

## The Devil's Fire by Mariam El-Hafi Chapter 5

Althaia

We got closer to the group of men and I tried not to stare at anyone longer than a second in case they would take it the wrong way. They were all tall and intimidating and they continued to look at us as we walked past them. Cara dragged me over to the two men standing furthest to the left of the rest of the men. The most two intimidating men in the group. And one of them was the man Michael told me not to stare at... But holy shit, that man was even finer up close.

4 ”

For some reason, I was nervous to approach him as his eyes followed me. My heart started to beat a little faster at the intensity of his stare. He didn't even try to hide it as he shamelessly checked me out, which gave me some kind of mixed feelings. I averted my eyes at the man standing next to him. The man was about the size of a tank! He was tall and so muscular he could actually be related to The Rock. I wouldn't be surprised if he was.

“Althaia, meet my fiancé, Lorenzo.” She gestured to Tank Man. He was in fact quite handsome with his closely shaved head, dark brown eyes, a strong jawline with light stubble. And tall as hell. Or I was just short as fuck. It was probably the latter as I was only 5'2 hence why I was wearing heels most of the time. I even had to tilt my head up a little to look at him.

“It's nice to meet you.” I smiled at him and stuck my hand out for a handshake. He looked down at my hand with a bored expression but shook my hand anyway.

Well, that was just lovely.

1/7

1288 Vouchers

“And this is his older brother, Damiano.” She motioned to the man standing next to her fiancé. The one I had looked at for too long. The one who had me feeling intimidated and something else by the way he was looking at me.

Damn, he was really sexy...

They were about the same height, however, Tank Man was more broad-shouldered than Damiano. Even though Tank Man was, well, like a tank, Damiano was definitely much more intimidating with his golden-brown eyes, cold and dead as they could be as he stared at me.

I almost wanted to gulp.

“Pleasure to meet you.” I smiled at him, despite feeling frightened by him, and stuck my hand out to shake his hand as well. Luckily, he didn’t stare at my hand for a moment like Lorenzo did and took my hand into his big hand.

“Althaia.” Damiano said as if he was testing my name. An involuntary shiver ran down my back as he said my name. I was not prepared for his voice to be this deep and rich. Which made him just even more handsome.

How that was possible, I had no idea...

“Yup, that’s me.” I mentally cringed as I said that out loud and made a slight grimace. Of course, I would embarrass myself in front of probably the sexiest man I had ever laid my eyes upon. I fucking knew I shouldn’t have watched That’s So Raven to calm my nerves before coming here, but it was too addicting not to.

Damiano turned his head to Tank Man, also known as

Lorenzo, and it was like they were communicating without

2/7

saying any words. Because, whatever it was, Lorenzo turned to Cara, held her by the waist, and started to walk away. Cara looked over her shoulder as she walked away with Lorenzo, and gave me a confused expression. I looked around and noticed the rest of the men were also gone.

Okay then... Was I supposed to leave as well?

I turned back around and faced Damiano, who already had his set of eyes on me. He reached into his pocket and took out a pack of cigarettes. He held the packet out to me, offering me one, but shook my head.

“No, thank you.” I gave a tight smile, confused about this whole situation. He took the packet up to his mouth and took a cigarette between his lips, still

while looking into my eyes. There was something about the way he did it that was incredibly hot.

“So, Althaia.” He said while he lit up his cigarette and took a long draft from it.

“You look awfully well for someone who died a few years ago.’ He casually said as he smoked.

A say what?

Did I hear him correctly?

“I’m sorry, what?” I shook my head a little as if I heard him wrong.

“Your file says you are dead.” He said as if it was the most normal thing to say, and blew the smoke right into my face. I waved the smoke away from my face and frowned at him.

3/7

My file? What file?

“Ehm... I think you have me confused for someone else.” I awkwardly laughed.

“Althaia Volante, 24 years old, was born on November 7th because her parents decided to fuck on Valentine’s Day. Died instantly in a car accident on New Year’s Eve three years ago.” He casually said as he took another long draft from his cigarette.

My expression fell at the information about me.

“I have no idea what you are talking about.” I stared at him confused.

“Besides, my name is not Volante. It’s Celano. Big difference. You must have me confused for someone else because I’m pretty sure I’m not dead. Obviously.” I gestured to myself as I was literally standing in front of him in the flesh.

“Obviously.” He finished his cigarette and my eyes followed the bud as he flicked it away. I looked back at him, and he was looking me up and down, his eyes coming to rest on my necklace resting between my breasts. Damiano’s hand reached out to touch my necklace, and out of reflex, I took a step back

but immediately stilled when his eyes snapped to mine, giving me a stern look.

“However, you are wearing the Volante heirloom around your neck.” I subconsciously touched my necklace, accidentally touching his hand in the process. He stepped closer to me and my heart started to beat faster when his hand trailed up and held my chin. I swallowed hard as he tilted it slightly upwards so I could meet his eyes. His face was inching closer to mine as if going for a kiss and my eyes went wide. But

moved his head at the last second to the side of my ear.

1

“Makes me wonder why your father is hiding you from me.” He said in a low voice that sent cold shivers down my spine.

He slightly stepped back and dropped his hand to his side. I let out a breath I didn’t know I was holding. I shuddered as he looked behind me and smirked devilishly at whoever was there. Fear started to fill my body at his expression.

Deadly and devilish.

I had to get away from him as soon as possible.

I turned around, intending to walk away, but halted in my steps as I came face to face with my father, who looked at me with a furious look.

“Papá.” I breathed out.

It was weird seeing him in front of me when we haven’t seen each other since, well you know, my mother took me and left. I remember I had tried to keep in touch with him, but the number was suddenly not available, and I didn’t know how else to reach him at that time. Eventually, I got the message and stopped trying but that didn’t mean that I didn’t miss him from time to time.

He was my father after all.

“What are you doing here!?” My father hissed at me, his expression full of anger.

My heart dropped.

I guess the feelings were not mutual.

5/7

“I’m here to get fucked up, what else?” I gave a sarcastic smile. I was well aware it was disrespectful of me to talk to him like that. But I felt attacked and hurt by his reaction, and my defense mechanism got activated. I had the strong urge to be sarcastic whenever I felt hurt.

Did he really not want to see me?

I frowned back at him but then noticed how the rest of the guests had stopped what they were doing and turned to stare at us. Wasn’t that just fucking lovely? They were all witnessing a shitty reunion of a father and daughter. He clearly didn’t want me present and it made me feel like shit.

Great, so the worst that could happen, happened.

I crossed my arms, shoving my feelings away as I was about to leave but stopped when Michael’s tense form moved forward to stand slightly behind my father, posing as a bodyguard.

I felt someone grab my waist and push me into their side. I let out a noise of surprise at the sudden action, and I turned slightly to see it was Damiano who held me firmly.

“Gaetano, such a lovely gem you’ve been hiding.” He said in Italian. My father clenched his fist as he stared at Damiano. He, however, just tilted his head to the side in response.

“Michael, take Althaia away from here.” My father ordered firmly. Before Michael could even move a little, I let out a scream at the deadly object in Damiano’s hand.

“Holy shit!” I yelled as Damiano pulled out a gun and aimed it at Michael. My heart started to violently pump inside my chest, making me breathe faster. I tried to get away but he had a firm grip on me.

6/7

Vouchers

“Don’t even think about it.” He said to Michael, while he crushed me into his side to prevent me from leaving. My legs would have crumbled if he didn’t have such a firm grip on me. Michael tried to grab me again, but before he could even take a step, the sound of a gunshot rang out in the air, making me scream and cover my ears.

“I won’t fucking miss your head if you move one more time.” Damiano stated in a deadly low tone.

My heart was racing against my chest, and I could feel my knees weakening with each passing second. With my eyes as wide as they could be, I looked at Michael, who was already staring at me, his jaw tightened. I looked at my father and it looked like he was battling something inside his head.

I should have said yes to that fucking drink.

7/27