



99 Was she with someone else?

Arwen's eyes widened, and her cheeks flushed red. Opening her mouth she was ready to defend herself, but then she realized that he had once again trapped her, skillfully manipulating her into saying something he wanted her to say. 1

Aiden smirked as he saw the realization dawning upon her. "Tell me, Moon, was it the kiss that you wanted?"

"I ... It's you who wanted it," Arwen countered, though she knew she wasn't going to win this. "You are the one who suggested it. Don't blame it on me."

"I suggested it? How so?" Aiden raised his brow, his expression one of feigned innocence. "Didn't I merely suggest you learn to get what you desire, either by yourself or by asking for it? When did I say it had to be a kiss? That's something you said all on your own." 1

"You —"

"What?" Aiden leaned in lower, teasingly close to her lips, yet still distant enough to leave her



craving his touch.

Arwen knew that pulling away would help her save the situation, from the embarrassment that would inevitably come later. But even knowing this, she couldn't bring herself to move. The temptation was too hard to resist. With him so close, she felt more like a moth drawn to the flame. Her chin tilted up towards him instinctively with the same desire. But just as their lips were about to meet, Aiden smiled against her skin, speaking in a teasing whisper.

"So you do want a kiss, Moon?"

Arwen's pulse quickened, her fingers slightly curling against his chest. Despite the challenge in her eyes, her voice came out soft but daring. "So what if I do? What if I want a kiss? Do you expect me to beg for it?"

Aiden's smile deepened, curving his lips in a slow, wicked smile. "Yes," he murmured, his voice thick with dark amusement, "I would love to see you underneath me, begging for every touch, every kiss, every moment I could give you. But Moon, ..." he paused, his gaze locking onto hers, "you should know by now ... I don't



need you to beg. All you need is to ask." 1

Arwen's breath hitched at his words, feeling a strange heat warming her core. Her lips parted as if to challenge him again, but no words came out. Instead, she lifted her chin higher, her eyes never leaving his, defiance and desire swirling together.

"Ask?" she repeated, her voice soft but edged with stubbornness. "Why should I ask when you have given me the right to take what I want?"

With that, she rose on her toes, pressing her lips to his, soft and fleeting, taking what he had teased her with —and what she knew he desired as well. 1

But just as Aiden would have pulled her closer to deepen that touch, Arwen's lips curled up against his, revealing the game he hadn't expected her to learn so soon. But then again, he should have known better. Arwen had always had a way of matching him —if she was not winning, she would make sure the other party didn't either.

Keeping the curl still on her lips, she looked up into his intense gaze, teasingly. "So? Have I

learned well enough, husband?"

"Moon, you —"

"Shhh.." Arwen pressed her finger to his lips, shushing him. "Let me finish first," she said with a satisfied smile, before continuing, "You were right —why ask when I can take? I can easily take such sweet, easy, yet torturous kisses, husband. But if you want me to beg for your touches, kisses, and the moments of pleasure that you could give me, then—" she paused, her lips curved into a smirk, "—you will be waiting a long time. Now, the question is ... can you wait that long?" 2

Aiden eyes darkened with heat as if he were being dared. And in that moment, she knew exactly how difficult it would be for him to wait. But then again, it has no longer remained easy for her as well. With each passing second around him, it was getting more difficult than before.

The question was -up until when will she be able to take this?

On the other side of the city, Ryan stood outside



Gianna's apartment with his hands balled into fists at his sides. His jaws clenched as his patience thinned with the passing second.

He had gone to Quin Villa earlier, expecting to find Arwen there. But instead, he was met with an empty house and the butler's cool response.

"Mr. and Mrs. Quinn have been on a business trip since last month but will be returning soon in the coming week. As for Young Miss, she hasn't been home either since last month," Mr. Cole had said, his usual politeness barely masking the hint of suspicion in his eyes. "She is staying with Ms. Gianna."

The words had hit Ryan like a blow, but he had kept his composure, nodding stiffly and walking away. Yet now, standing in front of Gianna's apartment door, with Arwen nowhere to be found, frustration bubbled up inside him, making him lose his calm.

He ran a hand through his hair in agitation, pacing back and forth outside the building.

Where could she possibly be, if not here? The anxiety gnawing at the pit of his stomach began twisting into something sharper, more volatile.



Was she avoiding him? Or worse —was she with someone else?

The thought sent a surge of anger through him. His mind flashing to the cold indifference she had shown him earlier. The memory was unbearable. With a frustrated growl, he kicked the nearest lamppost, the loud clang reverberated in the stillness of the night, doing nothing to calm the storm he was feeling inside him.

"Damn it Arwen!" he muttered under his breath, his voice thick with frustration and a flicker of something deeper, something he was trying hard to suppress. "Where the hell are you?"

In the past, all he had to do was look around, and he would find her. She had always been within reach, just a call or glance away. But today, she felt impossibly distant, like she had slipped beyond his grasp.

The unsettling thought gnawed at him, when suddenly interrupted it was by a voice.

"Sir, are you looking for someone?"

