

Uninvited Guest

Chapter 4

My mind brushed over the house's occupants.

It was an isolated building. A large home set apart from any others. A palace amongst mundane hovels. There was an impressive pool in the back yard. A well-maintained garden, full of different coloured flowers and perfectly sheared hedges. Four vehicles in the expansive garage; a business sedan, a minivan, a flashy pick-up truck, and a motorbike.

Without a doubt, it was one of the more expensive homes in this particular suburb. The kind of home that belonged to the community's idols - the family that set the standards everyone else sought to emulate or imitate. Wealthy, prestigious, successful. A flawless, ideal family. The true, suburban dream.

And the impressions that I got from their minds... Fascinating.

My feet led me up the drive to the large house, mind occupied with the five people inside.

Father, mother, two sons, and a daughter.

I didn't delve too deep. Didn't penetrate their minds fully. Not yet. No, I only brushed up against them - felt the stray thoughts, the instincts and beliefs attached.

When I rang the doorbell, I paid close attention to the mind that got up to answer.

The mother.

And the impression I got from her...

Duty. Obligation. Responsibility.

Interesting.

When the door opened, I saw the curious woman.

She was a beauty.

Vibrant blue eyes and plump red lips. High cheekbones paired with soft cheeks, make-up visible but faint. Her hair was curled and shiny, naturally blonde, done up in a neat ribbon headband.

She wore a white apron over a red house dress. A get-up that screamed 'fifties housewife'. Complete with ample bosom and slim waist.

A quick prodding of her mind, plucking out the answer to a simple question, had me staring at her in surprise.

The woman was in her early forties - though she looked late twenties at the most. And not a single surgery or beauty treatment to help her mask her age. She was all natural.

Impressive indeed.

She flashed me a bright, welcoming smile. Red lips splitting to reveal pearl-white teeth.

"Hello," the woman said in a soft, sweet voice. "Can I help you?"

Another quick prod, tugging a sliver of information from this woman's mind. A single word.

"Bethany," I spoke, cool and calm. "Beth. Nice to see you."

A perfect eyebrow quirked up as those dazzling, sapphire eyes examined me more closely.

"I'm sorry," she said earnestly. "Do I know you? I'm afraid I don't seem to remember-"

I touched her mind again, this time placing something there.

Beth's eyes widened in surprise, her smile widening from friendly to joyous and welcoming.

"Dad!" Bethany gasped. "What're you doing here? Come in, come in. We're just having dinner right now... How are you? How's Mom? Gosh, if I'd known you were

stopping by, I'd have set an extra plate..."

I wasn't old enough to pass for Beth's father. But then, Beth herself looked barely old enough to pass for the mother of three young adults herself. With a little bit of mental manipulation, no-one in this household would question it.

I stepped inside the house, allowed the woman to lead me into the family's dining room.

A large, rectangular table.

At the head of the table, a forty-something year old man. Clean shaven, bulky but not fat. Wearing a neat suit with the tie still on.

Most men, I knew, would've at least taken their tie off when they got home. Undone the topmost button of their shirt and tossed aside their suit jacket too. It was human nature to get comfortable at home, after all. Wearing a full suit, all done up, when he didn't need to. Who did that?

To the father's right, on a longer side of the table, were his two sons. Young men that could've been twins, for how similar they looked. Carbon copies of their father, albeit younger. Dark hair both, wearing uniforms and blazers from the private academy they attended. Obviously muscular and athletic, with matching square jaws and straight-back postures.

And, opposite the brothers, was the daughter of the family.

Pretty, like her mother. Sharp facial features, reminiscent of a model or actress. Chocolate hair that she'd tied back in a neat, boring bun. The girl wore barely any make-up, less so even than her mother. Chapstick and mascara, nothing more.

Like her brothers, she was wearing a uniform. Though hers was different. Not from the same school. Did she attend one for girls only? Probably.

The daughter sat next to an empty chair, a spot at the table without a plate or cutlery. Leaving the final space at the table - the one directly opposite the father - for Beth. A steaming plate of half-eaten vegetables lay waiting for her.

Though, to my surprise, Beth didn't sit down there.

As soon as I'd entered the room, I'd implanted myself in the minds of everyone at the table. Taking up the role of Beth's father - father-in-law to the man and grandfather to his three children.

The man - Bryce, I plucked from his mind - stood up, nodded his head to me. As he did so, his three children all set their knives and forks down on the table, waiting.

"Father," Bryce said stiffly. "How unexpected. Welcome."

I felt the emotions radiating off him. Surprise and annoyance, both hidden expertly from the man's face.

As he spoke, his wife moved nimbly, fetching up her plate and cutlery and moving to the empty spot next to her daughter. She took the seat there, obviously trying to draw as little attention to herself as possible.

"Sit, please," Bryce said, gesturing to the now-empty spot at the table opposite him. "Would you like something to eat or drink?"

As the father sat down, the others around the table began picking up their knives and forks and eating again.

Fascinating.

It was pretty easy to figure out the structure of this family. The way they saw and interacted with each other.

It was a 'traditional' household.

The father was the 'man of the house', the 'breadwinner'. The mother was the homemaker. The live-in cleaner, gardener, chef, and babysitter. The sons were sporty, encouraged to be masculine and confident. The daughter, on the other hand, was expected to be meek and quiet - following in her mother's footsteps, learning how to be a

'good wife'.

I'd seen families like this before - the old-school, traditional, family values type. But never like this.

Always, there was a weak link. More than one, usually.

A husband who saw himself as an 'alpha', chasing after other women behind his wife's back. A wife who, tired of being treated like a live-in maid, ended up in the bed of a neighbour or one of her husband's friends. Rebellious children that hated the out-dated family structure, acted out against it.

To my amazement, there was none of that here.

Bryce, the husband, loved his wife. He didn't like showing it, wasn't a fan of public displays of affection. But he loved her all the same. Cared about her so deeply that he'd never even *think* of being with another woman.

Bethany was as content a housewife as it was possible to be. She took immense pride in her home, her family. Loving every second that she spent cleaning up after them, cooking for them, caring for them. This, she believed with all her heart, was where she belonged. The purpose for her existence. And she was utterly happy with that.

The sons - Bryce Junior and Adam - looked up to and respected their father, saw him as a role-model. They were competitive with each other, but in the most brotherly, healthy way possible.

And the daughter - Evelyn - wanted nothing more from life than to have what her mother did. A well-off, good husband and a happy, loving family.

It was *sickening*.

Seeing this family, touching their minds, knowing their innermost thoughts and feelings. I could barely contain my revulsion at how *idyllic* they were. The five of them had somehow managed to stumble into the perfect lives for themselves. The ideal existence for each of them.

Given all the power in the world, not one of them would change a damned thing about their own lives.

Disgusting. The lot of them.

Luckily for them, I was here to put things right. To take their magical, traditional family and warp it into something a lot more... *fun*.

After dinner, the five of them tried splitting up - wanting to go do their own things. Bethany felt compelled to wash dishes and clean the kitchen, Bryce wanted to go relax in his study after a long day of work, Evelyn had a homework assignment she wanted to do before bed, and Junior and Adam were both eager to head out back and kick a ball around.

I put a stop to all *that* nonsense.

A simple thought implanted in each mind, shifting their priorities so all five would gather in the house's parlour room.

"My, my," I said to the family when all were seated. "Aren't you lot a mess. Trapped in the past, trying desperately to live a life that never existed to begin with."

Husband and wife glanced at each other, confused.

"Gramps?" Bryce Junior said after a short, uncomfortable silence. "What're you-"

"Chasing a fantasy," I interrupted, shaking my head. So many options for me. Father with daughter, sons spit-roasting their mother? Or sons fucking their sister while their father watched and their mother paid a visit to her husband's boss? So many ways I could bring this too-perfect family down. "You should know by now. Nothing good lasts forever. Every pretty picture has a flaw."

"Uhh..." Junior said, shooting his father and brother quick glances. "What?"

"Beth." I spoke the word loud and clear, drawing every eye in the room to my not-daughter. "Over the course of your life, how many different men have you fucked?"

"Dad!" The woman gasped in horror.

"Alright!" Her husband barked, shooting to his feet. "That's enough! I don't know what's going on but-"

"Answer," I commanded.

In a heartbeat, I reached out and touched all five minds. Froze all but Bethany in place, and compelled *her* to answer truthfully.

"One," Beth whispered, eyes drifting to her husband. "Just one."

"Boring," I sighed, turning to face Bryce Senior. "What about you? Bet you fucked a few sluts before settling for this fine piece of ass, didn't you?"

"No," the man said proudly. "There's only ever been Beth. She's the only woman for me."

"Careful what you say," I smiled, a lovely idea sparking in my head. "Or I might just have to prove you right."

Dare I?

It'd destroy this family completely, no doubt about that.

Yes... Yes, that was it. That's what I'd do.

"Hold still," I said softly, focusing. "And say goodbye to the silly little paradise you've got going on here."

A moment later, it was done.

The father trembled where he stood, his new mindset and thoughts taking root. Leather chairs creaked and squeaked as both his sons slowly stood, walked over to him, took one of his hands each. Not one of the three said a word as the sons led the father out of the room.

Not that they were aware of the family ties any longer. In their minds, they were just a throuple of strangers who'd all met in a gay bar tonight.

All in all, not too dissimilar to my earlier idea of sons spit-roasting their mother. The only difference was that it wasn't the mother who'd be the meat.

As soon as the three men left the room, I turned to the girls.

"Well then, sweetheart," I said, addressing Beth - who still saw me as her father. "I think it's about time you let Evelyn here in on our family tradition, don't you?"

A little mental nudge was all it took to get the old-fashioned woman sweating and panting with arousal.

She looked to her daughter, licked her lips.

"Married with kids, sharing a bed with a *man*, forced to do all the cooking and cleaning? Bleh," I said to Evelyn. "Sounds downright dreadful, doesn't it? But don't worry, babygirl. Momma's about to show you a whole new world of possibilities. After tonight, you'll never think about getting married - at least to a man - ever again."

I stood, spun, began to leave.

The mother's tongue was down her daughter's throat before I even made it out of the room.

So much for their 'perfect' traditional family.

The rhythmic, muted sound of thumping - a bedpost hitting a wall elsewhere in the house, perhaps - provided the tune I skipped to as I left the house. As soon as I was out, front door shut tight behind me, I was met with silence.

Whatever was happening back inside the house... Well, it wasn't for me to see or hear. All I cared for was the one simple truth.

No home, no matter how it might seem, was flawless.

There was no perfection. Not here.

Suburbia was a place for debauchery. People could lie and tell themselves otherwise all they liked, but the truth was self-evident. All I was doing was maintaining it.

A duty I was more than happy to fulfil.