

Rachel had just asked Chris to walk her to her room when his mother called out to him. "Go ahead," Chris said.

Rachel cast a concerned glance at Nathan, who was sitting a few feet away reading a magazine, not paying attention to them.

Chris followed her gaze and whispered, "I'll see what Mom wants and be right behind you."

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Rachel left the community center and walked down the bedroom tunnel while Chris hurried over to his mother on the other side of the room.

Moments later, as Rachel unlocked her bedroom door, she heard footfalls behind her. Certain that it was Chris, she turned toward him with a teasing comment on her lips about entering a girl's bedroom.

"Don't you know it's not—"

It was Nathan. He grabbed her by both shoulders and pushed her into her room, kicking the door shut behind him so hard, that it bounced off the frame and reopened a few inches.

Nathan continued pushing until Rachel banged into the dresser against the opposite wall, causing her to wince at the pain in her back. In the fraction of a second that her eyes were closed, Nathan had his hands under her untucked top, his hands warm against the bare skin of her stomach. As he pressed his face toward hers, likely for the kiss he'd tried to get earlier, she turned her head, so that his lips pressed against her ear.

"Now we're going to have some fun," he whispered into her ear, his husky voice making her shiver, "while your idiot boyfriend is occupied with mommy." As he moved his hands up her stomach, she folded her arms across her chest to stop his progress. She knew he outweighed her by at least sixty pounds and had been working out all winter. He was strong and she knew she couldn't stop him. She looked over his shoulder at the door, willing Chris to show up and rescue her. She later wondered why she hadn't cried out for help, but it didn't cross her mind at the time. She had never been threatened like this before, and it happened so fast, the reality of the situation had yet to sink in.

Nathan breathed heavily into her ear and chuckled deep in his throat as he slid his hands upward across her stomach, obviously in no hurry. Leaving her left arm across her chest, she

struck his face and shoulder with her right hand. He winced when she accidentally poked him in the eye, then growled and intensified his effort to get what he wanted.

Suddenly he was pulled backward—away from her—by strong hands that spun him around, off balance. Chris grabbed Nathan by the throat with one hand and punched him in the stomach with the other. Unaffected by the punch, as a result of his weight training, Nathan pushed Chris away and pulled a steak knife from his belt with his right hand, whipping it from left to right in front of him, cutting Chris's shirt and drawing blood on his chest. Chris winced and backed away a step.

Instead of pressing his advantage on Chris, Nathan took that brief reprieve to turn and grab Rachel with his left hand. He pulled her off balance and partially in front of him, then pressed the knife against her neck.

Rachel couldn't believe that Nathan intended to hurt her with the knife, but she didn't know what he was capable of and it scared her, both for herself and for Chris.

"You want to see your girl get hurt, huh?" Nathan asked. "You just back out the door and leave us to our fun."