

Reigns Manor

Chapter 1 of 4

Megan

"I'm not sure," Chris said, leaning back against the wall.

He was my best friend. Childhood best friend. We'd been stuck together like glue since before we could even walk or talk, or so our parents said. I could totally believe it. Chris and I were close. We'd gone through school together, from pre-school to high school and now college. I'd probably spent more of my waking hours with Chris around than without. I'd certainly been around him more than any other single human being.

So, when it came time to bunk together for college, he was the perfect choice.

"Would you rather be stuck in a dorm room with three other guys for the next two years?" I asked, enjoying the sight of Chris wincing.

He did not like crowded spaces. Or people in general.

And he *hated* loud noises.

Dorm life would be hell for him, and he knew it.

"Come on," I told him, brandishing my phone. On it was the 'for rent' listing that seemed so perfect for us. "This place is close enough to the college, cheap, spacious, and there's no crime in the area. What's not to be sure about?"

Chris didn't seem convinced. But he couldn't argue. There was nothing to argue about. The place was perfect.

"Did I mention they have a pool?"

Sylvia

Affluence, by itself, was boring. The Reigns Manor, to which I was the heiress of and de-facto owner, was grandiose. Built hundreds of years ago by my own ancestors. And, for all its splendour, the manor was near-empty.

There was the hired help, sure. A chef, a driver, a cleaner and gardener. Used to be that a Reigns Manor would have had at least a dozen servants employed at any given time, though that was long before I had been born. Now there were only those three. And only one of them, my driver, lived in Reigns Manor full-time.

I'd experimented on all three, of course. First as a curiosity, a way to pass time. And then to test and expand on my technique. But it wasn't enough.

My three employees were old, hired many years ago by my absent father. Wrinkled and set in their ways. No fun at all.

What I needed was a younger mind, ripe and open to change.

And that's where the 'room to let' business came in. An offer of affordable accommodations in a luxurious manor was likely to draw the masses like ants to a picnic. And, somewhere amongst the rabble, there would be at least one person to fit my criteria.

I'd seen several potential candidates thus far and none of them were what I wanted. Not even close.

When a loud thumping came from the manor's main entrance, I fully believed it would be another unsuitable pleb here to waste my time.

After opening the door to greet them, I changed my mind instantly.

There were two of them, a girl and a boy.

The girl was perfect.

She was college age, twenty-one or so, with bright blonde hair and an even brighter smile. Her eyes were a soft green, pale and full of intelligence. She had full lips, spread open into a wide white-toothed smile. And her body. Slender with curves in all the right

places. She was wearing a pink tank-top with white shorts, giving a lovely view of her nice legs. A perfect specimen.

The boy was not smiling. Nor was I overly interested in him. Mid-length brown hair, clean shaven, lean and toned body. He was shorter than the girl.

This girl would suit my needs nicely. And the boy. Well, I was sure I could find some use for him also.

"Hello!" The pretty girl said happily, "We saw your ad about renting a room."

Chris

Meg had said the place was big. Meg had lied. The place wasn't big, it was fucking huge. I'd been expecting some tottering old woman with a spare attic room or some shit, not a cocking eighteenth century mansion.

And the woman who answered the door, damn. She was wearing a dress that hung tight to her skin, showing off her amazing body. A slim waist paired with a huge ass and impressive rack. She had a pretentious air about her, but it lasted only a moment before she smiled softly at me and Meg, introduced herself as the owner of the place, called herself Sylvia Reigns.

Sylvia's eyes were emerald green, much darker and deeper than Meg's lovely eyes, and much colder. Her jet black hair was a stark contrast to Meg's bright blonde. And, perhaps most surprising of all, she looked barely older than we were. Twenty-seven tops.

Less little old lady and more sexy ass rich bitch.

"Come in," Sylvia said, gesturing inside her mansion, "I'll show you the room."

Something inside me told me not to follow.

I hesitated, watched Meg step through the large oak doorway.

And I followed after her. As usual.

Megan

Reigns Manor was freaking amazing! Every room we'd been in so far was immaculate. There were antiques everywhere, art lining the walls and decorations on every shelf. And not the dusty old boring stuff you'd expect from a building that looked this ancient. Almost all of the art was modern, contemporary. And everything that looked old fit in with everything that didn't. It was amazing.

Every room was well-lit, no dark corners. And every view out of the many windows was breathtaking. It wasn't just that the manor itself was huge, but the land around it was spacious too. A large perimeter wall cut off the old estate from the hustle and bustle of the outside world.

When Sylvia guided us into the room we'd hopefully be renting soon, my breath was taken away.

You could have cut the room in half and it still would have been far bigger than even a large dorm room. The ceiling was high and the windows were huge, bathing the room in light. There was a queen sized bed, more cabinets and cupboards than I could ever hope to fill, not to mention it had its own bathroom!

I squealed, ran over to check the view.

"I take that you like it, then," Sylvia said from behind me.

"It's amazing," I breathed.

"You're welcome to move in as soon as you'd like," Sylvia continued. "As soon as you make the first payment, of course."

I didn't say anything. I already had more than enough money saved and, with Chris

helping to pay the rent, there would be no issues at all on that front.

"Sounds too good to be true," Chris piped up. I turned to look at him. He always worried too much. About *everything*.

Sylvia frowned at him, and I felt the urge to give him a little kick. Who looks a gift horse in the mouth? This was a good catch. And amazing find. Why risk it now you idiot?

"I mean, why is it only the one room you're renting out? You have plenty spare. And why so cheap? Why do you even need to rent in the first place? It doesn't look like you're hurting for cash."

Idiot!

I wanted to smack him. What was he thinking?

Sylvia seemed unconcerned with the questions. "I'm renting out a single room as this is something of a trail run. Depending on how successful this turns out to be, I may start renting out more space. And, as you put it, I'm not hurting for cash. I don't need to charge a lot. It's more important to me to find the right tenants than the wealthiest."

The answer sounded rehearsed. But, of course, she probably got asked it a lot.

Sylvia turned to look at me.

"Besides," she said, "with how quiet and lonely the manor gets sometimes, I wouldn't mind the company."

"I'm not sure, Meg," Chris said as we walked home.

I couldn't help but roll my eyes. Nothing new there, Chris.

"What's there not to be sure about? It's perfect. She even has her own personal cook!"

Chris shrugged helplessly. "The place gives me a bad feeling. I don't like it."

"Your bad feelings are always wrong," I told him. "Do you remember when you told me you had a bad feeling about a school play that one time? Romeo and Juliet, right?"

"I fell off the stage during rehearsal and broke my leg," Chris said, eyes wide.

Oh yeah, he did didn't he?

"And because of that you didn't have to end up making a fool of yourself in the actual play! I'd say that was a win. And you didn't have to do gym for ages after that either, so it's really a win-win situation when you stop to think about it. In the end, it was a good thing that you broke your leg!"

Chris gave me a dead-pan look, unamused.

"Come on," I pleaded. "If it turns out to be a disaster, you can tell me 'I told you so' and hold it over my head."

I gave him the puppy-dog eyes.

He resisted for twelve seconds before caving. New record.

"Fine, fine," he sighed. "But only because there's a pool."

Sylvia

The families of my two new guests were nothing special. Bland, ordinary people. They helped their respective children move into the large room, not seeming concerned that Megan and Chris would be sharing it. The two families were very familiar with each other, a sign of how close Megan and Chris were.

I'd spoken to pretty, blonde Megan about it. Discovered that she was not dating Chris and, instead, that the two were platonic best friends - closer to brother and sister than lovers.

From the way little Chris look at Megan, I imagined that sentiment might well be one-sided. His eyes screamed of unrequited love, though he was skilled at hiding it.

But nothing got past me.

I watched as the two of them moved their things into the room I'd given them, oblivious to the modifications I'd made to it.

In their defence, there was nothing to see. Most of my special inventions were well out of sight. The only one that might be found at some point was in the room's air vents. A little machine to pump an odourless gas into the room.

The gas was harmless. It did nothing more than relax the body and mind and, even then, by a miniscule amount. An off-the-shelf headache tablet had more of an effect on the human body than day spent inhaling my gaseous concoction. It didn't need to be strong or potent, the gas itself was only the first part of my scheme.

Inside the walls themselves were speakers, set to play any audio I so wished at a level that the human ear couldn't hear.

Or, more accurately, could hear but wouldn't register.

Those two things alone did nothing. They'd help Megan and Chris relax a little easier, and annoy any dog that somehow found itself on my estate, but would do nothing by way of manipulation or harm. What they would do was open the door for me to begin my little experiment.

I'd start tonight. The very first night my two subjects would spend in my manor.

Chris

Shame this place didn't have a hot-tub jacuzzi. It would have been amazing to sit back in and relax after spending all day carrying my and Meg's - mostly Meg's - shit to our room. Still, a quick swim to wash away the sweat and have a little me time was plenty good enough.

Reign's Manor had a huge-ass pool that, as far as I could tell, never saw any actual use. It was clean, no denying that. But the things you'd expect to see were missing - pool-side chairs, a well-worn stepladder into the water, scratches and scuffs and general wear and tear. There was none of it. The pool was untouched. Why have a pool if you're not going to use it?

It wasn't just that though. Something felt off about the whole place. Like the three people who supposedly worked here. I'd seen no sign of any of them. How was that possible? Shouldn't Miss Sylvia Reigns want to introduce everyone?

And the woman herself, Sylvia, was another oddity.

She wasn't much older than me or Meg and somehow she'd ended up in charge of this place. She was beautiful, well-spoken if a little pretentious sounding, obviously intelligent. And there was something she wasn't telling us. I could sense it. Meg might not notice, but I did. There was more to Sylvia and the room she was renting out than she was saying.

I continued swimming, tried working out what this rich woman might possibly want.

Nothing good, I was certain.

Megan

"Seeing as you and Chrissy will be sharing a room, should I worry about installing sound-proofing?" Sylvia asked.

It took me a moment to realize what she was *really* asking.

"Oh god no," I said, waving my arms. "Me and Chris? No chance at all. We're just friends. We really are more like brother and sister than anything else, I promise."

Sylvia smiled.

"Not your type then? Chrissy does look quite androgynous, doesn't he. Am I to take

it, then, that you're into more strapping manlier men?" She said mischievously.

Truth be told, I didn't really have a 'type' of guy that I liked. As long as they were nice, charming, funny, I wasn't all to picky. But then, who doesn't like a bit of stubble and a solid chest to lean on?

"I suppose," I said smirking. "How about you? What does Lady Reigns like in a man?"

Sylvia tilted her head, thoughtful. "Woe," she said after a short moment.

I raised an eyebrow, and Sylvia chuckled to herself.

A joke. One that I didn't quite get. I laughed along with her all the same. That's the trick to making friends. Smiling. Having a good time. Being light-hearted and fun. Outgoing.

And who better to be friends with than the people you're going to be living with for the foreseeable future?

I only hoped Chris followed suit.

We, Sylvia and I, continued chatting and getting to know each other. Her father, the true owner of the Reigns Manor, was living in another country altogether, conducting business. Sylvia was an only child, prodigy at a young age, oversaw her father's assets and businesses at home, favourite colour was purple, single, was a fan of classical music - no surprises there.

See Chris? Once you striped away all the poshness, Sylvia was just an ordinary person just like everyone else.

Seriously, he needed to stop being such a worry-wart.

Sylvia

When the boy got back from his little swim, I excused myself. I'd gathered all the information I needed. While I would have loved to chat to beautiful Megan a little longer, I had no interest in wasting my breath or time on her companion.

Instead, I went to the basement.

At first glance, the basement, wide and spacious as it was, appeared to be nothing more than an extensive library. Thousands of books collected over hundreds of years, all lining the walls and shelves of the large room. The rarest and most valuable of them were kept in sealed glass cabinets. The rest were organized and shelved meticulously.

But there was far more to it than just books.

Wonderful as my library was, there was a secret here that only I knew. Neither my employees-turned-thralls nor my father were aware of the existence of my hidden room.

I walked to an empty segment of wooden wall, applied pressure at two specific points, felt the wooden panel crack open.

A single, makeshift switch-board sat inside, leavers and dials and buttons dotting its surface.

From that one panel, I could control everything.

I felt a smile spread my lips as I began flipping switches. It was time for me to have some fun with my new guinea pigs. Now my game would truly begin.