

The Devil's Fire by Mariam El-Hafi Chapter 51 - 60

Althaia

"Tell me again why you're driving back home instead of flying. It will take like what? Five hours instead forty hours." Arianna asked while folding my clothes with Cara. I had talked them into helping me pack, arguing it wouldn't take as much time and therefore could spend more time together. They agreed but they just didn't realize they were doing all the packing for me, while I was pretending to pack so I wouldn't do a thing.

I was such a genius.

"Because it's a freaking metal coffin."

"First butterflies, now planes?" She scoffed, not impressed at all.

"I'm not scared of flying, I just don't like to fly alone. Like, what if the plane suddenly crashes? I would be all alone, waiting to face my death, and that is just sad. I don't want to die alone." I tried to explain how it was a legit fear of mine.

"I guess that is a reasonable excuse. Better than the butterfly excuse."

"Just drop it already, okay? It's a freaking flying caterpillar. It shouldn't be flying in the first place!" I said defensively. Arianna rolled her eyes at me while Cara laughed at our bickering.

"So, you and Dom, huh?" Cara started and looked at Arianna with a teasing grin.

"Uh!" I said excitedly.

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"He is a hottie." I winked at her. Dom was an attractive man with skin of an umber, a dark-brown color, and with amazing blue eyes.

"Those eyes..." Cara sighed dreamingly and then burst out laughing when Arianna sent her a glare.

"You two biches are with my brothers. You better not talk about other men like that." Her eyes narrowed at us.

"Oh, chill. It's okay to look at the menu, but not order." I joked and Cara seconded it.

"Really? So, it's okay for Lorenzo to look at other women as long as he doesn't do anything with them?" Arianna raised a brow.

"I will gouge his eyes if he as much looks." Cara said in all seriousness.

"It was a joke, I'm not interested in other people." I laughed. I had eyes on probably the world's seest man, and there was no way I would want anyone else.

"But what did you talk about when Damiano called both of you to his office?"

"Just the standard talk. Either we drop what we have going, or we get

married.” She shrugged and kept folding my clothes. I blinked at her a few times, trying to process what she had said.

“Seriously?” Cara said shocked.

“He can’t decide that!” I exclaimed. I was surprised he had said that to her. If she wanted to have fun with Dom then she should be able to without him intervening.

“What did you say then?” Cara asked.

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“I told him to shove his options up in his ass.” She smirked proudly.

“I’m not going to marry the guy. We’re just having fun and enjoying each other.”

“So, you’re dropping him?” I asked.

“Hell no! The sex is too good. We’re just going to keep away from each other for a few days, pretending it’s over, and then just be more careful not to get caught.”

“Damn... Dom got balls of steel to continue after almost being choked to death.” I was impressed that he was willing to do so.

“Can’t blame him if the sex is too good.” Cara commented and I seconded with a laugh.

We continued to talk and we were almost done packing. Arianna had called me out after finding out I wasn’t doing anything, and I reminded her that Ellie told me to take it easy and not to do much. I shouldn’t have said that because Arianna and Cara shared a look, and then just left the room for me to continue to pack the rest of my clothes. I yelled at them for being mean but they just ignored me.

I let out a tired sigh when I plopped down on the bed, finally done with packing. I looked to the door when it opened, seeing Damiano making his way to me.

“Done packing?”

“Yeah. I think I’m going to take a nap.” I still had time to kill since I was leaving late in the afternoon, and a nap sounded so heavenly at the moment.

Damiano sat down on the bed and handed me a little black box. I

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sat up and saw it was the diamond earrings he had gifted me.

“Wear these at all times. Don’t take them out.” He said firmly.

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“Are they not a bit too much for everyday use?” I asked. They were filled with

diamonds and were sparkly, definitely something I would wear to some kind of event, and not for everyday use.

“Put them on.”

“So bossy.” I chuckled but put them on.

“How do I look?” I put my hands on my face and fluttered my eyelashes at him dramatically.

“Beautiful.” Damiano smiled softly while tucking some of my hair behind my ear as he looked at me.

“Luca and Giovanni will stay with you until you come back.”

“Damiano, no.”

“It’s not up for discussion, they are staying with you.” He frowned when I shook my head at him.

“My mom will freak out at the sight of them, and I’m not exactly planning on telling her why two men are with me, posing as bodyguards.”

“You won’t notice them. I need to make sure you’re safe at all times.”

“And I will be! Didn’t you say you caught the guy already?”

“Yes, but he wasn’t working alone. Until I get my hands on the bastard that sent him, you’re not going anywhere without security.” He said, leaving no room for discussion and I let out a sigh.

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“You do realize that I’m coming back a week before the wedding, which is eight weeks away. Are you really making Luca stay away from his girlfriend for seven weeks?”

“I gave him time off to spend time with her. He just came back. from Italy.”

“Oh, she lives in Italy?” I raised my brows in surprise, and he gave me a nod. I guess they were used to not seeing each other all the time then.

“Don’t fight me on this, Althaia.”

“Fine! But they better be invisible.” I said firmly and plopped down on the bed again.

“I’ll make sure of it.” He promised.

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288 Vouchers

“Come, take a nap with me.” I patted the pillow next to me.

“I’m not tired.” He shook his head and smiled a little.

“Are you even human because you barely get any sleep.”

"I get the amount of sleep I need."

"No, you don't. Now, take your shirt off and get in." I ordered him. Damiano looked at me with a raised brow.

"And why do I need my shirt off?"

"Because I have an addiction. Hurry up, I don't have all day."

"You're getting a little too comfortable with bossing me around." He said but still took off his shirt, leaving him in the delicious glory of his six-pack and tattoos.

"I've learned from the best." I winked at him.

Damiano laid down next to me and I sat up to straddle him so I could get my phone from the nightstand. I opened the camera and took a picture of him. The sight was to die for. Damiano, shirtless in bed with an arm behind his head, was pure porn. He tilted his head a little and I just grinned while snapping a few more pictures of him. I put my phone down once I was pleased with the number of pictures I had taken. I wanted to be able to look at him since I was going to be away from him for so long. He didn't seem to mind as he just looked at me as I did so.

"You know what? I have an awesome idea for your next tattoo!" I said excitedly.

"And that is?"

"My name in big bold letters going down here." I trailed my finger down the side of his ribs and stopped at his waistband.

"Or even better, on your butt 'cause that ass is mine." I burst out laughing at the idea of Damiano getting a tattoo on his ass.

"I'm not getting your name tattooed on my ass." He laughed and pulled me down to lay on top of him.

"Shame. Your ass would have looked pretty with it."

"No one is touching my ass." I let out a small smirk when my hand found its way down and squeezed his firm ass.

"I'm touching it right now." I winked.

"You can touch what's yours." I looked at him, my heart beating just a little faster as I didn't expect him to say that. Still, a smile found its way on my lips as I cuddled into his chest.

We lay in silence as he drew smooth circles on my back, making me extremely relaxed and sleepy.

"I was wondering... How did you find the guy?" I have been dying to ask the question. They found him fast and I was curious to hear how they worked. It was Arianna who broke the news to me as I was mad at him at the time they found him.

"Rafaelle found him. He hacked the security cameras but they were disconnected as predicted. But what they haven't thought of was the security

cameras of the buildings around the street, giving us footage of people coming in and out of the hotel. He then checked every person on the hotel's database to see who was

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checked in and who was not, but none of them matched his face. When he came out of the hotel again, he staggered on his feet to his car. Rafaelle tracked down his car to a motel." Damiano explained and I raised my head to look at him. I was stunned by the information because it sounded like the kind of work that would take weeks to complete. And they had done it in less than 48 hours.

Was that really the power of the Mafia?

"Rafaelle is a hacker?" I said surprised.

"That you found surprising?" He chuckled.

"Well, sometimes he does come across a bit... stupid."

"I know. But he is quite smart."

"Yeah, I can hear that. But wow! It's insane how you found him like that.

Sounds like a freaking movie." I said in awe.

"What did you do to him when you found him?"

"You don't need to know." He furrowed his brows at me, not liking my question. I gave a small pout.

"Just tell me, I want to know."

"Althaia." He said in a warning tone, but I ignored him as I leaned closer to his face, looking into his eyes.

"Did you torture him? Burn him? Drown him?" I listed. Damiano looked at me for a long time with a blank expression. I gave him a half-smile as I put my hand to his cheek and caressed him, letting him know I would be okay to hear it. He was silent for a while as he kept looking at me before finally speaking.

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"I made sure he had a painful death."

"How?" I asked, now playing with his hair, unbothered by his answer. I wasn't surprised. I knew he wouldn't make it out alive. Damiano went silent again, observing my face to see if I was okay to hear the answer.

"For every scratch, wound, and misplaced hair, I made sure to carve deep into his body and fed him to the rats when I was done." He said, almost carefully while still observing my face to see if I was scared by the answer. But I wasn't. I have come to learn what kind of man he was, and I wasn't scared of him. Not anymore.

"How do you feed someone to rats?" I found that interesting as I couldn't imagine small rats could eat a whole human being.

“You place a half-cage with rats on the person, then slowly heat the cage, which makes the rats desperate to get away from the heat. They then burrow through the flesh with their claws and teeth. They gnaw right into the bowel causing excruciating pain.”

“Yikes. I bet he regrets not staying in bed that day.” I couldn’t help but grimace a little at the mention of rats gnawing into the flesh. Damiano let out a soft smile and wrapped his arms tightly around me, making me snuggle into his chest.

“Althaia... What I wouldn’t do for you.” He whispered. I smiled into his chest and closed my eyes, enjoying the feeling of him and the sound of his heartbeat.

Post Views: 6

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

Althaia

“I’m going to miss you so much!” I hugged Cara tightly.

“Me too! It’s going to suck without you.”

“Ghee, thanks.” Arianna commented and faked an offended expression. I let out a laugh as I turned to hug her as well. It was going to be so weird to be away from them for so long when I had practically spent every single day with them.

“Now we can all get some sleep at night without you going crazy at it.”

Rafaelle started and I gave him a blank look.

“Don’t you ever get tired of your own stupid comments?”

“Never!” He grinned and gave me a bone-crushing hug. I smiled and shook my head when he let me go. He was going to be missed. Not so much his comments about my sex life though, but he was truly fun to hang out with. He was just one big man-child.

I gave them one last goodbye and even shared an awkward goodbye with Lorenzo where I patted his shoulder as a farewell. I didn’t know why I still felt awkward around him, but I did. Probably because of the number of times I have humiliated myself in front of him. I guess he kind of felt the same around me too because he simply awkwardly patted my head as a goodbye.

“That... hurts to watch.” Cara commented, making it all even more awkward.

I turned to look at Damiano. The last person I yet had to say bye to. The person I least wanted to part ways with. The others left to

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288 Wouches

give us some privacy and I took the moment to walk up to him. I wrapped my

arms around his neck, and his arms glided around my waist. He lifted me and hugged me tightly into his body while burying his face into my neck.

I was feeling a little emotional from our hug and I had to try my best not to shed a tear. I had to remind myself that I would see him again, but it was so damn hard to let him go right now. I was so used to seeing him every day, sharing a bed with him, feeling his touch... I had already created a little life with him in such a short amount of time. And even though I had gone through some fcked up things in the meantime, I was happy this man was in my life and I was in his.

"I will miss you so much..." I said quietly and he looked at me. I knew he didn't want to let me go. I could see it on his face as he looked at me softly.

"I'm going to cry if you keep looking at me like that." I chuckled and gave a small smile. I could feel my throat tighten as this got too emotional for me.

Damiano gave me one of his beautiful smiles before he pulled me into a sweet kiss.

"I will miss you too, baby." He whispered against my lips. My heart skipped a beat and my whole body started to tingle at the one word he used. I placed my hands on either side of his face, caressing his cheeks as I drank in his golden-brown eyes, making sure to memorize them. I smiled warmly at him with my blurry eyes as tears welled up in them. I blinked them away and pulled him into another kiss.

How was I going to be away from this man for weeks?

Damiano walked out to the car where Luca and Giovanni were already waiting for me.

Going Home(1)

288 Vouchere

"Looks like you two are the lucky ones who get to spend so many amazing hours with me in the car!... Okay, that sounded gross." I scrunched my nose when I heard it.

"What I meant was, I give great concerts and you get to hear my amazing singing!" I beamed once again. Luca just chuckled while Giovanni did not look like someone who was excited about what was about to unfold.

"I will need a raise." Giovanni looked at Damiano blankly.

"Hey! I have a great voice. Wait till you hear me sing in Korean!" I gave him a big smile. He blinked a few times before returning his gaze to Damiano.

"It better be six figures." He simply said and got in the car. I scoffed and called him a crybaby.

"Looks like you're going to torture my men." Damiano pulled me into him with a smile.

"Just a little." I grinned and he shook his head a little. I wrapped my arms around his torso as I looked up at him. He caressed my hair as his golden-

brown eyes looked affectionately into mine.

“Stay safe, don’t get hurt.”

“You stay safe too. I’ll be back before you know it.” I told him, mostly to remind myself that I would be back to see him again. Damiano placed a kiss on my forehead and held me tightly one more time.

We said our last goodbyes before I got in the car. My heart already felt heavy as we drove further and further away from him. Soon, he was out of my view and I was left alone with Luca and Giovanni, heading home for the first time in two months.

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288 Vouchers

... Got the neighbors yelling earthquake, four-point five when I make the bed shake, put it down heavy even though it’s lightweight.” I sang as I gave them my best performance to date. Well, I thought it was great. Giovanni, not so much. But it was not like he could do anything about it even though he did threaten to throw me out of the car if I didn’t shut up... He quickly released he shouldn’t have said that because it only made me sing louder, and I wasn’t trying to make it pretty.

He was quite the grumpy man.

“You should replace the bed with a car.” Luca commented when I was done.

“Why?” I was in the backseat in the middle but sat on the edge with my head popped out between them.

“That’s what you did with Damiano. You had us thinking something was wrong with the tires.” He laughed and I dropped my jaw.

“Why would you even mention that?!” What was wrong with these people and their comments about my sex life?

“And that’s such an exaggeration!”

“It really isn’t. I thought someone had shot the tire back there. Besides, we weren’t even far away from the hotel. You could have waited instead of shaking the car like that.” Luca continued, having me scowl at him for opening his mouth about it.

“I’m for once happy that he’s getting some. He’s less up in our asses now that he’s busy with you.” Giovanni commented.

“Oh, look at that! I am making your life easier, and you want to throw me out of the car.” I scoffed. I had started to get to know some of Damiano’s men. At least those who were closest to him,

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and it was often Antonio, Luca, Dom, and Giovanni who were around him the

most.

“Whatever.” He leaned back and closed his eyes. I just rolled my eyes at him.

“Anyway, I’m sorry to trouble you like this, Luca. I tried to talk Damiano out of it, but he wouldn’t budge.”

“Nah, don’t worry about it, I’m happy to do it. I never got the chance. to say thanks back then. This is me repaying you for saving my ass.” He chuckled. I smiled and gave his shoulder a small squeeze.

“She saved your ass?” Giovanni opened his eyes, now interested in our conversation.

“It was stupid, really... We were playing UNO while Antonio and Damiano were gone. I lost all rounds and thought Luca was cheating. While I was trying to get him up from the couch, I fell on top of him. At the same time, they returned and saw us like that...” I grimaced as I explained to him. Giovanni looked at Luca in surprise.

“Shit, and you got out of that one alive?”

“Barely. Antonio almost got my ass if she didn’t step between us. Damiano made him back down when she did.”

“You didn’t even try to defend yourself! I know what it looked like from their view but still, it was a misunderstanding.” I frowned a bit.

“Because that’s not how it works.” I looked at Giovanni.

“If Damiano decides he wants to kill you, no excuse or explanation will save you. Luca was just accepting his fate. That’s how it

“How does that even make sense? Honestly, the more I get to know about all of this, the more fcked up it gets.”

“Did you expect it to be all unicorns who shit rainbows?” Giovanni scoffed.

“No... I just get surprised by how dark and twisted it all can get.”

“Oh, it can get dark and twisted. You should have seen what he did to the guy who attacked you.” He smirked and Luca turned to glare at him.

“Giovanni.” Luca warned him not to tell anymore.

“Damiano told me already.” I shrugged.

“He did?” Luca looked at me in the rearview mirror in surprise before focusing back on the road.

“Yeah. I asked and he told me. Something about placing cages. with rats on him.” I shuddered in disgust.

“That was nothing.” Giovanni scoffed.

“The way Damiano nailed his hands to the chair and fked up his hands for touching you. The best part was when he drilled holes into his collarbones and kneecaps. It was insane. And the guy kept passing out, which only pissed him more off.” He laughed and I sat quietly while staring at him in shock.

A shiver ran down my back as I imagined the scenario in my mind. Graphic pictures of a machine drilling furiously into the guy’s bones had me feeling

sick. He truly had him suffer as much as possible before ending his life. Even though that man had most likely killed me if I hadn't been lucky... but to end his life so brutally

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had me shocked.

"He... what?" I blinked at him. Giovanni stilled and looked at me.

"... Didn't you say he told you?" He frowned at my reaction.

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"The rat thing, yes.. I didn't know he had left that much out of it."

"That's why you should have kept your mouth shut!" Luca gave an angry stare.

"Ah, for fcks sake." Giovanni sighed in annoyance.

"It's fine. I shouldn't be shocked... I have after all witnessed him shoot people." I tried to reassure them, but I think I tried to reassure myself more with that statement.

"And you almost passed out when you did." Luca reminded me.

"Well, since then, my ass almost got killed twice. I would like to think I have gotten a thicker skin."

"Talk about having bad luck." Luca grinned and I couldn't help but chuckle a bit. Might as well just laugh and joke about it now. I mean, I did come out alive...

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We had been driving for six hours and I had to explain once again to Giovanni's grumpy ss why we were driving and not taking a flight back. I didn't want to admit it to Arianna because she would only make more fun of me. Truth was, I was scared of flying and I hated it. I would avoid it at all costs if possible. I was lucky my friend, Jenny, was going on a road trip with a few friends, and since they were passing by, they could give me a ride so I could attend the engagement party.

But I was getting restless and my as was numb. And I wasn't allowed to sing anymore for Giovanni after singing Pocketful of Sunshine. He said making his ears bleed was not a part of the deal, and he better gets a raise so big he can feed the world's poor countries and still retire comfortably.

He was definitely not a pocketful of sunshine...

It also made me wonder just how much money Damiano has since Giovanni had said to him he better gets a six-figure raise. Sure, he did spend fifty million on a freaking necklace and acted like he only spent a couple of hundred dollars. Just how rich was he?

I made Luca pull into a gas station because I needed to pee, and also, I was

in the mood for some snacks. After I was done, I filled my arms with whatever I could get my hands on, chips, candy, chocolates, and even grabbed a few drinks. Luca and Giovanni said they didn't want anything but still grabbed something for them too. I grabbed enough to last us the whole ride.

As the cashier rang my massive pile of snacks and drinks, I opened my wallet but frowned when I didn't see my card in there. Instead, I saw a shiny black card in its place.

"That will be sixty-two and seventy-five cents." I rummaged through my wallet to see if I had enough cash. I didn't. I sighed in

Going Home(3)

18 284 Vouchers

annoyance when I didn't have any choice but to use the black card. Quickly thanking the cashier, I got out to make a phone call.

It picked up on the first ring.

"You took my card and replaced it with yours."

"I did."

"Why?"

"Because I wanted to."

"That's not an answer."

"I don't want you to spend your money."

"But that's the thing! I want to spend my own money, and not yours."

"I told you, my money is yours."

"Damiano..." I sighed in annoyance.

That man could be a pain in the ss sometimes.

"I miss you." He suddenly said. It made my heart flutter and made me forget why I was annoyed with him in the first place.

"I miss you too." I smiled. I was already missing him like crazy, and it made me feel warm inside that he was missing me just as much. I dropped my smile when I realized what he was doing.

"I know what you're trying to do."

"And what am I trying to do?" It was like I could hear his smug grin through the phone.

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Going Home(3)

"You're distracting me by saying you miss me." I accused and narrowed my eyes slightly even though he couldn't see me.

288 Vouchers

"Can't a man tell his woman he misses her?" He spoke softly, and my heart melted even more.

"As if this isn't hard enough, you have to say it like that?" I let out a light chuckle.

"I know. Call me when you get home."

"I will. Don't get your ss shot."

"Have you already forgotten who I am?" He scoffed.

"A man who drills holes into bones?" The words came out of my mouth before I could stop myself. I inwardly groaned at my stupidity.

It was silent. So silent I had to check if the call got disconnected, but it wasn't.

"Dami – "

"Who told you?" He practically growled in a low tone.

"It doesn't matter." I sighed.

"Who told you?" He pressed on with a more demanding tone.

"I know you're worried about what I will think of it. What I will think of you...

But I know who you are." I said softly.

He didn't say anything for a while. I knew the reason why he would never include me in what was going on. He didn't want me to see that side of him.

The much darker and more twisted side of him. To see what he was truly capable of. A man, so dangerous and so

286 Mouchers

deadly, yet he was gentle with me and allowed me to see the softer side of him he didn't allow others to see.

He was my villain. Who would do anything for me.

"Damiano... I'm not going anywhere." I smiled a little as I imagined the frown on his face slowly disappearing.

"... You better come back to me." His tone was low and soft, having me smile.

"I promise I will."

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Post Views: 8

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

Althaia

It has been a week since I got home, and even though I miss the others terribly, it was good to be home and spend time with my mother. It has been crazy busy in my mother's boutique, and I felt terrible seeing how exhausted she looked. She had been working hard, taking orders here and there, and made a couple of custom- designed dresses.

I was happy I was going back to work the next week. I have been doing nothing but rest since I was on crutches, and since it was only a mild sprain to begin with, I was already moving around without needing them too much.

Though, I felt extremely guilty for just sitting around doing nothing, especially while my mother was working her ass off for two months while I was away.

I was sitting on the couch in the living room as I watched the Seven Deadly

Sins while eating a bagel with cream cheese for breakfast. Just as I took a big bite of my bagel, the doorbell rang. I let out a noise of annoyance as I tried to chew faster and made my way to the front door.

Who would be coming at this hour anyway?

I brushed away any crumbs around my mouth and quickly made sure I looked decent enough to open the door.

“Delivery for Miss Althaia.” The man said and handed me the biggest arrangement of red roses I had ever seen.

“From... who?” My voice died down as he was already making his way back to his car. I walked back to the living room and placed

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the roses on the coffee table to get a good look at them.

288 Vouchers

There were at least a hundred! And they were so beautiful. There were even a few white orchids on the side, making it look so cute. It was a gorgeous flower arrangement and I leaned down a bit to smell the fresh roses. My nose was flooded with a sweet and somewhat spicy aroma that reminded me of meadow honey with fruity tones.

It was all wrapped in a fancy crystal vase with a silk ribbon around it where I noticed a small note placed with the ribbon. I took the note and a smile spread on my lips when I read what it said.

Every second, of every minute, of every hour, of every day, I miss you.

-Your villain.

I couldn't stop smiling as I kept reading the note over and over again, filling my heart with infinite warmth and happiness. I clutched the note into my chest as if burying the words into my heart while I carefully touched the rose petals with my fingertips.

I placed the note back as I made my way upstairs to my bedroom with the flowers. I wasn't going to leave it in the living room or on the dining table for my mother to see. If there was one thing I would like to keep to myself, for now, was my relationship with Damiano. She wasn't thrilled when she found out that Cara was going to marry a Bellavia. In fact, she was furious about it. Her reaction didn't exactly make me want to jump up and down in eagerness to tell her I was dating a Bellavia as well.

The Mafia Boss to make it worse.

I placed the vase on my desk and pulled out my phone to take a picture of a huge flower arrangement and sent the picture to him.

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Althaia

Thank you. I love them so much! But I love the words even more.

Damiano

Hmm, if I knew you would like the words this much, I would have written you a hundred more.

Althaia

That would have been quite some extra work with your busy ass.

Damiano

Never too busy when it comes to you. Speaking of ass, I miss looking at yours. Touching it too. And other things...

Althaia

Getting blue balls already?

Damiano

Been having them ever since you left. Those damn pictures you sent didn't make it better. I'm warning you from now – I will make sure you won't be able to walk for a week when I'm done burying myself deep inside of you.

I sat down on my bed, and I bit my lip a little as I squeezed my legs together I felt myself... throbbing a bit, aching to feel him inside of me. The way he would brutally pound inside of me, his biceps flexing when he would rest his arms on either side of my head, and my hands trailing down on his rock-hard stomach...

Holy shit! A single text message like this had this much effect on me?

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I knew I would miss him terribly but I didn't exactly think of how... desperate I also would be to feel our bodies move against each other. Every night, before I went to sleep, I would talk to him, and my body would burn with a desire of listening to his deep and rich voice. It was not like I couldn't do anything to release myself. It just didn't feel the same when Damiano knew my body way better than I did, and he just knew where to hit all the right spots. It just felt much better when he did it to me.

288 Workers

I also did something I never thought I would. I sent Damiano quite some daring pictures of myself. At first, it was only one picture. A teasing one where I was in bed, in my red lace nightgown, and took a picture of my body posing a bit seductively, and sent it to him. His reaction was priceless, and he was lost for words for a little. Then I kept sending him different pictures of me, one less clothing than the other.

Althaia

I do look forward to being on top of you. To feel you deep like that...

Damiano

Fcking hell, Althaia. I'm in a meeting.

Althaia

Awh, too bad. I was about to send you a picture of my tis as a thank you.

Damiano

Fck the meeting. Send the picture.

I let out a laugh at his text and decided to stop my flirting and let him be in his meeting in peace. Who knew I would have this much effect on him too? He would text me every day and every time he did that, I had to be careful not to smile down at my phone around my mother. She would only be curious and ask me who I was texting. And if I said no one, then she would know I was lying because no one smiles down at their phone without it having a bigger meaning to it.

Somehow, being away from each other made my feelings for him

12:06

283 Vouchers

grow even stronger. I didn't realize my feelings would be this much bigger and stronger for him. They were already overwhelming when I was at the manor, but now they were so... powerful. It scared me a little that I was already having such big feelings for him. But I couldn't help it. Now, whenever I think of the future, it was with him. It was always with him, and I couldn't imagine spending my life with anyone else but with him.

"I have something to tell you." My mother said after we were done ordering our food. We were sitting in a nice restaurant to have dinner and spend some relaxing time together. Luca and Giovanni were in the restaurant too, seated close to our table. They have been good at staying in the far background so we wouldn't notice them wherever we went, but they did come inside the restaurants whenever I went to make sure everything was all right. I could live with that as I just ignored them to not cause any attention to them.

"What is it?" I picked up my glass of water and took a sip as I waited for her to talk. She looked at me with a big smile.

"I got you a date." She said excitedly and I choked on my water as soon as the words got out of her mouth. Tears blurred my vision as I violently coughed. My mother quickly came over to me and patted my back.

"A what?" I finally asked after calming down.

"A date!" Her green eyes were twinkling in happiness. I was a spitting image of my mother with the same green eyes, though she was taller and had faint freckles on her cheeks. People would always mistake us for being sisters and would be shocked when they learned we were actually mother and daughter.

My mom had me when she was my age, twenty-four, but she was keeping 288 vouchers

herself in good shape and taking good care of her health. Me, on the other hand, I was filling myself with garbage and barely did any exercise.

“Why? And with who?” I looked at her shocked.

“The other day I had a customer. We were chatting for a little and then her son came in, a very handsome young man, and I asked him if he was single because I have a single daughter. So, I gave him your number.” She said proudly and I just gaped at her.

“What?! Mom, you can’t just give my number out like that.” I hissed quietly.

“And why not? You will like him, trust me. He’s very smart and has his own business.” She took a sip of her wine, looking satisfied with her date arrangement. My phone buzzed on the table and I looked to see a text message from Luca.

Luca

Turn it down.

Well, no shit. I sighed and I looked at my mother, trying to figure out how to get out of this date.

“Mom, I can’t go on a date with... What’s his name?”

“Liam.”

“Liam... I’m sure he’s a nice guy but no thank you.”

“Why not? You have been single for a long time. Isn’t it time for you to go out and see what’s out there?”

My phone buzzed again, and I quickly looked down to see another text message.

Luca

Shut it down. Tell her you’re already dating.

That, I can’t do, Luca. I really wanted to glare at him right now, but I couldn’t when my mom was looking at me. I couldn’t tell her I was dating someone. She would ask too many questions I wasn’t ready for.

“That phone of yours has been buzzing a lot lately... Oh my, did you find someone?” My mother gasped, excitement showing in her eyes.

Oh, crap.

“I- Uh... Well.” I struggled to come up with any words as I tried to think of some kind of excuse.

“My goodness, you did! Tell, me who is he?” She leaned forward, resting her elbows on the table, ready to hear whatever I had to spill.

“Is it Michael?” She asked, helping me with the perfect excuse.

“Yes, it’s Michael.” I could feel both Luca’s and Giovanni’s gaze on me as soon as I said another man’s name. I had to try my best not to make a face.

“I’ve always liked Michael, he’s a good kid. It’s cute though, you always had a thing for him when you were younger, and you said you were going to marry him. Maybe it will come true.” My mother chuckled and totally exposed my ass

without knowing it.

My phone buzzed again.

Giovanni

I am telling Damiano.

That little bitch....

Althaia

uck off.

“How’s Cara? Is she doing all right?” We were done eating and having dessert. It was one heavenly chocolate cake. It melted right on my tongue with bits of chocolate pieces hidden inside the delicious layers, giving a delectable surprise.

“Yeah, she’s good. Quite demanding with her endless list of things she wants to have done for the wedding, but she deserves it.” I chuckled and my mom just nodded a bit.

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“Which one is she marrying?”

“Lorenzo.”

“Hmm.”

“Something’s wrong?”

“He’s the younger brother, right?” I just nodded, confused about where she wanted to go with it.

“I was just wondering why she is getting married to the younger brother and not the oldest... But I guess it’s for the best. I heard he’s quite the monster, and that’s to say it mildly.” She scoffed, completely unaware that his men are present right next to our table. I felt myself frowning when she called Damiano a monster, but I had to be careful with my words.

“I wouldn’t say that... I’ve met him a few times, he seems... nice?” Meally, I was beating myself for being such an idiot. Out of all words in the world, I settled on nice?

“Are you making jokes now?” My mother frowned at me.

“I just mean that he hasn’t done anything to me, so...” I trailed off when I should have just shut the fck up already.

“Be careful. Don’t get too close to him. I don’t want anything to happen to you. Or I swear to God, I will kill him with my own two hands.” Her voice was low and threatening. I looked at her in shock, and I noticed Luca and Giovanni tense up a bit at the mention of my mother promising to kill their boss. They normally didn’t tense up like that unless they get the sense of a real threat. I didn’t blame them since they had to be alert at all times.

Her tone had set them off with the hint of a promise behind it. I

highly doubt she would actually hunt down a powerful Mafia Boss. I mean, I

did get startled because I have never heard my own mother speak like that or seen that look on her face before. It was like in a split second, her eyes went cold,

“Don’t worry, I will... stay away.” Guilt filled my body as I continued to lie to my mother. I didn’t want to but there was no way she would approve of me being with Damiano. And now, I was definitely not going to tell her with the way she had reacted. I just somehow needed to change her view of him little by little so she wouldn’t think of him as a monster.

How was I going to do that, I had no idea...

“You have been working really hard lately, mom. How about you take some time off while I take over?” I tried to change the subject.

“Yeah? I have been thinking about it, going away for a week or something. My back has been killing me lately.”

“I know. And I do feel bad for leaving you alone with all of this while I was away. You and Mrs. Park can go somewhere nice, get drunk, and have massages. Maybe get laid for once.” I snickered, and she did not look amused when I said the last part.

We sat quietly and chatted about nothing in particular as we finished our desserts. But then my mother kept looking toward Luca and Giovanni. At first, I didn’t think anything of it as she did look around in the restaurant and her gaze would randomly land on someone. But this time, she looked at them for a little while longer. Actually, for so long that Luca even made eye contact with her and gave her a small smile and nod to which she returned.

I started to get nervous and squirmed in my seat a little. Did she catch on to who they were? I mean I didn’t pay any attention to them to not blow their cover, and I couldn’t tell if she was

12.07 C

neutral expression.

“Wanna leave?” I asked, trying to distract her.

“Sure. Let me just use the restroom before we leave.” She got up and before she walked to the restroom, she looked at Luca and Giovanni with a big smile.

“I’m sorry for staring at you earlier, I wasn’t trying to be rude. I am just very happy that we live in a time where we can love whomever we want. And if I may say, you two look absolutely beautiful together!” I had to try my hardest not to burst out laughing. I put my hand up to my mouth so I wouldn’t accidentally laugh.

I

My mother was looking so happy for them!

“Thank you! We just got married.” Luca said with a bright smile.

“Oh, isn’t that lovely! Congratulations.” My mother let out a big smile before going to the restroom. When she was out of sight, I turned to look at them and

burst out laughing. I laughed so hard that no sound was coming out. Giovanni made it even funnier with the sour look on his face as he glared at me.

Post Views: 7

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

Althaia

Things had calmed down a bit at work. I was taking a lot of stress off my mother's shoulder now that I was back because other than her, I was the only one skilled enough to sketch customers' wishes.

We did have one more worker in the boutique, but she was a seamstress and would take on the job of measuring our customers and helping them find their dresses. She only worked a few hours a week since she was an older lady but still wanted to move around a bit. We did sell many stunning, high-end dresses, both our own and other designers' work. However, many of our customers preferred to get a custom-designed dress.

Time was going by so fast with the amount of work there had to be done, and before I knew it, three weeks already went by. It felt like time was going by even faster because as soon as I got home from work, I would pass out as soon as my head hit the pillow. I haven't been talking much to Damiano, only squeezing a text message here and there. He called me last night and I was so tired that I fell asleep while talking to him, but he knew how busy things have been. I did feel guilty that I barely had any time for him when he always made sure to have time for me. And he was the one with multiple businesses and running a Mafia...

Lately, I was feeling like I didn't get much sleep and would run late for work a few times. My mother was always the one who left for work first to make sure the boutique is in a presentable state and sort out any form of paperwork that had to be done. It was not like I couldn't wake up by myself. It was just that I would hit snooze way too many times. And because of my many late mornings,

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Luca had to give drive me to work. He even had coffee and e me to work. He ever

breakfast ready for me in the car since it became a routine, and he would drop me off a block away from the boutique so my mother wouldn't notice. She thought I was taking an Uber for work.

"Are you sure you can keep the boutique open while I'm gone?" My mother asked for the hundredth time.

"Yes, I'm sure I can. You just focus on relaxing because you're seriously all

tensed up.” I chuckled.

“Besides, things have calmed down a lot so I can manage.”

“Okay, good. If not, you call me and I will come right away.”

“No. I can’t believe I have to force you to take a break!” I shook my head and made a tsking sound.

It was evening and my mother would leave for her trip with Mrs. Park tomorrow morning, and I was helping her pack her things. It took way too long as I went through her clothes and assembled outfits for spa days, cocktail hour, dinner, and whatnot. You might as well look your best when you were going away for a week with your bestie.

Mrs. Park and my mother have been friends ever since we moved here, and I was also close friends with her daughter, Jenny, who was currently on a very hot vacation. And by hot, I was referring to her being with one hot guy after another. She sent me pictures of them and even rated them from one to ten on how good they were in bed. And other detailed information I didn’t need to know about. She was definitely going to be the hot, single, rich Asian auntie in the future.

“Mom, what’s this?” I frowned down at the paper in my hands that I took out from her purse. She turned to look at me, stopping in her

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288 Vouchers

tracks when she noticed what it was.

“You were not supposed to see that. Not yet at least.” She sighed.

“You bought a property?” I asked confused as I read the paper in my hands.

My eyes suddenly went wide when I read where.

“You bought a property in Greece?”

“I did.” She smiled and took the paper from me.

“But why?”

“Because we are moving.” She stated calmly. I looked at her in complete shock.

Moving to Greece?

“Why? We can’t just do that!” I exclaimed.

“Why not? We have always talked about how it could be nice to live there whenever we are there on vacation. And trust me, it’s for the best. Everything has already been taken care of. Once Cara gets married, we are out of here.”

My mother left no room for discussion as if it wasn’t a big deal.

I frowned, not fully understanding what she was saying. Cara was getting married in five weeks. Was she expecting us to move so suddenly? And even across the freaking world just like that?

“Why do we need to move?”

“I’m tired of staying here. I want a new start. The sooner we can get out of here, the better.” She didn’t look at me as she continued to pack her bag.

“No.” I said, coming to my senses a bit.

“We can’t move to Greece, mom. I can’t do that!”

“Oh, yes you can! I’m not leaving without you.” She now stood in front of me and furrowed her brows at me.

“No, mom. I can’t just leave everything behind and move across the world like that. What about Cara? Am I supposed to leave her just like that?” There was no way I would leave Cara like that again. She was my sister, my best friend. Moving here was already hard enough without her.

“I have just started to get in touch with my family again. I can’t abandon Cara. What about my father?” She scoffed at the mention of my father which had me narrow my eyes at her.

“Like he cares. And trust me, it’s for the best once Cara gets married. Listen, we will talk more about it when I come back.” She said dismissively.

“There isn’t more to talk about, I’m not moving.”

“And why not?!” She looked at me furiously, not liking my answer. For a while, I just stood there and looked at my mother’s furious expression, not knowing how to tell her that there was so much more to it.

It wasn’t just about my father or Cara.

“...Because I’m pregnant.” I held my breath as my mother stood in front of me. She looked at me in shock.

My mother didn’t say anything and just looked at me. I had to bite down on my lip so it wouldn’t tremble.

“...What?” She breathed out and shook her head a little as if she heard it wrong. I took a deep breath, calming my nerves as I spoke.

“I’m pregnant. I can’t leave.” It came out as a whisper.

once again.

“With Michael’s...?”

“No.” I shook my head quickly. I had completely forgotten about the lie I had told that I was dating Michael. She looked at me with wide eyes, almost scared to know the answer.

“Then who?”

“I...Mom, I don’t know how to say it...but I never dated Michael.” I trailed off, watching her reaction closely before I continued. I took another deep breath, trying to prepare myself for what is about to come.

“I am seeing someone, it’s just not Michael.”

She looked at me confused and gestured for me to go on. I swallowed down the knot in my throat that was building up. My heart was beating so much and

my chest was moving up and down fast.

"It's Damiano Bellavia." I held my breath as I watched my mother's face turn into one of horror. She took a step back, not believing her own two ears.

"No... It can't be true... How? When?!" She almost shouted.

"Mom, please calm down." I tried to tell her with my shaky voice.

"Calm down?! You're telling me you're pregnant with that monster's child?!" She screamed at me.

"He's not a monster!" I snapped back. She looked taken aback at my reaction. I have never raised my voice at my mother. She was my everything and for a long time, it has just been the two of us

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together. It still was. But I was upset with the way she was reacting.

"He's not a monster, so stop saying that." I said more calmly.

288 Vouchers

"Did he force himself on you?" Her voice went ice cold, making me drop my jaw in shock she was even thinking that!

"No!"

"My od... What have you done, Althaia!" She ran a hand through her hair, looking distressed as she paced back and forth. I didn't say anything as I just watched her. My heart was clenching at the whole situation. It wasn't supposed to be like this. I had hoped I could change her mind about Damiano. But to her, he was nothing more than just a cold-blooded killer.

"Does he know?" My mother finally broke the silence while facing away from me.

"No... I just found out a few days ago..." I had missed my period and I didn't even notice it with how busy I had been with everything.

"Okay... Okay... He doesn't need to know. We can get this fixed. Get rid of it and pretend it never happened."

"Yo-You can't decide that." I breathed out, looking at her with wide eyes as my heart started to violently pump inside my chest. I took a few shaky steps away from her, suddenly feeling protective.

"You're not keeping it." She looked at me with a cold look.

"That is something we will decide, and not you." I said angrily and she scoffed at me.

"There is no you and him. Do you really think someone like him is capable of being a father? Someone like him could never!" She spat out.

"You don't know him!"

"And you do? You have known him for like two seconds!"

"I know him way better than you think." My whole body was shaking. Shaking

in anger as she kept going on and insulting him. I could feel tears wanting to build up in my eyes, but I took a deep breath and clenched my fists.

—

“He cares about me, and I care about him, mom. I really do... love him.” My voice was shaking as I kept swallowing down the so that so desperately wanted to escape my lips as I stood my ground in front of my mother.

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Post Views: 9

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

Althaia

We were slowly making our way back to the house. I didn't want to go back yet but I had to if I was going with the excuse that I was in the shower because I knew he would call again. I just had to calm down entirely and make sure my voice didn't sound off when I talked to him. Hopefully, I could end the call by saying I'm too tired to talk just to keep it safe.

“Do you think he will be mad, or...?” I asked them quietly while keeping my eyes down as I walked. They have been around him longer than I have. Maybe they would be able to prepare me for the reaction when I get the courage to tell him.

“Why would he be mad?” Luca asked and I shrugged at his question.

“I don't know... It's not like this is planned.” Hell, I didn't plan to fall in love with a Mafia Boss either.

“I don't think he would be mad... He did this to you, it's his fault. He's not allowed to be mad.” Luca tried to lighten the mood. He even got a pathetic chuckle out of me.

“Damiano with a baby... S*it, I didn't think I would live to see that happening.” Giovanni commented.

“Is that a good thing or a bad thing?” I turned to look at him, but he kept looking straight ahead.

“My guess is just as good as yours.”

“You're so helpful.” I said sarcastically.

1/4

Vouchers

“What I mean is, Damiano is private and a mystery, even around us. But...it’s you. Even a blind man can see he’s crazy about you.” Hearing this from Giovanni made me relax a little and gave me hope that maybe he would be happy about it.

“I don’t know what he sees in you honestly. You’re barely average.” He said, making me drop my smile immediately.

“You’re such a mean bi*ch!” I said and threw a punch to his stomach. He didn’t see it coming and bent over a little, taken by surprise as he let out a restrained breath. Luca let out a laugh and Giovanni looked at me with a slightly amused look on his face.

“And she’s back.” He patted my head. I smiled when I realized he said that to get me in a better mood. Giovanni and I had that sibling relationship where we sometimes wanted to kill each other. Luca and I were the type of siblings that never bumped heads with each other. We shared the same humor, and he was pretty cool about everything. And also, we loved to gang up against Giovanni because he was constantly grumpy, which made it even more fun to mess with him.

My mood dampened when I saw my house and I purposely walked slower, not ready to face my mother again. I just hoped that she had somehow calmed down or just gone to bed. I let out a sigh when we were near, and I stopped to look at them.

“I know you’re just doing your job by being here, but...I’m glad you are here. I don’t think I could do this if I was alone.” My voice cracked a little and a lump formed in my throat. I

swallowed down hard and took a deep breath. I didn’t want to cry anymore.

2/4

288 Vouchers

“Anyway, thank you.” I gave a small smile, thankful for them.

“Don’t worry about it. You’re family now, and we will do anything for family.” Luca smiled and Giovanni gave a small, firm, nod. It made me tear up a little. They saw me as a part of their family. I smiled, grateful for their words that eased my heart.

I took a deep breath before walking to the front door.

I quietly shut the door behind me. The house was completely silent and dark. Maybe she went to bed? Either way, I was happy. I wouldn’t have to face her right now as I made my way upstairs to my room. I let out a breath when I closed my bedroom door and searched for my phone. Sure enough, I had a few missed calls from Damiano. I took a final deep breath and cleared my throat a few times to make sure I would sound somewhat as I usually do.

“Althaia.” His voice never failed to make me shiver.

“Hi.”

“What’s wrong?” He asked immediately. The way he had said it made me tear up, and I bit down on my lip so a s*b wouldn’t escape. I closed my eyes, trying to get it together before I talked.

“Nothing’s wrong.” I let out a forced chuckle.

“You have been crying.” He knew me too well... It was impossible to hide anything from him.

“I’m fine, trust me.” I squeezed my eyes shut as my voice decided to c*ack.

3/4

“I was just watching a sad movie, that’s all.”

“... I see.” I knew he wasn’t convinced but he didn’t press on, and for that I was thankful. I got comfortable under my covers as exhaustion washed over me, and the banging headache I had been ignoring was now in full force.

“I miss you. So much.” I whispered into the phone. I missed his arms wrapped around me, I missed being close to him, listening to his heartbeat, and breathing in his scent.

“I miss you too.” His voice was soft and it had my eyes welling up with tears.

“I need you. I wish you were here with me.” He was the only person I desperately wanted to comfort me right now and to tell me everything was going to be okay. I just hoped he wouldn’t leave once he found out.

My heart clenched at the thought.

protect you from that world. And I am trying to protect you by telling you to get out of it before it’s too late.” Her voice was firm but with a hint of desperation.

“It’s already too late, mom.” I didn’t want to leave him. The way he made me feel, and the way he cared for me...

“It’s not. You can still get it fixed.”

“There is nothing to fix.” I hissed, feeling anger taking over. I placed my mug on the counter, afraid I might break it in my hands with how tight I was holding it.

“You can’t be happy with him. Don’t you think many people would love to get to him? He’s a Don, for G*d’s sake! And you’ re an easy target for all his enemies! Is that a life you want? Constantly fearing for your life?” My mother raised her voice again, anger showing on her face.

“What difference would it have made if you didn’t leave my father? I would have been an easy target no matter what.” I said calmly. She looked at me a bit startled that I have brought it up.

“I left for a reason. To protect you.” She insisted.

“Was it really to protect me, mom? If it was to protect me, then why did you let me go there? Why did you let me stay there for so long when you knew what kind of people were involved? You knew I stayed at their place with Cara, so don’t give me that blls*it!” My voice raised with each sentence, almost making me shout the last part. My breathing was heavy as I looked at my mother. There were certain things we never talked about, and one thing was why she ever left. For some reason, it was something she didn’t want to talk about.

2/3

She didn’t say anything as she looked at me with a cold expression. This was a whole different side I was witnessing of my mother. Never in my life have I ever seen her like this, but those cold expressions were something I have

learned to recognize with the amount of time I had spent with Damiano and his men.

“I have booked an appointment with the doctor for you once I come back. This ends right now.” Her voice was calm and steady but the look on her face was cold and dark.

Intimidating.

I stared at her retreating form with wide eyes, not believing what I had just heard. I let out a shaky breath as I stood frozen in place. My heart was violently beating. So much it was pounding in my ears. The sound of the door closing and the driving away made me snap out of it.

Post Views: 11

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

I woke up with tears in my eyes. I had been crying in my sleep. I stayed in bed, just staring at the ceiling as it was early, the sun barely making its appearance on the horizon. I let out a tired sigh and got up and made my way to the bathroom. I saw my reflection. Tired eyes, red, and puffy, and my hair was a mess. I washed my face with some cold water in an attempt to make my puffy eyes disappear.

I heard movements in the kitchen when I made my way downstairs. I looked at the time and saw that it was almost time for her to leave. Mrs. Park would be here with a cab so they could leave for the airport together.

My mother was leaning against the counter while drinking her coffee. I walked past her, feeling her gaze on me as I poured myself a cup. No one said anything as we drank our coffee in silence with tension so thick it was almost suffocating.

“You were with those two men from the restaurant.” She said quietly. I looked at her with a blank look on my face. If she had seen me with them then she had already connected the dots. I didn’t bother to answer.

“You’ve gone too far into this. Get out of it while you still can.”

“I’m not going anywhere.”

“It’s a world you don’t know a thing about. I have been in your situation. Don’t make the same mistakes I did.”

“So, now I’m a mistake?” I let out a humorless laugh.

“Don’t you ever say that!” She placed her mug to the side and looked at me.

“You are the biggest blessing of my life. Your whole life I’ve

Post Views: 9

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

I grabbed the coffee mug in anger and threw it to the floor, watching it break. But it did nothing to satisfy the fuming anger inside of me.

I grabbed anything I could get my hands on and threw it violently to the floor. Dishes flew and crashed to the walls, watching them shatter into pieces. Drawers were pulled out and their contents spilled, creating a disastrous mess in the kitchen. I was panting as I continued to empty the cupboards, smashing and breaking everything.

But it still wasn’t enough to relieve the pain in my heart.

I grabbed my hair and screamed at the top of my lungs. Anger, sadness, emptiness, pain. I let it all out.

I stumbled around on my feet as an intense wave of fear took over my body. My body started to shake. I couldn’t catch my breath and my heart was pounding out of my chest.

Everything started to spin and I looked frantically around to hold onto something. Instead, I crashed right onto the broken glass on the floor.

I felt like I was dying.

I couldn’t breathe.

My ears were ringing. I couldn’t hear anything. My body continued to shake as I gasped for air. But nothing was filling my lungs. My vision blurred. The ringing in my ears intensified and my chest was rapidly moving up and down, desperate for air.

“I can’t breathe...” I choked out.

Arms grabbed me and made me look up but it felt like

1/4

everything was in slow motion. I tried to focus but I couldn't make out who it was. I could faintly see lips moving, talking to me but I couldn't hear anything.

Breathe, Althaia.

Damiano's voice rang out. I rapidly blinked and gasped, trying

to take deep breaths while I focused on his voice. Slowly, my vision was getting clearer and the ringing in my ears suddenly disappeared.

But I was met with a pair of hazel eyes.

"Deep breaths, Althaia." Luca instructed with a frown on his face. I held onto him tightly as I tried to match my breathing with his.

"You're okay. You're safe." I slowly felt myself calm down as he kept reassuring me.

I was sitting on the couch as the paramedics measured my blood pressure. Giovanni had made the call when Luca tried to get me back to my senses. I had gotten cuts on my hands and knees from falling directly onto the glass I had shattered all over the kitchen. Most of them were just surface cuts but there were a couple of deeper cuts and they cleaned it all out and bandaged me.

"Your blood pressure is high, but I wouldn't worry too much about it right after a panic attack. Do you have those often?" The paramedic asked and I shook my head at him.

"I haven't had them before."

2/4

Panic Attack(3)

"Do you know the cause of it, or did it just happen?"

"I was just...upset." I said while keeping my eyes down. My body was feeling weak and heavy as I sat there and answered their questions.

“Make sure you get enough restful sleep and avoid caffeine, smoking, and alcohol...” I nodded mindlessly as he continued to talk while packing his things.

I felt empty. Like there was a deep hole inside of me that wouldn't close. I got up from the couch once the paramedics made their way out but got stopped by Giovanni.

“I have to go to work...” I mumbled quietly, keeping my eyes down when he blocked my way.

“The hell you are! Go back and sit down. You need to rest.” He sat me back down and I didn't even protest. I was too weak to do anything. Too upset. Too much in pain.

I lay down on the couch and closed my eyes while I heard Luca's and Giovanni's hushed voices as they talked to each other. A blanket was pulled over my body, and I soon let sleep take over me to escape my reality.

I slowly came out of my slumber when the feeling of something caressing my stomach woke me up. It took me a few tries to open my heavy eyelids, and I tiredly blinked a couple of times before my eyes adjusted to the darkness in the room.

A s*b immediately escaped my lips when saw him.

3/4

“Damiano...”

Post Views: 9

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

Althaia

Tears welled up in my eyes at the sight of him. I quickly sat up and wrapped my arms around his neck. Damiano held me tightly into his body with his strong arms as I sobbed into his neck.

I couldn't believe he was here. Right in front of me, holding me.

He caressed my back as we were in each other's arms. It was something I had missed so much for the past three weeks. Something I desperately needed right now while my entire body shook as I cried in his arms.

“Althaia...” Damiano spoke softly and had me look at him. He cupped my

face, wiping the tears away, and looked around my face before meeting my eyes, looking concerned.

“Tell me what’s wrong.”

I looked at him with teary eyes, not knowing how to even tell him. Where do I even start? This whole thing had gotten out of control and I didn’t know what to do.

“I – “I bit my lip when my voice cracked and I looked down, trying to breathe before I continued.

“I had a fight with my mom...” I decided to say and I let out a breath before I looked back at him. He looked at me with furrowed brows, waiting for me to elaborate but I didn’t know how to break it all down to him.

“Because you’re pregnant?” He asked and I held my breath. Fresh tears went down my cheeks as I looked at him with a defeated

12 331

look, but I gave him a small nod, confirming it to him.

“Why?”

“Because it’s with you...” It came out as a whisper.

“She... She wants me to... to get rid...” I couldn’t even finish the sentence as I broke down once again. Damiano stilled, his expression hardened, a storm of rage unfolding in his eyes before he pulled me into him again.

“Shh, don’t worry. No one is going to take our baby away. I

promise.” He told me quietly. I let myself be in his arms for a while as he comforted me until I had calmed down. I had cried so much in such a short time, and the pain in my chest only got worse every time I cried. This was a whole different kind of heartbreak I was experiencing and it hurt like hell.

I didn’t think I would be going through this if I got pregnant. I didn’t think my mother would be reacting this badly to me being pregnant with Damiano’s baby. I knew she wasn’t fond of him in any way, but to tell me to get rid of the baby tore me completely apart. Those words were something I never thought I would ever hear coming from my mother’s mouth... Planned or not, it was supposed to be a joyous moment.

“How did you find out? Did Luca and Giovanni tell you?” I was sitting on his lap, curled up in his arms as I looked at him.

“No. I found the pregnancy tests in your purse when I packed a bag for you.” I took a look around and saw that we weren’t in my house anymore but in what looked like a hotel room. I had been so disoriented that I hadn’t even noticed where we were.

“I had to get you out of there.” He said softly and continued to rub my back. I nodded, sighing a bit. Maybe it was for the best not to

29.193

be there at the moment. The kitchen would just be a reminder of what had

happened.

“I’m happy you’re here.” I snuggled into him, holding him tight.

“You said you needed me.” He kissed the top of my head. It had me swallowing down a s*b. He really came all the way here because I said I needed him.

“Luca called, telling me they had called the paramedics because you were not doing well. F*ck, Althaia...for a minute, I thought I was losing you. I was driving like a madman from the airport to get to you.” Damiano held me tightly, almost as if his life depended on it.

“It was just a panic attack.” I tried to tell him it wasn’t a big deal.

“That was more than just a panic attack.” He lifted my bandaged hand, small spots of blood had seeped through the material.

“I told you not to get hurt.” He kissed my palm.

“I know, I’m sorry...”

“Did you go to a doctor yet?” His hand went down to my stomach, caressing it as he looked at me.

“No, not yet. I haven’t really had time to process the fact that I’m..... pregnant.” It was strange to use that word about myself.

“I was worried about telling you.” I admitted. We were in the early stages of our relationship, and it was not like the talk about babies ever occurred to me. We were still getting to know each other, and I was living in the moment. I honestly didn’t know his thoughts about kids or if he even wanted them one day. I looked at him to see his reaction, and he looked at me with a small frown on his face.

1

Post Views: 9

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

“You shouldn’t have worried about that.”

“I didn’t know if you would be happy about it.” I said quietly. I tried to control my breathing, feeling my heart beat faster as I waited for him to say something. His eyes softened, a beautiful smile on his lips.

“My Althaia...why wouldn’t I be happy when it’s with you?” Those golden-brown eyes held everything my soul thirsted for. Certainty and joy.

I felt my eyes welling with tears again.

I moved to straddle his lap and placed my hands on his cheeks, caressing them and looking into his lovely eyes that held so much affection. This time, my heart was filled with warmth and happiness. He was happy about it. It was the only thing that truly mattered to me. The look on his face was enough to

give me hope that things were going to be better, and right now, I couldn't be happier that it was with him.

"We are having a baby." I whispered, relieved and finally able to be happy about it.

"We are." He smiled. His eyes were bright and filled with so much tenderness.

"No more tears." He wiped away the tears that had escaped and I couldn't help but chuckle a little. These were tears of happiness.

"Se agapó." I whispered with a smile on my lips and I let myself get lost in his golden-brown eyes. G*d, I loved his eyes so much. And I loved him even more.

283 Vouchers

Damiano didn't say anything. He looked deep into my eyes when I said those words to him. I didn't expect him to know what it meant. I just had to tell him as I continued to lovingly caress his stubbly cheeks.

"E ti amo." He whispered back. For a split second, I held my breath. I looked at him, trying to figure out if I heard him correctly.

breath.
"Ti amo, Althaia." He said once again. My heart started to beat faster. This time, there was no doubt that I heard him right.

He knew what I said.

I let out a breath. My heart went still for a second before furiously pounding, sending me over the edge as everything in me fluttered. I shuddered because of the tingles that shot right through me when he slid his fingers into my hair and cupped my face.

"My Althaia, I love you." His eyes went down when I bit my lip to avoid another tearful round. Damiano let out another one of his beautiful smiles before slowly leaning in. His lips brushed against mine ever so lightly before he kissed me. It was a small, soft, peck yet it had me gasping. It was electric and pulsing when his tongue ran across my lips before completely sealing me with his lips.

It felt unreal. So much it sent a jolt in my soul, awakening my deep feelings for him. I was desperate for more. I wanted to feel all of him. Just to make sure I was truly in his arms again and it wasn't a dream I would wake up from. I leaned in closer, deepening the kiss and tasting his tongue.

I was on fire.

My body was burning, our passionate kiss turning wilder, desperate, hungry. Hungry for each other so much our kiss was only broken when we undressed. It has been far too long. For me.

For him. For us. And it showed as we held onto each other as if one of us would disappear.

Damiano moved until I was flat on my back with him above me. His lips trailed

to the side of my face, plastering small kisses as he went down to my neck, kissed, and sucked my skin. It had me softly moaning, unable not to react when it had my whole body feel electric. So much it was almost unbearable. I have missed his touch. The way he would roam my body, touching all the right places to get me worked up.

“F*ck, how I have missed your moans...” Damiano’s voice was low, deep, and husky. It had my body burning even more with desire. Even more when he positioned himself at my entrance. I touched him wherever I could, wanting to feel all of him.

I exhaled a moan when he slowly entered me.

“So f*cking tight...” He grunted in pleasure. I gasped loudly at the feeling of him inside of me.

“Don’t hold them back, let me hear you.” He looked at me as he slowly moved his hips against me, giving me time to adjust to him after so long. The way he filled me up to the brim, stretching my walls completely, moaning again and again as he slowly went in and out.

I closed my eyes in pleasure, hearing him groaning as he went deeper inside me.

“Mhn.. yes..” I moaned out, his tongue circling my nipple and sucking it. They were already sore and sensitive, and the way he took my breasts in his mouth sent me a mix of pain and pleasure that I loved so much. Loving the feeling, I arched my back and wrapped my arms around his neck, eager for more.

Chapter 60

Post Views: 9

? Views, Released on February 11, 2024

Damiano came back up, hungry for my lips. He pulled it with his teeth, sucking on my lip before shoving his tongue inside as his thrusts went faster and harder. I moved my hips against him too, getting a satisfying sound from deep in his throat. His hold tightened on me, pounding deep to make sure I would feel all of him.

And I did.

Our breathing was loud and heavy as we moved faster against each other. I was panting into his mouth, and he was making those low growls that went straight to my core.

“Perfect. You’re f*cking perfect.” He growled, and I whimpered. when he pulled my legs higher up around him, gasping at how hard and deep he went. The familiar, tightening feeling in my core built, taking me higher and higher as

he pushed his thick length into me. In and out, faster as he panted and grunted, close to his own release.

“Oh, G*d, Damiano!” I cried out. The intense climax rippled through me, having me gasp and arch as I trembled in pleasure.

“F*ck.. Althaia!” His hand gripped my thigh, and with two final pumps, I felt his warm release.

We were both panting, trying to catch out breaths. I closed my eyes and played with the back of his hair, not moving from our position. Damiano buried his face into my neck, plastering small kisses around, and having me laugh a bit when he found my ticklish spots.

He moved to lie next to me and pulled me into his chest, immediately caressing my stomach again.

288 Vouchers

“You have lost weight.” He said unhappily as he felt my ribs.

“Thank you.” Damiano frowned.

“It wasn’t a compliment.”

“I know.” I gave a small smile.

“I may have ski*ed a few meals... But it wasn’t intentional. I was just too busy and too tired.” I explained. At least now I knew why I was tired all the time.

“You need to be more careful and eat more for our baby to grow.”

Our baby.

His words had me smiling and erupted a wave of butterflies in me.

“I love it when you say our baby. It’s cute” I grinned at him.

“And I didn’t know I was pregnant at the time, but don’t worry, I will eat. Now I have an excuse to stuff my face all the time. I’m going to be so fat.” I chuckled.

“Good. The bigger you get, the happier I will be.” He smiled and placed a small kiss on my lips. I snuggled into his arms as he kept caressing me. Right now, I felt like I was on cloud nine in his arms. He came when I needed him the most. And most importantly, he was happy about the unexpected pregnancy.

“I hope it’s a girl.” Damiano said quietly and I looked at him in surprise.

“Really?”

“I want a mini version of you and your green eyes.” He said with a loving smile, and I felt my heart could burst with happiness.

288 Vouchers

“Hmm, are you sure you can handle two of me?” I teased with a smile.

“No, but I’m for the challenge.”

“I can’t wait to see that. To see you with a tiny baby in your arms.” I sighed happily as I imagined Damiano carrying a tiny baby in his tattooed arms.

He was going to be one hell of a hot father, and that was for sure.

“I’m going to shower you both in diamonds.” He smiled as he caressed my head.

“That is going to be one spoiled child!”

“Of course. That’s my baby. I’m going to make sure she is spoiled as hell so she knows no one will ever be good enough for her.” Damiano smirked.

“I don’t think anyone would dare to approach her once they see you.” I chuckled and he looked happy about that.

“I barely dared to approach you at the engagement party! You were so intimidating and you just kept looking at me.”

“Hmm, if I remember correctly, you were definitely checking me out too. And took your sweet time doing so.” He raised a brow at me, making me blush.

“Tsk, I barely looked at you...” He scoffed at my answer, making me laugh because it was such an obvious lie. I did take my sweet time checking him out at the engagement party. It was not every day I would get to see a man this beautiful.

I rested my head on his chest as I traced his skull tattoo with my fingertips. It was such a fascinating piece of art. How the skull

289 Wouchera

was hooded with a crown on his head and massive angel wings.

I raised my head, frowning as I looked intently at the crown, trying to figure out whether or not my eyes were playing tricks on me.

“Do you like it?” My eyes widened.

“Damiano!” I gasped and looked at him in shock.

“Sì, amore mio?” He smiled softly. I looked back down and traced my fingers across the base of the imperial crown tattoo as I stared in shock at the new ink.

Αλθαία.

It was my name in Greek!

On his chest!

“You’re insane!” I said breathlessly. Damiano looked satisfied and pulled me into a kiss.

“I told you, only for you, baby.”

Post Views: 9