

Handle with Care EXCERPT

NOTE: This is an unedited excerpt. Content is subject to change, excuse any typos and my terrible use of commas.

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I'm startled out of my thoughts when my brother jumps up and shouts a bunch of profane nonsense, hands flailing like he's trying to swim on land, or approximate the chicken dance while on an LSD trip.

"You can't do this! It's absolute bullshit!" Armstrong yells.

I look around the table, trying to piece together what I missed.

"I'm sorry, Armstrong. I know this is a shock, but we feel it's in the company's best interest to put Lincoln at the helm during this transitional stage," G-mom says firmly.

At the helm? I look to G-mom who's busy not looking at me.

Armstrong jabs at finger at himself. "But I'm the one who's put in all the time here! I deserve to run the company! Lincoln doesn't know the first thing about Moorehead. All he knows how to do is dig wells and forage for food in the wilderness. How are those valuable assets here?" He turns his attention to our mother. "Did you know about this? How can you let this happen? Look at him. How can *that* be the face of our company? He looks like he crawled out of a gutter and mugged a twenty-year-old college kid on a bender. How is this better for our bottom line?"

My mother clasps her hands in front of her. "I'm sorry, Armstrong, but this decision wasn't mine to make. I know this is hard for you, but your grandmother and fath—"

Armstrong stomps his foot, exactly as a toddler would. "The company is mine! Lincoln can't have it!"

I raise a hand, half to quiet my brother and also to find out what the freaking deal is. "Whoa, let's back this bus up. Can someone explain what's going on?"

"You've been appointed as the CEO of Moorehead Media, according to the will," Christophe—no R, because that would make it far too pedestrian a name—my father's lawyer says.

I'm working on trying to remain calm as I address my grandmother. "You didn't say anything about me being CEO. You said you needed my help."

"Running the company, yes," she says through a practiced, stiff smile.

It's her warning face, but seriously, when she said she needed my help for a few months I figured it meant I'd be keeping Armstrong in line while she sorted out who was going to take over the company, which I realize now was a stupid assumption.

"I didn't think that meant CEO. How am I going to run a company with this dickhead on staff?" I motion to my brother.

"The name calling is unnecessary," G-mom replies.

"Lincoln's not even part of this family! He hasn't attended one event in the past five years except for Dad's funeral. He didn't bother coming to my wedding and now he's going to run the company? How is that fair?"

I snort. "Your wedding was an expensive joke."

He crosses his arms over his chest. “I was set up. Amalie had cold feet and made me out to look like the bad guy.”

The woman beside him shoots him disgusted look.

Armstrong clears his throat and tugs at his collar. “My wedding is not the real issue. The point is that you’ve never involved yourself in any part of this family and now you think you can come in and take over. I will not stand by and let this happen!” He keeps jabbing his finger at me, as if he’s engaged in a finger sword fight.

I lean back in my chair and lace my fingers behind my neck. Armstrong has always been reactive. And self-absorbed. For a while it seemed like he finally had it together—back when he was engaged. But ever since that fiasco of a wedding he seems to have come completely unglued. Again. But worse this time. “Someone needs a timeout.”