

Unwelcome guest

Elizabeth POV

Over the next few weeks, things returned to normal—or at least, as normal as they could be when your boss had offered to sleep with you in exchange for money.

Elizabeth couldn't quite forget it, no matter how hard she tried. Matteo had apologized, they had a new agreement, and everything was supposed to be professional now. But the memory lingered, always in the back of her mind, resurfacing at the most inconvenient times. Like when she caught him watching her across the room, or when she noticed how often their hands brushed when he handed her something.

Things were normal. But not quite.

She'd surprised herself by refusing his offer. She'd been attracted to him from the moment she'd seen him. But she didn't want him like that—she wasn't a p*****e. Elizabeth believed in love—real love. Yes, she'd had a one-night stand or two when she was younger, but she'd quickly learned that it wasn't her thing. She did love intimacy, but in the connes of a relationship.

But a relationship with her boss would be a bad idea, plus she was pretty certain that wasn't what he'd had in mind.

Elizabeth was happy to see that Sophia was enjoying going to school again. The little girl ourished in the presence of other children, and Elizabeth loved every minute of it.

While Elizabeth waited for the bell to ring, she was approached by Romano. They still hadn't had their date, and they wouldn't be having one for a while. She'd kept her distance over the last few weeks. His Brooklyn accent—which had been a turn on before—was now a reminder of what she had been through, and what she would have gone through if Matteo hadn't saved her.

“Elizabeth, how are you?” he asked, stepping up beside her with an easy grin.

“Hey, I've been ne, thank you. You?” she responded, smiling politely.

“All good,” he said, ashing a grin. “Though I have to admit, life would be a little better if a certain blonde wasn't ghosting me,” he teased, leaning slightly toward her with a mock pout. “I mean, come on, Elizabeth, you know I'm fragile. My ego's taken a serious hit.”

She laughed, shaking her head. “I'm sure you'll survive.”

“Barely,” he sighed dramatically. “Most women would be lining up for the honor of dinner with me, but you? You keep me humble.” He shot her a wink. “You know, I might start thinking you're playing hard to get.”

“I'm not most woman,” she countered with a smile. “And maybe I am,” She couldn't help but irt. She'd forgotten how easy it was to be around him—a far cry from another grumpy Italian she knew. She mentally berated herself for letting her mind drift to Matteo and quickly pushed the thought away.

“I'm starting to notice that,” he winked at her. And just like that, the idea of going to dinner with him was back on the table, or so to speak.

“Let it gooo,” Elizabeth and Sophia belted out on the way home, for the fth time in a row. She had to give it to their driver, Milton. The man didn't even inch at their terrible singing, but just drove on as if it didn't sound like two cats were being slaughtered in the backseat.

It was Thanksgiving weekend, and spirits were high. Though Elizabeth didn't have a family to go home to—or she didn't want to go home to them at least—Sophia's enthusiasm was contagious, and they walked into the manor with a smile on their faces.

That was until she was greeted by an unwelcome guest.

“Sophia!” Vittoria greeted her enthusiastically, but the little girl did not share the same excitement. Elizabeth couldn't help but let her eyes rake over the woman's body. She was dressed impeccably as always, but the creases on her dress didn't go unnoticed. It was almost like someone had roughly pulled it off of her.

Suddenly, Matteo appeared, coming out of his oce. He'd clearly not been expecting anyone home yet. His dress shirt was half untucked, and there was a lipstick stain on his collar.

Elizabeth's eyes ickered from the red stain to Vittoria's red lips—not needing to guess what had happened. Her expression hardened, her hands clenched into sts. But she had no right to feel the way she felt.

“Daddy!” Sophia, completely oblivious to the situation, jumped up and raced toward her father, who hid his surprise and stopped tucking his shirt in his pants to catch her.

“Hey, Principessina, how was school today?” Matteo smiled warmly. (Little Princess)

As Sophia started rambling about everything that had happened at school, Vittoria—being the b***h that she was—felt the need to further antagonize Elizabeth.

“For someone who's pretending to be not into Matteo, you sure hide it terribly,” She purred.

“What?” Elizabeth asked, while Sophia told Matteo what one of her friends, Thomas, had done during recess—making wild hand gestures. She was a true Italian at heart.

“Your face, dear. It's all over your face. Jealously doesn't suit you.” The woman made a dig at her. When Elizabeth didn't respond, she went even further.

“You're probably wondering, and the answer is yes. He is an expert with his hands and tongue, not to mention what he can do with his hips. Multiple orgasms,” She grinned like the Cheshire cat.

“I'm guessing his equipment is pretty big then,” Elizabeth replied with a grin of her own.

“Oh, it is,” Vittoria's smile widened.

“Must be, to ll up a hole like yours that's probably been drilled by everyone in the broad vicinity.” The smile dropped from Vittoria's lips.

“Anyway, it was nice talking to you, Victoria.” Elizabeth smiled, emphasizing the wrong name on purpose, before excusing herself. Putting the b***h in her place had felt so good.

The rest of the evening was spent playing games with Sophia, while Vittoria glared daggers at her from her spot next to Matteo at the dining room table. Matteo, either oblivious to the tension or choosing to ignore it, carried on as if nothing was wrong.

Elizabeth hoped the witch would leave soon, but a sinking feeling told her Vittoria would be a guest at tomorrow night's dinner. Of course, she herself would probably not be invited to join.

She was just an employee after all.

The next morning, Elizabeth was woken up by a knock on the door. A knock at an ungodly hour. She did her usual grumble as she stalked toward the person responsible for waking her.

She was surprised to see it was Rosemary—aka Parsley—with a panicked expression on her face.

“Hey, Elizabeth, Good morning,” the woman paced from foot to foot, an unnatural friendly smile on her face.

“Yes?” Elizabeth asked, narrowing her eyes at the nervous woman.

“So, a funny thing just happened. Apparently, Evita is sick again, so...”

“No!” Elizabeth tried closing her door, but the head of housekeepers quickly wedged her foot in the frame, preventing it from shutting.

“Please? You know I can't nd anyone else on such short notice!” Rosemary pleaded, her voice bordering on desperation.

Elizabeth huffed, pausing her attempt to crush Parsley's foot with the door. “Fine, but on one condition.”

“Okay, name it,” Rosemary exhaled in relief.

“Matteo asks me himself.”