

Chapter 38: Truth and Consequence

Norman's mind reeled back to that day in bed, when Norma had told him the truth. About Caleb, about Dylan, about the horror that must always be kept from his aunt and brother. Red clouded into his vision. He wanted him dead. Right there and now. Norman felt the control loosening on his mind and the darkness beginning to take over. He nearly welcomed it.

"You." he growled. "How could you do what you did? You show up here now?!" Norman advanced on Caleb, who put his hands up in defense, looking freaked out at the murderous look on his nephew's face.

"Hey, man, calm down, okay? I just want to talk to her, it's been years. I don't know what she told you about me, but--"

"Get out. Now. We don't want you here!" Norman was barely able to stop his own hands from seizing his mother's rapist brother around the throat and squeezing the life out of him, right there in the street. "She was your sister! How could you have done that?! I see you again, you're dead!!"

It was only Caleb's luck that Norman didn't have that knife his mother had so recently used to get rid of that other trouble. Caleb outweighed him by quite a bit, but this strain of fury gave Norman and Aunt Emma surprising strength. He managed to make a lunge at him, but not before Caleb managed to get the door of his ancient-looking van open, start it up and speed away.

Norman stood in the street in the van's empty space for several minutes, breathing hard, trying to get that rage under control. That piece of scum had to show up now? After his mother was finally starting to have the happiness she deserved, the rapist who'd scarred her was going to ruin everything. "He's not gonna go away," Norman

muttered as he made his way back across the street to the Mercedes. "He's gonna come back, gonna hurt her again...."

Somehow he was parked cliffside, the next thing he realized, overlooking the ocean. Norman saw the setting sun glinting off the waves, and it would've been gorgeous on any other day. Now, it was only terrifying. He'd driven all the way out here while blacked out, a couple of hours from home. He could've crashed, hurt someone, hurt himself..even killed someone. A strangled sob came from deep in his throat. Worst of all, he'd left his mother alone with her brother loose in town. Norman grabbed his phone; he had over a dozen increasingly panicked voicemails and twice as many texts from Norma, the last one of her sobbing "Honey, please! Where are you?! If you don't answer, I'm gonna have to call the police! You know we can't have them around if we can help it; NORMAN!!" the last of her message was of her crying that was as hysterical as his own once he'd finished listening to it.

Norma answered before the first ring even finished as he called her back. "I'm so sorry, Mother! Something bad happened and I blacked out, I drove out of town and out here by Brighton. I didn't know what I was doing!"

"Oh sweetie!" Relief and terror were at fighting for control in her voice. "Thank god you're okay!! Come home right now, Norman! We'll talk about it then."

Norman kept crying and shaking as she hung up, though he recognized that false brightness, that pretending of "normalcy" in her tone. She must have called one of the cops out to the house after all. He managed to calm himself enough to pull up "Home" in his GPS and start up the car, head back onto the coastal highway.

When she ended the call she'd been frantic to get, Norma turned back around to face Deputy Harrison with a too-bright smile. "Oh, that was him and everything's fine now!" she assured her, "He's on his way home. Thank you for coming out here,

Deputy." Norma moved quickly to show Harrison out, the other woman looking skeptical.

"Are you sure, Mrs. Bates?" she asked. Only minutes ago, the boy's mother had been out of her mind with hysterical worry. Now a switch had been flipped.

"Of course! We're good now; we just an a disagreement earlier and he needed to take a drive to clear his head, but we're *okay now!*" Norma opened the outside front door and stood to the side, giving Harrison an obvious cue to get going. The deputy wished her good night and left, a confused and rather troubled look on her face.

Norma slammed the inside door shut and leaned her back hard against it, knees weakening as she sank to the floor, struggling to get her breath and get the shaking in her body under control. Norman's meds hadn't stopped a black-out. It hadn't happened since before he went to Bayview. Actually, since before Emma-Christine burst into their world and this whole wild ride got set in motion. Something horrible had to have set off the black-out.

Her phone rang just as she picked it up again, wanting to text him to be careful driving home. Norman called her back before she got the chance. "Honey, don't talk and drive, just come home! It's dangerous, and--"

"I pulled over, Mother. Don't worry." His voice was calm if trembling a little. "Mother...I have to tell you something." Norman was terrified to tell her, but even more terrified not to. "Mother, your..um..your brother's in town, he ran into me outside the store earlier and told me who he was and he was looking for you!" Once the words started, Norman couldn't stop the flood of them, "I told him to leave, that we didn't want him here, and I almost attacked him! Then I blacked out and the next thing I knew I was out here! I left you and I couldn't help it; I'm sorry!"

Sobs of both rage and fear were ripping through Norma. One of her worst fears for the past couple of decades: her tormenter finding her. She hadn't seen Caleb since the day she'd run away with John Massett all those years ago, pregnant with Dylan and vowing never to let anyone find out who his real father was. Until Norman, she'd never loved or trusted anyone enough to tell them. After everything she'd done to forget and move on, it would all come crashing back if she ever had to see Caleb again. Not a word from or about him in years, and Norma told herself she'd been an idiot to think it would always stay that way. She drew her knees up to her chest and hugged them, shivering in spite of the heated house. How long she sat there, crying, she couldn't say. Only when Norman got home and had to knock on the inside door to get her to move enough so he could get inside and drop to his knees with her.

"Mother! Oh, god Mother! I'm sorry." Norman gathered her in his arms and held her as she cried even harder. "I'm here. I'm gonna take care of you." He pressed a kiss to her forehead. "He didn't show up here, did he?" It was an obvious question, given their motion-detecting security system, but Norman couldn't help being worried.

"No. No one was here, at the house, at all." she murmured. She got to her feet, shaking badly. Norman put a hand under her knees and swept her up bridal-style into his arms, making her tears turn into a loving smile. He carried her up the stairs and lay her on the bed they shared, reverently. She was his queen, and he treated her as such. He leaned over and kissed her lips, still shy after all this time. It sent a hot rush of arousal through her, his sweet bashfulness. She pulled at his belt, undoing it before ripping it loose. Then reality set in, before they went any further. "Norman, honey," she began, pressing her palm to his chest, "Wait. We need to do something about this." Norma rolled away from him and grabbed her phone where she'd left it on the night stand. She tapped "FaceTime" before Norman could protest. When her sister's face came on the screen, Norma didn't give her a chance to say anything, "Emma, something terrible's happened. We need your help!"

3,000 miles away, Emma and Dylan were cuddled on the couch, still up and watching some lame sitcom, but loving the company much more than anything on the TV. The living room had felt strange at first, too large and empty with the sofa bed folded up. On hearing the wind chime sound on her phone that she'd assigned to Norma, she had to disentangle herself from him and get it off the kitchen island.

On seeing Norma's red eyes, she knew it had to be something awful before the words were even out. The news was not what she expected, "Emma, our brother Caleb showed up in town. He's horrible, as bad as our parents! Worse! Abusive. I NEVER want to have to see him again, ever! He came after Norman, and...Norman blacked out; I'm scared, Emma! So scared.." Norma couldn't go on, as more tears took over. Norman took the phone from her and cradled her against him as he lay back, her face buried in his neck and his face replacing hers on the screen.

"He's a bad guy, Aunt Emma. He hurt Mother when they were kids. Hurt her a lot, and it went on for years. He'll hurt her again, and we can't have that. One of us is going to do something if he shows up here. And yeah: I had a blackout for the first time in so long. Even the meds didn't stop it. You can. We all know it. If you don't come help us, I can't say what Mother and I might do."

It took Emma several seconds to process what they'd said, before she found her voice. "Okay. You two: sit tight. Don't even think of what I know you're thinking about. Where did he show up? At the house?"

Norma had calmed down enough to say, "No, thank god!"

"It was in town. I told him to get the hell away from us, he took off in this beat-up old van, then I blacked out."

Dylan had joined her by this point and heard most of it, "Your brother? Norma, you haven't seen him in how long? Maybe he wants to try making things right. And he has no idea about her," He put an arm around Emma, "What if we--"

"He ra-he HURT me, abused me for years, dumbass!!" Norma yelled at him, "There's no way in HELL!!" She'd come dangerously close to blurting out that Caleb had raped her, but barely caught herself.

"All right, stop! Norma, Norman, I'm on the next flight out. Calling work and telling I'm taking another vacation week. In the meantime, you two sit tight and be vigilant. Watch the security cameras like always, and stay locked in the house or the office and call the cops if you see that van on the property. I know the cops suck, but they're better than nothing until I get there. We'll handle this, let him know he needs to stay the fuck away from all of us if he wants to stay out of a jail cell!"

She'd barely hung up when Dylan turned on her, "So you're running back to them without even consulting me. I see how it is. And you just blindly believe anything Norma says. I know it was rough for her growing up, but aren't you even a little curious to hear it from him? He's your brother too!"

"My brother who was an abuser just like your grandfather!" She spat at him, "That couldn't be more obvious from how upset she is! So yes: I believe her. If I don't do something, we're gonna end up with another fucking corpse on our hands, you want that?! I sure as shit don't."

Dylan sulked, leaning against the island, his bent head shaking. "I can't get the time off work at such short notice, not like you can." He grumbled, "Not that I'm thrilled to go back to that town anyway."

"You don't have to. Stay here then. Go to work, and I'll take care of it."

At his hurt look, she went to him and pulled his crossed arms apart, slipped hers around his waist and pulled herself to him. "Don't be mad at me, Dylan. Please. I hate it when we fight. You're everything to me. So's this family; there's nothing I won't do for us all. Nothing."

He drew her into a tight embrace. "I hate it too. I never knew I had an uncle for a long time, was so mad at Norma for keeping that from me and Norman, but...no matter what he might've done to her, at the end of the day: he's a threat. If he even gets a hint about the four of us. So," He kissed her lips briefly, "Do what you've gotta do."



Two days later, Norma parked the Mercedes curbside at the Portland airport and saw the familiar tall lean frame of her sister coming out of the automatic glass doors, pulling a rolling suitcase with one hand, her other one pulling off her sunglasses and her face breaking into a grin at the sight of Norma's car. Norman had stayed behind, needing to run the motel office.

Four months suddenly seemed like nothing as Norma leaped out and ran to the woman who'd become another protector for her...and another endangerer all at once. She gave an excited little squeal right before throwing her arms around her, "Oh! I'm so happy to see you again! Missed you!" For a few moments, they were two normal sisters, happy to be together again, not a murder or black-out anywhere in either of their minds.

Emma squeezed her back, tight. Then she stepped back to get a better look at her, her fingers touching the ends of Norma's shorter blonde locks. "Missed you too; you look wonderful! Love the hair, it suits you."

"Love yours too; it's gotten long!" Norma briefly twisted a chestnut strand of Em's around one finger, not wanting this moment to end and reality to set back in as they lifted the suitcase into the car trunk.

"Yeah, I'm letting it grow. Dylan sure likes it."

"How's he been?" Norma wanted to know.

"He's good, really likes D.C., even if he spends the day mopping floors. He's not thrilled about what's happened, curious about his uncle, thinks we should hear Caleb's side of the story. But he's also got at least something of a clue, far as how dangerous any of that would be." She noted Norma's dark, troubled look and gave her hand a strong squeeze. "I don't want you to let it stress you out all the time. Try to focus on other stuff, like bringing in more motel business. They still haven't started building that freeway bypass, have they?"

"No, not until the summer, last thing I read. So that's something good, I guess."

Norma gave a heavy sigh, "There've been people driving slowly by the motel, a few times a week on average. Always the same couple of cars. One's a black BMW, the other's some kind of grey sports car; I don't know what kind, would know it if I saw it though."

"We'll figure something out. Something that'll make it stop. All of it."

The next few days at the Bates house were fairly uneventful. Norma wisely declined Em's offers to help with the cooking, thus avoiding chances of a fire starting in the kitchen. Norman managed the office and worked on his writing during slow times, which were often. Emma and Norma took care of the room cleaning. That black car Norma mentioned did make another appearance, driving to the edge of the highway bordering the parking lot and slowing to a crawl. Em dropped the towel she'd been folding from the laundry and grabbed her Glock, which was never far from reach.

Once the car's occupant saw the elder Calhoun sister striding towards them, he or she floored the gas pedal and took off. None of them saw it again, but of course it would've been naive to think they weren't still being watched. Emma could never shake that paranoid feeling of eyes on them from a distance away. From the tension she noticed in Norma and Norman, they were feeling it too.

In the evenings, the three of them invariably ended up piled on the couch together, watching a movie and cuddled together in various combinations. Separation didn't last long, so after a couple of nights of that, they stopped bothering with it. The same with Em sleeping in Dylan's old room; she'd end up in the Norms' bed within a couple hours at the most. When Norma was between them, getting deliciously spoiled with their skilled hands and lips, the horrid memories of Caleb were all but erased. She could drift on that insane pleasure they gave her, forever. She was still drifting on the beautiful memory of it one evening as she carried groceries up to the house, anticipating more later. Norma didn't see him around one corner of the porch.

"Norma Louise." All she could register was his moving towards her, "I can't tell you how many times I've thought of this, of seeing you again.."

How she got the front door open, she had had no idea, among the roaring blood in her head and "GET OUT!!" that ripped from her throat. How the hell had he gotten past the security cameras without Emma or Norman seeing him? It had to be the one time both their attention was elsewhere.

Caleb kept begging her to please stop, please give him a chance, but he could barely get the words out as Norma kept trying to shove him back outside from where he'd pushed his way into the foyer after her.

"What's going on here?" demanded another female voice so similar to that of his lost love. Caleb turned to face the brunette who bore a shocking resemblance to Norma, sure he was hallucinating.

He'd started to reach for Norma's arm, but stopped cold. "Who the hell are you?!"

"I'm your other sister." Her voice was icy.

"I don't have another sister!"

She folded her arms and gave a cold smile, "Are you sure about that?"

"She IS!" Norma yelled in his face, "It's true, now GET THE FUCK OUT!! DON'T EVER COME BACK HERE!! WE WANT NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU!!!"

Caleb looked even further shocked and confused, not ever remembering Norma Louise using the F-word. "I just want to talk! Please, it's been so long. I'm so sorry for what happened between us, Norma Louise. Just let me--" He'd grasped her by the upper arm and Norma was twisting away, fighting with all her strength as she tried to break loose and tear up the stairs.

BANG. Once again, that deafening sound filled the house. Blood exploded out of a hole in Caleb's chest as the bullet made its exit wound, ripping through one of his lungs and cutting off his voice forever. Norma felt a searing burn on her right cheek as it flew past her and lodged deep in the stairs. He made a horrid "uhhh" death rasp as his body slumped forewarn onto the stairs, nearly pulling her with him if she hadn't yanked her arm free and jerked fast out of its path of descent. Her eyes lifted and first saw the wisp of gun smoke drifting up from the barrel of Emma-Christine's weapon. Her still-living sibling's eyes were devoid of emotion.

The gunshot brought Norman running up from the basement, where he'd been making room in the extra freezer. He didn't have to ask, just blinked several times at the sight of them standing over the body. "Mother. Aunt Emma." he swallowed hard, "Now what?"

