

I cracked my knuckles as I squared up my shoulders and lifted my chin.

"Let's go, Kay, before we're late." I glanced a glare at him and he followed me like a lost puppy as I strode across the parking lot. Except lost puppies don't huff and puff and they *definitely* don't mutter curses under their breath.

As I reached the door, I took a deep breath and yanked it open. Kayden fell in step beside me, sauntering through the hallway with a confident look on his face. I must admit, it's pretty cool, how he can fake confidence so easily.

Although, I have it mastered, considering I've been doing it for the past years of my life. And it works, because as I strode down the hallway, the loud gossiping and sports talk faded down to a soft murmur.

I felt eyes on me, and I must admit, it's a little unsettling, even though I've dealt with it for a while. It's different because I'm actually going to know these people and introduce myself to them later.

Oh God, I hate doing that.

As I walked like I belonged there, *which I really didn't*, I glanced around, never looking into the eyes of our onlookers. I could already tell they recognized me.

The hallway was pretty dull, it was just a normal high school hallway. The lockers and the tiled floor were to be expected, just like the gazes of my classmates were.

I caught some of the squeals and whispers that *really* weren't as quiet as the people saying them thought.

"Leah... Rayne? There's no way that's her."

*"Oh my God, I (*I never really understood why people curse*) love her so much."*

*"The new girl's hot. What I wouldn't give to (*I barely resist the urge to cover my ears and start humming*). Wait, what do you mean she's famous?"*

"She said she was moving from Florida, but I didn't know she was moving here. We're so lucky, what are the chances?!"

I also heard some swoons concerning my brother, and basically, I wanted to puke. *What the freak do they see in him?*

The muttering slowly died down to just plain staring, and to say the least, it was awkward.

I almost sighed in relief when I saw a group of people that weren't affected by the sight of me and my ugly brother as everyone else.

As we walked by them, I saw a girl that has excellent taste in fashion throw herself on a boy that was *clearly* not interested in her. They were also attracting a significant amount of attention, like us, shown by the large group gathered around the pair.

I almost completely breezed past them until I heard a familiar voice speak louder. "I *told* you already, Carrie, you're annoying and I don't want you. And let me just say this, anyone who's watching us right now, mind your own (censored) businesses.

I froze, my eyes widening. I elbowed my brother hard, making him stop and stare at me incredulously.

I gestured pointedly towards a tuft of familiar hair, and he smirked, causing another round of murmurs

to occur from our stalkers.

I licked my lips and spoke out-loud clearly, "Wow, self-centered much, Ry?"

The boy in question stiffened up and turned his head sharply towards me, a glare evidently present on his face.

It faltered though, as he caught sight of who I was.

He looked older than I remembered, which would be obvious considering the last I'd seen him was four years ago, when he was thirteen. His brown hair fluffed up differently and his jawline was sharper. The black t-shirt he was wearing showed off his muscles that I'm sure he gained from (who wants to guess?) football, if he's still playing it. He looked amaz- I mean, *different*.

I definitely meant to say that.

But the thing is, I think I now know why he had such a large crowd gathered around him.

His adam's apple bobbed up and down as he swallowed, eyes widening as he showed off his long eyelashes that girls would *die* for.

Including me. What I wouldn't give for long eyelashes.

Let's not get sidetracked.

"Ei? Wha-," he faltered.

I beamed, rushing forward to throw my arms around Ryder. He stumbled but caught himself and strung his arms around my waist, chuckling deeply as I squeezed him tight.

Once I finally pulled away, I looked into his brown eyes, another thing that hasn't changed in his appearance. They searched my face but then caught sight of an item gleaming on my neck. His lips turned up.

"What are you doing here -wait. Kayden?" His eyes caught sight of Kayden, standing awkwardly behind me. Ryder let go of my waist and pushed me aside before they both performed their handshake they made up when they were eight and somehow still remembered. It consisted of rapid fist bumps and explosions that I had no interest in, but had no choice to watch as they reconnected.

I crossed my arms and sulked as they continued to ignore me and did a bro hug.

Eventually, I went around Ryder to stand next to Kayden because I would be ignored like a peasant no longer. In fact, I should be first priority. Obviously, they didn't know that yet, but I'll make sure they do soon.

"What are you guys doing here? How did you know... wait, why are you... wait the- what?" He sounded flabbergasted, his eyes darting between us.

Kayden and I both chuckled at the same time before looking at each other and glaring. I narrowed my eyes as he made a really rude gesture at me. *That's offensive.*

All of a sudden, Carrie, I'm pretty sure her name is, walked up to us and strung her arm through Ryder's. My eyebrows lifted up in amusement as he quickly unstrung his arm and stepped away, looking ready to barf.

Carrie had long sleek blonde hair and big siren blue eyes. She was, sorry to admit this, kind of pretty, and she knew it too. But, she didn't *quite* have the effect she wanted to. There was an aura surrounding her, and the aura said *try-hard*.

Her skirt was way too short and her top was... skimpy. But, I had to agree they looked good, and I've been around a lot of models to know if an outfit looks good or not. Her clothes were modest enough to pass dress code but at the same time very revealing.

Not that she has anything to sho- stop.

I assume she was the type of person to bad mouth everyone behind their backs and use a different pitch of voice when talking to guys she was interested in.

"Do you know these people, Ry?" Her high pitched voice (of course) asked him as she focused her eyes on Kayden.

Ew.

Ryder did not give Carrie the liberty of him answering her question, but he did state sharply, "Don't call me that."

She looked up at him with wide, fake innocent eyes. "But *she* called you Ry, so I thought I could too." She said the word '*she*' like she was talking about pests. She also narrowed her eyes at me, and I gasped internally.

I, in fact, am not a pest, nor should I be treated like one. Carrie shall now die.

Before I could pounce on her, Kayden grabbed my wrist like he knew what I was thinking. I suppose he did, though, since he has lived with me since a very young age.

Since I was born. He's lived with me since I was born.

Soon-To-Be-Dead-Carrie continued, "What's your name, Handsome?" Carrie fluttered her eyelashes flirtatiously, and I made a mental note to tell her to get her eyes checked soon.

I literally gagged while her attention was focused on my brother, glancing at Ryder and sharing a moment of widened eyes and suppressed wheezes together.

Carrie's eyes trailed down Kayden's body, looking at the hand that was around my wrist.

Her jaw ticked.

Kayden cleared his throat and glanced at me. I could tell he was holding in a laugh. "I'm Kayden... Rayne."

Her eyebrows raised and she tilted her head slightly. "Aren't you Leah Rayne's brother? Wow, so you're technically famous." She stated, acting like she was very knowledgeable while her eyes gleamed gleefully.

Wait, has she not recognized me yet?

Her expression dropped as she looked towards my attractive self.

"Is this your... girlfriend? No offense or anything, but she looks kind of..." she trailed off.

My eyes widened and I flickered my eyes towards Ryder and the others to see if they were getting this. They were, because I saw everyone's jaws dropped to the floor as I glanced around the hallway.

First, I knew she was dumb, but I didn't know she was *this* dumb. She knows Kayden's my brother, but again, *she doesn't recognize me?*

Honestly, that's just plain offensive.

And second, *did she just insult me?* I'm *this* close from ripping the hair off her head, but because I'm so nice, I'll refrain from killing her.

I just needed to pry off Kayden's hand before I become a hairdresser, which I'm sure I'd be amazing at.
Anyways...

I looked at the boy in question and almost started snorting because of the look on his face. His eyebrows were hovering underneath his hair line and his ugly eyes were widened into saucers. His jaw was slackened and he was staring straight at Carrie like she was mentally ill. Which she probably was.

"Wha-," *long pause*, "of course we're not d-."

I cleared my throat. "Yeah, he's my boyfriend, and I swear if you try to steal my," I subtly gagged, "*man*, I will rip your nonexistent eyelashes from your face."

I didn't even know why I just said that, but I'm assuming it was to see the look on her face.

And *man*, did she not disappoint.

Her jaw was locked in a hilarious position and I saw her throat move as she swallowed. Her eyes glittered in anger as her cheeks slightly reddened in embarrassment.

I smirked slightly, before looking around to our crowd.

Everyone's faces ranged from astonished to amused to confused. There was also a small group trying to advance on us, likely wanting to get an autograph from me.

I tugged my hand from Kayden's slackened grip and threw my arm around his waist (I was so close to running to the nearest bathroom to deep clean my hands) and leaned my head against his shoulder.

He was still frozen in shock, before he blinked several times and then started saying, "What the-,"

I interrupted him before he ruined my entire plan. "So, Charlotte. I mean Cherry, how do you know *Ry*?"

I stressed the *Ry* in that sentence just to point out that I could call him that and she couldn't. It gave me intense satisfaction.

Carrie stared at me, annoyed. "My name's *Carrie*, and *Ry* and I go way back," she stated confidently.

Ryder eyes narrowed into a glare towards her. His jaw ticked, and honestly, he looked pretty scary. To make it worse, his voice lowered to a menacing tone. "Call me *Ry* one more time."

Carrie took a tiny step backward, slightly shrinking away. Then, she probably realized she was too ugly to be bossed around, so she lifted her double chin and smirked.

"You'll accept it one day, babe. No one can resist my charms." She did a weird twitching with one eye (I still don't know what she was trying to do) and turned to me.

"So..." Carrie smiled sickeningly, "What's your name, girlfriend?" She looked me up and down while brightening her fake smile up to the full force of her blinding teeth.

I paused. I haven't thought this far. I blurted the first name that came to mind. "Olivia Rodrigo."

Mentally face palming, I closed my eyes, waiting for her to all me out.

The only thing I heard was silence. Opening my eyes, I surveyed the crowd that had grown bigger, all of the onlookers sporting exasperated expressions. I could tell they had wanted me to put Carrie in her place, but saying a name that was just as famous as me was probably not the way to do it, considering I don't look anything like Olivia.

I looked back at Carrie, eyes widening in surprise when I see her frown in contemplation.

"Hmm, your name sounds familiar. But, can't say I've heard it before." She looked back at me with a

tiny smirk while trying to cover it up with a sympathetic pout. Her arm rewound around Ryder's waist, the latter immediately pulling away from her.

I stared at her, stuttering. "I- you haven't," *cough*, "heard of me before?" My jaw was dropped open at this point.

Carrie turned to Kayden. "I'm sorry that I have to tell you this, but honestly, you could do better. Your girlfriend is... truthfully, ugly." She bit her lip seductively and checked her nails.

Anyone who looked at my face at this moment cringed away. I was bright red with rage while my hands were balling in and out of fists. My eyes stared straight into Dead-Negative-Two-Seconds-Ago-Carrie's soul while my lips angled into a sickly smile.

I was, not gonna lie, looking kind of scary, if I do say so myself.

And *that's* how I ended up slapping a two-faced little (many words describe what I am trying to say) and striding away confidently before any of my fans could anger me more with autograph requests.