02

He stands immobile, hands shoved in the pockets of his dark slacks. That's Luciano for you, dressed to the nines in fitted Armani, even while idling the busy streets of Boston on a

"Tell me why you're crying."

just left upstairs."

Except now.

"You're going to call it off."

"Tell me why you won't call it off."

The sight of him sobers me up.

Sunday afternoon. Something about it has to corners of my lips twisting. I try to move past him, offering another apology, but he gets in my way. Wordlessly shoving himself in between me and my current path.

I look up at him, a bite to my voice, "Is there a point to all this?" He's unbothered, unnaturally calm as his eyes rove over every inch of me, starting at the top of my head, lingering on my face and moving down to the pointed tips of my black heels.

"You're crying." He states.

I scoff, "Oh, you don't say. I had no idea it was that obvious." I move to step past him again, but just like before, he blocks my path. I light up like a fuse, all my patience diminished. "What the hell are you doing? Can you let me through?"

He doesn't respond immediately, just patiently watching me like he has all the time in the world to do so.

"Luciano," I start, closing my eyes so I don't lash out any more than necessary, "Can you please let me go on with my day?"

That does it, the way the asshole doesn't even ask, how he demands, like it's his right to know things. I lash out, not even caring about the pitch of my voice when I lay it all down for him.

"Yeah?" I taunt, "You'd like to know why I'm crying? Well maybe it's because I've just had the worst day of my whole entire life! Maybe it's because I just walked in on the man I'm

welcome. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'd like to go drown my sorrows in peace."

set to marry in a few months balls deep in my best friend! That good enough for you? Have I

made your day with the drab story of how my life is currently fallin apart? Well, you're

I move to walk past him and the bastard gets iin my way, again. "Listen, Luciano," The words are nothing short of a growl, "Get the hell out of my way this minute or I will impale you with my shoe." "I don't see a reason for you to be so torn up about this, seems to me like the man doesn't

was for you to get the fuck put of my way."

A small smile jerks the corner of his mouth, the faintest bit, "Like me." He still doesn't voice it as question, and it does nothing aggravate my raging temper.

"Yeah, a guy like you." I tell him, "Word on the street says you're no better than the man I

Word on the street says worse. Luciano Roman. Billionaire bachelor playboy. He's never been seen with the same woman more than once. And that was insane to analyze, considering I'd never seen Luciano in all the years I've known him with out a female dangling like a trophy on his arm.

He smiles, it's a full grin this time, deepening the dimples on his face. He leans into my space, making my breath catch, the musky scent of his masculine cologne washes over me as

"Your engagement." His words make me pause, a lump lodges deep in my throat. He cups my chin between his thumb and forefinger, tilting my face up to meet his eyes,

The greys of his eyes harden, darkening into small slits, "What do you mean, you can't?"

"I mean I cant okay!" I yell, tossing my hands up in frustration, "None of this is any of your

He's quiet, brows pulled in a kind of aggravation I don't understand.

know the real reason I cant call off the engagement.

away. This time he doesn't try to stop me.

percent. The old money riches.

It's an eyesore.

naive."

Sighing, I pull my face away. My shoulders droop, "I can't."

business, Luciano. I don't appreciate you butting into my personal life."

"Because!" I grate, "It's not that simple okay, it's... it's complicated."

It catches me off guard, the way he voices the words, like an insult. My mouth twist, "Yeah," I say, "I am." I was.

But he doesn't need to know that. None of this is any of his concern, he doesn't need to

"You love a man that disrespects you? That doesn't value you? How can you choose to be so

"Again," I seethe, "It's none of your business, Luciano. Goodbye." With that, I turn to walk

I get in my car, pulling away from the curb and making my way to the closest bar on the street. I wasn't joking about drowning my sorrows.

song blares from my phone. Kenzo. The nerve.

The reality of my situation weighs down on me as I settle into one of the bar stools. I waste

I'm nursing my third glass, most of my inhibitions tossed to the wind when the 'baby shark'

no time ordering up a glass of rum and coke. The first of many I intend to have.

Kenzo didn't come from money like ours, but his association with us got him places. His name is associated with not just many others now, but ours. Dad made a huge press release about my engagement, and he would never stand for the scandal it would bring if I called it off last minute.

"What pissed in your breakfast this morning?" The owner of the voice pulls out the bar stool

next to mine, shooting me a pearly white smile I'm all too familiar with.

"You're drunk, sweetheart." "You can tell?" I drawl. Someone siddles up about two chairs down from where patrick sits, I don't bother looking though, I'd probably fall of my seat if I tried. "Yeah, you look about a second away from getting on the table and showing us exactly

Kenzo has." "Exactly." I breathe. "Hold on," Patrick says, "Am I missing something here?"

I sigh, Patrick is one of best friends, I don't see why I shouldn't confide in him, "I found out

I roll my eyes. "Haha," I say to Patrick, "But really, I need to fugure out something. Maybe if his business deals start falling through, dad wont see him as that much of a catch anymore."

"Mr O'neal," A young man calls from behind us, "They're ready for you."

"I'll be there in a moment," Patrick tell him, before turning back to me, "Did you drive?"

It's been almost two hours, yet no sign of Patrick, and I need to pee horribly. But I'll be damned if I use one of these public restrooms.

The sun is blinding, I shield my eyes as I step haphazardly out of the building, trying to get

value you. Better you found out now than after you've already tied the knot." I balk, "Excuse me! I never asked for what your opinion is on this situation. What I did ask, He continues on like I hadn't said a word, "The man cant tell extravagant from pussy idling on the street. If he could slight you this way, he doesn't value you, Willow. A real man wouldn't cheat on a woman like you." "Oh, please!" I bark, "Like I'd take an opinion on this mater from a guy like you."

I don't want to be having this conversation anymore. I spin around, attempting to walk back up the steps of the hotel building when I feel him reach out, grabbing my arm. "You're going to call it off." I jerk out of his grip, "Call what off?"

his voice quiets to a whisper, "Your Fiance will never measure up to half the man I am."

I sigh, "I need to go, okay." "You're in love with him."

It's a Gentlemen's club, a popular one most of Boston's elites frequent. The pub is bustling with people, men, dressed just as corporately as the people of my world always are. The one

one I want to purge. In the world I live in, arranged marriages were very common. Not saying that what Kenzo and I had was one of those, but it isn't far from it. Dad was more than overjoyed when I announced our engagement. The simple reason behind it covered more ground than just

being a proud father, finally happy to marry off his litlle girl. It's the art of the business. The

He wasn't thinking of our marriage, he was thinking of how our marriage would benefit him.

doors that would be opened, the connections to be made.

actually tolerate for longer than an hour.

Like the rest of us.

"Why?"

whenever he's signing his next deal."

"Why would you need that?"

everything he knows."

he was cheating on me."

"Ohh shit!" His eyes widen even more.

marrying him with the way things are."

"I could always step in." He jokes.

"Oh shit."

"With Beth."

He wasn't pretentious like the rest of them.

"So, what's got your panties in a bunch?"

I sigh, it's long and exaggerated.

fueling company. No choice in the matter of things.

I turn it off altogether, shoving the device back in my purse and letting my eyes trail over the

swarm of mostly men packed in the upper class lounge. A bitter feeling churns in my gut, its

you never came to these places." He sighs, waving for the bartender, "Yeah, well, had to organize a broker deal. Needed to keep my men drunk enough to forgo reading a contract." I laugh at that. Patrick O'neal. One of us, probably the oldest friend in my life circle I can

And he hates our word almost as much as I do. But he's the heir to his father's multi-million

"Patrick," I say to him, pulling him in for the briefest, most uncoordinated hug, "I thought

whats hidden underneath your rich girl exterior." There's a cough from somewhere nearby. 'I need your healp with somehting," I say, frowning, "Do you happen to have any broker agreements with Wesley?"

"I need a contract fail safe, like some hidden portion of it he doesn't put in the document

"He has one though right, I know you all do. You hide a little portion of the material and add

it in after you get a signature to benefit you. I know Dad does it, and he taught Kenzo

"Yeah, but I don't see why you would want that. It's only going to hurt whatever plans

"Wesley?" He questions, confused, "As in, your fiance Wesley?"

The sound of the word creates an empty pit in my stomach, "Yeah."

"You're gonna call off the engagement right?" "You know my Dad as well as I do, he'll never let me do that. It'll put a stain on his reputation. The date has already been set, invites have been sent out. And it's not like I have

I hear the stool next to him screech back, Luciano rising from the seat. When the hell did he

get here? His arm drapes over the shoulder of a petite blonde I didn't notice standing next to

him. They walk off, disappearing behind the curtain of one of the lounge suites.

some other fitting suitor I could use to soften the blow. There's no way I can get out of

"Yeah," I say, dejected, "I need something. I don't know, some way to get him back."

"Mhmm." "Stay put, I'll take you home once I'm done with my meeting." I make a mock salute, "Aye, aye, captain."

He shoves me playfully, before walking away.

my bearings coherent enough to call a cab.

I had about four too many rums and cokes.

Seems like it could after all.

I order another drink.

Patrick's eyes soften a tad bit. I don't want his sympathy.

"Ugh," I groan, "Forget it. It wouldn't even work anyway."

Ugh, "Can today get any worse?" "Need a ride?" The familiar deep voice calls from behind me. I grimace.