

Chapter One

I don't know if it's morning yet. And I don't know if I'm waking up or coming to. All I know is whatever I'm lying in smells disgusting!

Then it hits me like a punch to the gut. I'm lying in puke. It has dried into a gross, smelly crust on the side of my face and in my hair. I think it's just my puke, but I can't be sure.

I feel a stab of pain in my head as I shift on the carpet. I try to open my eyes. Nope—not happening.

“Catch you later!”

“See ya, Jean-Luc!”

I know those voices. My friends Owen and Tate.

A door slams, and the stabbing in my head intensifies. I pass out again. Next thing I know, someone is shaking my shoulder.

“Jean-Luc!” It’s my dad.

I groan and slowly open one eye. I see beer cans, cigarette butts, crushed chips and other crap on the floor all around me.

I remember now. I told Owen and Tate my parents were going to be away.

“Let’s have a little year-end party,” Owen had said.

“Yeah,” Tate had said. “An eleventh-grade blowout.”

Before long, kids were streaming through the door. The music was pumping. The house was filled with beer kegs and tons of people. As for right now—

“Lève-toi!” Papa shakes me again. “Get up!”

I look up to see two people coming downstairs. The guy, Jonah—or maybe it’s Jonas—is with a girl. I wish he’d zipped up his jeans before he left the bedroom. It’s pretty obvious what they were just doing.

“Great party,” he says. “See you around, Jean-Luc.”

My dad drops a couple f-bombs. He usually swears in French. I guess he wanted to make sure Jonah/Jonas understood him too.

My mom is standing perfectly still—her overnight bag in her hand.

Papa turns to her. “Go grab the mop and bucket, Marie. And lots of cleaner.”

Moments later my mom shoves the mop and bucket in front of me. Then a big bottle of pine cleaner.

“Start cleaning up this mess.” Tears are forming in her eyes.

I reach for the bucket. Then I’m gagging and spitting out whatever was left in my stomach.

“Very impressive,” Papa says. “Where are your fine friends now? I’m sure Tate and Otis had a part in trashing our home.”

“Tate and Owen,” I say.

“Whatever,” Papa growls. “They’d be here helping you clean up if they were real friends.”

I can’t let him get away with that. “You don’t know shit about my friends,” I say.

Papa’s face turns red. “They’re not the great friends you think they are.” He shakes his head. “You used to have nice, respectful friends.”

He’s talking about Anisha and Colin—my old friends. I needed to switch it up after my sister, Lena, died. But I can’t go there.

“Use the garden hose to wash out that bucket,” Papa says. “Then start cleaning up all this merde.” All this shit.

Outside, the backyard spins and the sun stings my eyes. I hose out the bucket. The water is freezing cold.

Even so, I lean over and hose off my head too. Every drop of water feels like a razor cutting into my skin.

I pull out my phone to see if Tate and Owen have texted me. Nothing.

I take a closer look around the backyard. It’s a mess out here too. I kick the beer cans into a pile. I straighten the table and chairs. I leave the squished flowers and cigarette butts for later.

I don’t want to talk to Maman and Papa again, but I need to go back inside. Papa is in the kitchen.

“Do we have any Tylenol?” I ask.

“Check the shelf,” he says. “The one with the door ripped off.”

Oh man, he’s right. I step over the cupboard door on the floor and reach for the bottle of pills. I swallow a couple with water. The whole time, my feet are sticking to the floor. I can’t believe how much beer got spilled here last night. I also can’t believe how much beer got drank.