

*Titus & Cowboy Boots*

Part 1

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## Chapter1

### Cadence

I grab my dance bag and toss it over my shoulder. Laura, my best friend and duet partner, walks out of the dance studio behind me.

“So this is it,” she says with sadness in her voice.

“I guess so. What am I going to do without you?” I ask as she embraces me. “I mean why did my dad have to do something so stupid? And why am I the one being punished for it?” I ask as we pull apart.

“Just promise me if you have a chance to come back home, you will. I don’t know how you’re going to survive out there in the middle of nowhere. Do they even have cellphones?” Laura questions.

“Yeah, I’m sure they do but who knows if there will be any signal in the middle of a field. Well, I better get going. I have dinner tonight with Dad and his home-wrecking secretary. Maybe if I put on a smile, he’ll change his mind.”

“I got my fingers crossed,” she says while holding up her hands. I smile, but deep down I know better. My father is a selfish son-of-a-bitch. Not only did he mess around with his secretary, but he didn’t even put up a fight for me so tonight is our goodbye dinner. I know Laura wants me to come back, but it will never happen. I just hope and pray that my future isn’t as bleak as I envision it.

As I walk into our spacious apartment, I quickly drop my dance bag in the laundry room and hurry to get ready. Dad moved out six months ago and now this house is cold and all my memories that made it a home are all distorted. I knew Mom would sell it eventually, but I wasn’t prepared for her to move out of the city. And we’re not just moving to the suburbs, we’re moving to fucking Hillbilly USA. Never in my life did I think my mom would resort back to her Southern roots. She always told me she left for a full-ride to NYU and she’d never move back. When she met my dad, I’m betting she didn’t see this in her future. Tomorrow morning, we’re loading up our new Suburban, also known as our peace offering from Dad, and heading south to Delight, North Carolina. I can tell you right now, there’s nothing delightful about that town.

I check the time on my phone and have exactly fifteen minutes to catch the subway to get to Dad’s on time. I arrive at the station with five minutes to spare. As I stand waiting on the platform, I wonder if he’s going to do something special tonight. Oh! Maybe he’s changed his mind and will ask me to stay. I continue to ponder the possibilities as I take my seat. At exactly seven o’clock I knock on Dad’s door and am greeted by the home-wrecking bimbo. I smile as sweetly as possible, but underneath I want to take my nails and mess up that pretty face and rip out that bleach-blond hair. She lets me know Dad is in his office as I step into the apartment.

“Hey Dad,” I say as I lean on the doorframe.

“Hey Cadence. How was school and dance today?” he questions like he genuinely cares.

“It was great! I had so much fun telling everyone goodbye,” I say sarcastically.

He pauses and looks at me. “Don’t be like this. You’re leaving tomorrow. Can we please have a pleasant night?”

“Of course,” I say as I turn to help the bimbo set the table.

Dinner is the same routine it has been each week since he moved out. I try to convince him to let me stay here and he gives me the same bullshit about needing time with the bimbo, and making their relationship work. I want to scream, *what about our relationship? I’m your favorite girl.* At least that’s what he always said. I guess he lied.

When we finish eating, I leave my dishes on the table. That bitch can clean them her damn self. Dad asks me to sit on the patio with him. He makes small talk for a few minutes, and then I know what’s coming. Goodbye.

“Cadence, I really wish things were different, but your mother believes that going to Delight will be best for you. I agree.”

“What about what I think? I’ve lived in New York my entire life. Do you really think that I’m going to be able to fit in, in that spec of a town? Not to mention it’s my senior year. I have some amazing companies looking at me. Dad, everything is done. I need to be with Lauren. We’ve already choreographed our senior piece. How am I going to find a partner, learn a new piece and find a decent school? These are big name companies. They don’t want someone from some little hick town. You sent me to these schools because they were the best. Do you honestly think the best are in Delight, North Carolina?”

“It will work out.”

“Right, just like you and Mom.” I stand. “I guess I need to get home so I can finish packing,” I say as I stalk toward the door.

“Cadence, don’t do this. I don’t want you to leave like this.” I start to laugh as I turn to face him.

“Funny thing is. You didn’t think once about me and how I felt when you put our family second. Bye Dad.” As I open the door, he calls to me.

“Cadence!” I take in a deep breath and stop in the doorway. “No matter what I love you. Just remember that.” I nod.

“Love you too Dad,” I say as I close the door. It’s true because no matter what, he’s my dad.

Walking up to our building, I see every light is on in our apartment. I take a deep breath. I don't want to cry. I want to be mad. Mad at my dad who doesn't want me and mad at my mom who is taking me away from everything I've ever known. I check my reflection in my camera app to make sure no tears have escaped then make my way inside.

"Cade, is that you?" Mom asks as I pass her bedroom.

"Yes," I say hurrying to my room. I don't want to talk right now.

"How did it go?"

I laugh. "How do you think?"

I kick off my shoes, and Mom walks into my room as I begin to remove my jewelry.

"That bad, huh?"

"Oh, best time ever, Mom," I scoff.

"I'm sorry," she says as she pulls me into her arms. I refuse to cry in front of her.

"It's okay. I don't need him."

"Actually, it's not. As much as I want to say you don't need him. I know that he's your dad, and you do. Things will change. Just give it time." I nod. "Now, you need to go to bed soon. Tomorrow is going to be a long day. The movers will be here at eight."

"Okay. Night Mom," I say.

"Love you, Cadence."

"Love you, too."

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