

The Devil's Fire by Mariam El-Hafi Chapter 61 - 70

Damiano

I couldn't help myself as I continued to admire her while she was sleeping in my arms. Finally. After so long, she was back in my arms where she fit so perfectly.

Althaia had gone back to sleep after I made sure she ate something, and I made sure she ate enough. That was another thing I noticed. She was not eating as much as before, and it was concerning considering how much weight she had lost.

One thing I loved about her was her love for food. The way her eyes would light up whenever she was about to eat something to her liking. The way she would close her eyes and make a face of happiness when it exceeded her expectations had me always smiling. And f*ck, it annoyed me endlessly that she hadn't been taking good care of herself. Whether she knew she was pregnant or not. Now, I was glad I was here to take care of her and make sure she was safe and happy.

Not like how I found her.

I had to take a deep breath to calm down as I remembered the sight. She was whimpering and crying in her sleep and right there, at the sight of that, I was furious. My hands twitched so badly, wanting to get my hands on whoever made her be like that. When Luca called and said I better get my a*s over here as fast as I could, a strange feeling was filling my body quickly.

For the first time, I felt fear.

The thought of losing her made me feel fear. A feeling I didn't recognize and a feeling I didn't allow myself to have. Not even a gun to my head could make me feel that. At that moment, I did. She made me feel something I had never felt before.

When I asked about the mess in the kitchen, they simply said Althaia did it and nothing else. They refused to tell me why and I was about to lose my s*it on them until they said it was better if she was the one to explain.

Then I found the pregnancy tests.

Three tests read positive, and that was when I connected it to the mess in the kitchen. Either she was unhappy about it or it had to do with her mother.

The thought of her mother wanting to get rid of our baby had me pi*sed.

Pi*sed couldn't even describe what I felt and if she wasn't her mother, I had f*cking hunted her down and made her disappear for good. I would burn the entire world if it meant Althaia would be safe. Safe and healthy with our baby. S*it... I never even thought about having children. Not even when I was with ... Sienna. But when I had the pregnancy tests in my hands, I stilled for a moment before a smile broke out. I shouldn't have been surprised when I

thought back to how many times we ended up having sex without protection. I looked down at her sleeping form in my arms and caressed her stomach, wishing it would show she was pregnant. It was an unfamiliar feeling that we had created life. A baby that would be half me and half her, and I couldn't wait to see what our baby would look like.

As if I wasn't protective enough of her, somehow the feeling of protectiveness deepened and I couldn't keep my hands away from her stomach. I was well aware that it was too early and that would

take time before she got bigger, but the image in my head of her with a pregnant belly in front of her made me feel like the f*cking King of the world.

The image of that made me...excited in another sense. The blood was constantly rushing down at the thought and there was nothing more I wanted to do than bury myself deep inside of her. Just to make sure she would stay pregnant and the image in my head would become true.

I watched her as she stirred in her sleep a little, making the blanket move and expose her naked breasts. As if I wasn't h*ry enough already...

"Why are you still awake?" Althaia mumbled, her eyes still closed. She stretched her arms above her head and arched her back which made her chest rise and her breasts bounce.

F*cking hell...

She wasn't even doing this intentionally and all I could think of right now was to f*ck her hard. But I had to let her sleep.

"I want to look at you."

"Creep." She smiled and opened her eyes to look at me. I chuckled. How I have missed her witty comments.

"You have been away from me for three weeks. I am simply catching up on the time I haven't been able to look at you."

"I sent you pictures."

"And you gave me blue balls." I half-smiled. I faintly brushed my fingers across her breast, over her nipple as I watched it harden under my touch. She shivered a little, her body responding immediately to my touch. It pleased me to no end that I had this much effect on her.

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"You have hands." She chuckled a little, making me smile at the sound.

"I do..." I said quietly as I leaned closer to her ear, flicking her earlobe with my tongue.

"Though I prefer something warmer, wet, and... tight." I whispered into her ear while I slowly trailed my hand from her breast, down to her stomach. Smirking when her breathing changed and went faster when I stopped right between her legs.

“Go back to sleep.” I kissed her cheek before leaning back. She whipped her head to look at me with a scowl on her face.

“Sleep after you did all that to me?” She scoffed in disapproval.

“You need to rest.” I reminded her and she rolled her eyes at me.

“I have almost slept the whole day.” She swung her leg over me to straddle me and placed her hands on my chest for support.

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“Besides, what kind of girlfriend would I be to leave you like this?” She gave a flirtatious smile and she took a hold of my hard length, making me almost groan at the feeling.

“Hmm, girlfriend you say?” I smirked, liking that she had said that about herself.

“Yup, that’s the title I’ve decided to give myself unless...” She bit her lip as she leaned down, her long hair falling around us like a curtain while she looked at me teasingly.

“You want to make me your wife?” She whispered and amusement t*inkled in her green eyes as she said that. I wrapped my arms around her waist and instantly sat up with her still straddling my lap. She let out a small squeal at the unexpected move, laughing as she wrapped her arms around my neck.

“Marry me.” I said as I looked into her green eyes that had captivated me a long time ago.

“Sure.” She smiled.

“Marry me.” I repeated. Her eyes slowly widened when she realized I was being serious. She was for me, and I was for her. And if she wanted the title wife, then I would happily make it happen. To marry her. To let her become my wife, and I, her husband.

“You can’t be serious...?” She looked at me in shock, trying to figure out if I was or not.

“I am.” I looked into her eyes, serious about my proposal.

“Are you only saying it because I’m pregnant?” Her eyes narrowed a little.

“No. I’m saying it because I love you.” I told her quietly. And it was true. I loved her and I wanted her to be my wife. I didn’t need to think twice about it.

For her, I would do anything.

Althaia didn’t say anything as she just looked at me and looked around my face, not really believing her own ears before she gave me a small smile.

“I love you, Damiano... But maybe we should slow things down a bit and have

the baby first?”

“Are you saying no?” I frowned, not happy with the answer, but she just smiled while playing with the back of my hair.

“I’m saying not now. I have barely processed we are going to have a baby. Let us just take one step at a time. I’ll be ready next time you ask.” Her green eyes were bright and sparkled with love as she looked at me, making me even more eager to make her my wife one day.

“I already like the name, Althaia Bellavia. Fits perfectly together.” I smiled. I didn’t mind waiting for her to be ready to marry me. As long as she was with me, I would wait.

“Hmm, now that you say it like that, it does sound good.” She chuckled a little and rested her head against mine.

“Just wait for a little longer.” She whispered before pressing her lips to mine. Her soft lips always made me go crazy, making me tighten my hold around her and bite her lip to gain access while my hands trailed down and grabbed her a*s. She then started to slowly rock her hips along my length, teasing me, and smiling against my lips when I made a sound.

“Althaia…” My voice was restrained and filled with lust as she

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continued her teasing.

“Yes?” She breathed out.

“I want you. Now.” I growled out and she chuckled a little but moved to position my length right at her entrance. She slowly slid down, a moan escaping her lips. It was enough to make me almost lose it and f*ck her hard right now. But I knew she liked to control the pace when she was on top, so I let her.

Althaia pushed me down on my back and placed her hands on my chest again while she slowly rocked her hips back and forth. She always felt so f*cking good. So warm, so wet, and so tight around me. I couldn’t look away from her as she continued to move, her lip in between her teeth as she looked at me with that se*y smile of hers. The sight of that alone was enough to almost make me release inside of her. She moved faster and I watched her breasts bounce as she did, admiring her whole naked beauty while she was on top of me, breathing and moaning loudly.

Lord, have f*cking mercy.

She was a G*d-sent Angel. It was the only explanation for how she was so beautiful.

So perfect and full of light.

“Move with me…” She breathed out but I wasn’t done looking at her. She was the most breathtaking woman I have ever seen. Even more right now with her long hair that flowed around her body as she moved, her perfect round full

breasts, and her amazing bright innocent green eyes.

She was mine. And mine only.

“Damiano...!” She moaned out and I grabbed her hips, not wanting
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her to wait anymore. I started to move fast and hard, making her close her eyes in pleasure. Despite her innocent look, she was a freaky one in bed and loved it rough.

I held onto her hips tightly as I continued to move fast, the sound of our skin slapping against each other filled the dark room with her loud moans and my grunting. She closed her eyes, and I felt her clench around me as her body started to tremble, and I slammed myself harder and faster into her.

“Yes.. ah...” She cried out, reaching her climax and I groaned when she clenched around me, and I released inside. Althaia collapsed on top as we caught our breaths, our bodies covered in a light coat of sweat as we lay in silence.

She had her eyes closed with a hand against my cheek as her thumb lazily caressed me. I moved her to a more comfortable position on top of me and pulled the blanket over us. And I once again went back to lovingly admire her while she slowly drifted off to sleep.

After so long, I finally found happiness. She gave my life a new meaning. She was my missing piece.

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Althaia

“I have been resting and I slept all day yesterday. I’m fine and I’m good to go to work, Damiano.” I sighed while I got dressed in a pair of black leggings and one of his t-shirts. I had woken up early to go back home and grab some clothes. Damiano did pack a bag for me, but it was mostly comfortable clothes and not entirely appropriate for work. We didn’t have a dress code per se, but we definitely needed to be properly dressed as it was still a high-end boutique.

“Keep it closed.” Damiano had a frown on his face as he sat at the end of the bed, watching me get dressed.

“You’re a businessman. You out of all people should know that it’s bad for business if I just keep it closed.” I raised a brow and walked towards him. I stepped in between his legs and his hands rested right on my a*s.

“I will write a check for your losses. Keep it closed.”

“Look at you, throwing money at the problem.” I said amused and rested my arms on his shoulders.

“Usually works.” He smirked and I scoffed at him.

“Yeah? Well, it doesn’t work for me. People have their orders ready and I kind of need to be there to hand them their orders.” I pointed out.

“You’re pregnant. You shouldn’t be working at all.” He continued.

“Just because I’m pregnant doesn’t mean I can’t work. You know
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what? I’m not even going to discuss this with you anymore.” I shook my head but still smiled. We had been going over this ever since I said I was going to work.

“The minute you get tired, you’re closing.” Damiano ordered firmly and I rolled my eyes at him but agreed to it just so he would drop it already. He pulled me back into him when I tried to step away. He didn’t say anything and raised my t-shirt and placed a kiss on my stomach.

I couldn’t help but smile big at his actions. It was all the little things. he did that made me feel so warm, loved, and happy. I never thought that he would be taking the pregnancy news this well, and I was over the moon that he was. He was already obsessed with my stomach and always wanted to touch me more than he usually did. I didn’t mind it one bit. It was all these things he already did that made me sure he was going to be an amazing father, and I couldn’t wait to start that chapter of my life with him.

A knock sounded on the door, and I already knew it was Luca and Giovanni coming with breakfast. I was slowly getting my appetite back and I had pretty much demanded a long list of food that I wanted. And for some reason, I was even craving doughnuts at this hour. I had to add a ‘please’ and some cute emojis at the end of my long message to Luca because it did sound very bossy.

“I may have gotten carried away with the food...” My eyes went wide eyes when I saw the coffee table that was now made into a whole breakfast buffet, and all three of them just stared at the amount of food. I did not realize it would be this much.

“No judgment from here but... can you eat all that?” Luca looked kind of both shocked and impressed at the same time.

“No! What do you think I am? I just didn’t know what I wanted, and
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it turned out I wanted everything. Oh well, get comfortable and eat!” I laughed and got comfortable on the couch with Damiano sitting next to me and Luca and Giovanni in the armchairs in front of us.

“What are you doing?” Giovanni frowned as I took a sip of my iced caramel macchiato. It was my favorite drink, and I would have it at least once a day.

“Drinking?” I asked, confused.

"You can't have that." He got up and s*atched it out of my hand before I could react.

"Hey! Give it back!" I got up from the couch to take it back, and him. being the mature man he was, held it up high above his head so I couldn't reach it.

"You can't have any caffeine."

"Yes, I can!"

"No, you can't!" He stared down at me and I scowled.

"Give it back!"

"Giovanni." Damiano called after him.

"She can't have caffeine. That's what the paramedics said." He stated and still held it up high. I considered kneeling him in the balls but then he would spill my coffee. I could see Luca leaning back with his food as he watched us like some kind of entertainment.

"I can have that one. It's mostly milk and ice anyway."

"I don't care. I'm trying to prevent you from having another

Extravagant Necklace(1)

psychotic episode." I dropped my jaw.

"Excuse me? Psychotic?"

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"Yes. It almost cost me my head, and I don't want to die for you, woman." He ignored me and sat down when I cursed after him.

"Go, drink water, it's healthier."

"Drink water, it's healthier." I mimicked as I continued to scowl at him. He just looked at me with a st*pid smirk on his face as he drank my iced coffee.

"I'm only helping you. Shouldn't you be on a healthy diet anyway?"

"Shouldn't you be minding your own business?!" I snapped. I was very serious about my morning coffee. And the fact that he took it from me... Oh, I was about to give him hell!

"Althaia, eat." Damiano called out for me, but I ignored him as I sat down, watching the idiot who was still drinking my iced coffee. He was even making 'ah' noises now and then to agitate me.

"I hope you choke on it and die." I said angrily and continued my glaring.

"That pregnancy has made you meaner. First, you punch me, and now, you wish for me to choke and die." Giovanni looked amused while he finished my coffee.

"That woman of yours is abusive." He said to Damiano, and I flipped him off, which didn't exactly help my case as Giovanni gave a 'see what I mean?' look.

"What's wrong?" Damiano frowned when he saw I was rubbing my stomach and took deep breaths.

"I don't know... There's this weird smell in the room." I didn't know what it was,

but it made me feel nauseous. I got up from the couch and walked around to see if I could spot what it was.

“Oh my G*d, it’s you.” I said disgusted and I looked at Giovanni.

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“How am I smelling bad when I took a shower before coming here?” Giovanni looked at me blankly that I had just said he smelled. I leaned in closer to him and sniffed a little. The smell came from his clothes.

“It’s your clothes...” “I tried to wave the smell away from my nose. but it was as if it was stuck in my nostrils. I stepped away from him and at this point, I had to take deep breaths through my mouth to keep my nausea down.

“Wait, you smoked before coming up. That’s probably what’s triggering you right now.” Luca commented. I didn’t reply as I ran towards the bathroom and made it just in time for me to throw up. Damiano pulled my hair back and rubbed my back as I continued to empty my stomach. When I was sure I was done, I got up to wash my face and mouth, almost ch*ging the mouthwash to remove the nasty taste.

“Are you okay?” Damiano looked concerned while looking around at my red face. I was dry heaving at the end, and it hurt like hell. It felt like I was stuck during a crunch for hours.

“I think I need to lie down for a bit...” I said tiredly and walked to the bed and lay down. I closed my eyes and tried to calm down because somehow, I still felt nauseous even though I almost threw up my or*ans. At least it felt like that.

“Gio, go change. You stunk up the whole room.” I yelled out to him right as Damiano came back with a bottle of water for me.

“As if she wasn’t a pain in the a*s before, now I can’t even smoke in peace.” Giovanni complained.

“I heard that!”

“You were supposed to.” He said grumpily and walked out. I

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chuckled a little.

He was so going to be called Uncle Grumpy.

“Aight, I’m out too. Feel better.” Luca said and followed Giovanni. I sat up to talk a sip of water, the cold water running down helped with the burning in my throat.

“Don’t go in with me when I throw up. It’s gross.” I groaned and rested my head on his shoulder while he rubbed my back.

“It doesn’t bother me.”

“Right. Sometimes I forget what you do. The things you must have witnessed.” I said with a chuckle, but I should have shut my mouth when the image of him drilling holes into bones popped into my mind. It had me gagging and running to the bathroom once again.

I spent another day in bed, sleeping since it was the only time I would stop dry heaving. I couldn’t even eat anything as it would come straight up again. And poor Damiano didn’t know what to do as he watched me suffer. If I wasn’t busy feeling sorry for myself, I would have laughed at him because for the first time, he really looked lost. He had to call Ellie for advice, and she told him there wasn’t much to do as it was all part of being pregnant.

Fantastic, right?

But she did say that I should try and eat something high in carbs. and low in fat, which usually helped with nausea. I thought that would be okay because I loved my carbs. But the only thing I could keep down was plain dry toast.

“This sucks!” I sulked and took a bite of the dry and boring toast.

“Just hang on for a little. It shouldn’t be like this for a long time.” Damiano tried to comfort me.

“What if it does? I tend to be quite unlucky, you know.” I sighed and leaned back against the headboard. Today made me truly fear for the next many months. I was already exhausted, and I was still in the very early stages of my pregnancy.

“This is your fault. You did this to me.” I blamed him with a scowl.

“I’m sorry you have to go through that, but I’m not apologizing for getting you pregnant.” He gave a smug smile.

“Ha, you’re not sorry. I know you’re secretly happy about me not going to work.”

“True. This way I know you’re not overworking yourself and I can keep an eye on you. Eat more.” He handed me more bread.

“You’re so bossy.” I chuckled. He was making sure I would be eating enough since I haven’t been able to have a decent meal. It was not like I was totally eager to eat plain bread when I knew there was something much more delicious in the other room. I sighed. I really wanted those glazed doughnuts.

“I know.” He winked, making me roll my eyes at him.

“I have something for you.” Damiano got up from the bed and pulled something from his bag.

“What is it?” I asked when he handed me a black jewelry box.

“Open and see.” He nodded to the box in my hand. I held my breath as I looked at what was inside. Completely mesmerized by the beauty of the most extravagant jewelry my eyes had ever seen.

The Tiffany Yellow Diamond was right here.

In front of me.

In my freaking hands.

And it was even more divine up close than what it was at the auction. Well, I had seen the replica, and even the replica was insanely beautiful, but this one in front of me was out of this world. The whole chain was made of diamonds, and at the very end hung the massive Tiffany Yellow Diamond.

“Try it on.” Damiano’s voice got me out of my trance from the ravishing and sparkling necklace.

“No way I’m touching it! I’m afraid to even breathe near it!” I exclaimed and carefully put it down on the bed so I could admire it from a bit of a distance.

“It’s just a necklace.” He shrugged, and I gaped at him.

Just a necklace?

“It’s a necklace worth fifty million dollars.” I reminded him.

“Why are you whispering?” He looked at me amused that I had whispered the fifty-million-dollar part.

“What if someone hears and tries to break in to steal it?” I said, making a valid point but he wasn’t impressed with it. At all.

“I happen to be very fast on the trigger. Now, let me see it on you.” He took the necklace out of the jewelry box, and I pulled my hair to the side. I shivered a little when the cold diamonds touched my skin.

“Beautiful.” Damiano smiled, having me blush. He wasn’t even looking at the necklace. Despite being scared to move in case I would break it, I still went to the bathroom mirror so I could have a

look. Damiano came to stand behind me and wrapped his arms around me as I continued to admire the incredible necklace around my neck.

A fifty-million-dollar necklace.

Holy s*it!

“I can’t...” I said breathlessly when I met his eyes in the mirror. It was too expensive, too elegant. It was just too much for someone like me to wear!

“You can, my love. It’s all yours.” I let out a shaky breath when he kissed my neck. I looked at the necklace, not knowing how to feel about having such an extravagant piece of jewelry.

“Remember what I told you at the auction?” I felt his smirk against my neck. As if I could forget that.

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Reader Discretion Advised – Sexual Assault

Althaia

After staying in bed for two days I could finally get the boutique open.

Damiano wasn't happy about it and insisted to cover any losses, just so I could stay in bed and rest.

Guess who won that round?

I was in the middle of going through the racks of dresses, writing down the sizes that remained and how many were left when I heard someone entering.

"Hi and welcome! Is there anything I can help you with?" I smiled at the couple, hoping I could help them as fast as possible so I could close.

And I was hungry.

"I need a dress for her." The man said coldly as he looked me up and down.

He was tall and looked to be some kind of a

businessman with the suit and long black coat he was wearing. The way he talked and the cold look in his eyes made me a little uneasy, but I continued to smile, not letting it show that he was making me uncomfortable.

"I can help with that. Anything particular in mind?" I turned to the woman who had a light auburn hair color that complimented her ochre skin.

"It needs to be long." The man replied instead of her. I had to try my best not to frown at him. I looked back to the woman, who had a forced smile on her lips.

"Okay... Do you know what size you are? If not, it's fine and I can just measure you." I told her.

"Unfortunately, she's a size six. Someone hasn't been watching their diet and has gained weight." He looked at her in disapproval and I noticed how she slightly gulped and looked down. I didn't like this one bit. His behavior and words got me really pi*sed, and it was obvious he was a control freak.

"A size six isn't big. I would be concerned if she was smaller." I couldn't help but frown at him as I stared into his eyes. I noticed how the woman's eyes widened a little at how I talked to him. But right now, I didn't care.

He was pissing me off.

"Let's go find you something, shall we?" I smiled at the woman and led her to the back of the boutique and into a room where our customers could wait and try on the dresses. The man followed closely behind and took a seat on the couch. I grabbed a few dresses I thought would look good on her and led her into the dressing room. The one furthest away from the shady scu*bag.

"You shouldn't have talked to him like that." She whispered so quietly I almost missed what she said. I was getting a dress ready for her to try but stopped when she looked at me with wide eyes. She was scared.

"Well, he was being disrespectful." I whispered back. He was being more than that, but she already knew.

"He doesn't like when women talk back." I wanted to scoff loudly. He sure as hell wouldn't find me likable then because I was one to snap right back. I was about to tell her but stopped when I noticed her whole

body was shaking. She was terrified of him.

“What’s your name?” I smiled and took her hands in mine, trying to give her some comfort.

“Laila.”

“Laila, are you in any danger? Do you need help?” I asked softly, letting her know it was okay to tell me. She looked at me for a long time, not talking as if debating whether she should tell me or not.

“What’s taking so long!” The man suddenly erupted, and she flinched, squeezing her eyes shut. My heart was breaking at the sight in front of me, and I knew I had to do something.

No way I was letting her go with that di*khead.

“Just a minute!” I said loudly, not hiding my annoyance with him.

“Listen, Laila, I can help you. You don’t need to be with someone like that. Stay here while I get help, okay?” I gave her a reassuring smile. I didn’t exactly have a plan but at least I could make a call knowing he wouldn’t stand a chance against Damiano.

She stopped me before I could step out of the dressing room.

“H – He has a gun.” Laila looked at me hopelessly, on the verge of tears. Even I had to take a moment and not let her show that I was scared now. I had to be the strong one.

“Don’t worry, I can get help.” I gave her hand a tight squeeze before getting out of the dressing room. The man’s cold eyes snapped at me when I got out, sending a chill down my back but I held my head high.

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“I took the wrong size for her. I will be back with the right one.” I gave a tight smile and hurriedly went to the desk to grab my phone.

Only to find it missing.

My heart started to beat faster as I searched everywhere for my phone. My purse, the drawers, under the paperwork. But it was gone.

F*ck!

“Looking for this one?” I jumped and turned around. He let out a sinister smile and waved my phone in front of my face. I backed away from him when he slowly came closer, trapping me between the desk and him. I glared at him even though my heart was furiously beating. But I wasn’t about to give him the satisfaction of seeing me scared.

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“Give me my phone back.” I said firmly and he just let out an evil snicker. He shook his head and made a tsking sound while

pressing himself against me. His face inched so close to mine that I had to face away from him..

“You were only supposed to get us a dress. And now, look what you have gotten yourself into by trying to play a strong woman. You women are nothing but for f*cking. You are only designed to spread your legs, and please us.” He hissed, his eyes filled with rage. My eyes widened when I felt something against my stomach. I winced when he pressed the gun harshly into my stomach and violently grabbed my hair.

“Now, go back and get us a dress and I won’t shoot your guts out.” He pushed me roughly in front of him and followed closely behind me as I walked back to Laila.

He had his gun pressed against my back, and my body was filled with fear. I put my hand to my stomach and took a deep breath. I had to think of something, and it had to be fast.

“Okay, let’s get you into a dress.” I gave Laila a warm smile, trying to let her know everything was going to be okay, but she looked like she was about to pass out.

“You keep that open.” He said before I could close the curtain. I glared at him, but he just waved the gun, daring me to defy him. I slowly let go of the curtain and turned my back to him, trying to cover Laila as much as possible as she shakily undressed.

She didn’t deserve this. I didn’t care if I didn’t know her. No one deserved to be stuck with a d*che like him.

I stepped aside once she was done getting dressed for him to see. He looked her up and down, not impressed with what he was seeing, and all I could think of right now was to smash his skull

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into the wall.

“If only she had the body for it.” He looked at her with disgust.

“You! Let me see it on you.” His sinister smile returned. He leaned back on the couch with arms and his legs spread with the gun still in his hand.

“That’s not a service I provide.” I spat out. He slowly lost the smirk on his face. His face turned cold and dead as he looked at me. Suddenly, he jumped from the couch so fast I had barely time to register he was now standing in front of me. Laila let out a gasp and backed away, and I tried to step away from him, but he grabbed my arm tightly and pushed the gun into me again.

“You do as I say, you f*cking wh*re! Get undressed and let me see those f*cking t*ts.” I tried to get away from his grip, but he only tightened his hold, making me clench my jaw in pain.

“Then let go of me.” I hissed out. He let go and stepped slightly away but he was still close, watching me. My heart was about to burst out of my chest, and

I was trying my best to keep calm.

I slowly untucked my shirt from my jeans. Right now, I couldn't be happier with the outfit I wore and not a dress.

Even happier that I always kept a pen with me.

I slowly grabbed the pen from my pocket and looked anywhere I could try and stab him hard enough to cause damage.

"Hurry up!" He loosely waved the gun around and I acted without thinking. I swung my arm out and pushed the gun away from his hand, making him drop the gun to the floor with a loud clang.

"You little –" He hissed out between his clenched teeth and lunged after me. My eyes widened at how fast he was coming at me, and I stumbled away from him. I held the pen tightly in my hand and with all my strength, I aimed right for his eye when he was close enough.

"F*cking bit*h!" He yelled out in pain and held his hands up to his face while stumbling back.

"Laila, run!" I yelled and she wasted no time and quickly ran out of the room with me behind her.

I screamed out in pain when my hair was painfully yanked back, and I was pushed to the floor. I groaned when the back of my head hit the floor. But it was cut short when he grabbed me, lifted me from the floor, and roughly pushed me down on the couch.

"Look what you have done, you little sl*t! You should have minded your own business! But no, you wanted to try and play the hero." He let out a sa*istic laugh with one eye open. He was on top of me, his lower body on my legs while he held my arms down.

By now, I was breathing hard and loud as I tried to get out of his grip but every time I moved, he would add more of his weight, almost crushing me. It made me panic in fear he would crush my stomach.

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"I f*cking bought her! She is my little toy to f*ck, and you let her run!"

"You deserve to rot in hell." I sneered but it seemed he only took pleasure from the words. He had the scariest smile on his lips and leaned closer to my face.

"You need to pay for my lost possession." He said in a low tone, and I looked at him with disgust. So much I spat him right in the face.

My head whipped to the side and the whole left side of my face erupted in pain. The slap left me dizzy and I had to blink a couple of times to make out

what was happening. Only to feel my shirt getting ribbed, making me snap out of it. I started to thrash around and scream at the top of my lungs.

“Get off me!” I screamed but he stuffed my mouth with a piece of clothing, preventing me from making any noise. He forcibly pulled down my bra and his hand roughly grabbed my breast. Tears ran down the side of my face as I continued to try and break free, but he was too heavy and too strong.

I froze and stopped breathing when I felt his mouth on my body, feeling his hand going down to unbutton my jeans.

No... Please, no.

My throat tightened and I felt like I couldn't breathe. I squeezed my eyes shut, not wanting to witness what was about to happen to me. His mouth was still on my body, his hand was desperately trying to get inside my jeans.

The weight on top of me suddenly disappeared, making me roll off the couch, and land on the floor on my front. I spat the piece of clothing out as I shakily got up on my hands and knees, gasping

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for air.

“No!” I flinched when hands grabbed me, and I tried to get out of the hold.

“It's me.” I relaxed when I saw it was Giovanni. He had a frown on his face as he looked at me. But he quickly looked away as he took off his jacket and gave it to me. I looked down and immediately tried to cover my breasts with my arms. My shirt was completely ripped, and he had somehow managed to ruin my bra.

I slipped my arms into the jacket and pulled it around me tightly to make sure I was covered. The sound of shouting, groans, and hissing made me look.

Only to see Damiano furiously punching the man's now bloodied face.

“I. Will. F*cking. Kill. You!” Damiano sneered out with each powerful punch.

What scared me was how the man still had this chilling smile on his face while he received the punches.

“Don't look.” Giovanni pulled me into his chest and covered my ears. I jumped when I heard multiple gunshots echoing in the room.

Giovanni stepped away and Damiano stood in front of me. His clothes and hands were covered in blood.

“That f*cking s*n of a bit*h.” He was furious, breathing hard. Damiano still had a murderous look on his face as he looked at my face and ribbed clothes. He pulled me into him, holding me tightly, and felt around my body to see if I had any injuries.

“I'm okay.” I breathed out. I was somewhat... okay. It was a close call. A really f*cking close one. I took a deep breath as I tried my

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best to compose myself. I had to find out if Laila was okay.

“Damiano, I’m okay.” I leaned back to look at him, even though I was sure it didn’t look like I was.

“He touched you. He f*cking touched you!” He put his hands to my face, his chest rapidly rising and falling with anger the more he looked at me

“Are you hurt? Do you – Let’s get you a doctor.”

“I’m okay, I don’t need a doctor. I need to find Laila.” I stepped away from him before he could carry me.

“Oh, G*d...” I made the mistake and looked over at the man. He was on the floor, in a massive pool of blood. I had to try my best not to gag at the cruel sight.

“Who’s Laila?” Damiano asked and followed me out of the room.

“Did you see a woman run out?” I asked Luca. He was standing close to the door, making sure everything was okay from his end. I stopped in my tracks, confused when he shook his head.

If they didn’t see anyone go out, then where did she go?

“Althaia.” Damiano grabbed my hand and turned me to look at him. I let out a sigh, about to explain but stopped and quickly made my way over to the desk.

“Hey, Laila. It’s okay, you’re safe now.” I said quietly and got down on my knees to look at her. She had her ears covered and eyes squeezed shut as she hid under the desk. I carefully put a hand on her shoulder, trying not to scare her too much but she still flinched. She opened her teary eyes.

“I-I’m so-sorry.” She whimpered. My heart couldn’t take it anymore

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and I embraced her tightly, whispering she was safe. Laila sobbed in my arms, and I looked up to Damiano, who was already looking at me with a frown, and then at Laila

“She needed help. I had to do something.”

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Althaia

I handed Laila a bottle of water after she had calmed down a little. We were still sitting on the floor, under the desk as it was better to stay down here so she wouldn’t have to witness the awful sight of the man.

“Are you okay?” I asked her quietly. She clutched the water bottle into her. I noticed how she continued to take small glances at Damiano but would quickly look away again, either to look at me or to look down. She nodded, taking a deep breath before speaking.

“You have blood on your face...” She whispered and I looked at her in surprise. I blindly tried to wipe my face with Giovanni’s jacket.

“Did he do this to you?” She asked with wide eyes and quickly took a glance at Damiano. I followed her gaze, forgetting that his hands were covered in blood.

“Oh, no! No, he’s with me. He won’t do anything to harm me, don’t worry. We’re safe with him.” I promised with a smile. She let out a breath of relief and her whole body seemed to relax. I forgot Damiano did look intimidating if you didn’t know him, and she was probably frightened by him since he was standing close to us, watching us.

“Laila, stay down here for a bit, okay? I’ll be right back.” She nodded and pulled her legs into her. It was obvious to see how broken she was, and I didn’t dare to imagine what she must have gone through.

I pulled Damiano away to quietly talk to him, being careful not to look into the other room.

“You should probably wash your hands... You do look kind of scary right now.” I grimaced as I looked at his hands and clothes.

“And I need you to take us back to my place.”

“Why?” He frowned and I let out a sigh, not really in the mood for his interrogation.

“She needs a safe place to stay for the night, and all my things are at home.” I said quietly but he wasn’t liking it one bit.

“Why are you helping her?” I looked at him in surprise, not expecting him to ask me that.

“She needed help from that scumbag. She was sold to him.” I could barely believe my own words. He looked at me for a while with a blank expression on his face, not allowing me to see what he was thinking.

“Can we talk about it later and just get us home?” I pleaded.

“Fine. Go and get her but don’t look in the room.” He said sternly and I gave a nod, keeping my eyes down as I returned to Laila under the desk.

“Laila, would you be comfortable coming with me home? Get cleaned up, and have a good night’s sleep? I promise you will be safe.” She looked at me, not saying anything and I could tell she was hesitating.

“Why are you helping me?” She was suspicious and I didn’t blame her one bit. I would be suspicious of anyone too if I was in her position.

“I was almost a victim of human trafficking. The only reason I’m not is thanks to Damiano, the man who was here before. He...took care of it and kept me safe. I can’t imagine what you must have gone through...but if I can help you, even if it’s just a little, then I will.” Her eyes started to water as she looked at me. She sniffed a little before wiping her tears away and taking a deep breath.

“He...He won’t come after me?”

“He won’t. I promise you that.” That was definitely I promise I could make

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sure of, and I hoped the scumbag was burning in hell as we spoke.

“Thank you...I don’t know your name.” She mumbled, a bit embarrassed and making me chuckle a little at her childlike behavior.

“I’m Althaia.”

“Thank you, Althaia.” She took my hand into hers and gave it a small squeeze.

The ride back home was quiet as I sat in the backseat with Laila. She kept herself close to me, only trusting me as she found the others intimidating, and kept her head down whenever they came close.

“This is the guest bedroom, and the bathroom is right there. I will get you some clothes to change into, and you just take all the time you need, okay?” Laila nodded. After I made sure she would be all right, I closed the door behind me and walked to my bedroom to give her some comfortable clothes.

“You don’t know her and you’re doing this to help her. Why?” Damiano asked as he walked into my bedroom, closing the door behind him.

“What do you mean why? She needed help. She was being mistreated by him, and not to mention freaking sold like she was nothing.” I explained with a frown.

“At the expense of your own safety? What were you thinking?!” He was angry, and I looked at him in startlement.

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“What was I thinking? I saw a woman who needed help, so I did!” Now I was getting angry with him for not understanding.

“You put yourself at risk, Althaia. Not only you but also our baby. He could have shot you, and I would have lost you.” Damiano clenched his fists as he looked at me, anger written all over his face.

“Well, he didn’t.” I said dismissively and tried to walk away but he caged me between his arms against my desk.

“No, thank God he fucking didn’t. What you did was reckless!”

“Did you expect me just to turn a blind eye to it and leave her with the psychopath?!”

“Yes. You had absolutely no business in interfering.” He simply said and I gaped at him.

“I can’t believe you right now.” I shook my head at him and stepped away from him.

“What you did was reckless, and you had no defense. What chance did you stand, Althaia? That fucking bastard touched you. He fucking touched you! And he was going to end you once he was done with you. What would you have gained from putting yourself at risk for some woman?!”

“Don’t you think I know that?! Don’t you think I can still feel his nasty hands on my body? His disgusting mouth on me? But I only suffered for a short while she had to suffer for God knows how long! I felt like I had to do something... Maybe you can shut it all down and not care, but I can’t. If I can help someone then I will, and I will not apologize for it.” I snapped at him and angrily wiped away the tears that had escaped. I really hated I cried whenever I was angry.

Damiano slowly walked up to me. He placed his hands on my cheeks, wiping away the tears that didn’t seem to want to stop.

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“You’re right. I don’t care about other people. I care about you only and I don’t fuck around when it comes to your safety. You didn’t think anything through and put yourself in danger. And our baby. All that just to help someone? At the expense of your own safety? That is making me really fucking pissed at you.” He said quietly with a blank look on his face. before out of my room. I stood frozen, swallowing hard at the lump forming in my throat, and tried my best not to cry more.

I sat in the living room in front of the lit fireplace with Laila after we had gotten something to eat. We were drinking a cup of tea as we sat in silence. The only sound that filled the room was the crackling from the burning wood, both of us were lost in our own thoughts. I was feeling cold, and it was probably due to shock and being upset about what happened with Damiano. I had taken a hot shower, made sure my skin was scrubbed raw and cleaned myself from any blood that had gotten on

I hadn’t seen Damiano since he walked out of my room, and I didn’t know where he went either. This was the first time he was pissed at me, and I didn’t know what to do. But he probably just needed to cool down. It was not like I couldn’t understand where he was coming from, but I still didn’t regret helping Laila.

“He...cares about you.” Laila quietly broke the silence. She was more relaxed after seeing she was truly safe here.

“I know.” I smiled.

“I haven’t seen a man look at a woman like that before.” She kept her gaze down at the mug in her hands.

“What do you mean?” I tilted my head a little.

“He keeps looking at you. His eyes follow you everywhere... Not in a sexualized way but in a caring way. I haven’t seen that from a man

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before.” She gave the tiniest smile and looked at me. I gave a sad one back. She had ever only witnessed men eyeing women lustfully, not caring about them as human beings and only seeing them as sex objects. Only caring about their sexual desires.

“I hope I didn’t get you in too much trouble... I didn’t mean to, but I overheard you a little when I wanted to ask for a towel.” She looked back down at the mug.

“Don’t worry about it. He’s just very protective of me and is a little upset with me for putting myself at risk. Maybe a little more so because I’m pregnant.” I let out a small chuckle to lighten the mood. Laila looked at me with big eyes and her mouth slightly agape.

“Pregnant or not, I still stand by my actions, and I don’t regret it one bit.” I said before she could say anything about it.

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Chapter 70

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“I don’t know how to thank you enough. You’ve saved my life... and even sitting here feels unreal. I’m scared it’s all a dream and I will wake up soon. Back with him.” Her eyes glistened with tears. I scooted closer to her and held her hand in mine.

“You’re free. He won’t ever hurt you again. You can do whatever you want now. Go wherever you want.”

“I – I want to go back to my family. I haven’t seen them in years.” Her voice cracked and she broke down. I placed our mugs on the coffee table and pulled her into me as she sobbed. I had to bite down on my lip as it started to tremble, but tears still escaped as I couldn’t hold them in.

My heart was breaking for her.

Laila slowly started to open up to me, telling me she was from Portugal and came to New York to study. She was out with some friends and left earlier than the others because she started to feel unwell. She didn’t know. it back then, but she got drugged, and couldn’t remember what happened. She blacked out and woke up in a creepy place with tons of other girls.

”

“...We... We got... prepared to be sold. And trained how to be a good sex slave for our Master...” Laila’s voice shook the entire time while she

explained. Her eyes were wide and traumatized.

I couldn’t believe my own two ears as I listened to everything. And whenever she cried, I cried with her at the inhuman things she had to go through to survive. It made me hold her tightly, desperately wanting to comfort her as much as possible.

After a while of sitting and crying together, Laila got exhausted, and I walked her back to the guest bedroom to make sure she would sleep okay. I sighed as I walked downstairs again, not feeling like sleeping yet as Damiano was on my mind. I didn’t like that he was mad at me, and I was trying my best to give him space to cool down but all I wanted right now was just to be in his arms as I felt safest with him.

I looked out of the window to the backyard and got surprised when I saw Damiano was out there. He was sitting on one of the chairs, already

looking at me. I grabbed a blanket and wrapped it around me as I stepped out. I shivered a little, somehow still feeling cold as I slowly walked up to

him.

“It’s a bit cold... Why don’t you come in?” There was some distance

between us as I didn’t go all the way up to him. I didn’t know if he wanted me to be around since he was pissed, and still needed some time for himself. Damiano didn’t say anything and just looked at me with this blank look on his face. I hated it because it didn’t allow me to know what he was feeling.

“Come here.” His deep voice rang out and held out his hand for me to take. I walked up to him, placing my hand in his hand, and stepped in between his legs.

“Are you still mad at me?” I asked quietly.

“I am.” He said but sat me down on his lap and pulled me into him, his hand immediately caressing my stomach. I sighed and rested my head on his shoulder, enjoying the feeling of his arms around me.

“How are you feeling?”

“I’m okay.” I reassured him. I was disgusted but mainly about what that scumbag did to Laila. Damiano let out a sigh of relief and caressed the side of my head.

“I’m still not going to apologize for what I did.” I was going to let him know that no matter what, I still stood by my decisions. I couldn’t help but keep thinking ‘what if it was my daughter?’ I would be so grateful if anyone stepped in to help.

“I know.” Damiano kissed the top of my head, making me smile. He couldn’t stay pissed at me for too long.

“Where does she want to go?” He asked and I looked at him.

“Her family is in Portugal. She wants to go there.” He nodded a few times, not saying anything for a while.

“I will have Rafaelle get her documents ready by tomorrow morning. Then she can go to her family. I’ll make sure she has money and will arrive safely.” I sat up a little to look at him, shocked that he was willing to do all that for her.

“Really?” I breathed out, afraid I heard wrong.

“On one condition.” He looked at me with a dead-serious expression.

“This is the last time you pull shit like that.” He said sternly and I couldn’t help but smile. I wrapped my arms around his neck as I looked into his still firm expression.

“Okay.” I whispered, wanting to put it behind us already.

“Thank you.” I was truly grateful for everything he did.

“I’m only doing it for you.”

“I know.” I placed a small kiss on his lips, and his hold tightened around

“I love you.” I caressed his cheek with a smile, and his expression softened a little.

“And I love you. You reckless woman.” It had me laughing before pulling him in for another kiss.

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