

Chapter 16

I looked back to see Aaron. He was standing with his back to the sun, and his face was obscured with shadows. I raised my hand to block the harsh light, but he took that opportunity to grab it and gently thread his fingers through mine.

"You're blushing." I heard his trademark smirk in his voice.

"The sun's really bright. It's hot." I shook off his hand.

"Well, you're cold. You know, you tossed me aside like that last time, too."

I rolled my eyes. The Aaron I met a few hours ago must've been possessed by an angel. Now that the sun was setting, that familiar devil was back, and he was as lecherous as ever.

"I missed you," he crooned as he took another step closer

"And you're gonna keep missing me."

I wasn't in the mood to play his games. All I wanted was to sort out my feelings and nip my interest in him in the bud.

Regardless, he continued. "I'm going to a charity event later tonight. Could I ask you to be my date?"

I sneered and shook my head. "No. You can't. Today's my third year anniversary with Vincent ..."

Aaron raised his eyebrow and waited for the rest of my explanation.

I sighed. "I don't have time."

"Oh, but you will," he said with a confident raise of his chin.

I stared at him.

This was the first time I looked at him with such a calm mind. The first time I scrutinized his features so seriously. The man in front of me had high cheekbones and deep eye sockets My whole life. I had this idea that a CEO was supposed to be some middle-aged man posing his overweight body for Forbes magazine Aaron was nothing like that stereotype. His temperament was a balanced blend of pride and romance. He was something so much nobler Inviolable

What have I gotten myself into, choosing him of all people to cheat on Vincent with? I never should've gotten involved with Aaron

Once upon a time, all he was to me was Vincent's rich friend. A p*ayboy. I'd imagined this 'tomcat' to be shallow, when in fact, he'd shown himself to be exemplary in almost every way.

Still, I resisted.

"Don't be so sure of yourself," I told him.

Then, my phone rang. It was Vincent.

I waved the screen in front of Aaron with a smile. "See you at the next debrief, boss."

He didn't answer and simply looked at me. That was the last I saw of him once I'd turned around to leave.

I didn't have to walk far across campus before I saw Vincent waiting by his car. He was leaning back against the door and talking to someone on his cell phone.

Obviously, he was well-dressed today. He wore a dark gray suit, and his usually unruly hair was styled into something more brushed back. He looked very much like a romantic boyfriend,

Except for his demeanor.

He waved his hand through the air in front of him, and the volume of his voice rose and fell chaotically. He didn't even notice me approaching

"I told you, I'm taking Olive out to dinner. I don't have time today," he growled impatiently.

I raised my eyebrows at that. Could it be?

Was he talking to Emily?

I'd assumed tonight's anniversary celebration would be something boring, but now that Emily wanted him, I heavily regretted wearing a plain t-shirt and jeans this morning.

"Vincent!" I greeted and flashed a plastic smile. In a single motion, I took hold of Vincent's arm and pulled him down for a kiss.

He didn't have the chance to hang up first.

In the back of my mind, I couldn't believe that he had the nerve to talk to Emily on the phone while waiting to pick up his girlfriend for dinner.

I parted my lips, hellbent on kissing him more intensely than I ever had before. I bit his lips and let my tongue brush over his teeth, and then his tongue. Shameless, I made sure the distinct, wet noises reached his phone.

I wanted Emily to hear.

"Babe-" He was stunned, but it only lasted a second before he began kissing me back with the same enthusiasm. He sucked at my lips and held my chin between his thumb and index finger.

I didn't pull away from him until I heard Emily scoff and the call disconnected.

Vincent seemed lost. Even though I'd already pulled away, his eyes were still closed, and he leaned forward to follow my lips. Of course, I lightly placed a hand on his chest to stop him. There was no point in kissing him anymore.

"Who were you on the phone with?" I asked as I giggled breathlessly.

"Just... a coworker. He said I was called in for overtime again." The lie spilled out of him so naturally. His expression didn't even change. Then, he put his arm around my shoulder and opened the car door for

"But," he carried on. "I told him I wanted to spend tonight with my girlfriend, and that if I missed our anniversary, she'd be heartbroken." Lie after lie fell from his lips as he reached over to fasten my seatbelt for me.

Ugh.

My heart felt like it was writhing in my chest, enraged. Since when did he care about my feelings?

Since I was the one who forgot the date, it was a draw.

"Your car... kind of smells like perfume," I wrinkled my nose and glanced at Vincent suspiciously, "Did you have someone over?"

I didn't actually smell anything. I just wanted to see how flustered he would get

Clearly, I underestimated how shameless Vincent really was. He never missed a beat. "Do you like it? I thought I'd pick a special air freshener for you!"

Bu*ls*it

But I hummed and sat back in the passenger seat, feigning contentment.

"So I booked us a table at a French restaurant tonight," Vincent said

cheerfully to me as he drove. "Aaron actually recommended it to me. Said it was the best in town!" He seemed to have completely forgotten about the tense phone call from a few minutes ago.

"Oh, did you tell him it was our anniversary?"

"Yeah. He even bought a bottle of their vintage in advance. To formally apologize for what happened at the bar a few weeks ago." Vincent continued as high-spirited as ever.

Suddenly, I remembered Aaron's confident remark from earlier.

"You'll have time."

An uneasy feeling settled in my mind.

"What else did he say?"

"You'll just have to find out later!"

After fifteen minutes, Vincent parked in front of a high-end boutique. I recognized the store immediately. Cinder was a regular customer here. This was the kind of place that required an expensive membership and appointments weeks in advance. Why were we here?

L!

Vincent locked the car and led me inside. As we stepped in, he mentioned that the appointment was under Aaron's name, and the staff snapped to attention.

"Of course, sir. Please, come with us."

I clung to Vincent's arm involuntarily. "What's all this?"

He turned and put his hands on my shoulders to massage them soothingly.

"Olive. Today is our third year anniversary. You are, by far, the most beautiful woman I've ever seen, and tonight, I wanted to showcase just how gorgeous you are."

I felt the corner of my mouth twitch upward in an uncontrollable smile. This must've been because this French restaurant he mentioned had a strict dress code.

It seemed that everything today was all thanks to Aaron

He recommended the restaurant. Ordered the wine. Scheduled a stylist appointment.

He was the one who organized my anniversary. Not Vincent.

I let my smirk grow into a grin. "You're always so thoughtful!"

"For you, L!"

Before Vincent could finish his sentence, his phone rang again, but he immediately sent the caller to voicemail.

"No, go ahead," I insisted. "Answer it. I have to go try on the clothes first."

I gave him a kiss before following the stylist and whispered lowly, "I have a surprise for you, too."

SLF

He chuckled, overwhelmed by my sudden forwardness tonight. "Who are you and what have you done to my girlfriend?"

I just smiled and told him I'd be back soon, then turned and headed to the fitting room

I was eager to see what Emily had up her sleeve, because tonight, Vincent must be mine.