked; her voice laced with venom.

“What are you talking about?” he asked.

“You know what I am talking about, so don’t you go playing dumb with me. Brianna doesn’t need you hovering and getting obsessive over her, so I wouldn’t even think about it,” she said, her eyes narrowing.

Had my cousin changed for the worst and I wasn’t aware of it? Or did she always do this when a new student had arrived? She didn’t know him like I did and basically didn’t have the right to judge.

“Hudson, Alex is my cousin,” I said, putting an end to this fight.

“What?” she asked.

“You heard what she said Hudson. I am her cousin and I do have a right to hover over her if I have to. It is my job to protect her and I will

be doing that, no matter what you say. No one can keep me away from my cousin.”

Hudson walked out of the classroom, leaving me alone with Alex. I grabbed my books and started to walk, Alex by my side.

“What was that?” I asked after a while.

“What was what?” he asked.

“What was that back in the classroom?”

“Brianna, I was just standing up to Hudson for my own sake. If she got her way, we wouldn’t be around each other while she was in the same room. She would stop it, thinking she was saving you from going down a dark path, but you already have.”

I stopped at my locker and yanked it open before looking at Alex. “How did Rachel raise you?” I asked.

My whole life, I had never heard Alex speak like that to anyone and never about me. All he told people was that I was his cousin and that was usually it. I didn’t know if Rachel had said anything and he was listening to her.

“My mother raised me fine thank you very much.”

Rolling my eyes, I placed my books in the locker and grabbed my school bag, before shutting it and turning to walk away, but I hit something hard. I grabbed onto Alex for support and looked up. Looking down at me was another beautiful boy. How many were there in this school? He had sandy blonde hair and dark blue eyes that laced amusement in them. He was tall also, but not as tall as Nathaniel and his features weren’t as full.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I was in my own world and didn’t even see you,” I said, trying not to fall to a puddle of goo on the floor.

“It’s quite alright. I just happened to look over and see a very beautiful girl standing here with this idiot and had to introduce myself before she got away,” the good looking man said.

“James, quit flirting with my cousin, Brianna. Amylia would have your neck for it if she was here today and saw you doing that,” Alex said and smirked.

“I can handle Amylia,” James said, looking at my cousin.

“Why do I have a feeling that you both are trouble when in the

same room?" I asked suddenly.

James looked at me and smirked before looking at Alex. "She is very smart."

"She's a Clarkson. We figure things out very quickly."

"Well, as much as I would love to stay and talk, I have a break that I wish to enjoy. James, it was nice meeting you and Alex...just...forget it," I muttered and walked away.

I pushed open the door and stopped when I noticed a boy with bleach blonde hair looking straight at me. He was looking at me like I was his prize that he had won. Great, that's what I needed; a stalker and on my first day, too. He started to approach me and his brown eyes looked dirty, but it was just the colour of them. It matched his creepiness

"Hello," he said, stopping in front of me.

"Hi," I said, unsure of what he even wanted.

"I haven't had a chance to introduce myself. My name is Jason and saw you all alone and thought that you might have wanted some company."

"Brianna, and I'm sorry, but I have to go," I said and tried to walk away from him, but he wouldn't let me as he grabbed onto my arm.

My skin felt like it was crawling from Jason's touch and I didn't like it at all. I looked down and forced myself not to shudder from his touch. That wouldn't have been a good thing, and he might have taken it the wrong way.

"Why? Are you in a hurry?" he asked, not giving up.

"Of course I am," I muttered.

"Well, that's a pity. I'll see you around beautiful," he said and walked away.

Something about him gave me the creeps. Hudson walked over to me with; I believed to be Brandon, behind her. She looked over towards Jason and glared.

"Stay away from Jason Hargreaves. He isn't someone that you would want in your life for any reason," Hudson said and looked at me.

"He came up to me," I said, feeling offended that she thought I would have gone up to someone like that.

“Hudson, let the girl breathe,” Brandon said, crossing his arms.

I looked at him and half smiled, trying to gauge his reaction on me, since I was new and wasn’t sure that he even liked me. He looked me up and down before muttering something to Hudson and walked away.

“Don’t worry about Brandon. He isn’t too sure about you at the moment because you are new here at the moment,” Hudson said.

“Does he think I am going to murder you or something?”

“You’re the new kid whose father no one has seen. Everyone is a bit jumpy.”

“Oh, so everyone is judging me because they haven’t seen my father? Well, for your information and you can pass this along to everyone else also, I haven’t seen my father for a very long time, since I was eighteen months old,” I said in a calm voice.

“Why didn’t you just say that in the first place?” she asked.

“Because it’s none of your business to know where my father is or not, I don’t want anyone knowing anything because I don’t want questions fired at me all the time,” I replied and walked away, leaving her standing there.

I walked down to the football oval and sat down on the grass. I pulled my knees up to my chest and sighed. I should have just done home schooling and been done with it. I didn’t need the stress from everyone and this wasn’t going to help my mood at all. James looked over to where I was and walked over to where I was sitting.

“I thought it was you sitting here alone Brianna,” he said, making me look up.

“Who else would it be?” I asked in a dead tone.

He sat down next to me, looking concerned. If he was putting on the niceness for more information about me and my life, he wasn’t getting anything. He did look concerned for me though, so maybe he did care and wasn’t acting.

“Are you okay?” he asked.

“Do I look it? I haven’t even been here for twenty-four hours and everyone wants the gossip on me,” I said, feeling frustrated and upset that everything about me couldn’t be left alone.

“We had that problem when we moved here also. They are like

leeches that want to suck your blood all because they want to know everything about you,” James told me.

“How did you put up with it?” I asked and sniffed, trying to fight back the water works that wanted to break free. “Because I am ready to hurt the next person that has something to say about my life or at least scream,” I finished.

“We ignored them and now all but three people are still trying to make our lives a living hell and one of them has already spoken to you. I can tell whatever they want to know and saying is upsetting you,” James said and wiped away a tear that fell. “Don’t let them get to you and don’t ever let them break you. That is what they want to see Brianna. They want to see the vulnerable side of you so they have something to bully you about.”

His skin was cold, but it wasn’t enough to make me shiver. It wasn’t a cold day though, so why would he be cold? I decided to let it go and didn’t say anything. I took a shaky breath and didn’t say anything for a while.

“All I want is a friend that won’t want to know everything about what happened in my past and why I won’t tell anyone because I don’t want them knowing everything about me but that will never happen,” I said and looked down at the grass.

“Brianna, you do. I’m your friend, though I hardly know you, I still care about you even though I have only known you since this morning, and Alex would kill me if I did something bad to you and mind you, he fights like a girl sometimes,” he said, making me laugh.

“That’s my cousin for you.”

There was something about James that made me feel I could trust him. It was like he sent off this calming vibe, but I couldn’t understand why though. Sighing, I got off the ground, and turned around to look at James.

“I’ll see you around,” I said and walked away.

I stopped walking and turned around, seeing that James was still sitting where I left him. I cleared my throat, making him look up from the ground. “James, thank you for caring about me,” I said, earning a smile off him.

“You’re welcome, Brianna.”

I kept my head down as I walked towards the classrooms, hoping that no one would pay any attention to me. When I got back inside, Brandon was waiting at my locker. What did he want? He must have sensed that I was approaching as he turned and looked at me, standing still in my spot. I walked over and didn’t look at him.

“Hello,” he said and gave me a tight lip smile.

“Are you here to judge me like usual?” I asked and looked at him.

“You are as feisty as your cousin said you were,” he snapped.

He was getting on my nerves and I really didn’t want to lose my temper. I took a deep breath and closed my eyes, then reopening them.

“Listen glamour boy, just tell me what you want because if you are here to annoy me, don’t even bother about it,” I snapped, glaring back at him.

“No Brianna. I just want you to know that I am protective of Hudson and if I came across judgemental, I am sorry,” he said.

“Did Hudson set you up to this?” I asked and crossed my arms.

“What makes you think that?” he asked.

“Why else would you say sorry for? It isn’t like that you would come up to me for no reason and apologize. There has to be a motive behind this.”

“I can be nice when I want to be.”

“Look, is there a reason why you are here for? I thought I would be too plain for your liking and too secretive,” I said and opened my locker, pretending that I was looking for something when I clearly wasn’t.

I just didn’t want to look him in the eye.

“Brianna, I want to be your friend for Hudson’s sake. You are the only person that she has to class as a friend besides the Pryor’s and I don’t want to ruin that for the woman I love,” he said and looked down towards the floor.

I laughed to myself and cleared my throat, catching his attention again before shaking my head and speaking. “I guess we can try for Hudson, but I am not holding any promises.”

“Neither am I,” he said and smirked. “So you are from Melton?”

“I thought my dear cousin would have filled you in on all that by

now," I replied.

"Alexander really hasn't said a lot about you. He has been secretive. When someone asked a question about you when we all found out that you were coming here, as we had questions, but he never really gave us an answer and now I can understand why. You don't like people knowing about you or anything about you. It's like you are hiding something that you don't want anyone knowing."

I stopped stiff and looked Brandon in the eye. "You make me sound like I am the wicked witch of Colac and Forrest for having secrets," I replied.

"Leave that to Augusta. Once she gets wind that you are the interest of the day, and she hasn't yet, she will unleash her Tornado of fury and I will tell you this now, it isn't a pretty sight to be around when she does."

Hudson came up and looked between us with a glint in her eye. She grabbed Brandon's hand and smiled at me. I smiled back before looking at Brandon.

"I see that you both are getting along?" she asked in a happy tone.

"Hudson," a cold, icy voice said behind Brandon.

They both looked at each other with the same look of hatred in their eyes. This must have been someone they didn't like. I shut my locker and leaned against it.

"Augusta, what do you want? Haven't you caused enough pain and trouble in my life without adding to it?" Hudson asked and turned around to face her.

I stood behind Hudson so I could get a look at this Augusta. Her hair was black as midnight, her skin, covered in white foundation that you could actually see under the lights to try and fit in with someone, but I didn't know who. And her eyes were ice blue and held a glare towards Hudson and myself, but not towards Brandon. That was strange.

She was just a bit taller than I was, but was clearly intimidating and vain towards most people. The look in her eye was murderous. The words if looks could kill sprung to mind and if that was true, both Hudson and I would be dead.

"What are you doing with this new person?" she asked, raising her eyebrows.

“Being nice; that is something you wouldn’t know how to do,” Hudson replied. “By the way, the black clothes match your black heart and stone soul.”

“Brandon, I haven’t seen you around for a long time. I thought you would have moved on from the plain Hudson Mahoney by now and find someone else that will suit you, like me,” Augusta said in a sickly sweet voice.

I looked at Hudson with questions in my eyes, but hers were glued onto Augusta. I started to wonder to myself if this was the reason they didn’t get along. It seemed like she tried to move in on every guy in the school. Straight away, I felt sorry for James and this Amylia that I hadn’t met.

“Augusta, you know that I am in love with Hudson and nothing is going to change that,” Brandon said.

“Honey, you are still only young. You wouldn’t know what love is...unless you went out with me, of course. I could and would show you a good time. I don’t have values like she does,” she said and placed her hand on Brandon’s arm.

I grabbed onto Hudson’s arm to stop her from killing her in the middle of the school hall, and I wanted to do the same thing and I didn’t even know this person. I removed my hand from her arm and looked at her.

“Are you going to be okay by yourself?” I asked Hudson in a quiet voice.

“I will try not to hurt her, but I want to pull those hair extensions out of her head one by one just to see her in pain for once and not causing it,” she said through gritted teeth.

I nodded and walked away, going back to my locker before heading off to finish the rest of my break before lunch time. As I walked outside, Alex came running up to me, almost knocking me over onto my back and making me drop my school bag onto the floor.

“Where’s the fire?” I exclaimed and grabbed my bag.

“Am I not allowed being excited to see my cousin?” he asked and pouted like the child he was at heart.

“You saw me this morning when I arrived, Alexander.”

“Which, I didn’t even know that you were moving to Forrest until I saw you before. Did mum know about it?” Alex asked.

I sighed and rubbed my temples, hoping to ease some of the throbbing that started to form with Alex’s game of twenty questions.

“No, Aunty Rachel did not know that we found a house until mum told her last night over the phone,” I replied and crossed my arms, waiting for the rest of his questions.

“I have more questions for you another day to answer, Brianna Christina,” Alex said, smirking at the look I gave him.

“Ok Alexander Tyler,” I shot back, earning a glare from him.

The bell rang, signalling that it was almost lunch time. Alex went off in a different direction while I slowly made my way to the lunch room. I was looking down at the ground when I walked into someone. I looked up and was face to face with Nathaniel. He was even more beautiful close up.

I noticed that he was slightly muscular and when I looked into his eyes, they were cold, hard and extremely unfriendly towards me. I was tempted to take a step back, but I couldn’t move from the spot I was in.

“I’m sorry. I wasn’t paying any attention to where I was going,” I said, hoping to break through some of his icy exterior.

“Just stay out of my way and look where you are going next time,” Nathaniel said in a harsh tone and walked away from me.

I turned around and looked at his retreating form, speechless. Is that how he spoke to everyone? I slowly walked away and shook my head. I would have to ask Hudson about that later on. When I made my way into the lunch area, I saw Hudson and Brandon already sitting at the table, looking towards the door. Hudson got up and smiled when she saw me walk into the room. I placed my school bag on the floor and smiled back, hoping that it wasn’t a grimace.

“We were starting to think that you got lost or something since you are new,” Hudson said, earning a smile of Brandon.

“Ha-ha I didn’t get lost, but thank you for your concern. I ran into my cousin outside and had a not so nice meeting with Nathaniel in the hall way before making my way over here in one piece surprisingly,” I said, grabbing Brandon’s attention.

“What happened with Nathaniel?” he asked, his grey coloured eyes showing interest for a change.

“I ran into Nathaniel by mistake as I was on my way here, and he spoke harshly to me. Told me to stay out of his way and to watch where I was going. I just don’t understand what I could have done to earn such a cold response off him,” I said and leaned back into my chair.

“Speak of the devil and he shall appear,” Hudson muttered and looked over my shoulder.

I turned around and saw Nathaniel walk in with James. They both looked over to where we were, before picking a table near us. I automatically looked the other way so I didn’t have to see Nathaniel’s hard, cold stare again. That was something that would get etched into my mind permanently

“Don’t worry about him. He sometimes gets like that, and for all you know, he could be nice next time you speak to him and might apologize for lashing out like that,” Brandon said and grabbed Hudson’s hand.

“I don’t really have plans on speaking to him again if he is going to be like that towards me all the time. I don’t like being treated like dirt when I haven’t done anything wrong,” I said and looked down to the bare spot on the table.

Throughout the whole lunch break, I could feel Nathaniel’s hard and cold glare on me. I fought the urge to look at him and ended up winning. Hudson ended up looking over at him and glared, making him look at James. In the end, I got up and grabbed my school bag, catching the attention of both tables. I didn’t want to be around this environment any longer than I had to be. It was starting to make me feel unhappy.

“Where are you going?” Hudson asked.

“I need some air,” I said and started walking away.

“What about your lunch though, even though you didn’t get anything?” Brandon asked.

“I lost my appetite,” I said back, looking over my shoulder at him

“You and your hostile reception, Nathaniel. You will never learn, will you?” I heard Hudson say.

“Why are you blaming me for? Why do I have to be nice for when I don’t even know the girl? I mean, for all I know, she could throw herself

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