

10. Trouble

Mateo's POV

"New incriminating evidence is being released regarding the assassination of Presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio. His wife, Diana Rojas, demands his killers be brought to justice. More from our correspondent Camila Casilla."

"Emiliano hurry up! We're going to be late!" I call out from the kitchen as I munch on my cereal.

Across from me, Valentina scrunches her nose and reaches for the remote.

"We are watching the parade. I want to see the dancers at the Palacio Nacional," she says, switching the channel and cutting off the news anchor mid sentence.

"HEY!" I growl at her, ripping the remote from her hands. "I was watching that. I want to know what they say about el idiota de Salinas (President of Mexico; 1988-1994)."

"The same thing they always say." My mother says, taking the remote from my hand. "That he is the President and Colosio's predecessor. How could he possibly kill his own party member?" she says sarcastically, handing Valentina the remote. "Now let your sister enjoy the independence celebrations."

I roll my eyes and scarf down the last of my cereal. Emiliano emerges from the hall, his hair messily combed back and his shirt inside out.

"Sorry," he mutters. "I over slept."

"Yeah, no kidding," Valentina laughs. "We missed the morning dances at the square because of you. Now we have to wait for the noon parade."

Emiliano scratches his head apologetically.

"Leave your brother alone, Valentina." Mom warns before turning to Emiliano. "Y tu, arregla tu camisa. (and you, x your shirt)."

Emiliano looks down at his shirt and his cheeks flush red as he scrambles to x it.

Mom goes back to her food prep, busying herself and getting things ready for the carne asada (cook out) we would be hosting later in the evening. Dad was outside getting the grill ready and setting up for the party.

Just before we're about to go to the plaza for the dance show, the phone rings.

"Teo! It's Gabriel," Valentina screams, holding out the phone to me.

I run to pick it up and hear Gabriel laughing on the other side.

"You're sister's got some lungs," he chuckles.

"Tell me about it," I roll my eyes. "What's up?"

"Ey, guey (hey man), let's go to Tampico."

"What's in Tampico?"

"Hot chicks and mola (slang for m****a)," he replies. I can almost see the smirk on his face.

I breathe into the phone. I hadn't seen Gabriel in almost 3 months since the beach party. I missed hanging out with him. We always did stupid s**t together.

"You know my dad still hates you, right?" I sigh. "Besides, I got to take Vale and Emi down to the plaza to see the dances. I promised. And then we have a carne asada going on at 6."

"There's an even bigger plaza in Tampico," he argues. "Come on man. Just say you're taking them there instead and give 'em a couple pesos to keep them entertained. You and me can go to a party and be back before your carne asada. What do ya say?"

I shake my head. I had a bad feeling about this.

"Come on, guey!" Gabriel snaps impatiently when I don't agree immediately.

I'm going to regret this.

"I'll see what I can do."

"Sweet, meet me in the Plaza de Armas in 30 mins," he says excitedly before hanging up the phone.

I turn to my siblings, forcing a smile on my face. "Change of plans guys."

We arrive at the Plaza de Armas, the square full of independence decorations, music and lots of good food. Several people are gathered around watching a group of actors reenacting the independence battles and the Cry of Dolores. Valentina drags Emiliano and I to the center of the square, squealing excitedly and aching her camera. 15 mins into the performance, Gabriel arrives, hands in his pocket and a backpack on his back.

Emiliano runs to give him a high ve. "What are you doing here?" he asks.

Gabriel shrugs and points at me. "I'm here to have a good time with your brother."

"Cool, you can watch the parade with us!" Emiliano says, tugging at his sleeve, but Gabriel doesn't budge.

"No can do, little man. We actually have somewhere else to be," Gabriel says, ruing up his hair and nodding at me. "Lets go."

"Where are you going?" Valentina scowls as I search my pockets for cash.

"I need a favor," I say. "Gabe and I are going to hang out somewhere. I need you guys to cover for me."

"Oh," Emiliano sulks, hanging his head slightly. "I thought we were hanging out today. You've been really busy with training... I was looking forward to spending some time with you."

I feel bad but I've missed hanging out with my friends.

"I'm sorry, chamaco. I'll make it up to you, I promise. Just do me this solid. Please?" I beg, giving him puppy eyes.

He smiles but I can see it doesn't reach his eyes. He's bummed out.

"Okay," he shrugs half-heartedly.

I crouch down on the balls of my feet and look up at him. "What do you say you and me go on a run this Saturday. I'll teach you some moves? Sound good?"

His face lights up instantly and he nods.

"Cool," I reply, handing him and Valentina 40 pesos each. "Here's some cash for you guys to buy some food or what ever candy you want. I'll be back at 4:30 on the dot to pick you guys up here. DO NOT LEAVE THE PLAZA. I will actually kill you. Understand?"

Emiliano nods vigorously while Valentina just scowls at me.

"Understand?" I repeat and she rolls her eyes at me.

"Fine," she groans. "But don't say I didn't warn you when Dad nds out."

"Whatever," I sigh, turning to Gabe and walking away. "4:30!" I shout over my shoulder.

We make it to Gabe's car parked by a gas station and he proceeds to buy some supplies while I wait in the car.

"So, where are we going?" I ask when he comes back and settles in the drivers seat.

"You remember Renata?" he asks, putting the car in drive and pulling out of the station.

Renata had to be the hottest girl in our class and every guy was pining for her, myself included. How could I forget?

"Well, her parents are in Mexico city for the celebrations and she has the whole house to herself," he smirks. "And you're the rst person she wanted to invite over. "

"No mames, dude," I laugh but Inside I was over the moon. I've had a crush on her since third grade. Could this nally be my chance?

We pull up to Renata's house, music blasting so loud we could hear it from the drive way. It was only noon but day drinking was the best part about Independence day. I help Gabriel bring in the beers he bought and the crowd inside the house cheers as we pass out the drinks. I nearly trip over myself when Renata walks over, taking a drink from my hand.

"Hi," she giggles as she cracks open her drink.

She looks absolutely stunning in a high waisted denim skirt and a tight green crop top that left little to the imagination. I feel a twitch in my pants and send a silent prayer to Moon Goddess she couldn't tell I was turned on just looking at her.

"Teo?" She asks, waving her hand in front of my face.

Oh s**t, she was talking... What did she say?

Beats me! Luis sighs.

"W-what?" I ask, feeling my blush reach my ears.

She giggles again, taking my hand and leading me towards the middle of the living room now serving as a dance oor. She grinds her ass against me, swaying back and forth rhythmically to the beat of the music. We dance song after song until our bodies drip with sweat. Exhausted, she pulls me to the couches, making me sit down rst before taking a seat on my lap. We make small talk, although its hard to concentrate with her on my thigh. After a few excruciating minutes, it's clear she's growing impatient and she hands me a can beer.

"No thanks," I say, pushing at the can. "I can't. My parents would kill me if I came home drunk."

"Then don't get drunk," she chirps, placing the drink in my hand and opening it for me. "Besides," she whispers in my ear. "You're parents aren't here."

I gulp when her lips graze my cheek.

"You smell so good," she purrs, her hand resting on my chest while the other plays with my hair. "I'm sure you taste even better."

Oh the thoughts running through my mind...

She leans close to my face, her brown eyes staring at me seductively as she bites her lips. They weren't as beautiful as the honey gold eyes of the princess-

Why did she all of a sudden come up?

Renata's lips crash onto my, gently sucking my own. She tastes of cherry Chapstick and I'm eager for more. Her pretty pink lips are thinner than the princess'.

There I go again thinking about Soa. What the hell is wrong with me? Renata Guerrero is sitting on my lap for crying out loud! The princess should be the last thing on my mind.

I pull back and she frowns, confused by my reaction.

"What's wrong?" she asks.

"Nothing," I say, leaning forward and biting her lip. "Just ignore me."

I force all thoughts of Soa out of my mind, determined to make Renata my only focus when I receive a mind-link from Emiliano.

"Teo. Come quick I-"

"Emiliano, I'm busy. I told you I'd be there by 4:30! I growl, not wanting to ruin my one shot with impressing Renata.

"But-"

"Emi, whatever it is, I'm sure it can wait! I'm a little busy!"

I close my mind-link, keeping my attention on the sexy girl devouring my lips. Twenty minutes go by and I get a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach.

Something's not right, Luis snarls. We need to go.

Not you too, I sigh. Look whatever it is, I'm sure it's not important. -

You're brother wants your help! This slut can wait!

I want to pull my hair out in frustration but I know he's right. I had to go. I pull away from Renata and look down at my watch. 5:15. f**k! When did the time go this fast.

"I gotta go," I say, running my hand through my hair and lifting her off my lap.

"But-"

"Sorry," I mutter. "I have to take care of something."

Before she can argue, I walk off into the crowd, searching for Gabriel but come up empty. He's gone! Panicking, I nd our friend Angel and ask him if he's seen him.

"He's up stairs with some chick," Angel screams over the music.

I rush up stairs and search every bedroom, nding him and a girl going at it on someone's bed.

"Oh for f**k's sake, " I cry out loud, closing the door to mentally wipe that image out of my head. "Gabriel, we gotta go!" I call out, knocking at the door.

I hear muttering and scrambling before a disheveled Gabriel comes out shirtless.

"You couldn't wait ve minutes," he hisses as he adjusts his clothes.

"I'm already late man. Come on!"

We race back to the Plaza de Armas with me cursing myself for losing track of time.

"Dude, relax. I'm sure those kids are having a blast at the plaza. Don't worry about it," Gabriel tries reassuring me but I'm way past consolation.

When we arrive, I sprint through the crowds of people to the place where I agreed to meet my siblings. I feel my heart sink to the pit of my stomach when I see my father standing there instead, arms crossed over his chest and a murderous look in his eyes.

Damn it, Valentina! I snap, knowing she probably called him when I didn't show up on time.

My father says nothing, walking towards me a popping lot and I know better than to speak without being asked to. Gabriel gives me an apologetic smile and we say our goodbyes before I follow my father. He doesn't say a word to me as we climb into the car and remains silent on our drive back to Madero. The silence is eating at me, the anxiety building up with every second that crawls by.

Dread settles in my bones when he pulls up to the drive way and I see the house is lacking party guests. I try to think of what to say as we walk up to the house but my thoughts are muddled with anxiety and I can't seem to string together a sentence. Once in the living room, my father begins his interrogation.

"Where did you go?" he asks, his voice surprisingly calm despite the clenched sts at his side.

"O-out with some friends," I reply forcing my voice not to tremble.

"I see..." he says, clenching and unclenching his jaw. "And did you get Emiliano's message?"

His silver eyes are ice cold, sending shivers down my spine. I open my mouth to speak but all that comes out is a puff of air and I simply nod instead.

His eyes fog over and I hear foot steps climb down the stairs. Emiliano emerges from the hall, his face badly bruised and beaten. His right eye is swollen shut, a ring of dark purple surrounding it. His lips are cut and still bleeding and his cheeks are a sickly black color.

"W-what happened?" I ask, stepping towards him only to be blocked by my father.

"What happened?" he laughs without emotion, his body trembling with every cruel chuckle. "You leave your siblings and ignore their calls and then you have the audacity to ask what happened?" His face hardens and if looks could kill, I'd be dead a thousand times over.

He rushes at me, grabbing me by the collar of the shirt and pinning me against a wall. My mother rushes in, pulling Emiliano to her chest and begging my father to go easy on me.

"You want to know what happened?" he spits, slamming me against the wall. "What happened is you weren't there!" He snarls. "An Alpha takes care of his own, dropping everything to protect those who can't defend themselves. And your failed brother is more of an Alpha than you. You want to know what happened? A man tried to take advantage of your sister... and your brother..." his voice cracks. "He made sure she was safe. Not you. He took the rushing like a man and where the f**k were you? Huh? WHERE THE F**k WERE YOU?"

I'm sick to my stomach, feeling bile rise up in my throat and I swallow it. From the corner of my eye, I see Valentina enter the room, a thick bruise on her neck. She walks like a zombie through the living room, giving no one a second glance. It's as if we don't exist. She's in her own world. She disappears into the kitchen and returns moments later with a glass of water before disappearing once more into the hall. Ashamed, I glue my eyes to the ground and give up trying to ght my father.

"You have failed your pack for the last time, Mateo," my father's voice booms throughout the house, shaking even its foundation. He releases me and I slump against the wall, still unable to look my family in the eye. My father runs his hands through his hair, dripping with fury. "Your mother and I have discussed you punishment and we've both agreed that you need to learn what it means to be responsible for those under your care. I've spoken with King Juan Carlos and he has agreed to take you in and train you. You'll complete the remainder of your training in Mante with his family."

"What?"

"You leave tomorrow," he says before storming out of the room.