

Canto 1: Capital "I" Issues

Even after sitting in our mail slot for hours, the envelope smelled faintly of antiseptic and latex. Medical summons always arrived on bright blue paper, making them easy to spot and just as easy to dump down the recycler.

OK, I'm lying about that last part. My actual plan was to do what I'd always done: request a deferment. I snatched the letter and realized it was addressed to both of us—Beatrice *and* Ansaf Gil.

I swallowed my rising panic and nestled the note among my groceries, a bounty of misshapen vegetables, hard, nubby potatoes, and a tiny bottle of real cream from the farm on Eleven.

Ansaf must have heard me schlepping up the stairs, because he appeared at the doorway and grabbed the tote bag hanging from my left wrist. The one hiding the note.

Maybe he won't...

He picked up the envelope, one long finger tracing our names.

Shit.

"They must have an automated system showing I turned eighteen."

I shrugged past him with the food, ignoring both my brother and the letter now grasped in his hands.

A gust of lukewarm air greeted me as I swung open our ancient refrigerator. A mundane, solvable, *distracting* problem. Thank Aphrodite. "The cooling mechanism is busted again. Can you fix it now, so the cream doesn't spoil?"

Ansaf looked like he wanted to argue, but broken appliances beckoned to him like nothing else in this world. Dutifully, he unlatched the bottom compartment and fiddled with it.