

Chapter 21: What It's Going to Come to

"I knew it. I could tell how close you two were becoming. I had a gut feeling. I didn't want to believe it, but here you are: throwing it in our faces. Dylan?! Really?! Emma-Christine, what the HELL was going through your head?! Do you know how AWFUL he's treated me and Norman?!"

The words were barely past Norma's lips before she knew how stupid they sounded. She had absolutely no room to talk. None of the four of them did.

Em's tear-reddened eyes were blazing and her expression was ferocious. "I could ask the same thing of you! Norma..Norman: you gave birth to him; he's your own child!! Jesus Fucking Christ!!"

Icy fear prickled Norma's skin. She'd started to move closer to her sister, then stopped. Emma-Christine was getting that blank-eyed, feral look. One she recognized all too well. She'd seen the same look on Norman, the day he'd smashed a blender into Sam's head.

Oh god, what if she blacks out? What if they both black out?!

An even worse realization came over her: Emma-Christine didn't need any weapon, be it her gun, a blender, or anything. She could take someone out with her bare hands. She was a trained fighter, a trained killer. And that training evidently didn't leave her when she blacked out. In that way, she was even more dangerous than Norman.

Norman himself moved from behind Norma before she could stop him. Unafraid, he went to his aunt, standing in front of where she was seated on the stairs. For a terrifying moment, Norma thought he was going to attack her. But he didn't. He simply reached out and took her hand. Her head snapped up, and she drew a sharp breath, almost one of pain. As if she'd received an electric shock. Norman gave a gasp and then a wince, in much the same way. Both their bodies went rigid at first,

and then their blue eyes cleared and focused. They both exhaled and seemed to calm down. Back to normal. Somewhat. Somehow.

What the hell?!

“It’s true, Aunt Emma.” Norman said softly, tears still running down his own face. “I love her. She loves me. I’ve always loved my mother, but I fell in love with her a few years ago. She feels the same. We couldn’t fight it anymore. She’s never hurt me, never done a single thing we both didn’t want. We’d never do a thing to hurt each other. Please,” he gave a soft sob. “Please, can’t you try to understand that?”

Norman went back over to Norma and put his arms around her, folding her against him. She wrapped her arms around his waist and leaned into him, both their eyes still fixed on hers.

Emma-Christine still stared at them with disbelief, shock, and probably a million other emotions she couldn’t even separate, let alone process. *I know that look*, went through her mind. *That look he’s giving her right now. Pure and unadulterated love, devotion, adoration...my god, this boy worships the ground she walks on.* She knew it because Dylan looked at her the exact same way.

“How long..” she swallowed hard, wiped at her eyes. “How long has this been going on, with you two? Don’t make me spell it out; you know what I mean.”

“Since our first night in this house. That was the first time we both knew we couldn’t deny or fight it anymore. What we feel for each other.” Norma told her. “I should ask you how long it’s been going on between you and Dylan. After all, I also gave birth to the man you’re saying YOU’VE fallen in love with!”

No way anyone could argue with that, or try to hoist themselves onto any kind of moral high horse. There wasn’t one of those in existence.

Caleb...my brother..OUR brother...oh god!! It makes her not simply Dylan's aunt! It makes her..what? What in god's name would you even call that? But Norma wouldn't let that thought stay in her mind. She couldn't, not now.

“Since the night after you kicked him out, so four days. I..I can't help this, Norma..Norman..I've never felt this way about anyone, ever! It just hit me, hit us both, hard.”

Norma rolled her eyes, “What, he went running right to you?”

“No, not exactly. We met up the next day like we'd planned.”

Norma looked to be thinking of a cutting remark but was coming up empty. Norman suggested, “We should get this mess cleaned up, Mother. Aunt Emma.”

“I'm sorry about that. I'll buy us another one.”

“It's okay, Emma-Christine. Plenty of worse things any of us could've done, other than dropping a wine bottle. I never meant for you to see that, for you to walk in on us like that. And I still have the vodka anyway, couldn't think of a better reason for it.”

Norma found the mop, scrub-bucket, and some towels, while Norman and Em picked up the bigger pieces of glass, dropping them into a trash bag. Then she soaked up the spilled wine before giving the foyer a good sweeping and mopping. The normal, everyday task of cleaning helped them calm down, restored a semblance of life-going-on.

Some of the wine had soaked into the dark flower-patterned carpet in the front hallway. As much as she scrubbed at it, Norma couldn't get all of it up. It was going to leave a darker stain, probably would even if she rented one of those rug-cleaning machines. An accompanying idea struck her as hilarious, and she couldn't stop the laugh that escaped her, startling Em and Norman.

“Mother, what on earth could be funny?” Norman demanded. For some reason, his question made her laugh harder.

“Because every time I come downstairs in the morning, I’m going to be thinking ‘Oh, what a beautiful day, and oh, look, that’s where my sister dropped and broke a bottle of merlot all over the floor when she first learned about me and Norman!’”

That shared thought was all it took to push Emma-Christine into the same minor hysteria. She let out the same kind of laugh, then “I need a drink. Badly. So do you, little sister. Come on, you too Norman.”

In the kitchen, Norma and Em each sipped on generous helpings of vodka poured into tumbler glasses. Any other time, she never would’ve allowed it, but she let Norman have a taste in a glass as well. Given the current situation, a bit of underage drinking seemed an extremely small issue. Though both his mother and aunt grinned at the revolted expression he made.

“This stuff tastes terrible; how the hell can you two drink it?” he made a gagging face and dumped the rest in his glass into the sink. “No thank you!”

Norma wasn’t sorry he didn’t like it. “Would you check on the roast in the oven, honey?” she asked. “It should be almost done.” More of that craving for normalcy.

“Of course, Mother.” Norman located oven mitts and did as she asked.

Emma-Christine slowly shook her head in wonderment, her gaze moving from Norma to him, back to Norma. She slugged more from her drink, then:

“I feel like the biggest fucking idiot in the world right now, you know that Norma?” she admitted.

“Don’t be ridiculous, that’s the last thing you are!”

“Then how the hell could I have been so blind to what’s been right in front of me?! Huh? A four-year psych degree and three years at Quantico, and STILL I never saw this between you two until now!”

Norma rotated her glass in her hands, sliding it around on the kitchen table where they were seated. “I don’t know..maybe because you were so caught up in your own love drama. And really, you even said at one point you thought Norman and I are sweet. With how close we are. Has all that much really changed?”

Em poured another splash into both their glasses, both of them catching Norman’s disapproving frown as he joined them at the table.

“All right, baby. We know! That’s enough; we’re not going to get hammered. I’m putting it away.” Norma picked up and closed the vodka bottle, stashing it back in the pantry.

“Good. I hope you don’t. Roast’ll be done in five more minutes.” Norman informed them.

The three of them were quiet for a few beats, then “Fuck, how am I going to tell Dylan that you two know about us?!”

“Do you really love him, Emma-Christine? Or are you just going to screw him a few dozen times and then kick him aside when you get bored with that? You’ve got a track record of doing that with men.”

“Norma, it’s COMPLETELY different! YES, I love him! Love him so much it scares me. In 44 years on this planet, I’ve never felt anything this strong for anyone.” Em drew a shaky breath. “I’d never do that to him, EVER! I know it’s only been a short time, but I don’t want to even think of a life without him in it.”

Norma met her eyes. “This isn’t going to be pretty, and we all know it. I imagine he’s going to try to make you choose between him and us, if he hasn’t already. That’s not fair to any of us, and I don’t want that!”

Norman cut in with, “I don’t want that either! Dylan would have no right to do that to us!”

As Norma and Aunt Emma talked about his brother, Norman heard the soft whisper of his mother in his right ear again, pulling his attention from the real Norma and real Aunt Emma.

“She’s dangerous, but she can protect you, sweetie. Protect all of us. If we let her. If she will.”

Aunt Emma’s disembodied voice followed in his left ear, “You can’t hurt me, Norman, and I can’t hurt you. I’m part of that darkness in you. I have it too. I feel it too.”

Norman got up from his chair and gently but firmly took the almost-empty vodka glasses away from his mother and aunt. Norma caught his hand and squeezed it. When he took his aunt’s glass, his fingers briefly brushed the top of her hand. That same (though milder) pain shot through his hand, and the voices in his head were cut off, as if they’d been a recording playing and someone pulled the plug.

His eyes met hers, both fearful and incredulous this was happening. This on top of the discovered truth about him and his mother, about her and his brother.

Norman covered it with his own opinion on that matter, “I think you deserve a lot better, Aunt Emma. Dylan’s a low-life, he’s never amounted to anything, and Mother’s right: he’s always been so mean and hateful to both of us.” He put the two glasses in the sink, found two clean ones, filled them with ice water, and handed one to each of them. Taking his seat, he went on, “You’re so far out of his league. You deserve..I don’t know..a lawyer, a senator, a businessman, you know..someone successful.”

Emma-Christine gave a short, dry laugh. “Could either of you suddenly go be with someone else?” she asked.

“NO!” Norma and Norman exclaimed at once.

“NEVER! I’d die without her! I don’t even want to think of living without her, not even for one minute!” Norman reached over and took Norma’s hand again.

“It’s like we share the same soul, Emma. Always have. Always will. I’d die if anything bad ever happened to him! If it did, I’d be one step after!”

Emma-Christine slowly nodded, “Then you two know how I feel about Dylan.”

More understanding was sinking into Norma. She took a gulp of her ice water, which seemed to bring the reality home even more. “We’re really in a conundrum, aren’t we? Will you promise me one thing, Emma?”

“Anything.”

“No one else can find out. About any of us. Not the police or the FBI, not anyone in this town or in Washington, not your parents, not ANYONE! Ever.”

Emma-Christine locked eyes with them both. “They won’t. I swear on my life they won’t! As long as we look out for each other. As long as we all agree to protect each other.”

“Then get him out here. We’re going to tell him. We have to. All of it.”

Em went to get her purse from the living room floor where she’d dropped it, brought it back to the kitchen, found her personal iPhone. She had a couple of texts from Dylan, the last one about 20 minutes ago:

Are you still at Norma’s?

and then: Where are you? I'm starting to worry!

Guilt shot through her heart; she hated that she'd done that to him. Though it was mild compared to the hell she was sure was about to break loose. She called him, and he answered on the first ring:

"Emma! Is everything okay? When are you gonna be home?"

Damn, she loved him for being so worried about her for only a short absence. She inhaled a deep, shaking breath.

"Dylan...honey.." she began. God, she didn't want to do this to him. But no choice. "You need to come out here to your mom's, right now. We need to talk. All four of us."

"Why?! What's wrong; what happened?!" he sounded panicked.

Tears started rolling down her cheeks again. "They know about us." Her voice started to shake before cracking with a sob. "And that's..that's not all. I'm so sorry, baby!"

"DID YOU TELL THEM?! Why?! Why the hell would you--"

"I didn't! Not directly. It came out. Norma had already figured it out before, anyway! Please, just get out here, okay? That's not the only thing; there's more. But I don't want to say it over the phone; it's not my place to!"

She heard Dylan also draw a shaky breath, trying to calm himself. "All right, I'll be there as soon as I can."

"Dylan?"

"Yeah?"

“I love you. No matter what, I love you!”

“I love you too. Be there soon.” he said softly before ending the call.

Dylan must have broken every speed limit law in the whole town, because he got there in record time, just as Norma, Norman, and Emma-Christine were clearing away the dinner dishes. None of them had eaten much, understandably. He'd barely made it into the kitchen before she was in his arms, and he grabbed her up in a fierce, tight hug. She tried to hold it back, but a sob escaped her and she buried her face in his shoulder. The tough, aggressive federal agent who'd captured countless criminals had temporarily taken a back seat. Here was a woman desperately in love, and desperate to hold onto the man she loved, no matter the threats they might face.

“It's okay, Emma. It's gonna be okay; we'll be all right!” Dylan kissed her cheek several times, still holding her. “No one's keeping us apart, not them, not anyone. I won't let them!” He leaned his forehead against hers, stroking her jawline with the backs of his fingers.

Norma was nothing less than astounded to the point of speechlessness. In his entire almost-22 years of life, she'd never seen Dylan behave like this. Not towards anyone. Not even close. Gone was the drifting loner who cared about no one but himself. In his place was a man in love with this woman, and a man prepared to fight for her, to fight for them both.

He's acting like..like Norman does, with me! Good god, it's true!! He LOVES her, loves her so much it's crazy! Something I know--that WE know--all too well.

She turned and looked at Norman himself, who was equally slack-jawed at their raw display of devotion. “It's true.” he said softly, echoing her same thought.

They didn't have time to ponder it further, because Dylan turned and glared angrily at them.

“So you figured us out, huh Norma? What did you say to her, to get her so upset? You think you’re going to ruin this for us?! You’ve got another thing coming if you think that! I love her, and she loves me! We don’t CARE what you think, or what some dumb-ass law says is right or wrong!”

I love her, and she loves me. Norman had spoken the same words only a short time ago.

“I didn’t say anything to her!” Norma yelled back at him, “It’s more complicated than that! If you’d just let me explain--”

Dylan sneered at her and interrupted, “What’re you gonna do, Norma? Call the police on us?” he taunted. He tightened his arm around Em’s waist. “She IS the police! We could deny it and say you made the whole thing up in your crazy head! Who do you think they’d believe, you or her?”

“Dylan, stop it!” Em broke away from his side. “Don’t talk about me like I’m not here; you know I hate that, and let her finish!”

Dylan turned to her with tear-filled eyes, “It’s not going to make any difference, anything she says. Let’s just go, please? Right now. I wanna go. We can leave, start over, you and me. I’ll go with you to Seattle, then home to D.C.” He pulled her close to him again. “Please, Emma. I want that so much. We don’t ever have to see them again. We can start a new life together.”

She swallowed hard, “I--we can’t do that. They need me, need US, more than you know. We all need each other.”

“Why?! Why do we have to keep them in our lives?!” He hadn’t noticed that Norma and Norman had moved around to the same side of the kitchen table, their arms also around one another’s waists.

Norman could keep silent no more. "Because Mother and I are in love, Dylan! We have been for a long time. Aunt Emma walked in on us tonight, then she told us about you two!"

Dylan's arms dropped from Emma-Christine as he gaped at his mother and half-brother. His turn to be totally slack-jawed.

"WHHAAT!!...oh my GOD..Holy shit...YOU TWO!?!?!? You've GOT to be FUCKING kidding me!! Norma!! Don't you realize what--"

"We're not doing ANYTHING different from what you're doing, Dylan!! I realize THAT!! Don't you FUCKING DARE try to tell me any different!!" Norma fired back at him, her eyes blazing.

If only he knew the whole truth.. She had to shove that thought aside again.

Dylan started to retort, then stopped, fell silent. To say his head was reeling was a massive understatement. He looked at Emma-Christine, "You're telling me you had no idea about them before tonight? No idea they were..god, more than mother and son? You spent a night in the same bed with them! You expect me to believe you didn't see anything?!"

"YES, because NOTHING HAPPENED! Not that night. And NO, I didn't think that about them, I swear it! I couldn't see it! Not until now, when it was right in front of me!"

"You've been defending them from day one!" Dylan stepped away from her, shaking his head in disbelief. "I can't believe this."

She stepped back closer to him, "Norma's right. What they're doing IS no different from us! They love each other! Just as much as we love each other."

Dylan was retreating down the hallway to the front door. "I need some time alone. I can't even think straight about this right now!" He exited the house and headed down the hillside stairs, all three of his family right behind him.

"Dylan! Don't do this! Please!" Emma S. started sobbing again, running after him and grabbing his arm as they reached the bottom of the stairs where his motorcycle was parked. Her glance fell to the rest of the gravel parking lot, and what she saw made her freeze. A ghostly-white, hollow-eyed, obviously very sick girl was standing there. She had long black hair, evident Asian ethnicity, and a load of bleeding track marks along her arms.

"No. No, go away. You're not real." Em muttered under her breath.

Dylan looked at her in alarm. "What are you saying, Emma?!"

Too late. He looked in horror at the woman he loved, as her eyes rolled back in her head, showing only the whites, as she started to collapse to the ground. He caught her in his arms before she could.

"Call 911!!" he yelled at Norma and Norman, as they reached them. He grasped her and hoisted her up into his arms bridal-style, no easy feat since she was lean but muscular and only a few inches shorter than he was.

"No." Emma-Christine muttered, coming around. "No hospital. I'm fine. Please, don't."

Dylan ignored whatever his mother was calling after him, as he carried her back up the stairs, towards the house. He got up the first section of stairs before she started to struggle, "Put me down. I'm not some damsel in distress. I mean it." He reluctantly set her on her feet, but her knees buckled under her. He grabbed her left arm and put it over his shoulders, holding her upright with his other arm. Norma caught up with them, grabbed her sister's right arm, and hauled it over her own shoulders before Dylan could protest. Further supporting her, they helped her back into the

house, Norman right on their heels. They got her down on the sofa, Norma grabbing a couple of throw pillows and putting them behind Em's head. "I'll go get her some water." she said as she raced for the kitchen. Dylan went to the downstairs bathroom, wet and wrung out a hand-towel for her to put on her forehead. While they both were busy with those tasks, Norman crouched on the floor beside her, leaned close and whispered,

"Aunt Emma, did you see something, or hear something?...something no one else could?"

She slowly nodded. "Yes." she whispered back. "Do you?"

"I hear things. Voices."

They didn't have time to continue because Dylan returned, pushing his brother out of the way and kneeling beside her. He put the cold compress on her head. "I still think we should take you to the hospital."

She held the damp towel to her head. "Baby, I just fainted. I'm sure it's the stress from tonight. Understandably. I'm FINE. Stop worrying; I'll be okay." She gratefully accepted the water from Norma, who had joined them.

"She's right. Dylan. No matter what, if she goes to the hospital, this will become public. I'm sure it'd be all over town by tomorrow! How would it look if the agent who caught Maggie Summers and Zach Shelby suddenly collapsed in a fainting spell? It'd make her look like a laughing stock!"

"I agree with your mother." Emma-Christine told him. "This is what it's going to come to: we're all going to have to take care of each other. Figure out how to put whatever differences we have aside and have each other's backs, no matter what!" She glared hard at Dylan, then at Norma, with that last phrase. "We involve anyone from the outside when something bad happens, and we're taking a huge risk every time. You get what I'm saying?"

Never mind the issue of Dr. Ross. She'd deal with that when the time came.

Dylan caressed her cheek with one hand. "Yes. It's not gonna be easy. I'm still trying to wrap my head around all this. But I'll try. For you. I'd do anything for you."

She grasped his wrist. "I know." She gulped from her water glass and put it in the coffee table, then got to her feet. Feeling woozy and exhausted, but otherwise okay.

It was Norma's turn to push past Dylan. She caught her sister in a tight hug. "I still don't really like this. You with him. I'm going to have to get used to it, and it's going to take time. But you're still my sister. My family. No matter what."

Emma-Christine squeezed her, then broke the embrace. "He's still your son too, Norma."

Norma shut her eyes in a slow blink for a moment, as if she didn't want to be reminded of that. *God, could there ever be any family situation more screwed-up than ours?* she thought.

"We should all get some sleep. It's been the most unbelievable night. You two can stay in Dylan's old room, of course. If you want."

"Thanks, Norma." Dylan replied. He turned to head for the stairs, Emma-Christine moving to his side. Before she got far, Norman caught her by the hand again. No burning electric pain going up their arms this time, but that unexplainable, undefinable connection was still there. His turn to hug her. He whispered in her ear, "We need you."

She hugged him back. "I need you. All of you." she whispered back. When their eyes met briefly, unspoken understanding passed between them. Something their partners weren't picking up on, due to the gravity of the other revealed truths. At least they weren't aware of it yet..

My black-outs. She can make them stop. I can make hers stop. This can't be real; this kind of thing isn't supposed to exist...but it does..

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A bit later, Norman was freshly showered and in his pajamas, laying in his bed and waiting for his mother to finish her shower. He stared at the ceiling, still in disbelief at all the events that had unfolded that night. Nothing was ever going to be the same. Where were they all going to go from here? His aunt had sworn to protect them, that no one would ever find out about him and Norma. He wanted to believe her with every fiber of his being. *After all*, he thought, *she can't tell anyone about us without it leading right back to her and Dylan. She's really right: If we don't stick together, we'll all go down in flames. In more ways than one.*

He didn't want to ruminate any more over all this tonight. The last thing he wanted was to get upset and bring on the threat of another black-out. How he was going to tell his mother about what he and Aunt Emma could both do about the black-outs: Norman couldn't even begin to fathom that.

He smiled as Norma came into his room, wearing that blue satin robe that she looked absolutely gorgeous in. Although she looked gorgeous in anything. She shut both doors to his room, went to his bureau, and pulled out another one of his pajama tops. She'd gotten in the habit of wearing them to bed--when she wore anything at all. Norman loved it; the sight of her in any of his shirts was beyond perfect. She gave him a tired smile as she moved to the side of his bed, untied and dropped her robe. She was wearing only a pair of black lace panties under it.

"God, you're so beautiful." he told her, his eyes drinking in every curve of her perfect figure. Suddenly everything else that had happened didn't matter as much. They could handle it. They could face anything, as long as they had each other.

Norma slipped on his pajama top, doing up only the first few buttons, before joining him. She snuggled up into his arms, resting her head in the crook of his neck and shoulder, giving a deep sigh.

“Well...Dylan and Aunt Emma..” Norman began but trailed off. It was all he needed to say.

Norma gave a brief, dry laugh and wrapped her arms tighter around him. “Good god, Norman! Can you believe it?! Great to know I wasn’t imagining things, but still..life’s a veritable carnival of ironies, isn’t it?”

“A carnival freak sideshow of them, Mother. The whole time, we were trying to hide us from them, and they were trying to hide them from us.”

She turned to face him, her face growing serious and the beginnings of tears coming to her eyes. “Honey, remember a couple of weeks ago when I told you there was another secret I wanted to tell you, but I wasn’t ready? I’m..” she swallowed against the growing lump in her throat. “I’m ready now. This also can’t ever leave this room. We can’t ever tell them. It would destroy them both. It’s only between you and me, okay?”

“Of course, Mother.” Norman grew worried right away. Whenever she was sad, he wanted to cry himself, and do something to make it better.

“If there’s one person on this earth who knows this truth about me, I want it to be you.” Norma struggled to go on. This horrible nightmare of a memory she’d never fully escape. “I grew up in Akron, Ohio. About a two-hour drive away from where your aunt grew up.” She closed her eyes and paused, her voice cracking. “God, all those years..two hours away..and we never knew. But anyway, that’s not what I want to tell you. My brother used to force me to have sex with him. It started when I was 13, and it continued until he moved out.”



“Mother! Oh god..Mother, I’m so sorry! That fucking piece of scum!! If I ever run into him--”

“Norman, it’s okay honey. And don’t start cursing as much as your aunt does. I love her, but that’s a terrible habit of hers.”

“I’m sorry, Mother. I won’t.”

“Anyway,” She wiped at her eyes, as he held her tight to him and kissed her forehead, her cheeks, then her closed eyes. “I couldn’t do anything about it, to make it stop. My father was so violent; I was terrified of him the whole time, and my mother was already checked out of her body.” If Norma was going to tell her soulmate this awful truth about her, she was going to tell him all of it. She managed to go on,

“When I moved out and married John Massett, I was already pregnant.” she whispered. Norman cupped her face and looked into her eyes, the horrid realization sinking into him.

“Mother, are you saying he wasn’t Dylan’s father? That your brother is?!” Norman’s hushed voice was full of shock.

Norma nodded and buried her face in his shoulder, her body shaking with soft sobs for long moments. Finally she continued, “Now you understand why I first reacted like that to Dylan with Emma-Christine. Norman, he doesn’t know! He can’t ever know Caleb’s his dad. Neither can she. Like I said, it would RUIN both of them! I can’t do that to them. Regardless of what I think about Dylan or any of it, I know they’re so in love. I see it. I can feel it. I know you do too.”

Norman nodded, “He looks at her like I look at you.” he said softly. He lifted her chin and gently kissed her lips. “I love you so much. I’ll take this to my grave, I swear it, Mother. They’ll never know. I promise.”

“I love you more than life itself, Norman.”

They kissed and held each other for a while, before Norman reached over and turned off the lamp. Wrapped around one another, both fell into exhausted sleep.

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The next morning, Em awoke slowly to the lovely feeling of Dylan's lips on her neck. They'd fallen asleep almost as soon as they'd fallen into his narrow bed, pressed together, their arms around each other. She'd dragged herself out of her suit and into the same cream-colored satin pajamas she's previously borrowed from Norma. He'd stripped down to his boxers. Waking up to the feel of her was heavenly, with the silky fabric against his bare chest and the warmth of her curves underneath it.

"You're so beautiful when you wake up," he murmured into her ear. "I don't ever want to wake up without you right here, with me."

"I don't either, baby." she said softly, bringing his lips to hers. Then the memories of the night before came flooding back. Both stared into space as he turned onto his back, pulling her with him as she rested her head on his shoulder. There was always going to be a line drawn in their lives: before and after the truth about their family foursome came out.

Emma-Christine spoke first, "I know this is a shock. It was a hell of a shock for me, for Norma, and for Norman. You're not alone in that, not at all."

Dylan sighed and pulled her closer, "Some part of me had been picking up that certain vibe from them, that they were so close physically. Another part of me denied it, refused to believe it. After what you told me after you fell asleep in Norma's bed, I'd mostly convinced myself it had all been my imagination. But I know you couldn't see it at first either."

"Ironically, your mother said as much about us."

“This is going to keep on being ironic, isn’t it?” Dylan shook his head slowly, still struggling to get used to the reality.

“Probably more than we realize, even now.”

He was quiet for a bit, then “You know something? In some way, I don’t care as much that they’re together. I mean, if I’d found out before I met you, I would’ve freaked out so much worse, gone right to the cops. But now..on some level..I get it. If he loves her even a fraction as much as I love you, they’ve got some crazy intense love going on. As much as it’s..you know..seen as wrong..”

She turned to lay on her side, propping herself on her elbow. “Does what you and I have feel wrong?” she asked quietly.

“No! Emma, nothing else has EVER felt more right or good to me!” He cupped her cheek and kissed her. When he pulled back, “Yeah..I get what you mean. We’re no different. This is still gonna be tough for me to get used to.”

“It’s going to be tough for all of us. But will you promise me something?”

“Anything for you.”

“Will you make an effort to be nice?”

He smiled, “I’ll at least try.”

“Good. Now get dressed. I’ll go make us some coffee.”

She swung out of bed and headed downstairs, met by the aroma of breakfast cooking. Norma was already in the kitchen, busy making enough bacon, eggs, and toast for the four of them.

The sisters exchanged a glance that both of them understood: *Please, let's not have this be awkward.*

“Good morning, Norma.” She gave a warm smile, trying to sound like life was the same, moving forward.

Norma returned the smile, looking relieved. “Good morning. How do you like your eggs?”

“Scrambled would be great.”

“No problem.”

Emma-Christine went to the coffee machine and brewed a pot. She was just pouring it into two mugs when Dylan and Norman both entered the kitchen.

Norman went up behind his mother at the stove and hugged her around the waist, kissed her cheek. “Morning, Mother.” he murmured. She stiffened for a moment, but then the two of them turned and saw what followed.

Dylan joined Em by the counter as she handed him his coffee. He'd put on his jeans and white tank top undershirt, bringing on a lust-filled glance from her. Her eyes roamed over him as she unconsciously licked her lips. He caught that look and caressed the side of her face, leaned in to give her a lingering, passionate kiss. When they broke apart, he shot a defiant smirk at Norma and Norman.

Norma put a hand on her hip. “Ahem..if you two are going to do that in front of us,” She put her hand on Norman's cheek and brought his lips down to hers, kissing him long and good, teasing his bottom lip with her tongue. It caused him to nearly drop his plate he'd been loading up with breakfast, but then he eagerly returned her kiss.

Dylan's eyes nearly bugged out of his head, and then he blinked hard several times. He didn't know if he'd ever get used to his mother kissing Norman like that. Then

Emma-Christine pinched his chin gently and turned it so he faced her. "Remember, be nice." she admonished. "Anyway, you started it!" She gave him a briefer kiss, then abruptly slapped him on the ass. "Go sit down." She jabbed a finger at the table. "I'll bring you your breakfast."

"Yes, honey." Dylan rather meekly obeyed her.

At first Norma gawked open-mouthed at them, scandalized. Then she was unable to stop the grin starting to spread over her face. Dylan would apparently do any little thing her sister ordered him to do. This time Emma-Christine smirked, even as she was starting to blush. Damned if that smirk didn't look so much like Norman's.

Norma and Emma finished dishing up breakfast for everyone, and all four settled around the kitchen table. However they might still stumble and fall, the Bates family was taking tentative steps forward.