

## The Devil's Fire by Mariam El-Hafi Chapter 71 - 80

Althaia

Laila was shocked when I broke the news to her that she could finally be reunited with her family again, and so soon. It was an emotional rollercoaster for her, and me as well. At first, she didn't believe me, scared to get her hopes up, but then I showed her the passport. She couldn't believe what she was seeing and asked how I had made it possible. I tried my best to explain that I just happen to be with someone who could make it happen.

Rafaella managed to fix her documents and get her a passport in no time. It was freakishly scary how fast they could work out something like that, and once again I was reminded just how powerful Damiano was.

Sometimes I did forget who he truly was because he was different around

Who would have thought such a powerful and deadly Mafia Boss would have a soft spot for me?

I, for sure, never would have thought I would end up with someone like him. I always imagined myself living a pretty ordinary life, getting married to a, well, non-criminal man with a normal job, and living in a normal-sized house with kids someday.

But then I fell for The Devil, and he showed me a whole different side of the world I was naively living in. Scary and dangerous, yet such a fascinating world had been revealed to me. I keep telling myself to expect the unexpected. Which was easier said than done when I had no idea what could happen.

"Please, take care and stay safe. Call me when you land and remember you can always call me no matter what, okay?" I told Laila as I hugged her tightly. We were at the airport, and I had packed a bag for her with money

and all the necessities she needed. I didn't want her to worry about it and just wanted her to be with her family.

"Thank you so much. I don't know how I can ever thank you enough for everything you have done for me." Laila hugged me tightly and sniffed a little as she did so.

“No need to. Just promise me you will stay safe.” I leaned back and smiled. She nodded, giving me a teary smile.

“Giovanni will be with you and make sure you get to your family safely. And I know he looks scary and grumpy but trust me, he is harmless.” I grinned at Giovanni, and he looked at me with a scowl.

“I’m just happy I get a break from your annoying ass.” He scoffed, making me pout at him.

“Oh, shut it! I know you will miss me.”

“I really won’t.”

“It’s okay, Gio. I know you will. I will miss you too, Uncle Grumpy.” I teased.

“Uncle Grumpy...?” He tilted his head a little with slightly furrowed brows.

“Yup, that’s what I’m going to teach my kid to call you.” I said with a laugh and patted my still flat stomach. The corners of his mouth curled up in the tiniest amount as he raised a brow at me.

“That’s cute...” Laila giggled a little and Giovanni just shook his head, trying to look like he was unhappy, but I knew he was secretly happy about being called Uncle Grumpy. Okay, so maybe not the grumpy part, but definitely uncle.

I gave one last hug to Laila before they made their way to the gate, and I

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couldn’t help but tear up knowing she would be reunited with her family after so long. I hoped she would get all the help she needed to live her life to the fullest now.

“You look happy.” Damiano said, making me turn to look at him with a smile.

“I am.” I wrapped my arms around his torso and looked up at him. He caressed my head as we stood in our own little bubble, looking at each other.

“Why don’t you promise me you will stay safe?” He said with a small frown, and I gave him a dramatic thinking look.

“Hmm, but then you won’t be my knight in shining armor.” I dramatically fluttered my eyelashes at him, and he scoffed, making me laugh.

“I knew you would drive me crazy.” Damiano shook his head.

“But you still love me.” I grinned.

“Always.” He leaned down and kissed me, making my heart skip a beat and my body tingle.

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“I’m a bit worried we sent Gio with her.” I said as we got back to my place. I decided to close the boutique a day earlier than usual. We didn’t open during weekends, and I also needed to take a break just to process everything that had happened. I was not quite ready to go back and face it all. Of course, Damiano made sure everything was cleaned up and replaced the couch because there was no way I would want to keep that.

“He’s more than capable of keeping her safe.”

“That’s not what I’m worried about. I’m worried about him scaring her. I knew I should have just gone with her instead.” I sighed, now feeling guilty about it.

“You worry too much about others and too little about yourself.” Damiano stood in front of me, his hands trailing down to my ass, and picked me up.

“You have to start thinking about yourself and the baby.” He said while walking to the living room, and taking a seat on the couch with me on his lap.

“I will, I promise.” I smiled. He was still unhappy about the whole thing with me putting myself at risk. I tried to make a joke about it and said it turned out for the better anyway. The scumbag was now dead, and Laila was free. Damiano didn’t find my joke funny. He actually glared at me but what can I say? I recover by making jokes.

“How long are you staying here?” I asked him, now wondering about it. He still had his businesses and a Mafia to run. I knew Lorenzo took over whenever he was unavailable, but I also knew Damiano couldn’t stay away from it all for too long.

“For a few more days. And I’m taking you back with me.”

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“Uh, are you forgetting I’m first coming a week before the wedding?” I asked confused. He shook his head, making me frown.

“I’m not leaving you here.” He mirrored my expression.

“Why are you saying it like I’m in a strange place? I live here. And I also need to talk to my mom about all this.” I sighed. My mood dampened as I remembered how we had left things. Damiano’s eyes turned cold at the mention of my mother, and his hold tightened on me.

“She’s the main reason why I need to take you away.” He almost sneered in a low tone, clearly not a fan of her.

“I don’t need to be saved from my own mom. She’s not going to hurt me.”

“She doesn’t need to lay her hands on you to hurt you. I found you crying in your sleep. Do I also need to remind you she’s the one who wants to get rid of our baby?” Damiano’s tone was full of anger. I looked down because he was right. It was the worst possible emotional pain I had ever experienced in my life... To the point I felt like I couldn’t breathe.

“But she’s still my mom... For a long time, it was just me and her together. And despite the fights we had I’m sure she will come around at some point. Right? I mean, she has to...I – I don’t want to do this without her.” I half-whispered as I felt my throat tighten and tears threatening to spill.

Damiano didn’t say anything and pulled me into him. He caressed my head, comforting me as tears silently ran down and dampened his shirt. My mother was my everything. I couldn’t imagine having a baby without her in my life.

“It’s her loss if she doesn’t.” He said quietly. I took a deep breath and wiped away the tears with my head still resting on his shoulder.

“I just need to talk to her. I’m her only child... She wouldn’t abandon me just because I’m pregnant. I’m hoping after she cools down, she will

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realize we do love each other, and this is happening.” I tried to comfort myself. I closed my eyes while Damiano continued to rub my back. To be in his arms was my favorite place, and it always made me relax to the point I just wanted to take a nap on him.

“I hoped to change her view on you before I told her I was pregnant. She’s not exactly the biggest fan of yours.” I half-mumbled as I felt myself getting sleepy.

“What’s one more to the club?” I chuckled and raised my head to look at him.

“Making jokes now?”

“I believe some of your personality has rubbed on me.” He gave a half-smile while his hand worked itself up to the back of my neck and massaged me.

“Are you sure you haven’t been a masseuse?” I struggled to keep my eyes open as his hands worked on me. They were magic hands right now, removing all the tension that had built up the last few days.

“I’m sure. I just happen to know where to apply pressure.” I didn’t have to open my eyes to know he had a smug grin on his lips.

“You’ve studied the body?” I looked at him.

“Something like that.”

“To become a masseuse?” I teased with a grin on my face.

“More for other reasons.” He smirked and moved his hand to the side of my neck.

“By applying the right amount of pressure here, I can knock you out in no time without breaking a sweat.”

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“How does that work?”

“It’s all about pressure and nerves, baby. Hit the vagus nerve and the chances of you being knocked out are big.” Damiano explained and my eyes went wide with excitement.

“Really?” I was intrigued and amazed by the new information.

“Try it on me!” Damiano immediately gave me a firm look, and I burst out laughing. He clicked his tongue in disapproval but cracked a small smile anyway.

“Has anyone ever tried it on you?” I asked when I managed to calm down from laughing.

“Lorenzo has many times.” He casually said and I stared at him with my mouth slightly open.

“Why would he do that?!”

“We were kids, and whenever we had learned something, we would try it out on each other to figure out how to implement it in our fighting skills.” Damiano shrugged as if it was the most normal thing to do.

“But...you were kids. Shouldn't you have played around with toys instead of learning how to fight?” I was truly in shock. I knew we had two very different childhoods, but I didn't expect him to learn to be a fighter at such a young age!

“Unlike you, I knew very well what my family was doing. And being male and the oldest born meant that I would be trained very early on how to take over everything one day. That was my childhood, to be trained to be a leader and ... other things.” He didn't have to elaborate on what he meant with the last part because I already knew. Trained to be a fearless killer.

“Don't look at me like.” He smiled softly as he placed his hand on my cheek.

“Look at you how?” I asked quietly, looking into his golden-brown eyes.

“You're pitying me.” He pointed out, making me let out a sad smile in return.

“I can't help it.”

“You live too much up to your name. Althaia, one who cares.”

"I'm just being a normal human being with feelings. How can I not be sad for you when you tell me stuff like that?" Damiano looked down at my lips when I made a slight pout.

"Are you saying I'm not normal?" He raised a brow.

"Oh, honey! I think we both know the answer to that." I snickered. He was about to say something when he suddenly frowned.

"Don't do that." He moved his head when I lightly trailed my fingers around his neck.

"I'm not doing anything?" I said confused and went back to do smooth circles on his neck.

"Althaia." He said firmly and grabbed my wrists to stop me when he shivered ever so slightly under my touch. I scowled, confused as to why I wasn't allowed to touch him so suddenly.

Then I gasped.

"Oh, my God, you're ticklish!" I laughed when he gave me a blank look. I quickly trailed my fingers around his neck again.

"Stop it." Damiano grabbed both of my wrists and put them behind my back so I couldn't move.

"Awh, is the big bad Mafia Boss ticklish?" I continued to tease him, finding it extremely funny that he was a little ticklish on his neck.

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Damiano narrowed his eyes as I talked to him like I would to a child. I suddenly stopped. My smile got wiped away when he moved one hand under my shirt while still holding my wrists with the other. His hand went straight to the side of my stomach where I was most ticklish.

"Don't you dare!" I warned. He gave me a devilish smirk and started to tickle me.

"No!" I squirmed around on his lap, laughing so hard. I tried to get away, but he made sure I couldn't move away from him. I was laughing so much I had tears in my eyes.

“Stop... Pl-please... I need to

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to breathe!” I said in between laughs.

Damiano stopped as he looked at me a smile on his face. His eyes were twinkling in amusement while he watched me calm down from my laughing fit.

“Better behave from now on.”

“Never!” I broke free and tried to tickle his neck. But he was faster and pinned me down on the couch with my hands above my head. Damiano started to tickle me again, smiling as he made me scream in laughter.

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Althaia

I walked out of the bathroom after a well-needed hot shower. Damiano was still downstairs, on the phone with Lorenzo and I thought I would just leave him be and get ready for bed.

The black jewelry box on my desk caught my eye, and I carefully opened the box, still afraid to accidentally ruin it. Once again, I got starstruck by the captivating and magnificent necklace. I still couldn't believe he spent that much money on something like this without blinking an eye.

And for someone like me.

I didn't feel worthy of it. Not even one bit. But it was so damn gorgeous I couldn't keep my eyes off it, and it was insane to think that this necklace — right in front of me was worth more than every single house on my street, combined. Also, when was I ever supposed to wear this? I snorted when I imagined myself just casually walking around and doing grocery

shopping with this around my neck.

Staring at it for a while, I bit down on my lip as I thought of what Damiano said to me that night. I listened for any movements coming toward my bedroom. When I didn't hear anything I pulled my nightgown over my head and carefully took the Tiffany Yellow Diamond necklace.



I looked in the mirror, letting my hair fall around me as I watched the necklace sparkle. I turned off the light, only leaving my bedside lamp on to give a little light. I lay down in the middle of the bed with my legs bent a little in an attempt to pose seductively.

My heart was beating fast when I could hear his faint footsteps coming closer. For some reason, I was nervous to lie here with only the necklace around my neck even though I shouldn't be. Damiano has seen me naked

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hundreds of times already but it was the first time I had ever done something like this. Naked with a freaking fifty million dollar necklace around my neck and waiting for the sexiest man alive.

My heart fluttered when the door opened, his eyes immediately finding mine as he stopped by the door. I suddenly felt very shy when his eyes slowly trailed down on my body, taking his time, drinking in the sight in front of him. He walked closer to the bed, his eyes never once leaving my body as if to make sure he saw it all. He grabbed my desk chair and moved it to the end of the bed before he sat down.

"Spread your legs." Damiano's deep voice went low in command, and that was enough to send a pool of heat down between my legs. I slowly spread my legs for him, his golden-brown eyes watching intently at my most intimate part. I never took my eyes off him either, watching how his eyes continued to drink in every inch of my body.

"... Fucking gorgeous." His eyes snapped to mine, making me blush at his words. He gave me that half-smirk that made him look so devilish, and his eyes were dark and filled with hunger, ready to pounce on his prey. My tongue swiftly wet my lower lip before taking in it between my teeth. It didn't go unnoticed as his eyes immediately looked at my lips, making my entire body tingle in excitement. I still couldn't understand how it was possible to look the way he did. The most gorgeous man I have ever seen.

And he was all mine.

He leaned back, looking into my eyes and my heart was still beating fast at the intensity of his stare.

“Play with yourself.” My mouth opened slightly at his request and I could feel my cheeks getting warm. I swallowed down my shyness and slowly trailed my fingers down my stomach, making sure his eyes were following my every move and came to a stop right between my legs.

I slid a finger inside, feeling how wet I already was. I slowly worked my way to my clit, pleasuring myself the way I knew best. Damiano was

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watching every single move I made with my fingers as I slightly picked up the speed. I felt hot, almost burning with how he was looking at me, watching me naked play with myself. I was burning with so much desire and in need of feeling him inside of me. Now.

“Damiano...” My breath quickened as I started to feel the familiar tension building up in the pit of my stomach.

“Keep going, baby.” His voice was low, deep, husky, and laced with so much lust.

Damiano slowly started to unbutton his dress shirt as he continued to watch me, and I moved my fingers faster, feeling myself coming close. He got up and removed his shirt, exposing all of his tattoos and his incredible rock-hard body. He slid out of the rest of his clothing, leaving him naked at the end of my bed and I couldn't help myself as I trailed my eyes down his body, seeing how aroused he already was.

“Oh, fuck...” I breathed out when Damiano started to stroke himself.

The sight of that alone made me let out a moan and go faster. I couldn't tear my eyes away from him, breathing loudly as I watched him. Soon, my toes curled, and my back arched as the wave of pleasure rippled through my body, leaving me breathless. I closed my eyes, calming down from my high. It was so intense and he didn't even touch me. But the way he watched me and stroked himself was enough to send me over the edge.

I opened my eyes when I heard him move. He looked at me as he spread my legs further apart, trailing his lips on the inside of my thigh, giving small kisses as he made his way between my legs. My hands fisted the sheet when I felt his hot breath on me, gasping when I felt his tongue and making my legs tremble even more.

“So sweet...” Damiano grunted and shoved his tongue inside of me, teasing me.

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“Please...” I moaned, wanting him to take me already. Damiano continued his way up, plastering small kisses on my stomach till he reached my breasts. My eyes rolled to the back of my head as his tongue swirled around my nipple, sucking hard and giving that mixture of pleasure and pain that I have come to love so much.

I moved my hands to play with his hair, only for him to grab my wrists and pin them above my head while his tongue played around on my nipple. He made his way up, kissing my neck and jaw before stopping right at my ear, grunting.

“You have no idea how fucking beautiful you are.” He whispered, his voice hoarse. Damiano nibbled my earlobe before trailing his nose down to my neck again, sucking hard on my skin, and having me squirm in excitement and impatience. Damiano looked at me and softly caressed my cheek with his fingertips.

“Remember, I love you, okay?” I looked at him confused.

“I know.” His eyes darkened, leaning down to my ear.

“Good... because I’m about to fuck you like I don’t.” He growled and slammed inside of me, catching me off guard and making me gasp at the sudden feeling of him filling me up. He caught my moan in his mouth as he hungrily invaded my mouth and dominated my tongue as he continued to thrust inside of me with hard and fast moves.

“Fuck... Come here.” Damiano pulled out and flipped me on my stomach. He pinned my arms behind my back and pulled me up on my knees with my back tightly pressed against his front so I couldn’t move. With one arm around my waist, he roughly entered me from behind.

“Oh, God!” I cried out. It was filling me up in a whole new way. I rested the back of my head on his shoulder, letting the intensity of the pleasure take over while his hands roamed my body. The way he touched my breasts while the other went down and played with my clit.

The touches, the feelings, it was all so overwhelming I could barely keep up, and catch my breath. His thrusts were fast, hard like a beast that had been unleashed as he kept fucking me relentlessly from behind.

“Say my name, baby.” He growled, sounding more like a beast than a man. And it had me going fucking crazy.

“Damiano..” I moaned and I started to tremble when I felt it coming

“Again!”

“Damiano!” I cried out, my entire body jolting at the intense wave of pleasure that erupted in the pit of my stomach.

“Althaia... Fuck!” He let out a strangled grunt as I clenched around him, feeling his release inside of me.

We were both breathing loud and hard and if it wasn’t for him holding me right now, I would have collapsed. Damiano released my arms so I could lie down to catch my breath.

“Did I hurt you?” He frowned and wiped my tears away.

“No, apparently this happens when I get overwhelmed by pleasure.” I grinned and he gave me that sexy smirk in satisfaction.

“They’re the only tears I will allow.” He leaned down to capture my lips in a soft kiss.

I trailed my fingers across his tattoos while he played with my hair as we lay in bed. It was late but I wasn’t tired yet. Neither was Damiano, but he wasn’t a normal human being. I had no idea how he was alive and well when I felt like he barely gets any sleep, and was always on the move.

“I can’t believe you got my name tattooed.” I trailed my fingers across my name as I admired it. It was one of my favorite tattoos on him since he went the extra mile and got it in Greek.

“When did you get it done?” I raised my head to look at him.

“The day you had to leave.”

“Just like that?” I gaped. This man was truly insane.

“What if I decided I didn’t want to be with you? Then you would have walked around with my name on your chest.”

“You’re not going anywhere, my love. I would have kidnapped you and locked you in my home.” He said as if it was the most normal thing to say.

“That’s fucked up.” I laughed and he just gave me a wink, making me shake my head.

Damiano moved me to lie on top of him with his arms around me. I smiled as I rested my head on his chest, feeling my heart filled with happiness at this moment. It was crazy to think of I had fallen in love in such a short time, and was now pregnant. The pregnancy happened way sooner than I would have liked, but right now, everything felt so perfect and I couldn’t wait for the ultrasound to see our tiny baby.

“We should have many kids.” Damiano broke the silence, making me look at him in surprise.

“How many?”

“As many as you can carry. Once this one pops out, we should try for another one.”

“How about we have this one first? I’m sure you will change your mind once you see how difficult it can be.” I chuckled. I wasn’t even showing, and he was already talking about trying for baby number two.

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“I want to see you pregnant all the time. I don’t know why, but the thought of seeing you pregnant is making me horny as fuck.” Damiano almost groaned, and sure enough, I felt him hardening against my stomach.

“Is that a fetish of yours? Pregnant women?” I squinted my eyes.

“No. Only you can make my dick hard.” He gave a wicked smile and I burst out laughing at his answer.

“Well, in that case, let me help you out.” I winked and straddled him.

I slowly woke up and stretched my limbs, feeling how my entire body was deliciously sore from last night's pleasures. I opened my eyes and turned my head to where Damiano was and saw he was still sleeping. I moved the best I could with his heavy arm draped over me so I could look at him. His hair was messy in a cute way, making him almost look boyish. He did look like a different person. Less intimidating and carefree. It was cute and had me grinning.

"Morning, my love." He said with his eyes still closed. I pouted at him, thinking I had woken up before him.

"How long have you been awake?"

"Not for too long." He finally opened his eyes and pulled me closer to him. to place a kiss on my lips.

"How did you sleep?"

"I had a good night's sleep. You did tire me out." I chuckled a little and he smiled while he caressed my body. We lay in silence for a little while before he let out a sigh, making me look at him.

"Your mom is home." My heart dropped.

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Althaia

I jolted up in a sitting position, feeling my heart beat faster as I looked at Damiano with wide eyes. Fear and panic took over my body at the news. Damiano sat up as well, looking at me with a slight frown and concern showing in his eyes.

"Breathe, Althaia. You're going to pass out." He said softly and I took a shaky breath, not realizing I had stopped breathing altogether.

"She's home early, and – and you're here!" I suddenly realized, now feeling the blood drain from my face.

"I need you to calm down, baby." Damiano placed his hands on my cheeks and I immediately held onto his arms as I felt myself panicking like the day before she left. I closed my eyes and focused on steadying my breathing to calm down my hammering heart. I kept listening to his soothing voice, focusing on the way his thumbs were lightly caressing my cheeks and slowly calming down.

"I'm okay." I let out a breath and opened my eyes again. The thought of dealing with my mother so unexpectedly made me already feel exhausted because I knew it wasn't going to be easy.

I groaned as I plopped down on the bed again, wondering why she was home so early and if she had calmed down. Or if we were going to fight again. All these thoughts were starting to give me a headache.

"She's going to freak out if she sees you here. How am I supposed to sneak you out when you're a giant?!" I wanted to cry at how overwhelmed I felt at the moment and feel like this was mission impossible.

"She already saw me." He didn't look concerned at all.

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"She..what?" I blinked at him a few times.

"Your mother came in to see if you were here. I told her to be quiet so you could sleep."

"She saw you and you told her to be quiet...?" I said slowly as I registered his words in my mind. At this point, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. My mother saw me in bed with the man she despised... And it was not like it would take a genius to figure out what we have been doing since we were both naked under the blanket.

The thought of that alone made me completely mortified and just added to my already chaotic thoughts.

"I wanted you to get as much sleep as you could. I knew you were tired." Damiano was still not bothered at all by the fact my mother was home.



I sighed and got up from the bed, thinking I might as well just get this over with and face her. Rip it off like a band-aid. Except that I knew this band-aid was placed on a very hairy place and it was going to hurt like a bitch.

“Damiano!” I hissed lowly at him as he followed me to the bathroom. I looked at myself in the mirror and turned to scowl at him. He just crossed his arms and leaned against the doorframe, looking at me with a smirk.

“Yes?”

“You can’t keep doing this!” I gestured to my neck and chest. They were once again covered in red marks. For some reason, he liked to do this to me which was annoying only because it was a pain to cover up until they faded.

“Since you don’t want to wear a ring yet I have to be creative.” He shrugged and looked at my neck and chest with a satisfied look, making me gape at him.

“You’re seriously unbelievable!” I huffed before getting in the shower. He chuckled as he joined me.

I made Damiano stay in the room as I slowly made my way downstairs to talk to my mother. He wasn’t happy about it, insisting to be with me in case something happened. I had to explain that it would only stress me out, even more, and I was aiming for a calm conversation.

I felt the nerves building up fast and I had to remind myself to take deep breaths so I wouldn’t feel sick.

I also made sure to wear a turtleneck to hide the embarrassing red marks. It was one thing she had seen me in bed with him but not hiding the marks would only make it embarrassingly worse. She knew what we have been doing but it didn’t mean I had to flash it to her.

I quietly made my way to the kitchen to see if I would find her there but found it empty. I did see the freshly brewed coffee, meaning she had just been here. I continued my way to the living room, and I found her there, sitting on the couch with a mug of coffee as she stared blankly at the unlit fireplace. I took a seat on the other couch to have some distance between us and sat silently, waiting for her to say something.

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She didn't say anything as she continued to drink her coffee and look at the fireplace. Her expression was completely blank but her body language was relaxed. My stomach was twisted with knots and only made my heart speed as I didn't know what to expect.

"How come you're back so soon?" I asked quietly. I couldn't sit in the tense silence anymore and had to say something. I watched her reaction, but she wasn't giving much. Finally, she turned to look at me, still expressionless but her eyes were less cold than before she left for her vacation.

"You brought him into my house." She stated calmly and I felt my breath get caught in my throat.

"How long has he been here?" She continued, having me twiddle my thumbs before answering her.

"He came the day you left." I watched her closely to see if she would just show me anything so I would know what she was thinking right now.

"Why?"

"I wasn't feeling well." I decided to answer after hesitating a little. I didn't want to relive that moment ever again. This time she furrowed her brows slightly. I spoke before she could ask more questions.

"Did something happen since you're back so soon?" I asked, getting straight to the point.

"No."

"Then what?" She let out a sigh before placing her mug on the coffee table.

"I didn't like the way we had left things. It's unlike us to be fighting like this." I felt hope starting to fill my body. Maybe she had changed her

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mind after she had calmed down and made her think clearly.

"I know." I gave a half-smile. It was really unlike us to be fighting like this as we rarely ever did. The closest we would come to a fight would just be some disagreements but would always put it behind us minutes later.

"However, I still stand by what I said." I felt like my heart stopped beating.

"Why?" My voice came out in a shaky whisper, feeling a lump forming in my throat.

"I don't trust you." My mother said in Italian, making me look at her confused. She looked behind me and I followed her gaze. Damiano was standing right at the entrance to the living room, observing us. He also wore an expressionless look on his face but his golden-brown eyes were cold as he looked at my mother.

"Likewise." He replied in a low tone. The tension in the room increased as they stared each other down.

"Mom, please... You can't mean that." I was trying my best not to cry as I felt my heart aching once again.

"To be with him will always put you in danger, and bringing a child will only make it worse. Not only would his enemies want you but also the child. Is that what you want?" She replied harshly.

"Why is that the only thing you can think about?!" I was getting frustrated with how she was only seeing it that way.

"Because it's reality." She spoke calmly and she got up from the couch. I got up as well, not ready to let this go as I was determined to make her see this from a different perspective.

"You don't think I will keep her safe?" Damiano's voice was almost threatening.

"Worked great for you last time, right?" My mother tilted her head. My eyes widened when he suddenly stormed towards my mother with a murderous look on his face. I quickly stood in front of him, preventing him to get closer. Luckily, he stopped and I looked at him in shock at his behavior. He glared at my mother, not realizing how panicked he made me feel.

I felt anxious to the point it was making me feel sick.

"You don't know shit." Damiano sneered. His body was tense as he spoke.

"Oh, I know enough." My mother slowly walked closer to us, not bothered by his actions.

"What are you talking about?" I asked her as I had no idea what they were talking about. I looked at her with a frown on my face as I tried to make sense of this whole situation.

"You haven't told her?" She made a tscking sound and shook her head, only making me more confused.

"Tell me what?" I turned to look at Damiano, but he continued to ignore me. I clenched my fists as I started to feel angry. They were openly talking about something yet keeping me in the dark about what it was.

"What are you doing in my house?"

"Taking care of your daughter since you're failing to do so.

"Okay, stop!" I shouted while trying to keep them apart before they killed each other.

"Can someone please tell me what's going on?" They didn't say anything and continued to glare at each other. This whole situation had me going through a new emotion every two seconds, something my body couldn't handle right now.

I bent over a little, taking a deep breath as I felt really sick

Damiano started to curse and pulled me into him to look at him.

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"Are you okay? Do you feel sick?" I got out of his hold and quickly ran to the bathroom as I couldn't keep my nausea down anymore. Hands pulled my hair away from my face and I already knew it was Damiano as it had become his new job to do so whenever I threw up.

I made my way back to the living room after I had washed up, ignoring both my mother and Damiano as they followed me. I lay down on the couch, feeling

stressed and exhausted, and the two of them wanting to kill each other wasn't helping one bit.

My mother sighed when she looked at me.

"Already having bad morning sickness?"

"I don't know if it's morning sickness, or if it's because the two are making me upset and stressed to the point I feel sick." I spat out, letting them know how pissed I was. Damiano placed a hand on my forehead and frowned.

"You're hot. We should get you to a doctor."

"She doesn't need a doctor. She just threw up, it's fine." My mother said which earned a glare from Damiano and she glared right back at him.

"If you don't stop, I will make sure none of you will see me for the rest of your lives!" I yelled, which caught their attention. They looked at me with a disapproving look at my threat. I was serious about it if they continued with their childish behavior. I took a deep breath and rubbed my stomach as I started to feel sick again.

"Ice cream helped with my nausea. Maybe it will help you too?"

"I will get you some." Damiano turned to leave, then stopped and looked back at my mother.

"What kind?"

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"Low-fat. And also, vitamins help too. Hold on, let me write you a list." She gestured for him to follow her and they both disappeared to the kitchen.

"What...?" I sat up and blinked confusedly at their retreating forms.

Did I just imagine that?

One minute they were ready to kill each other, and the next they were making a grocery list. Maybe the world was ending, and there suddenly was a moment of peace all over the world before we all died.

I lay back down and put a hand up to my head.

“Maybe I’m going crazy...”

“Why are you helping when you’re so unhappy about me being pregnant?”. I asked my mother after she had sent Damiano away with a list of things that would hopefully help me. I was hoping for a calm conversation now that Damiano wasn’t here. The tension between them was suffocating.

“The way we had left things... I’m not proud of it. The need to protect you took over, not having me think clearly. I kept thinking about you and... him. You have to understand where I’m coming from as well. He is the most dangerous and most feared man. And knowing he has taken a liking to you and you’re pregnant with his child... It made me panic.” My mother’s eyes narrowed as she spoke.

When she put it like that, I knew I should have considered that. Instead, I had refused to see things from her side and somehow expected her to be okay with it. I have spent so much time with Damiano and seen a different side of him. He was gentle and caring to me and it made me often forget that he was a man people feared.

“To have a baby, it’s a blessing regardless. I’m just concerned that it’s with him.” She continued.

“Mom, I understand, I do... But he cares about me. If I thought he would hurt me in any way, I wouldn’t be with him.”

“If he cared about you, he should tell you everything and not keep you in the dark. That is not making me want to trust him at all.” She frowned at

“I know he doesn’t tell me everything, and only what I need to know. He has several times made it clear to me that he doesn’t want me to get involved any deeper in what he.. does. If you could just give him a chance and get to know him, you will understand.” I smiled.

“Please, don’t make me choose between the two of you.” Tears welled up in my eyes and a lump formed in my throat. My mother pulled me into a tight hug, and I couldn’t help but let out a sob as I longed for her comfort.

“My sweet Althaia.... As a mother, it’s my job to protect you. But it’s also my job to make sure you’re happy.” She leaned back a little and wiped my tears

away. Her eyes were glistening too as she looked at me, giving me a small smile.

"I am happy, I really am. I just don't want to do this without you. I need you." I sniffed.

"I know, honey. You're having a baby... I can't believe you're already making me a grandma." She chuckled a little and embraced me again.

"I can barely believe it myself." I chuckled along. I felt a huge weight had been lifted from my heart, and it was finally able to heal.

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Damiano

"Are you staying with me tonight?" Althaia asked as she came out of the bathroom. My eyes trailed down her body, loving the black nightgown that clung to her body. It was short, showing off her beautiful legs and the top showed a generous amount of cleavage.

"My eyes are up here." She placed her hands on her hips and raised a brow.

"You don't want me to look?" I grabbed her hips, pulling her in between my legs as I was sitting on her bed.

"Haven't you looked enough?" She wrapped her arms around my neck, giving me a teasing smile.

"Never. I can't get enough of you. Or your tits." I looked back down, burying my face in her breasts, making her laugh at my actions. I placed small kisses on her breasts, making my way up to her neck, feeling her shiver under my touch until I reached her soft lips. So soft and delicate. It was my new favorite thing whenever our lips met.

Althaia placed her hands on my cheeks, feeling her tongue run across my lips but I didn't let her deepen the kiss as I knew she was tired. She had been sick most of the day, and just when she had gotten her appetite back and would eat properly, we would go back to square one.

I pulled slightly away and sat her on my lap.

"How are you feeling?" I rubbed her stomach and she let out a tired sigh, resting her head on my shoulder

"Better. I'm happy I got to talk to my mom about it all. She's less upset about the pregnancy, which is good...but I think it will still take some time

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before she can wrap her head around that it's with you." I shrugged. I couldn't give two shits about her mother.

"I don't care what she thinks of me. All I care about is how she treats you." Or so help me God, I would lose my fucking shit on that woman.

"You also need to have an open mind and put your differences aside. Maybe try not to kill each other every single minute." She rolled her eyes and I smiled, thinking about how her mother would be one less problem if I made her disappear.

"How's your nausea?"

"Surprisingly, the ice cream helped a lot! Finally, something that works because I'm getting really tired of throwing up." I placed a kiss on top of her head when she groaned.

"I will stock up the freezer for you."

"Thank you, you're the best." Althaia smiled brightly, giving me a quick peck on the lips.

"Anything for you." I let out a small smile when I watched her cheeks get flushed. It was so damn endearing, and I loved it whenever it happened.

"It's a good thing it's low fat. If it wasn't, I will be round and rolling before you know it." She let out a tired chuckle.

"I wouldn't mind. Shouldn't you be showing by now?" I asked. Every minute I would look at her stomach, somehow expecting to see a small baby bump, but then get slightly disappointed when it remained flat.



"You need to be patient, my love." I made a sound of disapproval which made her shake her head in amusement.

"You should call me that more often."

"Call you what? My love?" I nodded.

"I like it." I admitted. She never called me anything besides my name. Even though I loved whenever she called my name, there was something about it when she called me my love. It was different, and I liked it.

"Okay, my love." She winked as she let out a small laugh.

A knock sounded on the door. Althaia took the small blanket that was on her desk chair and wrapped it around herself to hide the red marks before she opened the door. She found them embarrassing, but until she agreed to wear a ring, I will continue to give her those marks. It will definitely send the message that she was completely off-limits.

Althaia closed the door once she was done talking, noticing the frown on my face. Her mother was someone I needed to find out who she truly was. I didn't believe one bit she had left her old life entirely behind. She knew too much. Too much about a part of my life that only a few knew about, meaning she had been digging into the depths of hell to find that information.

"You know, you have to at least try and get along with my mom." Althaia stopped in front of me, giving me a small smile as she ruffled up my hair.

"What did she want?" I didn't bother hiding my dislike toward her mother.

"Nothing really. Just if you were going to spend the night, which I'm assuming you are?"

"I'm not going to leave you alone here." My frown deepened. The last time they were alone, I found her crying. As if I was going to let that happen again.

"You know I'm not alone."

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Onto Youtz

"I don't trust her." Part of me wanted to tell her why to understand, but that would only distress her and possibly make her sick again. I had to be careful what to say for the sake of her and our baby. She didn't need the extra stress when she was already going through so much.

"So stubborn..." She muttered under her breath. She then looked at me, hesitating.

"Earlier, my mom said something that made you...angry."

"

"Let's go to bed. You're tired." I got up from the bed to undress, ignoring what she was trying to ask.

"What was it about?" Althaia pressed on. I turned my back to her, closing my eyes for a second.

"It was nothing." I dismissed her but knowing how strong her curiosity is, she wouldn't let it go before she got an answer.

"It didn't seem like nothing when you reacted like that."

"Althaia, drop it!"

Fuck...

It came out angry and I quickly turned around to face her. She was a few steps away from me, looking at me in surprise at my reaction.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to talk like that." I stepped closer to her but stopped when she backed away from me. Althaia avoided looking at me, made her way to the bed, and got under the blanket.

"Don't be like that." I sighed.

"I'm not being anything. I'm tired and I want to sleep." She turned off the bedside lamp and turned her back to me, lying close to the edge as she could. I clenched my fists, pissed at myself for reacting like that with her.

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And now, she was upset with me.

I couldn't tell her what it was about. I wasn't ready to share that part of my life with her yet. It still made me angry, and I had no desire to talk about it, knowing what the outcome would be.

undressed and got in bed. Althaia still had her back turned to me, which was unlike her. She liked to sleep in the middle of the bed, preferably in my arms. But she was letting me know she was pissed at me. I wrapped my arm around her and pulled her closer to me. She tried to move away but it only made me tighten my hold on her.

"I'm sorry. Just let me hold you tonight." I said softly to her. Her body was tense, and she was about to move away from me but decided against it when she finally relaxed, and let me hold her. I knew she slept better whenever I held her, and tonight I wanted her to get some decent sleep since she had been sick most of the day.

"Goodnight." I whispered. I kissed her shoulder as I caressed her body, knowing it would make her go to sleep faster.

After a little while, she let out a huff before she turned around to face me, still with her eyes close, and buried her face into my chest, making me smile in the dark at her actions. I knew she deserved to know so much more but right now, I couldn't get myself to let her know about that part of my life.

Not yet.

I had dropped Althaia off at work before I made my way to the airport. I arrived just in time to see Lorenzo, Arianna, Cara, and Antonio get out of the private jet. Althaia had let me know several times she was missing Arianna and Cara and couldn't wait to see them after spending so much time with them at the manor. And of course, I would do anything to make sure she would be happy and I told them to come for a surprise visit. But

there was more behind their visits, hence why Lorenzo and Antonio were here as well.

"I need to talk to you." I told them when they were close. I looked at Lorenzo and he gave a short nod before leading Cara inside the car. I walked a few steps away just to be sure she wouldn't be able to hear anything.

“Antonio, I need you to follow Althaia’s mother wherever she goes and report everything back to me. Don’t let yourself be seen. Not even to Althaia.” He gave a nod before making his way to the car I sent for him.

“Did you get the device from Rafaelle?” I asked Arianna once Lorenzo had joined us.

“I did, but what’s going on?”

“I need to know what her mother is doing. Something is not right.”

“What set you off?” She furrowed her brows and slightly tilted her head.

“She knows too much. She fucking knows about... Sienna.” I clenched my jaw, pissed that her mother knew about her. Arianna raised her brows in surprise.

“How?”

“I don’t know but that’s what I want to figure out. Lorenzo, see if you can get something out of Cara. Maybe she knows something that can tip us off. Arianna, there is a safe in their boutique only her mother has access to. It’s a digital one. Use the device Rafaelle got you to get the password. Lorenzo and I will take care of the rest.” I told her firmly. Once I made sure she understood what she had to do, we made our way back to the car.

I was ready to figure out who Jacinta Celano truly was.

chapter 80

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Althaia

I walked around the boutique as there wasn’t anything to do at the moment. I had just handed a customer her custom designed dress, making it the last one and now it was going deadly slow as I didn’t have anything to do. I could take the time to mop the floor, but I felt too lazy to do it. Usually, when my mother was present we would chat and have fun, but she had some errands

to run. I think it was to sort out some papers at the bank but I wasn't really listening.

I found some banana chips in the desk drawer and did some walking in the boutique. I hated banana chips but I was hungry and I couldn't leave. to get some food. I thought of calling Damiano or Luca to get me some food, but I also felt like taking a nap.

Food or sleep? Such a hard decision to make.

I decided to take my nap now when no one else was around. Plus, the banana chips did keep my hunger at bay.

I made my way to the couch but stopped in front of the floor-length mirror. I looked at my stomach, turning to the side to see if something was happening. I knew it was too early still, but I was excited to see what I would look like with a baby bump.

I couldn't help but smile a little as I rubbed my stomach. I still couldn't believe that I was currently making a tiny human in there. The feeling was overwhelming and exhilarating. If it wasn't for Damiano already being so amazing and caring about it, I think I would still be freaking out. The way he would always find the chance to rub my stomach, kiss it and talk so lovingly about it.

It made my heart burst with happiness.

I chuckled a little, thinking about the very first time I met him. Funny how life turned upside down for me, and now having a baby with the man I once feared.

I got comfortable on the couch and immediately felt my eyes droop. Just a quick power nap, I thought. I would be able to hear if someone comes into the shop anyway so I should be good. With that, it didn't take long before I slowly drifted off to sleep.

"... Is she being for real..."

"...Should we wake her up?"

"...Let her sleep."

I stirred in my sleep a little as I heard the hushed voices, making me annoyed that I was being disturbed. I let out a noise in frustration and turned around to continue my peaceful sleep.

“How charming.” I frowned a little at the voice. Why were there people talking, and what were they doing in my room? As I tried to ignore them and resume my sleeping, my eyes suddenly snapped open as it came crashing back to me that I was in the boutique, and not in my own room. I quickly sat up and blinked rapidly a few times.

“So unprofessional of you, Thaia!” Still, in a confused daze, I turned to the voice and saw Cara, looking at me with an amused face and her brow raised at me.

“Huh...?” I blinked a couple of times, trying to figure out what was going on and if that was truly Cara who had magically appeared in front of me.

“Shit, that must have been one good nap.” I turned to the other voice, seeing Arianna was here as well. I rubbed my eyes and blinked a couple of times more. My eyes slowly widened when I realized I wasn’t dreaming

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and they were truly in front of me.

“Oh, my God!” I squealed and jumped up from the couch. I immediately embraced them both tightly, taking them a little by surprise at my sudden action but laughing as they hugged me back.

“What are you doing here?!” I leaned back to look at them. I was surprised but so happy to see them here. I had missed them like crazy.

“I could feel you were missing us. Me the most, so I thought why not come and visit you! I have a sixth sense or something.” Cara grinned, and Arianna just looked at her with a slight scowl before rolling her eyes.

“Your man over there told us to come, saying you were miserable without us.” She gestured to Damiano at the other end with Lorenzo.

“I didn’t say that.” Damiano looked blankly at Arianna.

"It's called paraphrasing." I chuckled and walked over to him, wrapping my arms around him

"Thank you." I told him quietly, appreciating that he had gone to that extent to make a surprise visit for me. Damiano gave me a small smile and kissed the top of my head.

"Lorenzo." I greeted him and patted his arm, to which the corners of his mouth turned upwards a little as he looked at me.

"Althaia." He patted my head, just like he did the day I had left for home.

"I have never seen two people being that awkward with each other. For fucks sake, you're family now! Just hug each other!" Arianna practically yelled. I got pushed forward, making me stumble and almost fall if Lorenzo hadn't been fast enough to steady me. I turned around to scowl at her, only for Damiano to take a hold of me to see if I was okay before glaring at Arianna.

"Careful. Don't push her." He said sternly, and she just rolled her eyes at him.

"Oh, relax! You're acting as if she's made of glass." Arianna scoffed and gave Damiano a disapproving look.

"It's fine, nothing happened. Just remember, karma is a bitch and you might just trip down a staircase." I gave her a wicked smile.

"I dare you. I will knock you out in a second." She winked, making me laugh. I had truly missed them. Arianna and Cara were the sisters I never had, and being an only child could be lonely at times. But it didn't matter anymore now that I had them.

"Where's mom?" Cara asked as she walked around to see if she could find her.

"I think she went to the bank or something. I wasn't really listening. She should be back soon." I looked at the time, and my brows raised when I saw I had slept for a good hour.

"How long have you been here?" I grimaced, hoping they hadn't been watching me sleep for too long.

“We came like half an hour ago. How can you just sleep at work like that?”  
Cara laughed at me, making me let out an awkward laugh as I scratched the back of my head a little.

“I was tired and it’s a comfortable couch. You can’t blame me.”

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