

The TV hums quietly in the background, a sports highlight reel muted.

Darren is sprawled across the couch, knocked out. His sneakers dangle off one end, a faint snore rattling his throat. A streak of drool leaking from his damn mouth.

The front door opens with a careful creak. Chloe steps inside, clipboard tucked under her arm, perfectly composed. She pauses when she sees Darren.

For a long beat, she just watches him sleep. Her gaze is cool, assessing... like she's deciding whether to wake him or let him keep dreaming.

Darren stirs. Senses something. His eyes flutter open and focus on Chloe standing directly over him. He jolts upright, swiping at his mouth, embarrassed.

DARREN

Yo! What the hell--who are you?

Chloe's smile flicks on like a switch, polite, pleasant, but a little too smooth.

CHLOE

Sorry. Didn't mean to startle you. I'm Chloe.

Darren squints at her, skeptical.

DARREN

...Okay. Chloe. And you're just... standing over me, why?

Eddie limps out from the hallway, a pair of small hand weights in his hands.

EDDIE

Relax, D. This is Chloe. She's my physical therapist. Chloe, my homie/brother Darren.

Chloe extends a hand. Darren shakes it reluctantly, still eyeing her sideways.

DARREN

Right... physical therapist. Got it.

He grabs his jacket off the arm of the couch.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Look, I'ma bounce. Me and mamma gonna pull up tomorrow, alright?

EDDIE

That's a bet. Make sure you don't eat everything before she brings it.

DARREN

I got you, bruh. I 'll leave you some scraps.

They laugh and dap each other up.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Bye Chloe, take care of my boy.

Darren heads for the door, but glances back.

Chloe's smile hasn't wavered, only sharpened. It lingers on him a moment too long.

CHLOE

I will. Don't you worry.

DARREN

(sotto)

That's a creepy ass smile.

Darren shifts uneasily, then pulls the door shut behind him... A heavy silence follows.