

# Chapter 15

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This Saturday afternoon, Nina is throwing a small PTA gathering in her backyard. They're meeting up to plan something called "field day" in which the kids play in a field for a few hours, and somehow it takes months of planning to prepare for it. Nina has been talking about it nonstop lately. And she has texted me no less than a dozen times to remind me to pick up the hors d'oeuvres.

I'm starting to get stressed because, as usual, the entire house was a mess when I woke up this morning. I don't know how this house gets so messy. Is Nina's medication treating some sort of disorder where she gets up in the middle of the night and makes a mess in the house? Is that a thing? I don't know how the bathrooms get so bad overnight, for example.

When I come into her bathroom to clean in the morning, there are usually at least three or four towels strewn on the floor, sopping wet. There's usually toothpaste caked into the sink that I have to scrub to get free. Nina has some sort of aversion to throwing her clothes in the laundry basket, so it takes me a good ten minutes to gather her bra, underwear, pants, pantyhose, etc. Thank God Andrew is better at getting his clothing in the laundry basket.

Then there's the stuff that needs to be dry cleaned, of which there is a lot. Nina doesn't distinguish between the two, and God forbid I make the wrong decision about what goes in the laundry machine and what needs to be run to the dry cleaner. That would be a hanging offense.

The other thing is the food wrappers. I find candy wrappers stuffed into nearly every crevice in her bedroom and bathroom. I suppose that explains why Nina is fifty pounds heavier than she was in the photographs of when she and Andrew first met.

By the time I have cleaned the house top to bottom, dropped off the dry cleaning, and completed the laundry and the ironing, I'm running very short on time. The women are going to arrive within the hour, and I'm still not done with all the tasks Nina assigned me, including picking up the hors d'oeuvres. She's not going to understand if I try to explain that to her.

Considering she nearly fired me last week when she caught me watching Family Feud with Andrew, I can't afford to make any mistakes. I've got to make sure this afternoon is perfect.



Then I get to the backyard. The Winchesters' backyard is one of the most beautiful sights in the neighborhood. Enzo has done his job well—the hedges are trimmed so precisely, it's like he used a ruler. Flowers dot the edges of the yard, adding a pop of color. And the grass is so lush and green, I'm half tempted to lie down in it, waving my arms around to make grass angels.

But apparently, they don't spend much time out here, because all the patio furniture has a thick layer of dust on it. Everything has a thick layer of dust on it.

Oh God, I do not have time to get everything done.

"Millie? Are you okay?"

Andrew is standing behind me, dressed casually for a change, in a blue polo shirt and khaki slacks. Somehow, he looks even better than he does in an expensive suit.

"I'm fine," I mumble. I shouldn't even be talking to him.

"You look like you're about to cry," he points out.

I wipe my eyes self-consciously with the back of my hand. "I'm fine. There's just a lot to do for this PTA meeting."

"Aw, that's not worth crying over." His brow crinkles. "These PTA women are never going to be satisfied no matter what you do. They're all awful."

That does not make me feel any better.

“Look, maybe I have a...” He digs around in his pocket and pulls out a crumpled tissue.

“I can’t believe I have a tissue in my pocket, but here.”

I manage a smile as I accept the tissue. As I dab my nose, I catch a whiff of Andrew’s aftershave.

“Now,” he says, “what can I do to help?”



I shake my head. “It’s fine. I can handle it.”

“You’re crying.” He props one of his feet up on the dirty chair. “Seriously, I’m not completely useless. Just tell me what you need me to do.” When I hesitate, he adds, “Look, we both want to make Nina happy, right? This is how you make her happy. She’s not going to be happy if I let you screw this up.”

“Fine,” I grumble. “It would be incredibly helpful if you could pick up the hors d’oeuvres.”

“Done.”

It feels like a giant weight has been lifted from my shoulders. It was going to take me twenty minutes to get to the store to pick up the hors d’oeuvres and twenty minutes to get back. That would’ve left me only fifteen minutes to clean this filthy patio furniture. Could you imagine that Nina sat in one of these chairs in one of her white outfits?

“Thank you,” I say. “I really, really appreciate it. Really.”

He grins at me. “Really?”

“Really, really.”

Cecelia bursts into the backyard that moment, wearing a light pink dress with white trim. Like her mother, she doesn’t have so much as a hair out of place. “Daddy,” she says.

He turns his gaze on Cecelia. "What's up, Cece?"

"The computer isn't working," she says. "I can't do my homework. Can you fix it?"

"I absolutely can." He rests a hand on her shoulder. "But first we are going on a little road trip and it's going to be super fun."

She looks at him dubiously.



He ignores her skepticism. "Go put on your shoes."

It would have taken me half the day to convince Cecelia to put on her shoes, but she obediently goes back into the house to do what he says.

Cecelia is nice enough, as long as I'm not in charge of her.

"You're good with her," I comment.

"Thanks."

"She looks a lot like you."

Andrew shakes his head. "Not really. She looks like Nina."

"She does," I insist. "She has Nina's coloring and hair, but she has your nose."

He toys with the hem of his polo shirt. "Cecelia isn't my biological daughter. So any resemblance between the two of us is, you know..."