

Dinner disaster

Elizabeth POV

Elizabeth had just stepped out of the shower and wrapped a towel around her when there was a knock on the door. Thinking it would be Rosemary since Matteo would be busy with his family, Elizabeth didn't bother changing before opening.

"Eliz—" Matteo paused mid-sentence, his eyes dropping to her towel-clad frame. The earlier heat between them reignited, like gasoline being poured on a simmering re.

Elizabeth wondered how it would feel to have his body weight on top of her, their naked bodies gleaming with sweat, his muscles straining under her ngers while he slid in and out of her wet core, her legs wrapped around his strong torso...

"If you keep looking at me like that I'm going to have to disappoint my family," Matteo half chuckled, but when her eyes met his, she could see they had darkened with the same lust she was feeling.

Elizabeth shook her head to clear it. They needed to stop whatever this was. It would only end in heartbreak for her.

"Did you want to ask me something?" She managed, her voice steadier than she felt, "I was going to come and check on the turkey in a minute,"

"I—I wanted to ask you to join us. It's only fair since you did most of the work preparing our food," he said sheepishly, his usual condescence faltering.

"Is Rosemary coming?" she asked, her curiosity piqued. She would only consider it if the housekeeper was welcomed too.

"Oh, yes, of course. I was going to ask her right after you," he spluttered, the sincerity in his voice met with a icker of doubt in her mind.

"Okay, let me change into something more appropriate, and then I'll come and join you." As his eyes slid over her form once more, she caught the warmth of his gaze, sending a shiver down her spine.

"I'll see you downstairs," he replied, the tension between them hanging in the air like an unspoken promise.

Elizabeth made her way downstairs, making sure to stop in the kitchen to check on the turkey. She could tell it was almost ready when she checked the core temperature.

She quickly placed the other dishes into the oven, making sure they would all be ready at the same time. Content with the progress, Elizabeth made her way to the dining room, where she was greeted by the pleasant chatter and warm laughter of Matteo's family.

She had chosen a tted wrap dress in soft blush for the dinner, its delicate oral patterns dancing across the fabric. The dress hugged her curves in all the right places, while the knee-length cut offered just enough elegance for the occasion. Her hair cascaded down her shoulders.

She entered the dining room, and felt a utter of nerves as Matteo's eyes roamed over her.

"Thank you for letting me join your family dinner," She spoke to the room. "Dinner will be ready in a few minutes." She noticed they'd already eaten the antipasto platter Rosemary had made, and wanted to head to the kitchen to serve the appetizer, when Matteo's father approached her and handed her a glass of wine.

"Hello dear, I don't think I've introduced myself, I'm Giovanni De Luca, and that's my wife, Francesca," He pointed to Matteo's mother and smiled warmly, reminding her so much of Matteo.

"Elizabeth," She held out her hand, "it's nice to meet you." She smiled, taking a sip of her red wine.

"You know, Matteo, we have some lovely family friends. They have a daughter just your age. She's very pretty. You really should start dating again," Francesca spoke, causing Elizabeth to choke on her wine.

Suddenly, all eyes were on her, causing the slight redness in her face—caused by the wine entering her lungs—to turn into a full blown inferno.

"Ellie, are you okay?" Sophia asked, hugging her legs—a worried look on her face.

"Yes, dear, I'm ne," She smiled, pushing a piece of hair behind the girl's ear.

Elizabeth couldn't have felt more relieved when Rosemary walked into the room. The woman was wearing her normal attire and Elizabeth wondered why she hadn't dressed up. She quickly approached the housekeeper, who seemed to have grown on her.

"Thank goodness you're here." She whispered.

"The mom is scary, right," Rosemary spoke through clenched teeth, all the while pretending to smile.

"Hmm" Elizabeth hummed in agreement. This was going to be a long night.

"Oh, I'm so sorry I'm late," none other than Vittoria entered the room. She was wearing a crimson gown, with a daring thigh-high slit that revealed a glimpse of her toned legs, while the plunging neckline offered just a peek of her décolletage. Though elegant, Elizabeth couldn't help but feel like it was a bit too daring for a family dinner.

"Who invited her?" Rosemary whispered, wondering the same thing.

"Vittoria, what are you doing here?" Matteo asked, a look of confusion on his face, at the exact same time his mother spoke.

"Vittoria, how lovely to see you, my dear. I'm surprised you don't have a ring on your nger yet. Matteo, just look at her." Francesca said. Elizabeth choked in her wine again.

"Are you okay?" Rosemary asked.

"I'm ne," Elizabeth spoke between coughs. But on the inside, she felt a knot of anxiety tighten. Yes, she knew she and Matteo could never be together, it wouldn't work. But hearing his mother speak to him about another possible love interest made an uneasy feeling surface inside of her.

Dinner wasn't a whole lot better. During the appetizer, Francesca kept hinting to a wedding between Matteo and Vittoria.

"Oh, our families would nally come together. It would make your parents so happy," She dramatically clapped her hands together. Vittoria played along, and batted her eyelashes at Matteo every now and then, but he seemed to be preoccupied with his father and Sophia.

"Caterina, put down your phone!" Francesca slammed her hand on the table, causing everyone to startle, "This is family time, not social media hour!"

Caterina quickly threw her phone in her purse, and continued eating as if nothing had happened. If Elizabeth had doubts before, she was sure now that Francesca was the head of the family.

"Elizabeth, I really like this lasagna," Johnny, who was sitting near Matteo said. Elizabeth was at the end of the table with Rosemary on one side of her and Caterina on the other. She smiled at Johnny, silently thanking him for his compliment.

"Hmm, it's okay," Francesca hummed, a look of distain on her face. Vittoria laughed, stating that as a true Italian—whatever that was—even she could do a better job.

"Oh, that's good to know. Next time Evita is sick, I'll be sure to have Rosemary call you to come and help," Elizabeth said with a tight smile while Vittoria's faltered—a look of panic crossing her face.

"Matteo, really, where do you nd these girls," Francesca scoffed, a clear insult to Elizabeth. "They hardly have any manners."

Elizabeth clenched her sts as Caterina gave her a sympathetic look.

"Mother, Elizabeth is very good with Sophia. My principessina has ourished under her care," Matteo smiled warmly when looking at his daughter.

"Hmm, that maybe so, but look at how she just spoke to poor Vittoria. I'd even go as far as saying that she doesn't need to be here. The help at the table, really," She sneered.

"Well, the help needs to eat too," Elizabeth replied with a smile that didn't reach her eyes as Francesca's head snapped to her.

"Matty, you need someone around who understands our world, the girl is hardly wife material," This time it was Matteo's turn to choke on his drink.

"Mamma, who said anything about wife," He stated, as Elizabeth wondered the same thing.

"You think I am blind? Not to mention Sophia running around all afternoon singing about Daddy and Ellie kissing in some trees. Madre Madonna, what's going on here?" She waved her hands in the air. "Not the help Matteo," She added.

"Are you indicating that I'm stupid?" Elizabeth asked, her blood was starting to boil.

"Oh, no dear, not indicate. You are clearly stupid. You're just a nanny after all."

"Sophia, why don't we go play a game in the other room?" Rosemary asked, hastily ushering the little girl out of the room as the tension built.

"Mamma!" Matteo warned.

"Don't you take that tone with me!" The woman pointed a nger in his face.

"I'd like you to know that I have a business degree and was a marketing director before I became Sophia's nanny. What university degree do you have?" Elizabeth asked, arching an eyebrow—a smug smile on her face.

"You see! This girl is for the streets!" Francesca shouted. "She's beneath you Matteo!"

"It seems like the only one at the table who's beneath anyone, is you!" Elizabeth stood up with such force, her chair fell to the oor.

"Elizabeth, you will treat my mother with respect!" Matteo slammed his hand on the table. Elizabeth xed him with a glare. So, that's how it was? His mother was right. She was stupid—stupid to ever think there could be something between them. The room was silent, everyone staring at the three of them.

"Let's not forget about the wine! Matteo, pour your mother a glass before she starts another argument." Giovanni, Matteo's father chuckled, breaking the tension in the room.

"I'm going to check on the turkey," Elizabeth said, leaving the room. She pulled the large bird out of the oven, placing it on a serving plate when Matteo suddenly popped up behind her.

"Elizabeth, about before...I didn't mean—"

"It's perfectly ne, Matteo, if you'd excuse me, my appetite seems to have disappeared," Along with my affection for you. She thought. She grabbed a bottle of wine from the kitchen counter.

"Rosemary, let's go! The helps aren't welcomed at the table!" She shouted. Passing the room Sophia was playing in with Rosemary and now Caterina.

The woman quickly followed behind her.

They were going to need more wine to wash away this horrible night.