

## 39. Resident Psycho



Lucidius wouldn't call it quits, no matter how hard I pushed him away. I tried like hell but nothing seemed to be good enough. He had given up harassing other people, reserving his time and patience special for me. I explained this to Serkis and Layne. They told me I was being childish. I explained this to them multiple times. They told me they'd talk to him. And they did. And he only persisted more. I swear – that guy was impossible. Then again, most guys are.

I turned 19 as the time slipped by. I didn't really celebrate. I didn't tell people or make a big deal. Serkis knew. And she knew that I knew. I snuck out of my apartment and got to work before anyone could come over. I locked the door meticulously

behind me. And I went to work. I went to the bar, my second home. The family had told the regulars, who insisted on buying me drinks all night. Lucidius just smiled and grinned all night. As much as I hated to be the center of everything, the attention was pleasing. It put my mind at ease and my heart to rest, knowing that people gave a damn about me. Even if it was just something simple. It mattered the world to me.

I was left to lock up late again tonight. Lucidius stayed with me. I couldn't get that boy to do anything I wanted him to.

"Why don't you go on home, I'll finish up here." He was across the room wiping down tables. I laughed out loud, stifling myself when I realized he was serious.

"I'm sorry," I muttered. "You want me to give you the keys, leave you here alone, give you control and power over my job? This is my life, I'm not quite sure if you understand that."

He shrugged and cleaned faster. We got out of there in slightly less time than if I'd had to do everything alone. He waited with me again.

"Lucid, come on, please go on home?"

"Aw, come on, it's your birthday."

"Who told you?"

He smiled. "Come on. You should go home."

I gave him a look and he returned it, raising a brow at me. I gave up and let him walk me upstairs to the apartment. He wouldn't quit and I was too tired to try and make him. I might have been slightly intoxicated to boot.

We got to my door and he swung it open for me. I remembered specifically locking it, but I could have been mistaken. He helped me stumble in.

“Surprise!” I heard Serkis’ voice as I looked around. Layne, Serkis and Pandora were standing around, still working on setting things up I think. It was kind of funny. They all froze where they were standing and just yelled when we came in. Lucidius couldn’t stop laughing. Sylum was standing around something, probably working on getting drunk early. They had the babies...somewhere. I couldn’t help it – I started laughing too. It was really funny to walk in to them on chairs and things trying to hang up decorations and be cute and fluffy. And they’re working to industrial rock music. And the kids are sleeping to this. Only us.

We all sat around for hours and just laughed. We talked about everything under the sun and then some. Pandora ran back and forth to check in on the children. At one point I think Serkis and Layne held her down so she’d stay still. Sylum consented to the job when Pandora was stuck. I didn’t mind it either, but the longer we all stayed together, the more things got blurry. They insisted that Lucidius stay. At that point, I really didn’t mind. We sat around, played music, sang, laughed, you name it. We had a good time, and that was the point. We enjoyed each other’s company. That was the purpose of family. After the longer hours had passed, Serkis and Layne decided they should get the kids home. Pandora agreed. We all hugged and kissed at the door as they left. Sylum excused himself on his way out, explaining that he had work tomorrow and he needed an early start if he was going to attempt to sleep off the hangover he’d have. I laughed as they all left. I turned around and collapsed on the couch. Lucidius was still lurking around. I waved a hand for him to sit down.

“It was nice. Thanks,” I said. He smiled and patted me on the head.

“When you’re sober, I’ll give you my present.”

I raised a brow and looked him over. “I am sober.”

He laughed. "Oh really? Let's go then." And he pulled me off the couch, grabbing my coat as he pushed me out the door. I looked around.

"What are you up to?"

"Shush, it's a surprise."

And I was pushed, dragged, and pulled to the tattoo parlor in the middle of the night, though it might have been the morning. He unlocked the place and pulled me in, locking the door again behind him. After some more shoving and shushing, I was put in a chair in front of him. He was thoroughly excited. I might have been a little drunker then I liked to admit.

"So, where do you want it?"

"Excuse me?"

He smiled wickedly. I reached out and hit him. It might have been a tap but he got kind of offended. He laughed it off anyway. "I meant a tattoo. What kind of things did you have in mind there, kid?"

"I am not a kid."

"Sure you are."

"Nope."

"Right...you are so a kid. You're a little girl."

"Am not!"

"A tad pre-school are we?"

I reached out to hit him again. He laughed and smiled. I looked around the place. It was just Lucid and I. And this lunatic wanted to give me a tattoo. Oh man. I remember nodding absentmindedly, and I must have given him consent because he got started on...something. I couldn't really remember too much.

Whether because I passed out or fell asleep or something...I wasn't sure. But I couldn't remember. One way or another, I woke up at home, in my own bed, with Lucidius sitting close by.

"Whoa..."

"Yeah...fun birthday. You'll have to do that more often."

"What happened?" I started to get up and felt like everything hurt. I felt wrecked and my head was killing me. I tried to lie back down and found my back was killing me. I sat up halfway, resting on my elbows.

"Well, you got horrendously drunk and..." he smiled this evil little grin. I closed my eyes in an attempt to make him go away. As hard as I tried, blinking as much as I could, he was still there when I reopened my eyes. I growled at him.

"The truth."

He rolled his eyes. "Yeah, yeah, that...well...you did get a bit drunk. And we had a whole big party deal here with the rest of the family. And then you and me went over to the Dragon."

"Why did we go there?"

"For your present. From me."

"You gave me...a tattoo?"

He nodded, still smiling. I tried to jump out the bed but came up short and kind of stumbled. He was there to catch me and help me to my feet. I tried to beat him up but it was too difficult to swing the hits.

"Hey, hey, you'll like it, trust me, come on, I'll show you."

"Where is it?"

He grabbed my swinging arms to calm me down. And he brought me

close to him, against him. As his arms wrapped around, he brought them to my shoulder blades, creeping to in between, centered, below my neck. He poked and prodded carefully. I squirmed into him.

“Right...there.”

“Ow.”

He loosened up a little bit, still holding my arms as he pushed me away a little. “Aw, I’m sorry. But it came out really well.”

“What’s it of?”

“Ah, that’s the cool part.” He let me go and darted off. I tried to stand but found it to be kind of tricky. I sat on the edge of the bed to make things slow down. He came running back with a book of his own. He went flipping through the pages until he got to the one he wanted. He showed me the design.

“What...is...huh?”

“It’s the gang’s logo and the business’ logo and...it’s...well I made you a family kind of symbol. Like an icon or something. It’s everything in one, all together. It’s a business and a show and a family, you know? And it’s yours. You get the first one. If the rest of them like it, I’ll do it for them too.”

I held the book in my hand loosely, looking over it carefully. There was a lot in the one symbol to take into consideration, I couldn’t even properly describe it if I tried. I knew I liked it though. It took me awhile of thinking, staring past the page, weighing my options. It was very good. And drawn flawlessly. I was sure that the actual tattoo was just as well. It was in shades of white, black, grey, and red. I closed the book and handed it back to him.

“Well?”

“It’s...gorgeous.”

“Really?” He was genuinely pleased with himself. There was this flash of excitement in his eyes that made him seem like a child. He had dropped to a knee so that he was below me. He started to get up, book in hand, when I grabbed hold of him. He stood straight up, holding me up with him. And I kissed him. He was a bit taken aback, but not enough to let go.

“Thanks,” I whispered in his ear. He just stayed close with me, helping me sit back down on the bed. I held onto him so he’d sit with me. “I’m sorry that I’ve been so...”

“Cold?”

“Yeah...”

“It’s from lack of feeling.”

He was right. And I knew it. I looked at him. The smile was gone – it was all bare sincerity. I had a headache – I put my head on his shoulder. And he held me. And when I couldn’t sit up anymore, he lay down and I curled up against him. And he stayed the rest of the day while I slipped in and out of consciousness. Nothing more was said. Nothing more was truly considered. I remember we talked a little before I slipped off to sleep for the night.

“Aren’t you supposed to be crazy?” I whispered. He laughed and kissed my forehead, his hands over my eyes to try and get me back to sleep.

“Aren’t we all?”

And that was that.