

Debt

Elizabeth POV

“Let me go!” She yelled, struggling against the connes that tied her to a chair—her vision still blocked by a bag, or it could be a pillow case, she wasn’t sure. She’d had to calm herself a few times—closing her eyes and going to her happy place. Trying to stop herself from having a panic attack.

She hated narrow spaces. She swallowed—trying to ease her dry throat.

How had she ended up in this situation? What was going on? Where was she?

She could hear a door opening—footsteps approaching. Elizabeth shut her eyes against the sudden blinding light as whatever was on her head was pulled off her roughly. She could hear a chair scraping the oor—drawing closer as a shiver ran down her spine.

The room was musty—smelling of cigarettes and sweat.

“Ms. Livingstone, it’s a pleasure to meet you,” A deep voice said.

Elizabeth pried her eyes open, trying to see who was talking to her—who had taken her.

“Do I know you?” Was her rst question, as she took in the dark-haired man in front of her. He seemed to be in his late thirties.

“You should. You owe me a considerable amount of money.” He drawled. There was something threatening about the way he spoke.

“What?! I’ve never seen you before in my life!” She spat. What the hell was he talking about?

The man clacked his tongue, gesturing to someone behind her. Suddenly, two other men approached. They were all kind of handsome—their shirts straining to accommodate their muscled bodies. Tattoos peaking out from behind their clothes.

This was beginning to feel like the start of a bad porno.

“Do you know what we do to people who owe us money and don’t pay up?”

“N-No,” Elizabeth stuttered, as her heart rate started spiking—the palms of her hands had started to sweat. Her eyes darted between the men, and she suddenly noticed they all had the same tattoos on their necks, barely covered by their shirts.

“You don’t pay? You disappear.” The man threatened. Her heartbeat roared in her ears, and her wrists throbbed against the tape binding them to the cold metal chair.

“What? I—I don’t owe you anything!” Her mouth went dry, her pulse quickening as realization hit her. Brian. This was about Brian.

“Ah, I see that you’ve nally put the pieces together.” The man chuckled, shaking his head as though she was stupid. Even she had to admit that she kind of was.

“Wait, it’s not me, it’s Brian!” Elizabeth hastily spoke, looking around the room. “Yes, Brian, he has debt, not me—I”

Elizabeth reeled from the smack she received against her cheek—her ears buzzing. Her eyes started to tear up from the force of the hit—her cheek felt as though it was on re.

“There’s no point in trying to negotiate. Brian has told us everything.”

A tear escaped her eyes. This was serious. What was she going to do? She’d used the few thousand dollars she’d earned as a Nanny to pay off one of Brian’s other debts.

“Either you pay us or we’re going to teach you a lesson.” The man spoke menacingly, cracking his knuckles.

“H—how much is it?” She asked—trembling with fear.

“Fifty-two G’s” Elizabeth’s eyes widened. She didn’t have that kind of money, but maybe she could give them something until she had?

“I—I have some money in m—my purse, and um, maybe—” She suddenly thought of Matteo’s black card. No, she couldn’t do that—she couldn’t violate his trust like that and use the man’s money.

“Either you pay us now, or you work it off in one of our other businesses.”

“W—what do you mean?” Elizabeth asked in a trembling voice as tears streamed down her face.

“We own a few strip clubs. You could work there until you’ve earned us back the money.” The man explained in his heavy Brooklyn accent.

“Boss, she could start paying off her debt here. Let us inspect the goods, so to speak.” One of the other men suggested, eyeing her body while the other one chuckled.

Elizabeth had never felt so dirty before in her life.

“What do you say, tuts? How about you give me and my friends a little sample? Maybe we can do a little more than just strip,” His breath smelled of cigarettes and garlic, as he leaned closer to her—his hands on the armrest of her chair.

“I’d rather get eaten alive by ants,” She spat in the man’s face. Yep, literal saliva. Nope, not a great move.

“You’re going to regret not taking me up on my offer, you little b***h!” He said, backhanding her in the face. Elizabeth’s mouth lled with the metallic taste of blood. It gushed from her lip—but she held her tongue, not giving him the satisfaction of hearing her scream.

“Torture it is,” The rst man sitting across from her shrugged. Elizabeth wondered if anyone would care if she was dead.

She grated her teeth when her head was pulled back—as one of the men grabbed a huge chunk of her hair.

“Gentlemen, the meeting is about to start up again. Are you—Oh” The door suddenly opened, revealing a surprised looking older man. He surveyed the scene in front of him—and behind him stood—

“Elizabeth?”

“You should start feeling better in a few minutes, though the bruising will stay on for a few days. You should ice it regularly.”

“Thank you, doctor,” Elizabeth tried smiling, but her slit lip protested.

“Thank you, doctor. Let me see you out.” Matteo spoke, guiding the doctor out of his oce. He’d somehow gotten her out of that place—and back to his manor.

She didn’t know what he’d had to do to save her—but she would be forever grateful. The car ride back had been a blur. She’d been too out of it to notice anything, but now—now she wanted to thank him.

Matteo returned a few minutes later.

“How are you feeling?” He asked her.

“Better,” She smiled, “I just wanted to say than—”

“You’re red.”

“What?” She asked, her mouth agape despite her lip hurting.

“That’s one of the ground rules of my contract. No jeopardizing my daughter’s safety.” He spoke sternly.

“But I—”

“I don’t know what you’re into, is it drugs, gambling—I don’t care. All I know is that you endangered the life of my daughter with your lifestyle, and I don’t want you around her anymore. You’re red. I want you out of the house by tomorrow evening.”