

The Devil's Fire by Mariam El-Hafi Chapter 33 - 40

Althaia

We kept walking around, trying different types of food, and playing different games. I was a competitive person and I would challenge Damiano at any chance. Though I wasn't as successful as I had hoped but in return, he won a few more teddy bears for me.

The sky had turned dark and we were still at the amusement park. I kept glancing back every now and then as the feeling of someone watching us increased. I didn't know if I was being a bit paranoid after the girl and that woman had looked at me. Still, I squeezed the teddy bears closer to my chest and stepped closer to Damiano for comfort.

"Urgh, my feet are hurting." I winced. We had been at the amusement park for hours now, and I wasn't exactly wearing footwear that was comfortable for this kind of activity.

"Want to head back?" Damiano asked and I nodded tiredly. I couldn't wait to get off my feet and was already thinking about soaking in a hot bubble bath. The room we were staying in had a huge bathtub placed in front of a large window with a view of the massive lake with golden lights.

We changed direction to get to the exit and that was when I noticed the same man, who we had walked by a few times, suddenly changed direction too and followed us.

That couldn't be right...

My heart started to pump faster. His action set me off. It could be coincidental I tried to tell myself, and that it was easy to get lost

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1288 Vouchers

here. But now thinking about it, he had still been in the background when we tried out the games.

"Damiano..."

"I know." He said calmly. He wrapped his arm around my waist and pulled me closer to him.

"I was trying to distract you." He sounded serious yet he was talking in a soft voice to me.

"W-what's going on?" I couldn't help but stutter a little as I felt my heart start to pump violently.

"I haven't seen them before." Damiano kept staring straight ahead but his eyes were discreetly analyzing the crowd.

"Them?!" I shrieked in a panic. There was more than one?

"Don't look." He stopped me when I was about to look around.

“So far, there are six of them. If you look around now, they’ll know I’ve spotted them and then they might attack sooner than planned when we get out. They won’t do anything now. There are too many people around.” He softly explained while still keeping a firm grip on me.

“Breathe, Althaia. I won’t let them hurt you.” I hadn’t even noticed that I had stopped breathing.

“O-okay.” My voice wouldn’t stop shaking and I could feel my knees giving up on me a little.

We had now exited the amusement park, and the music and laughter were slowly getting out of hearing distance. We went through the park we had come from, but this time, it was extremely dark, only the lamp posts providing some light.

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“Talk to me.” His tone was still soft but my knees still felt they would buckle at any second.

“I’m scared.” I hadn’t felt this kind of fear before, and I had no ideal what to do other than to press myself into him for some kind of protection.

“I know.” His thumb caressed my side as we continued to walk. Damiano walked us to a darker and more isolated area in the park. I couldn’t see much as it was too dark for me, and the tall trees blocked any lights from the lamp posts. He suddenly stopped and pulled me in front of him and pressed me up against a tree.

“Listen to me, Althaia.” I looked up at him and his brows were slightly furrowed as he looked at me with a serious expression.

“No matter what, you keep your eyes on me. You don’t look anywhere else but at me.” He ordered firmly. I couldn’t say anything than just nod at him and stare at him wide-eyed.

“You’ll hear gunshots, but they won’t be too loud.” Damiano continued to instruct as he leaned closer to me. I could feel his hands moving around. And then I felt it.

His gun.

I looked down quickly and saw that he was twisting something at the muzzle of the gun. It must be a silencer. I gulped and looked back at him.

“They are close.” Damiano pressed himself against me, his face so close to mine I could feel his hot breath on my lips. On the outside, we looked like a normal couple, having a romantic about-to-kiss moment up against a tree. But it was in fact, a matter of a life-or-death situation. I didn’t dare to look anywhere else and kept focusing on Damiano’s golden-brown eyes that I have come to

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Za8 Vouchers

care so much for.

In a blink of an eye, Damiano's eyes hardened and went cold, his eyes snapped to look over my shoulder. He moved so fast that I could barely comprehend what was going on. I jumped at the sound of shots being fired from right beside my left shoulder. There were groans before I heard their bodies drop to the ground with a thud, having me swallow hard.

He was right about it not being too loud but still loud enough to hear as we were the only ones in the park, but still, very distant noises from the amusement park could still be heard.

My body tensed, even more, when I could see two muzzle flashes from different directions out of the corner of my eye. But I did as he said and kept looking at him, my eyes never leaving his face. My hands were in tight fists on his shirt when I heard the rustling sound of someone moving toward us.

That was it. We were going to die.

My lip wanted to tremble so badly in fear. Damiano looked back at me and put a hand on my cheek and lightly caressed it with his thumb.

"Antonio and Luca." He told me quietly. But it was like I couldn't understand what he was saying. I only realized what he meant when Antonio and Luca came out from behind the trees.

"Breathe. You're going to pass out." As if on cue, I gasped for air as if I had been underwater for so long, and finally came back to the surface for air. My lungs were hurting from the harsh intake of breaths, and my heart was going so crazy that I was afraid it would jump right out of my chest.

"I – I can't feel my legs." I whispered to him in a shaky voice. I

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wasn't sure what I could and couldn't feel. I was shaking so much and my knees finally gave up on me. Damiano moved his arm around my waist and the other behind my knees to carry me.

I wrapped my arms tightly around his neck, closing my eyes as I buried my face into his neck. It was silent. The only sounds coming from their light footsteps on the path. I heard the sound of a car door opening and Damiano slid in with me on his lap.

He still held me tightly, his hand caressing my back as the car drove off. He moved to reach for something and I felt a blanket being wrapped around me. I kept my eyes closed and focused on his calm and steady heartbeat.

We were back in our hotel room and Damiano placed me down on the couch and walked over to the window. I pulled the blanket tighter around me as I wrapped my arms around my legs with my head resting on my knees. A bottle of water entered my view and I looked up to see it was Antonio. They all seemed to wear this blank expression, never allowing anyone to see what

they were thinking.

I gave him a small smile and thanked him. I was still shaking, but this time it was from suddenly being cold even though I had the blanket around me. I struggled to twist the cap open as my hands were weak and wouldn't stop shaking. Antonio took the bottle out of my hands and opened it for me before giving it back.

All three of them were by the window, talking in hushed voices so I wouldn't pick up what they were saying. I tried to listen if I could just make sense of some words but failed to do so as my own thoughts were all over the place. I was scared and confused. I had so many questions about what had just happened. I looked over at

61.50%

them and saw that they were already looking at me. Damiano said something to them before they walked out of the room.

"What's going on?" I asked when they left us alone. Damiano sat down next to me on the couch before taking hold of me and placing me on his lap

"How are you feeling?" I frowned a little.

"What's going on." I pressed on when he tried to change the subject.

"You don't need to worry about it." He dismissed.

"Don't say that to me when I was in the middle of it!" My voice raised a little. I was freaked out about the whole situation. He just looked at me, giving nothing away.

"Please, tell me... I need to know." Damiano looked around my face as if pondering if he should tell me or not.

"We don't know who they are. They are not carrying anything to be identified with in any way, which only led to one answer."

"What?" I dreaded the answer but I also knew I would never get any peace if I didn't know.

"Human traffickers." He answered. My heart stopped beating for a second and my eyes went wide in shock.

"And they were after..." I trailed off, already knowing the answer. Yet I couldn't get myself to finish the sentence.

"They were." I just nodded, still in shock. I looked down at his shirt and started to nervously play with the buttons. I never thought something like this would happen to me. I kept thinking about why they would want me, and then I kept thinking about how many girls

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they had managed to s*atch at the amusement park.

It made me sick.

"What about their bodies in the park?" I decided to ask.

"They are being taken care of." He spoke to me softly.

“Okay.” The last thing I wanted on my mind was to think about children finding dead bodies in the park. They would be traumatized for life.

Damiano gently grabbed my chin and made me look at him.

“I won’t let anything happen to you. You’re safe.” His golden-brown eyes were full of promise. He slowly leaned in, and I closed my eyes when he kissed me softly, having me melt right into his arms.

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Post Views: 8

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

Althaia

I sighed as I slipped down into the bathtub I had filled up with bubbles. A tad too much as the bubbles spilled to the sides when I got in. I leaned back, resting my head, and closed my eyes, letting the hot water work its magic on my sore muscles and aching feet from yesterday’s activities.

I made a mental note never wearing flats to an amusement park ever again. I was tired and I could feel myself getting sleepy. I hadn’t slept a wink at all last night which definitely set its trace on my face. Every time I would close my eyes, the sound of gunshots would echo in my mind, and I would jump in startlement and my eyes would snap open. I spent the night with my head on Damiano’s chest, listening to his heartbeat while tracing some of his many tattoos with my fingers.

Damiano didn’t sleep either as his hand kept going around in smooth circles on my back. It did calm me down and in any other circumstances, it would have put me right to sleep. I doubt he was awake for the same reason I was. It was what he did for a living after all.

I kept replaying the scenario of him getting ready to fire. In a split second, his pupils went small, and his eyes were cold and dead. I had watched him getting into a strange zone, which took him less than a second to get into. It really made me wonder what a man like Damiano must have gone through to be able to shut everything down and just...kill.

My heart ached as I pictured Damiano as a kid with the very same look I had witnessed yesterday. How could someone be so fucked up... to take an innocent child and turn them into a person who doesn’t even blink when it comes to taking another person’s life.

He became a dangerous, skilled, cold-hearted assassin. And any person with a bit of common sense knew to stay hundreds of miles away from a person like him. Yet, I went to him for comfort and protection.

Did that make me naïve or just plain stupid? I haven’t decided yet.

At some point, I had dozed off in the tub and by the time I woke up, the water

was cold, the bubbles were gone, and my fingers. were all wrinkly and mushy. I wrapped myself in the incredibly soft robe, imagining that was how a cloud would feel.

Damiano went off somewhere after ordering room service for me. He didn't say where he was going and I was too tired to interrogate him. Not that he would tell me anything anyways.

"Oh shit, you scared me!" I put a hand up to my chest and let out a breath when I saw Luca on the couch. He was half asleep before I yelped and woke him up.

"Sorry, the couch sucked me in." He sat up and ran a hand through his jet-black hair. I have seen Luca around a few times before but never really talked to him. I liked that he was dressed casually in a white t-shirt and jeans. It made him seem normal.

"Yeah, it's really comfy." I chuckled a little. I went to the service cart and grabbed a cup of coffee. I must have been asleep for a while as it was cold. Still, I took a sip but immediately grimaced. It was not good at all.

"Where's Damiano?" I decided to ask and took a seat in the

288 Vouchers

armchair in front of Luca.

"I don't know." He looked at me with his hazel eyes as he leaned back.

"Really?" I raised a brow, not believing him.

"Yeah." He gave a half smirk and I rolled my eyes.

"You know, there's this café just around the corner with some really good coffee." I started.

"No." Luca immediately said, barely letting me finish my sentence.

"And why not?" I really needed some caffeine if I was going to that auction tonight.

"Boss's orders. You're not leaving the room." He shrugged.

"You would be with me? And that's me assuming why you're here, to keep an eye on me." I pointed out.

"Ah, you see, they told me to be careful with you." He crossed his arms with a teasing look.

"With me?"

"Dario and Antonio said you have a way to get what you want." I couldn't help but smile a little as I remembered how I practically forced Dario to give me Damiano's number and told Antonio just to follow me in his car while I drove Michael's Aston Martin.

"It's literally around the corner. We'll be back right away." I promised.

"Nope."

288 vouchers

"You look like you could use some coffee too. They have great sandwiches

too.”

“Sorry, can’t do.”

“Fine, I’ll just tell Damiano that you’re letting me starve.” It was a cheap shot but I really wanted that coffee.

“You have food.” He nodded to the cart.

“It’s cold and soaky.”

“Then order something.”

“Come on! It’ll take the same amount of time if we just went down to the café and get what we want. Thirty minutes tops!”

“No.”

“I haven’t slept all night, it’ll be your hell.” I challenged him.

“Good. It’ll give me something to do.” Luca grinned. I gave up. He wasn’t going to budge and I was too tired to try and convince him.

“So, we’re just stuck here for how long?” I got comfortable and sat crisscrossed on the armchair.

“They should be back right before we have to leave for the auction.” I looked at the time and saw that it was only eleven am. There was still a long time since we had to leave around seven pm. We sat in comfortable silence while I zoned out, lost in my own thoughts.

“Are you okay?” Luca asked and I looked back at him.

“About last night.” He elaborated.

258 Vouchers

“I’m fine... just shocked, I guess.” I was freaked out, and that was for sure.

What if I had been alone? They would have snatched me and there would be nothing I could do about it.

“How did you guys just pop out?” I thought we were alone as I didn’t see them anywhere, and Damiano didn’t mention them either.

“We’re always around. We kept in the background to give you privacy.”

“I see.” I said impressed. It was a bit creepy, but I was still impressed they had managed to keep out of sight.

“How old are you?” I randomly asked. When I really did look at him, he seemed to be a bit younger than Antonio and Damiano.

“27.”

“Oh, nice. Are you in a relationship?”

“I am. We have been together for three years now.” He gave me a smile at the mention of her.

“That’s nice.” I smiled back. Also very happy that he was answering my random questions without seeming annoyed by them.

“Does she know what you do?”

“I expect her to know since she’s related to Damiano.” Luca laughed. I raised my brows in surprise.

"Oh wow. I did not see that coming." I chuckled along with him.

"Yeah, he gave me hell for it when I commented on her in his presence. I didn't know they were cousins. But ever since, I couldn't keep away from her."

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"That is so cute! I'm happy for you." I beamed. I was a sucker for romance and that sounded too cute to be true.

"Thank you." He smiled warmly.

"You know, you're different from the other men who usually are around Damiano. They are all so serious it's terrifying. I tried to start a conversation with Antonio once, and he shut me down immediately. I think he hates me." I said and cringed at the awful attempt to make conversation with him in the car.

"He doesn't hate you." Luca laughed at me.

"You don't need to lie to me. It's fine. I know I can't be liked by everyone." I gave a small shrug but he shook his head.

"You don't get it. He was just being careful. We all thought you would just be a one-time thing and we wouldn't see you again. Guess we were wrong."

"And who says this isn't a one-time thing?"

"You're not fooling anyone." He looked at me amused.

"It was a genuine question."

"You really don't know much, do you?" He leaned forward, resting his arms on his thighs.

"We are all ordered to protect you with our lives if something were to happen. Which means you're not going anywhere." My eyes widened at the information. We didn't have a label on...whatever we were at the moment, but the thought of them having to sacrifice their lives just for someone like me did not settle well with me.

At all.

Vouchers

"My life is not worth more than yours." I shook my head at him, displeased about it all.

"But it is. That's how our society works."

"I don't like that..."

"You will get used to it."

"Will I though?" I sighed. It was such a strange world. A world where only a scratch of the surface had been exposed to me. I didn't know what to expect. I never did. It was like I tell myself I should expect the worst, but I didn't know what the definition of that was in their world.

I guess only time will tell.

After chatting a bit with Luca, I decided to get my hair and makeup done early

so I wouldn't have to worry about it later. I decided to wear my hair up in an updo, low on the back of my head with a few loose strands around my face. It was a backless dress, and it would be a shame to have it covered by my hair. I was drained of energy after that and had to order some coffee and something to eat since I actually was starting to feel starved. I had asked them at the reception if they by any chance had any card games. They didn't but they were happy to get us something.

"UNO!" I shouted.

"No, you can't put a draw two on top of my draw four. So, you lose!" Luca threw his last card on the table.

"Yes, I can!"

"No, you can't. Look, these are the rules." He held up the packet and showed me the backside of it with the rules.

"Tsk, you're the last one to lecture me about rules." I teased, and he gave me a bored look. Luca was fun to hang out with and was a very competitive person. And so was I. Which meant hell broke out a few times.

"Whatever, this game is boring anyways." I huffed and leaned back in the chair.

"Only because you lost all rounds. Sucker." He grinned and I squinted my eyes at him.

"You so much cheated. Get up." I got up from my seat because I was one hundred percent sure he was hiding some cards behind him.

"Accept your defeat. You lost." He said, refusing to get up.

"Never!" I grabbed his arm with both arms, trying to get him up. I just didn't realize he would barely budge from his seat, making my mission impossible. He was staring at me with a brow raised as if saying 'that's all you got?', which only made me more determined to get him out of the damn couch! He suddenly moved his arms back to him, and since I was holding his arms with both hands, I went straight with it.

Stumbling right on top of him.

Both of our heads snapped towards the door that opened, seeing Damiano and Antonio.

Luca was the first one to react and quickly got up from the couch, making me stand up with him. I took a few steps back when Damiano and Antonio looked back and forth between us.

"He cheated!" I erupted in panic, only to realize my mistake as Damiano looked at the robe I was still wearing.

"We were playing UNO, and he cheated." I quickly explained, pointing to the cards on the coffee table.

"And that's why you were on top of him." Damiano calmly stated.

"No, it's not like that -" My eyes widened when Antonio made his way toward

Luca with a murderous look. I gasped and quickly stood in front of Luca with my arms spread out so he wouldn't get to him.

"Let me just explain!" I yelled in pure fear of what he would do to him. I couldn't understand why Luca didn't say anything when his ass was on the line.

"Antonio." Damiano called after him and backed down and stepped aside. Damiano walked up to me and looked me up and down before his eyes turned to Luca.

"Get out." Luca gave a nod, wasting no time, and left quickly with Antonio following him.

"Don't hurt him."

"Why do you care." He tilted his head as he looked at me.

"You're reading too much into it. I fell when I tried to make him stand up because I was sure he was hiding some cards behind him." I explained but Damiano didn't say anything. He looked down at the robe I was wearing, pulling it slightly to the side. His expression hardened when he saw I wasn't wearing anything underneath.

"Get dressed, we're leaving soon." He turned around and walked

288 Vouchers

into the bedroom with me hot on his trail.

"Wait -" Damiano ignored me as he went to the bathroom and slammed the door shut. I stood there, gaping at the closed door. I felt my blood start to boil at his actions. In pure frustration, I kicked the door.

Hard.

I bit my lip as pain shot up in my right foot and tears appeared in my eyes.

"F*ck!" I erupted in a whisper and limped to the bed.

Post Views: 9

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

Althaia

I walked towards the elevator fast. Or as fast as I could. My foot was still throbbing in pain, and I was wearing heels. I was mad and refused to talk or even look at Damiano. Which was easy because it was not like he was trying to talk to me. But I could feel his gaze on me at times.

The ride down to the underground parking felt like forever in this silence. I could feel Damiano's gaze burning into the side of my head but I held my ground and kept staring at the closed elevator doors with a slight frown. He was being ridiculous even after I had explained myself.

I stepped out as soon as the doors opened, making my way toward the SUV where Antonio stood. My eyes were searching for Luca, and I started to panic

when I didn't see him. Just as I was about to turn around and confront Damiano about it, Luca got out of the driver's seat.

I let out a breath of relief.

I ignored Antonio when he opened the car door for me and made my way around the car to Luca. I scanned him to see if he was hurt anywhere, and when I didn't see any I felt myself relax. Luca gave me a reassuring smile and I gave him a small smile back before sliding into the car.

The car ride was silent. No one was making any conversation and the only sounds were coming from the radio, playing softly in the background. I rested my head against the window, sighing as I looked out, and carefully tried to move my foot a little to ease the pain. It wasn't much of a help and only seemed to make it a bit

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Vouchers

worse.

A sound disturbed my thoughts and I saw a tinted window rolling up to give us privacy from the front.

"What's wrong with your foot?" Damiano broke the silence. I ignored him and resumed looking out of the window.

"Althaia."

"Hmm, I don't know. Why don't you jump to a conclusion?"

"Let me see."

"Nothing's wrong with it. It's fine." I snapped. I closed my eyes to not let my frustration control me.

"Why don't you trust me?" I asked after a while.

"I do."

"No, you don't." I turned to face him. I haven't taken a look at him at all since he slammed the bathroom door in my face. And he was sitting right there, looking all se*y in his black three-piece suit.

Da*n him for looking this good.

"You sent him to our room to keep an eye on me, which means you trust him enough to do his job." I continued.

"It's not like that."

"Please, do enlighten me then." I feigned a sweet smile.

"I don't like you close to other men."

"They work for you! Should I not get to know them if I decide to

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stay around?" I furrowed my brows at him.

"It's not my responsibility to fix your insecurities. Either you trust me, or you don't." I simply told him. There was no reason to continue whatever we had

going if he didn't trust me.

Damiano looked amused.

"What's so funny?" I gaped, offended.

"You."

"How am I being funny right now?"

"You're cute when you're mad." I blinked, not knowing if he was being for real or not.

He moved me closer to him, his face coming closer to mine.

"You were so scared of me the first time we met... And now, you're sitting here, calling my a*s insecure." He was entertained by it and I couldn't help but smile at his comment. I have become a lot more comfortable around. He could still be very intimidating sometimes at times but he was also protective of me, and I actually liked it.

I was far more relaxed around him now that I knew he wouldn't hurt me.

"The way you screamed in fear that day... Now, I'm making you scream for other reasons." Damiano's voice went low which had my breath quicken. My cheeks started to flush at the way he was looking at me. It sent a steady pulse between my legs, having me squeeze my thighs together. He smirked as it didn't go unnoticed by him.

"You owe me an apology." I whispered, leaning closer to his face, our lips almost touching.

1288 Vouchers

"And how would you like your apology?" I almost moaned when he pulled my lip between his teeth, tugging a bit before letting go.

"I might have something in mind..." I breathed out. I pushed him back in the seat, swinging my left leg over his lap to straddle him. His hands immediately went to hold my hips, but I stopped him, taking his wrists in my hands, and pushed them aside.

"No touching." He raised a brow at me, and I just gave him a flirtatious look. His eyes snapped down to look when I wet my lip. My hands went to his shoulders and slowly made their way down his chest, and down to feel his rock-hard stomach. I let out a small moan when touched the hard bulge and started to stroke him outside his pants.

Damiano moved his hands once again to touch me but I moved them away as I positioned myself right on top of him. He let out a grunt when I started to move my hips, grinding him slowly all while I made sure he wouldn't be able to touch me.

I moved away a little to unbutton his pants and I took hold of his hard length. I started to stroke him, making him close his eyes for a bit before opening them as he made low sounds of pleasure. I kept my eyes on him, never looking away as I leaned in to kiss him.

Only to stop at the very last second.

"Oh, looks like we're here." I said and quickly rolled back to my side, opened the car door, and stepped out. I closed the door behind me just as Luca and Antonio also stepped out.

"He might need some time before coming out." I informed Antonio before he could open the door for Damiano. He raised a brow and I just smirked.

"That'll teach me not to p*ss me off." I said proudly and stepped

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around the car. I made a small whistle as I looked at the building. It looked like the freaking White House. I inwardly groaned when I saw the huge staircase, knowing it would be hell for my foot.

I just hoped we wouldn't have to stand up too much.

The car door opened and I turned to look. Damiano came out with a glare and I gave him my best innocent look. He stopped in front of me, staring me down.

I had to tilt my head up a little to meet his gaze. Even though I was wearing heels, the height difference was still great.

"You're going to pay for that." His voice was slightly husky as he spoke.

"I don't know what you're talking about." I smiled sweetly.

"You know exactly what you did." He sounded so displeased it amused me.

"If you behave, I might give you what you want." I retorted, using his own words against him. I looked down at his crotch, his bulge was still slightly visible.

I looked back at him with a smirk and a wink before turning around.

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Post Views: 8

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

Althaia

We stepped into a huge banquet hall which was set up to be as extravagant as possible. A swarm of people was present, dressed up in fine clothing of evening dresses and suits. There were a lot more people than I had imagined, and I ended up playing a little game in my head, guessing which ones were in a criminal organization or if they were just normal business people.

Antonio and Luca disappeared somewhere, leaving us alone. Well, not exactly as I now knew they would always have their eyes on us and were just keeping in the background.

One thing that also surprised me was just how well-known Damiano was.

People were already stopping us the second we made an appearance, eager

to talk to Damiano. I got introduced to way too many people and in the end, I stopped trying to remember their names.

Most of the people who came up to talk to Damiano were mostly trying to suck up to him, talking about their businesses and not so discreetly suggesting a partnership. I just stood next to him with his arm around my waist, and I just smiled politely as I minded my own business while they talked. Nothing they said really interested me.

"Is it always like this? Them trying to kiss your as." I asked after we had excused ourselves from two men who wouldn't stop talking.

"Something like that."

"How boring."

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"You've barely been here for an hour, and you're already bored?" He looked at me amused.

"I was hoping it would be more like a just sit and look pretty kind of thing. But no, I have to be on my feet and listen to people who don't even know how to pitch their businesses interestingly." I sighed. I had to keep most of my weight supported on my left leg after the freaking stairs. I just hoped it wasn't broken because a cast would be awful when Cara's wedding was soon.

"Let's get you off your feet then." I nodded, gratefully to finally have a small break.

"Mr. Bellavia." A man called with a woman linked to his arm made their way to us. My shoulders slumped in disappointment and Damiano looked at me.

"We don't have to talk to him."

"It's fine. I can manage." I smiled when they approached.

"Mr. Roberts." Damiano greeted and they shook hands.

"And who's the beautiful lady?" Mr. Roberts looked me up and down before meeting my eyes and stuck his hand out to greet me.

"Althaia. It's a pleasure to meet you." I placed my hand in his and he kissed the backside of my hand. I could feel Damiano's hand tightening a little around my waist, and I mentally rolled my eyes at him. But I still leaned closer to him to ease him.

"Pleasures all mine. This is my wife, Elena." She smiled at me and I smiled back at her with a small nod. She was wearing a long silver dress, making her red hair appear bright. She was definitely a big fan of jewelry as she was practically covered in them.

Mr. Roberts wasted no time and went straight to business talk.

And he aimed his question right at me.

"Mr. Bellavia's wine prices appear to rise by the minute, making it one of the most expensive on the market. Miss Althaia, what distinguishes Mr. Bellavia's

wine from the rest of the competitors. at much lower prices?"

Well, s*it. How the f*ck should I know?

He looked at me with scrutinizing eyes, waiting for my answer.

"Mr. Roberts, have you seen Mr. Bellavia's vineyards in Italy?"

Please say no.

"Unfortunately, I haven't been that lucky." He chuckled a little.

Bingo.

"They are without a doubt the greatest in Italy. You see, nearly all vineyards nowadays have abandoned traditional winemaking practices in favor of employing more technology than man. This, of course, reduces production time but, if I may be honest with you and come with an opinion of my own, it also reduces wine quality. Not to mention that Mr. Bellavia is improving the economy by creating additional jobs in the community. It is not always about statistics, Mr. Roberts, it is also about a set of moral values that are beneficial to both people and society." I finished with a smile.

I had no idea if I even came close. I wasn't even aware that Damiano had a wine business, and I hoped whatever I had just said, was at least somewhat true. I knew Damiano worked

incredibly hard and took pride in everything he did, so maybe this wasn't a total bluff.

288 Vouchers

Mr. Roberts looked at me for a long time without saying anything which made me nervous.

Did I screw up?

"So, she's not just a pretty face." Mr. Roberts broke into a smile and looked back at Damiano. I turned to look at Damiano only to see him already looking at me. I couldn't tell what he was thinking, but he was looking at me with a soft expression.

"She certainly isn't." An overwhelming fluttery feeling hit me at his words.

"Let's talk numbers." Mr. Roberts told Damiano.

"Althaia, why don't you join me at the bar while the men talk? If I hear them talk anymore about business, I might just fall asleep." Elena laughed and I chuckled, totally understanding what she meant.

"Don't go anywhere where I can't see you." Damiano whispered in my ear and kissed my temple. I gave a small nod and followed Elena to the bar. It was perfect as we would still be in their line of sight. I sighed in relief when I sat down on the barstool, grateful to be off my feet for a little.

"What's your choice of poison?" Elena asked while waving over to the bartender.

"Oh, anything really. I'm not a picky drinker."

"I've got one for you. Two liquid marijuana, thank you."

A liquid what?

"So, Althaia I haven't seen you around to these auctions before." Elena spoke before I had the chance to ask what kind of drinks she ordered.

"It is my first time here. Actually, my first time coming to an auction really."

"You're not missing out on much. It's mostly the men going around, talking about their boring business and showing off who's got the most money." She rolled her eyes and I laughed at her comment because so far, it really was what they were doing.

We got our drinks, and I wanted to laugh because funnily enough, they were green.

"Wow, I like this one!" I took another sip of the co*ktail. It was fruity with no trace of the taste of alcohol as the taste of pineapple was more prominent.

"It's good, right? I discovered this drink on my vacation in Cancún." She drank almost half of it in no time, while I took small sips. I had no idea how much alcohol was in this and I wasn't taking any chance of it sneaking up on me.

"I'm surprised Damiano actually showed up with a date. He usually comes alone." I looked at her surprised. Even though I didn't like to think of the women he had been with in the past, I did somehow expect he would show up to these kinds of things with a date.

"Oh no, sorry! He did come with that woman... Oh, what was her name ..."

She tapped her nails against the glass.

"Yes, Sienna was her name. He showed up with her a few times but suddenly came alone. Such a long time ago. I had almost forgotten about her." She said and she finished her drink.

"Who was she?" I didn't bother to try to be discreet with my curiosity about the mystery woman.

37.08%

"Hmm, I'm not too sure. I think they were engaged or something. She was wearing a remarkable ring on her finger, and I remember that because I was impressed with the piece of jewelry. As you can see, I'm a bit of a fan." Elena laughed and ran a hand across her neck and flicked her hair back to show her long earrings.

"I see." I chuckled.

1

We chatted for a bit before excusing herself to the lady's room, leaving me alone at the bar with my thoughts. Damiano had been engaged? Why didn't he tell me that he was once in a serious. relationship? But then I remembered he never told me anything and always kept me in the dark.

"Why is such a beautiful lady sitting alone." I jumped in startlement when

someone spoke right next to my ear. The man chuckled at my jumpiness and sat down on the barstool in front of me, where Elena had previously sat.

"I'm Alexei Vasiliev." He had a faint Russian accent and looked to be a middle-aged man with blue eyes and short light brown hair.

"I'm Althaia." I said with a tight smile. He didn't look to be scary but I was a bit wary of him since he had basically sneaked up on me.

"Just Althaia?" He looked amused as he took a sip of his drink.

"Why do you need more information? I don't know you." I said with a brow raised.

"Isn't that how you make new friends?"

"I don't need new friends." Alexei threw his head back and let out a big laugh, attracting some attention to us.

"You know, you remind me a lot of a lady friend I had back in the Vouchers

day. Well, she was more of a lover than a friend." He chuckled, and I didn't know if I should be disgusted or not by this man telling me I looked like one of his lovers.

"You're not together anymore?"

"She got married."

"Huh, I see. That must have sucked."

"Ah, yes. She broke my heart and left me." He put a hand to his chest and exaggerated a hurt expression.

"But she couldn't stay away from me, and we did have some fun even though she was married." His eyes twinkled a little as he remembered back to those days.

"Why couldn't you just be together if you cared for each other that much?" I asked, now intrigued. It was like hearing about a sad romance movie.

"It's the things we love the most that destroy us. We were never meant to be." He finished his drink.

"We drove each other crazy, but she will always be my Solnishko."

"Althaia." I turned to look to the side, only to see Damiano practically storming towards me with Antonio and Luca behind him.

"Bellavia! So good to see you again." Alexei stood up but Damiano was not having it as he had a murderous glare on his face directed at the Russian in front of me. I noticed a few men behind Alexei were now on guard when Damiano stopped in front of him in a threatening manner.

Antonio gently grabbed my hand to have me stand between him

56.665

and Luca as a way to protect me. I looked at Damiano and Alexei confused, hoping nothing would happen.

"I was just having a friendly chat with the lady. I did not know she was with

you.” Alexei chuckled and didn’t seem to be fazed by Damiano’s threatening demeanor. Alexei turned to leave but then stopped and looked back at me with a sincere expression.

“You reminded me of good times, Althaia. Thank you.” Then he left with his men following him. Damiano was still looking at Alexei’s retreating figure and when he was out of sight, he turned to me.

“Let’s go to our seats. The auction is about to start.” He held me by my waist and lead me to a different banquet hall where the auction would be held.

“Is something wrong?” I asked Damiano. Alexei didn’t do anything. besides chat with me and didn’t pose any threat.

“No.” He replied calmly and walked us to our table, which was at the front, close to the stage. Damiano pulled out the chair for me, and I looked at him as he got seated. Antonio and Luca joined us as well.

“He was nice.” I said quietly.

“He’s not. Stay away from him.” He slightly frowned and placed his arm on the backrest of my chair. The way Damiano had reacted and the men there were present had me thinking that Alexei Vasiliev might actually be a Mafia Boss. Before I could ask any more questions, the lights dimmed and a man in a burgundy tuxedo walked on stage and stopped in front of the wooden podium with a microphone.

“Ladies and gentlemen! Welcome to this year’s auction, we are

16 275

very pleased to see another year with a full house...” He carried on with his speech and did a recap from last year’s auction, and things I had no clue about. But I still listened, excited to see the items listed and how it all went down.

The first thing that was auctioned was a Matisse painting. I loved drawing and painting but I never understood the art behind his paintings. Mainly because it always looked like a child had done the job.

“... Do I hear a hundred thousand dollars?”

“For that painting?” I whispered in shock.

“Do you like it?” Damiano asked and I shook my head.

“And definitely not to that price.” I muttered.

“Three hundred and fifty thousand dollars to the lady in the back. Going once... going twice... Sold!” A round of applause filled the banquet. She must have really wanted that Matisse...

It all went fast, as soon as one item was sold, the next was on immediately and sold in no time. I thought of maybe bidding on. something but we were talking about massive chunks of money, and I was not about to throw my life saving away.

“So, this is what you rich people do in your free time.” I nodded, truly

impressed. I had never been in a room with so many rich. people at once. They were bidding and buying things for an amount of money that had my eyes bulging out.

And they didn't even bat an eye.

"Yes, to casually remind people how much money you have." The corner of his mouth turned up slightly at my shock at it all.

75 45%

"I could get endless chicken nuggets for that money." I said in all seriousness, and Damiano's lips curved into a full smile at my comment.

"...And here we have, the main item for the event, the Tiffany Yellow Stone! This is one of the largest yellow diamonds that has ever been discovered in 1878 in South Africa..." I looked at the very shiny necklace that had been displayed on the stage.

The medium-length chain was made entirely out of diamond and at the very end hung the biggest yellow stone my eyes had ever laid upon. The yellow diamond was cut into a cushion shape with 83 facets, including needle-like facets that pointed outward from the culet facet.

"Wow... I can't wait to see who's going to bid on that." I said in awe and I looked at Damiano. He was caressing my shoulder while we were listening to the history of the diamond. Damiano looked at me, his eyes swiftly going down to my neck before looking back at the necklace.

There was no way he was actually that crazy...

"... Do I hear twenty million dollars?" I choked on my own spit when I heard the starting price. Holy s*it! Were they even aware of how much money that was?

"Twenty-five!" The familiar voice rang out and I turned to look in the direction of the voice. It was Alexei Vasiliev.

"Twenty-five million dollars coming from Mr. Alexei Vasiliev!"

"Thirty." I snapped my head back to look at Damiano as he calmly bid on the necklace. I stared at him with wide eyes.

Was he f*cking insane?!

85.06%

"Thirty-five!" Alexei happily bid. He was looking in our direction, grinning at Damiano.

"Thirty-five million dollars! Do I hear any more? ... Going once... going twice..."

"Fifty million dollars."

"Fifty million dollars from Mr. Damiano Bellavia!" I looked at Alexei and he just put his hands up in a surrendering manner, looking amused and impressed.

"...Sold to Mr. Damiano Bellavia!" I tuned out the sound of the massive wave

of applause and I looked at Damiano. I was lost for words. He had just spent fifty million dollars on a freaking necklace.

“You’re insane.”

“Only for you.” He leaned in and kissed my bare shoulder before he reached my ear. I let out a small breath when his lips faintly brushed my earlobe.

“I want you to wear it. With nothing else.” He whispered.

9481%

Post Views: 9

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

Althaia

“They must have a return policy.” I insisted while we were making our way out of the banquet hall. The auction had finished after Damiano had bought the necklace, and then there was a long speech about how they were so grateful and something else that I didn’t listen to.

After that, what felt like a million people, came up to talk to

Damiano to tell him how impressed they were with his bidding, and how it was such a beautiful necklace. Then there was a long process where Damiano had to sign hundreds of papers and write a check.

What surprised me the most was that the necklace on the stage was not the real Tiffany Yellow Diamond, but a replica they had made for display at the auction. The real one was guarded somewhere with top security. Which made sense since there was always a possibility of it being stolen.

“That’s not how it works.”

“I don’t think you understand how much money it is.”

“I do. I just spent it.”

“I’m not accepting it.” I stopped and turned to look at him with my hands on my hips.

“Too late.” Damiano replied amused.

“You already gave me those earrings, and even that I think is too much!

People are going to think you’re my sugar daddy.” I turned

0.00%

to look at Luca who made a sound but tried to cover it up by clearing his throat.

“Oh, you think it’s funny, huh?” I squinted my eyes, and he looked like he couldn’t hold in his laugh.

“I’ll get the car running.” He walked away while shaking his head. I turned to look at Antonio, and he just looked at me slightly amused. It was the first time seeing him showing anything than the blank expression he always wore.

“Maybe you can knock some sense into that thick head of his?” I sighed to

Antonio.

"I have tried for years. Unfortunately, he doesn't listen." Antonio gave a small smile and followed Luca out to the car.

"Sugar daddy?" Damiano asked with a raised brow.

"Yup. But then again, do sugar daddies spend fifty million dollars on their sugar babies?" I now wondered about my own question.

"Only if the pssy is good."

"Damiano!" I gasped and looked at him in shock.

"People can hear you!" I hissed at him, and he gave me a teasing look. His hand glided around my waist, pressing me against him before dipping his head low, and sealing his lips over mine.

"Let them hear what they can't have. Your psy belongs to me." I gaped, feeling my cheeks heat up immediately.

"Oh, my ..." I lightly smacked his chest and got out of his hold to walk away. His explicit words had me helplessly blushing!

"Why are there so many stairs?" I groaned at the huge staircase. I

16.14%

knew I wouldn't make it down easily with my aching foot.

"Let me carry you."

"No! People will look and they will definitely think I'm a spoiled sugar baby." I dismissed him and walked to the stone railing for support.

"So stubborn..." Damiano sighed and before I knew it, he swept me off my feet and he carried me in his arms.

"You're seriously too much." I muttered. I was full-on blushing now when I noticed people looking at us.

"Only the best service for my sugar baby." Damiano said loudly, and I wanted to scream in embarrassment.

"Put me down." I wiggled out of his arms, walked down the last steps, and hurried to the SUV.

"He's crazy!" I erupted to Antonio and Luca and rushed inside the car. I stilled and immediately forgot about my embarrassment at the sound of his laughter. His deep laughter sounded so genuine and angelic.

It made my heart warm in a way I hadn't felt before.

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I kicked off my heels in the car, wincing when I tried to move my foot around. I took a look, seeing it was a bit swollen and bruised. Damiano gently took hold of my foot and placed it on his lap to examine it.

"You kicked the door, didn't you?" He started to gently massage my foot.

34 733

"Maybe." I sighed as it felt good.

"You know, if you're ever looking for a career change, being a masseuse is

not too shabby.” I laughed at my own joke as I imagined Damiano being a masseuse. He would make the clients tenser rather than more relaxed with his intimidating looks.

“Funny.” He scoffed but cracked a smile.

“By the way, why did that man, Mr. Roberts, ask me about your wine prices?” I decided to finally ask. It was odd he asked me about Damiano’s business instead of directing the questions to him.

“Mr. Roberts owns a large chain of high-end restaurants. Every year he tries to push me into lowering the prices, and every year I dismiss his idea without further explanation. The answer you gave him impressed him, giving him a new perspective, and we settled a deal.”

“Well, I guess I didn’t screw up then. I didn’t even know you have a business in wine” I chuckled.

“And yet you pulled out that answer to him.” He smiled, almost seeming proud.

“I just pitched some basic knowledge with a twist. I don’t even know if it’s true.”

“You were correct. I do like to do things traditionally. Mostly.” He winked and I rolled my eyes at his hint of premarital sex.

“Keep your foot up to keep the swelling down.” His hands started to work their way up my leg, coming dangerously to my private part that was eager for his touch.

—

“Luckily, your legs look ucking great on my shoulders.” Before he could touch me, I moved straddle him, and wrapped my arms around his neck.

“They do, but it will have to wait til we’re back at the hotel.” I pressed my lips to his. It was full of passion with our tongues playing with each other, having my body sizzle in anticipation. Damiano’s hands glided over my body and soon found their way under my dress. He rubbed me with his finger before pulling my underwear to the side and entering me with his finger.

I moaned against his lips when he played with my knob of pleasure.

“Wait.” I said out of breath, remembering Luca and Antonio in front of the tinted window.

“Soundproof.” Damiano said and kissed my neck.

“No... Hiceys...” I moaned out when I felt him suck my skin while his finger was working its magic.

“We’ll see.” I could feel him smiling against my neck as he kept going. My hands trailed down to unbutton his pants. I felt his already hard length and stroked him, making him groan against my neck. I positioned on top of him and Damiano leaned back to look at me with his hands on my hips.

I let out a breathy moan as I slid down, feeling his thick length fill me up. I

rested my head on his and slowly started to grind him. I moved faster after getting used to his size inside of me. This position really made me feel all of him, making me eager to move faster.

"Damiano..." I moaned against his lips.

288 Vouchers

"Fcking hell." He growled and grabbed my hips tightly. He roughly thrust inside of me, making me hold tightly around his neck. The tightening feeling started to build up fast and I rocked myself against him faster, not holding back my moans.

"Oh, Gd!" A wave of pleasure erupted as I reached my climax, my walls tightened around him as my entire body trembled. Damiano kept going, grunting in pleasure, thrusting a final time before filling me with his warm seed.

I closed my eyes as we caught our breaths, still not moving from my position on top of him. I looked at Damiano after calming down a little and smiled. I caressed his cheek as we looked deep into each other's eyes. He gently held my chin and looked at me in such a way that filled my body with a feeling I hadn't felt before.

He slowly leaned in and my body tingled when our lips met in a soft and passionate kiss.

28.04%

Post Views: 10

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

Althaia

"Is my skirt down?" I asked Damiano while I patted down my dress to make sure I wasn't flashing anyone before I got out of the car. He looked down at my dress and nodded before opening the door. He held out his hand to help me out of the car while I carried my heels in my hand. There was no way I was putting them back on.

"Are you okay to walk?" Damiano looked at my foot.

"Yeah, I can manage. Luckily, I don't have to take the stairs here." I said gratefully. The pain was still there but it lessened when I took off my heels. It sure did help when he massaged my foot.

"I'm hungry and I can't wait to lie down." I sighed tiredly. I was ready to hit the bed already.

"You know, there is a time and place for everything." Luca looked at us with a playful grin. I blinked a few times before turning around to face Damiano with a scowl.

"I thought you said it was soundproof!"

"It is. We felt the car shake." Antonio commented. I was more worried about them hearing us than thinking about shaking the car.

"Just great..." I muttered in embarrassment and made my way to the elevator to escape their playful expressions.

"Order some food, I'll be up soon."

"Don't take too long." I pouted a little that he wouldn't be going up

0.00%

with me right away.

"I won't." He smiled and placed a kiss on my forehead before sending me up.

On the ride up I was thinking about what kind of food I wanted. Since I was so hungry, I couldn't decide on one thing. Maybe I should just order a bit of everything? Hopefully, Damiano wouldn't mind since it was on his tab...

I slowly walked down the hotel hall to make sure I wouldn't restrain my foot too much. I was halfway to our room when I let out a small groan, suddenly remembering Damiano had the keycard.

"Just my luck..." I muttered under my breath. Just as I was about to turn around, I froze in place. The handle of our door got pulled down, having my heart pound like crazy.

The door opened.

A man, dressed up in all black from head to toe, even the face was covered, only making the eyes visible, came out of the room. My mind told me to run but my body wouldn't obey. A heel slipped out of my hand and dropped to the floor. His head immediately snapped in my direction.

For a minute, we just stood there and looked at each other. Then he started to move towards me. Fast.

My eyes widened and I finally found the air in my lungs to let out a scream.

But he wasn't fazed by it and fastened his speed. My mind screamed at me to move, and my body finally reacted. I threw the other heel at him and ran.

I ran as fast as I could towards the exit door, knowing the elevator doors wouldn't open in time. I grabbed the handle, slamming my

11.96%

body against the door to open it. I was almost out when I felt a pair of hands roughly grab me from behind and throw me on the floor. He threw me with such force the back of my head slammed right into the floor, making my vision blurry.

I groaned in pain and tried to get up, only to cry out in pain when he grabbed me by my hair to get me to my feet.

"Let me go!" I screamed and thrashed around to get out of his hold. But he was much stronger than I was, yanking me by my hair and putting a hand to my mouth to stop me from screaming. I was consumed by fear and panic. He

was holding me tightly from behind, trying to get me to still. There was only one thing I could do.

I threw my head back, slamming right into his face.

He grunted in pain and loosened his grip enough for me to break free. Only to fall face-first to the floor.

Adrenaline was pumping in my veins, and my breath came out harshly while I crawled. I was trying to get up but I kept stepping onto my dress, making me fall right down again. My body reacted on its own and kicked him hard right in the face. He groaned and stumbled back, dropping something.

My heart stopped at the sight of the knife he dropped. For once, I quickly reacted and clumsily crawled to get it. He immediately noticed and leaped for the knife. I grabbed the knife and turned around, only for a scream to get caught in my throat when he landed on top of me.

Right into the knife.

He made a sound when the knife plunged right into his stomach. I stared at him wide-eyed, feeling my hands getting wet with his

25 88%

blood at a fast rate.

“Oh, Gd...” My voice was shaking as I watched him get unconscious. I gulped and wiggled out from underneath him. I stumbled up to my feet, ran to the elevator, and repeatedly

pressing on the button until the doors opened. I kept my eye on him, making sure he wasn’t suddenly running after me. I felt somewhat relieved when the doors closed and I was on my way down.

I was breathing hard and my entire body was trembling. I could barely stand up and had to lean against the panel for support. I looked down at my hands. They were covered in blood. His blood. I tried to remove the sticky red liquid on my hands, but I was only making it worse and spreading it onto my arms. The doors opened and I stepped out. I was shocked and confused. My mind wasn’t comprehending anything yet I still managed to continue walking. I felt something trickle warm trickle down my face. I put my hand up to my face to wipe it away, only to see more blood on my hand. I stopped in my tracks as I kept wiping my face but only to continue to feel the blood trickle down.

“Althaia!” I looked up to see Damiano storming towards me with his brows furrowed. His eyes showed anger as he scanned my face and body. Luca and Antonio ran past me with their guns drawn. Damiano pulled me into him, his hands on my cheeks and his eyes darkened with fury.

“Who did this?”

“I – He... There was someone... and I killed him...” I was confused. My mind was cloudy and all over the place. I raised my hands in front of me, still seeing blood on them. My sight got blurry from tears building up and I started to

violently scratch my arms, trying

40 86%

288 Vouchers

to get the blood off me.

"Please... Get it off...Get it off, get it off!" I cried out to him, trying to remove the blood.

"Althaia, look at me. Look at me!" Damiano made me look at him with tears still streaming down my face.

"What happened, baby? Tell me." His voice was soft as he caressed my face with his hands, removing some of the blood that trickled down.

"Someone... A man dressed in all black, and... and he came out of our room, and then he chased me and tried to kill me, but he..." I kept stumbling over the words trying to form a sentence that made sense. My body was shaking from crying as I tried to explain to him, but nothing really made sense.

"It's okay. I'll find out." Damiano pulled me into his chest and held me tightly as I continued to cry. He took off his jacket and wrapped it around me tightly. The sound of footsteps could be heard, and I tried to calm down myself as I turned around to see Luca approaching us.

"No one's there."

"What? No, that's not right. He was there. Right on the floor. With a knife in him." I frantically explained. Had I imagined him lying on the floor?

"That means I didn't kill him, right? I – I didn't..." I looked up at Damiano. He was wearing this expression I had witnessed right before he had shot the men in the park. He pulled me into him again, not answering me.

"What else?" Luca looked at me, hesitating to say anything in front of me.

"It's better you see for yourself." He told him and my heart dropped at his words.

"Althaia, get in the car. Luca, stay with her." I felt Damiano move but I held onto him tightly.

"Please, don't leave me here." I begged him. It was not like I didn't trust Luca to keep me safe. Right now, I felt safest with Damiano.

He was looking at me for a long time, looking around my face as if contemplating if he should let me stay with Luca or not. He then gave a small nod and wrapped an arm around my shoulder to hold me close.

"You don't go inside the room. You're staying outside with Luca." Damiano stated firmly to me when we got in the elevator. He noticed blood on the buttons and tightened his hold on me as we silently waited to reach the floor. I almost buried my face into him as my heart started to beat faster, terrified that the man would come out of nowhere and kill us all.

When we reached the floor, I immediately look at the spot on the floor where I had left him. And he wasn't there. Not even a drop of blood was to be seen. "I don't get it... He was right there." I pointed to the floor, close to the exit door. How was it possible? Did I imagine it? I looked down at my hands where the blood was still present. I definitely didn't imagine it.

"He wasn't working alone. Someone has covered his tracks." Damiano explained. We came to a stop close to our room at the same time Antonio stepped out, his eyes immediately landed on

19 601

me. Damiano slid inside the room and shut the door behind him.

"Is it bad?" I finally dared to ask. No one said anything which let me know it was. I wrapped the jacket tighter around me to give a sense of security. I jumped in startlement when the door opened with such force it banged against the wall with a loud thud.

"I want the area completely searched and get Rafaele to check the security cameras. The fucker better be alive when I get a hold of him." Damiano was furious. I knew him to be a man who usually kept his emotions in check. And whatever was inside the room had fuelled the fire in him.

"What is it?" I asked nervously. Damiano snapped his head towards me, his eyes filled with rage.

"Let's get you out of here." He turned me around and lead me to the elevator again. What could have been in the room to cause him to react this way? As I pulled the jacket closer to my body, I felt a card in the breast pocket.

It was the keycard to our hotel room.

Before I could even think twice about it, I ducked under Damiano's arm and ran back to the door.

"Althaia!" He shouted after me.

But it was too late.

I pushed the door open and I dropped everything to the floor at the sight in front of me. The walls were covered in pictures.

Pictures of me.

Pictures of me drinking my iced coffee when I was out with Cara and Michael. Pictures of me when I was out with my father for brunch. And the most recent ones, pictures of me at the amusement park, holding snow cones in my hands. There were so many more. Whoever took the pictures, was keeping track of me. There was no one else in the pictures.

It was only me.

With a target mark on my face.

11 461

Post Views: 8

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

Damiano

Althaia looked around in shock, her body trembling in fear at the pictures of her hanging on the walls.

“What is this...?” It came out as a whisper. She looked at me, her eyes wide in panic. The sight of her in front of me like this flooded my body with a hunger to spill every last drop of the fcker’s bloo who had dared to touch her.

“Enough. Let’s go.” I went to grab her to get her out of here when she suddenly gasped and put her hand up to her mouth and pointed behind me. Fck. She saw it.

“Is that a heart?!” I blocked her view and she paled with tears in he eyes. Althaia stggered on her feet before her eyes rolled to the back of her head. I caught her in my arms before she collapsed to the floor. Her head rested on my shoulder as I carried her in my arms, holding her small frame tightly into my body.

I looked where the heart was hung by a knife with her picture on it. I gritted my teeth before walking out.

“Get Ellie to the manor.” I ordered them. On the way down, I took a look at her face and saw her busted brow that was still bleeding.

I will kill every single one who tries to harm you. That’s a promise.

I frowned, trying to think of who could have been after her and done this. I knew it was a risk to be with someone like me but some of those pictures started before we were even seen

0.00%

together.

Whoever it was, the scmbag would have wished he died before I get my hands on him. For every scratch on her body, for every misplaced hair on her head, he was going to get a hole drilled into his.

I parked the car in front of the manor, looking at Althaia who groaned as she regained consciousness. I carried her inside the manor while she kept blinking, trying to focus but she failed and squeezed her eyes shut.

“Everything hurts...” She whispered with a whimper.

“I know, baby. I know.” I had to stop myself from not holding her too tightly as I watched her in pain.

“What happened to her?” Arianna exclaimed when she saw me heading to my room. I ignored her and entered the room, laying Althaia down on the bed before heading to the bathroom. I filled the bathtub with water and rolled up my sleeves as I went back to her. Arianna was sitting next to Althaia, looking at her face and hands covered in blood.

"You take her away for a couple of days, and this is how you return her? What happened?"

"I don't know." She snapped her head towards me, looking at me with a frown.

"What do you mean you don't know?"

"I'm looking into it. Get out and send Ellie up here when she arrives." Arianna knew better than to argue with me right now and

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walked out without a say.

I removed Althaia's dress as carefully as I could and carried her to the tub. I grabbed a washcloth and cleaned her from all the blood covering her and winced when I tried to clean her busted brow.

"Ellie's here." Arianna announced.

"Who's Ellie?" Althaia mumbled and tried to open her eyes but closed them again as the lights were too bright for her

"She's a doctor." Her reaction almost made me smile. She was in agony and her head was clouded, yet her jealousy was fueled by the mention of another woman and powered right through it all.

She really was something else.

I dressed her in one of my t-shirts that went down to almost her knees and carried her to bed, sitting her down with her back resting on the headboard so Ellie could examine her.

"Okay, so what do we have here?" Ellie placed her medical bag at the end of the bed and sat next to Althaia to look at her face.

"How are you feeling?" Ellie asked as she flashed the penlight in her eyes.

"A banging headache... And this annoying ringing in my ears and my eyes can't really focus. It's making me dizzy." She blinked a few times when Ellie turned off her penlight.

"It sounds like you have a mild concussion, nothing I would worry too much about. You have to rest a lot and avoid any screen time and loud sounds and you should be good." She carried on and examined her brow.

"You'll need a few stitches for that though." Ellie rummaged

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through her bag to get the necessary things.

"I'm sorry, what?" Althaia frowned.

"I just need to stitch you up a little. It won't take long." Ellie gave a small smile while she cleaned the wound.

"Oh, hell no!" Althaia yelled and got up from bed, away from Ellie. She got up too quickly and wobbled on her feet.

"Althaia." I warned her sternly as I steadied her.

"A needle is not going near my face! Just put a band-aid on it and call it a night."

"I need to close it if you want to prevent a nasty infection." Ellie explained. She put on her gloves and got the needle and suture ready.

"Now, sit." She pointed to the bed. Althaia's eyes widened and made a run for it.

Only to fall face-first to the floor when she supported all of the weight on her injured foot.

"Oww..." She rolled on her back, hand to her face and a new wave of blood trickled from her brow. I sighed in annoyance at her recklessness. I pulled her up and sat her down on the bed.

"Are you trying to fcking kill yourself?" I sneered out, giving her a firm look.

"Stop moving so she can fix you." Arianna told her, not impressed with how she managed to injure herself more.

"No needles!" Althaia yelled.

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"Don't be such a baby!" Arianna crossed her arms.

"I won't hesitate to hold you down so you can get that nasty brow fixed."

"No, no, let us not do that. How about I give you something to relax? I'll have a look at your foot in the meantime and then come back to your brow, okay?"

Ellie suggested with a smile.

"So, what happened to your foot?" She asked after giving her a pill and started to examine her foot, moving it around to figure out the extent of the injury.

"Uh, I kicked a door... And then someone tried to kill me, and I kicked him in the face..." Ellie felt around at the center of her foot, causing her to scrunch up her face in pain. Even though I didn't show it, I was surprised to hear that she had actually managed to kick him in the face.

"Can you tell us what happened?" Arianna asked with a frown. I watched Althaia closely as she became quiet. I didn't miss the way her hands trembled a little before she clasped them together on her lap with her eyes looking down at them.

"Not now, Arianna." I glared at her. She was in no state of mind at the moment to be telling what happened.

"It's okay." I looked back at Althaia. She was twiddling her thumbs, took a deep breath, and began to explain what had happened.

It was taking everything in me not to get out of here and search for the fcker myself. Instead, I clenched my jaw as she spoke while my fingers were twitching to get hold of the fcking batard to give him a painful death for what he had done to her. If she hadn't been fast enough to grab the knife, I would have found her dead.

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Dead under my protection.

No one was going to take her away from me.

Not like how they took Sienna from me.

I couldn't let it happen.

Not again.

Chapter 40

Post Views: 8

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

Althaia

I blinked away the tears. I didn't want to cry in front of them and my head was also hurting too much to be crying. I removed my gaze from my hands and looked up to see Damiano with his hands in his pockets, staring at me and once again, not showing what he was thinking or feeling.

"Okay, you're all set here." I looked down to see Ellie had bandaged my foot. I had been too lost in my thoughts to realize what she had been doing.

"From what I can tell, it's not broken but I would like you to come to the clinic to do a proper check-up. Until then, do not support your foot and rest a lot, okay?" She smiled at me, and I gave her a small nod back. She went back to her back and grabbed a wipe and gently started to dab around on my brow.

"I really need to stitch you up now." I scrunched up my nose at the thought of being sewn in the freaking face.

"Fine." I mumbled. I was feeling a bit more relaxed now. Whatever she had given me, was working. She put on a new set of gloves and grabbed the needle driver and tissue forceps and came close to my face. Out reflex, I smacked her hands away from me, almost making her drop the things in her hands.

"Try not to hurt my wife." I looked to the doorway and saw Antonio standing there, observing the whole thing.

Wait, what?

"She's your wife?!" I exclaimed. I immediately looked at her hands

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to find a ring but didn't find one.

"It's around my neck in a necklace. I can't always wear a ring as a doctor."

Ellie explained when she noticed what I was looking for.

"Huh, how come I didn't know you were married?" I asked Antonio.

"You didn't ask,"

"I'm pretty sure I asked, and you were like 'I would rather not have you ask me questions.'" I told him and tried to imitate his voice.

"That sounds like Nino." Ellie laughed.

"Aww, she calls you Nino? That's so cute!" I smiled.

"You can't call me that." Antonio told me with a blank face and I pouted.

"Why not? It sure makes you less scary – Ow!" I yelled when I felt a painful pinch on my brow. I was too busy teasing Antonio I didn't notice Ellie had started to stitch me.

"Don't move!" She said as I tried to lean away from her.

"That's it! I'm holding her." Arianna got fed up and sat behind me. She held my head to make sure I wouldn't move again.

"Let me go, it hurts!" I tried to move away but Arianna had me in a strong grip. She was surprisingly strong! Did she bench press or something? How in the world was she this strong?!

"Stop making faces, you will get a scar. I'm almost done." Ellie scolded while continuing to torture me with her stupid needle.

"Ow, sit! It hurts!" I complained. I clenched my jaw when I felt another painful pinch.

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"Stop being a baby!" Arianna hushed me.

"See, all done now." Ellie let out a breath and stepped back right when I thought of kicking her away from me.

"Already? Oh, that wasn't too bad actually." I said impressed. Ellie gave me an 'I told you so' look and Arianna finally let go of me.

"She's the most difficult patient I have ever had." Ellie said to Damiano with a smile while shaking her head.

"Come to the clinic tomorrow, and make sure she gets plenty of rest and doesn't move around too much. I have a feeling she's the type to defy orders."

"You have no idea." Damiano and Antonio said at the same time and I gaped at them. Arianna let out a laugh at their comment and I flipped her off.

I couldn't be totally defensive about it when it was true so far...

I went to lie down when a sudden feeling of exhaustion hit me. Ellie packed her bag and made her way to Antonio whose eyes followed her every move. He took her bag from her and kissed the top of her head before they both went on their way.

"So cute..." I mumbled tiredly, struggling to keep my eyes open.

"That did not make me feel lonely at all." Arianna sighed and she walked out of the room as well. I let out a small chuckle at her comment and got comfortable as my eyes closed. The bed was so soft and practically sucked

me in, which my aching body was grateful for.

A blanket was pulled over me and I felt the bed dip next to me, fingers lightly caressing my face. I opened my eyes and saw that

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288 Vouchers

Damiano's gaze was focused on my now stitched-up brow.

"Get some sleep."

"What about yourself? You haven't slept at all." I had no idea how he was still awake and not looking tired at all when we both didn't get any sleep the night before. I was ready to sleep and not wake up for the next ten days.

"You don't need to worry about me."

"A bit too late for that now." I gave a small smile, and a corner of his mouth lifted a little. He leaned down and pressed a small kiss on my lips.

"I'll send Arianna in to keep an eye on you."

"Okay." I was a bit disappointed that he was going to leave but I didn't want to sound like a needy little girl. I let out a sigh and closed my eyes while enjoying the way he was caressing my face, having sleep come to me in no time.

The sound of faint voices disturbed my deep slumber. I moved around a bit on the bed to get comfortable and resume my sleep. Just as I was about to fall back asleep again, someone barged into the room. I quickly sat up with a scream and my heart almost jumped out of my chest. I jumped when an arm wrapped around me and pulled me back into them. I turned my head to see Damiano glaring at the person who had barged in like that.

"What the fck happened to you?!" Cara's voice filled the room and I put a hand on my chest in relief. For a moment, I thought the guy who attacked me found me to finish me off. Arianna called after Cara, telling her she couldn't just barge into the room like that but she ignored her.

"My goodness, look at your face." Cara cupped my face, moving my head from side to side to examine.

"You almost gave me a heart attack!" I smacked her hands and scowled at her, only to wince in pain when a throbbing feeling began from my brow. The skin was tightened uncomfortably and it was painful.

"Don't touch it." Damiano stopped me when I was about to.

"I feel like I have been hit by a truck." I groaned. I leaned back and rested on the headboard. My body felt heavy and in so much pain. It was much worse today.

"You look like it too. Who did this?" Cara continued.

"Please, stop yelling. My head is about to explode." I complained and closed my eyes. I was too drained of energy and in too much pain to be interrogated right now.

“Keep your voice down, she needs to rest. Lorenzo, get your woman out of here.” Damiano almost snapped and I opened my eyes just in time to see Lorenzo getting Cara out of the room. She wanted to say something about it but took a look at me and decided against it and left quietly.

“What time is it?” I turned to look at Damiano, only to realize he was shirtless. What a treat for the eyes.

“It’s seven.”

“Typical of Cara always barging in this early.” That woman had nothing better to do than waking up early and bothering me.

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“When did even you come?”

“About an hour ago.” Damiano’s arm glided around me to lay me down and pulled me closer to his chest.

“Go back to sleep.” I felt him draw smooth circles on my back, having me snuggle into him with my head resting on his bicep as I slowly felt sleep come to me again.

“Already there...” I mumbled into his chest, and I drifted off to sleep.

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Post Views: 9