

Chapter 9 A Different Kind Of Wine

After the bosses had selected their drinking companions, Madeline took her leave.

The bar's exterior boasted a grand lobby, but it also had private rooms reminiscent of karaoke and music video lounges, where singing was part of the experience.

Once we had respectfully offered a toast to the bosses at the adjacent table, we set about helping them choose songs.

Some bosses enjoyed singing, while others did not.

The robust and sturdy Lorenzo, seated two seats away from me, had a passion for singing. The evening kicked off with his rendition of “A King's Farewell to His Queen Consort.” He took on the role of the king, standing before the coffee table and belting out the lyrics with a voice that strained to its limits.

The two hostesses he chose sang the part of the queen consort, their voices imbued with a poignant tenderness that complemented his performance beautifully.

Every woman who worked in bars possessed a touch of singing talent. Groups of men gathered here not just for leisure but also for business discussions. When they weren't singing, it was our responsibility to keep the atmosphere lively.

Lorenzo was in high spirits, with an arm wrapped around each of the two women. He leaned in and planted a kiss on the one to his left, then turned to do the same to the one on his right.

Seeing him like this, I realized the two ladies probably wouldn't be leaving tonight.

After the song ended, Oberon gently squeezed my waist, reminding me to propose a toast to Lorenzo.

It was the perfect moment to raise a toast at that moment. In settings like this, it was customary for others to toast after someone finished singing. As I stood up, I noticed several others already on their feet, glasses in hand.

“Lorenzo, your singing is truly amazing! Here's to you!” I said, holding the wine glass with both hands, my sincerity clear.

He nodded, glancing my way with an air of casualness. Raising his cup, he lightly clinked it against mine before tilting his head back and downing the contents in one swift motion. There was no visible sign of him swallowing; the wine simply vanished down his throat.

As he watched me drink, a wave of anxiety washed over me. The intensity of his gaze felt primal, like a beast sizing up its prey.

When I finally finished my drink, leaving not a single drop, he gave a slight nod as if granting me permission to leave. I quickly scurried back to Oberon's side, and he almost chuckled at my haste, giving my hand a gentle squeeze.

“Why so scared?” he asked, his tone light.

I could feel the coldness in my hands. Each time fear gripped me, a chill would race through my fingers and toes.

“I'm right here,” he said, pulling me into his embrace. I nestled against his chest, and he murmured, “You won't have to toast anyone else later.”

I hastily nodded, lifting my face to steal another glance at him.

His strong jawline and the tantalizing curve of his Adam's apple gliding over his throat were irresistibly tempting—enough to make anyone yearn to take a bite.

Perhaps sensing my gaze, he lowered his head, a faint smirk dancing on his lips. “Want to bite me again?”

I smiled. Is my intent that obvious?

“I'll let you bite all you want tonight,” he murmured, his voice thick with implication, “but for now, no biting allowed.”

Heat rushed to my cheeks. Do I really seem that lecherous?

No, wait—only a pervert would say something like “bite all you want.” With those glasses, he was nothing more than a polished scoundrel! I felt an overwhelming urge to tear off this cultured rogue's clothes, toss aside his glasses, and kiss him fiercely.

Wrapped in Oberon's warmth and presence, I completely lost awareness of the man next to me, who was fixing his intense gaze on me.

He only gave me that kind of look when I was offering the toast; otherwise, he regarded me much the same way he did the other women in the room. Oberon remained oblivious to it all.

As the social gathering continued, it became clear that both Oberon and Lorenzo commanded a high level of respect throughout the room.

Lorenzo appeared to be involved in the mafia, as the people he brought with him exuded a strong gangster vibe. I noticed them spiking drinks throughout the evening.

By the time the latter half of the event rolled around, several bottles of whiskey had been emptied, and the combined effects of alcohol and the hidden substances had left a haze on half of the attendees' faces.

When a spiked drink was handed to me, and I felt flustered, preparing to decline, a hand suddenly reached out from the side and took the glass away.