

KEY TO HAPPINESS:(My mute devil)

#Chapter 1: Like...you sold me? - Read KEY TO HAPPINESS:(My mute devil) Chapter 1: Like...you sold me?

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(AN: The names of the characters narrating isn't stated but to prevent a lot of confusion, when ever there is a change of pov there will always be (...) this three little dots before the narration begins)

"Marry her and you are guaranteed to be the next empire ruler" Nix eyes feel on the picture before him and let out a silent scoff as his eyes scanned the photo before him 'Her name is Carmela..Carmela Dalton" Nix eyes lit up hearing the name that was mentioned

"You mean she's the daughter of the Alpha one family? The one every one aimed to kill?" Although his tone seemed soft, the person seated across him could feel the excitement that laced his tone and he hated it

"Yes she is..but she remembers nothing about that"

"And you are willing to give her position as the ruler to me and not just that keep her in my clutch?" He used the pretense of shock to hide the fact that he has been wanting this offer for a long time "Aren't you afraid that I'll torture your best friend to death? Zamiel" he look up from the pictures to be met by Zamiel cold eyes which was filled with void

"Do you dare?" Zamiel responded the air surrounding them slowly started getting dense but their conversation was interrupted by the shattering of glass from across the room. Nix suddenly smiles unlike him picking up the photo

"I'll think about the marriage part but until then she can ease my boredom" he winks taking his leave and Zamiel looks away wondering how exactly things are going to turn out. On one hand one is a cold hearted person while on the other hand the other is mysterious.

"A match made in hell" he scoffs taking another sip from the glass before him.

I looked up at the photo of my grandma placed on the table and a small smile appeared on my face.

Although it's just been two months since she was buried, the pain of departure feels as if it was just yesterday. The ironic smile she had when dying, saying I should be happy, felt like a backstab to me because there was no way I'd be happy without her by my side.

She played the role of the mother I never had, unlike that of a grandma, and seeing the lengths she reached just to have an orphan like me in her custody I feel even more indebted to her, because she gave an orphan who had no hope of having a complete family hope again, well even if the family isn't complete as I always imagined and both her kids are always out there getting into one problem or the other.

"Young miss, your phone is ringing" I turned to find one of the maids pointing to the phone I was holding.

I gave a small smile and nodded before making my way towards my room.

"He..hello," I said after taking a deep breath several times, trying to prepare myself mentally for whatever the caller had installed.

"Carmela, please help me; I'm about to lose my mind!" I heard editor Damien say from the other end of the phone

"What..what happened? And how..how am I supposed to be of help to you editor Damian?" I managed to respond after taking a seat on my bed.

"You can be of help by completing what you started, I know it's not the right time to say this but I've placed your book on hold for two months and I fear if we don't pick up from where you stopped the readers are going to start a protest or something" I heard him complain which I could understand, but why, why can't they just understand my own opinion?

I never wanted to write that book, I just thought it could be a good idea for Grandma to incorporate it in her book but she turned it into a separate book making me the sole owner

"But I.."

"I know you depended on your grandma before now because of your situation, and she did explain everything to me before her passing, and I can promise you wouldn't have to face anyone; just send me your work, and I'll handle the rest, okay," he said and ended the call on me.

I wanted to scream and throw a tantrum but the only one who listens to them is no longer around. I sighed, looking at the photo we both took at my bedside and remembering good times brought a smile to my face.

She was one who always believed in me even when no one did, she did. I never got adopted because I was a selective mutism patient, but she never looked down on me or my condition. Instead, she kept saying she saw something that no one could.

Well, that may be because she's a writer and loves to think outside the box, but I don't think I can be as great and good as she is.

But what are the chances that I'd be able to survive in this house?

What are the chances that I wouldn't let her hope and trust in me be shattered?

What are the chances that I'd be able to fulfill the dreams she had for me with success?

And the chances that I'd completely recover from being mute and be able to have a proper conversation with others just like she wished?

I took a deep breath and took a step towards my study table where my writing materials were laid and picked up my pen and diary, hoping I could write something, but nothing came.

I took a look at my phone to find it was just a few minutes past eight and I sighed in relief. If I can pick up my pace, I can surely write an entire Chapter before midnight and send it to editor Damian.

"This is for you, dearest grandma," I said inwardly, taking a look at the plain sheet in front of me but sighed, slamming myself on the table as I didn't know where to start or where exactly I was headed.

I picked up my phone, hoping to at least get some inspiration as I scrolled through the emails I had sent to the editor, but it seemed I'd have to start reading everything from the start.

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"To be a perfect woman is to be the woman in Proverbs 31." I remembered the priest's words as I stared at the statue before me, wondering if I could truly be the person he spoke of.. 'The perfect woman' even with my inability

"Child, you've been seated here for long. What could your issue be?" I looked up to find the priest and hurriedly stood to my feet with a sigh of respect "My darling child you've been made to go through so much at such a young age but by his stripes we're healed.." he patted my head as I look at my feet "There would come a time when it seems there's no hope and it's the end of everything but if only you believe then I tell you that it is only the beginning" he smiled at me. I would be lying if I said I understood what he just said if it is a Bible verse or just a piece of advice as I've never read through the Bible or wanted to come to church, but I always had to come because Grandma

always wanted to be here and I always wanted to be around her. And since she's gone I feel this is the only place I can feel her presence. My phone began vibrating in my bag and seeing the caller ID I answered on the third ring

"Carmela where are you..hurry up back home"

"I'm... I'm at the church" I manage to respond

"Hurry back now"

"I'm on my way Suzy, what is the hurry" I said excusing myself from the priest with a nod as I hurriedly picked up my bag and made my way towards the exit where the cab I hired was waiting

"My mum has packed your bags and lined them up at the door, while uncle is speaking with some weird people"

"We..weird people? My..My..my bag? Suzy I'll ..I'll be there in the next 10 minutes" I ended the call and took to my heels but stumbled into someone who reflectively pushed me backward but I was in no state to explain myself nor apologize so I continued my race

"What an impatient little girl..guess I'll have to deal with here" I heard him mumble or maybe it was just my imagination or him referring to someone else since we don't know each other and the chances of us ever meeting is a zero point zero percent.

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I arrived home to be met by three black limousines parked at the front of the house.

I slowed down my pace, seeing three men in black standing at the door with straight faces, but that wasn't my concern at the moment; my concern was my bags standing before me.

"Uncle, aunt..why are my luggages here?"

"Well it's a good thing that you're back, now off you go," she said not paying me a glance

"Off...I go? But where?" I questioned my voice barely visible

"You see, since my mother is dead, there's no way we can continue caring for you so those people over there are willing to take up your responsibility," she said with a smile but I doubt all she was saying was the truth

"Just be sincere with her, after all our mother did for her, this is the least she can do to repay us for all the unnecessary expenses she caused us.

I owe their boss some money and in exchange for that money you're being taken away" he said coldly

"Like..you sold me?" I spoke up

"You've always been a mute. At last, you've said something reasonable.

Yes little orphan you've been sold off"

I wanted to laugh and tell them to stop their cruel joke as it was no longer funny, but seeing their facial expressions and knowing how bad our relationship had been over the years I knew they weren't joking

I looked up to find Suzy trying to form some words with her mouth which I could understand after taking an intense look at her

'Run away' she said and I clenched my bag

Since destiny decided to play such a cruel game with me, I think it's high time I take my destiny into my own hands

"Ma'am, this way," one of the men in black came forward towards me, and taking my chance and calculating my move, I took to my heels.

"Catch her!" I could hear them scream but there was no way I was going to oblique.

The only problem I knew was going to be an obstacle to my escape plan was my panic attacks since I could barely keep up my race.

Feeling myself run out of breath, I stopped, trying to find a cab, but there was none, so I resumed my race, seeing the people in black catching up to me.

It felt like destiny was playing a game of cat and mice with me since I had no one to run to nor ask for help, except,

The orphanage and the church.

Remembering the orphanage, I was adopted from; I took a right turn that could lead me to the express road; even if the orphanage doesn't serve as a permanent hiding house, I could hide there temporarily until I think of something.

I snuggled my way into the crowd of people waiting for the pedestrian light to turn green before crossing the road and tried catching my breath.

My heart throbbed vigorously against my ribcage and my chest slowly closed up. I placed my hand on my chest, trying to calm my breath, but it didn't seem to be working. Instead, it felt as if my world had come to a sudden stop, and everything around me seemed hazy.

I fixed my glasses properly, blinking multiple times, trying to regain my sight, but it was of no use as my knees suddenly began to feel weak. I looked up to find everyone almost at the other end of the road while I was the only one still standing.

If I had read about this somewhere else and I wasn't in this situation, I would have said the person in my shoes lacked the determination to fight, but that wasn't the case for me as my entire body refused to oblique me.

Could this be what the priest meant by there would come a time when it seems there's no hope and it's the end of everything, but if only I believe, then.

My thoughts were interrupted as I suddenly felt a huge hand taking mine in there. I looked up but still couldn't tell who it was.

"Are you tired already? They are almost catching up to us" I heard him say and his voice sent sparks down my stomach

"Come on the pedestrian light is about to turn red," he said pulling me towards the road I felt like my guardian angel had finally appeared before me, ready to save me from my distress, and although I couldn't see his face, I could tell he was someone kind and caring for his voice

Stupid right?

But I don't care as long as I'm able to escape the hell I currently found myself in.

As he kept pulling me towards the road, I wanted to tell him I could no longer move nor take it anymore as a result of my body's weakness, but I didn't have the strength to. All I could see was me being pulled into a dark world and everything in it enclosing me.

Chapter 2: 2

I looked at the fragile figure lying on the bed, and a sigh escaped my mouth. The thought of how she managed to still have a peaceful expression even in her sleep despite all she'd been through kept lingering in my head although it was none of my business.

"Mr Xavier, can you tell me how she passed out?" Our family doctor suddenly turned toward me and I took a step backwards trying to find the perfect words to describe the situation without painting the orchestrator as the bad guy.

"She was suddenly sweating profusely and panting for breath. Before I knew it, she collapsed " I said, and she brought out a syringe from the bag she brought with her and withdrew blood from Carmela.

"What you mentioned could be symptoms of hypoglycemia according to her health records that were delivered to me, but to make my diagnosis accurate, I'll run some tests on her.

I've prescribed some medication for her make sure she takes them, especially the blood supplements because her blood level is very low, if care isn't taken she might need to undergo a blood transfusion and make sure she eats a lot of vegetables" She instructed and I nodded in understanding

"I'll see you out," I said but she quickly refused shaking her head vigorously

"I have to report to your older brother as well, so it's okay," she said with a smile before making her way towards the door.

I looked the the prescription I was holding and the fragile figure lying on the bed

What exactly have you been through and why did my brother choose you of all people?

From my years of observation, Carmela has always been a quiet person and hardly gets into conversation with others even in class, which sometimes makes me wonder if she has a life or wants to live as a ghost.

Her art pieces would gain a lot of attention but she never stood up to speak about them. After years of watching her from the side, I finally decided to ask our professor about her just to find out that she was a mutism patient who had a love for art and an aspiring writer, which I found unique and proud of, but still, what could be the connection between her and my cold-hearted brother?.

I stepped out of the room Carmela was lying in, closing the door behind me while I made my way to find the butler

"I heard someone got involved in my business?" I stumbled as I recognized the owner of the voice from behind me. I closed my eyes cursing my bad luck

"Hello there brother, I didn't expect you to be home by this hour," I said smiling trying to hide the fact that I was trembling

"The next time you get involved with my matters I would not take it likely with you," he said in a cold tone giving me a death glare as he walked past me

"But.." I wanted to speak up, but not hearing his footsteps anymore made my heart skip a bit. "I have an assignment I have to complete, the professor is going to deduct my

mark if I bring in an incomplete art piece," I said, running up the stairs toward my room. His aura alone made me feel like I was about to choke to death although I've spent my entire life with him, I wonder how Carmela would be able to cope.

I pity poor the poor girl.

"She was better off staying in an orphanage than staying in this hell known as my brother's house"

"Excuse me?"

Oops did I say that out loud?

I turned around with trembling feet to find his expression expectedly cold and his eyes lazily glaring at me

"Did I say something?" I asked forcing a smile

"How about I book you a nice and spacious room in an orphanage since my house feels like hell?" He raised an eyebrow

Oh goodness! I should have taken what my zodiac sign prediction said seriously, today surely is a bad day for me.

"When did I say that?" I said placing my hand on my chest and acting dramatically "I was merely singing a song in which one of the lines said 'she was better off staying in an orphanage.. than staying in this hell known as my brother's house' You see" I said in a song like manner just to have him walk away from me not sparing me a glance

I grabbed onto the stair rail, feeling my legs trembling as he walked away. Does having such a cold-hearted brother count as having a family?

Well that I doubt.

Just as my panic settled down, the sudden vibration from my phone diverted my attention. Seeing the name of the caller added a layer of suspense to my already tense moment.

"Hello" I resumed my journey back to my room

"Just one word, is it true?" I heard her question from the other end of the phone

"What are you talking about?" I sighed

"Did your brother bring a woman into the house!" I detached my phone from my ear hearing her scream.

How exactly does she get such information? Did she perhaps fix a camera somewhere?
I thought looking around

"Stop looking around and answer me"

"Listen here girl, did you leave a camera here?"

"That isn't the answer I was looking for, bro; who is she, and which family does she belong to? I want to know everything," I could hear her impatient tone from over the phone. First Nix and now her, my zodiac reading was accurate then

"Her name is Carmela, she's eighteen years old and she attended the same university as me, she's also a writer and a nice person but she's an orphan" I introduced

"Wait, what did you just say? You must be kidding me right? What could your brother be wanting from a girl he's ten years older than?"

Well, that's what I also want to know; Nix has never gotten involved with any woman. Even when he was set on a blind date by our uncle, he always found an excuse not to attend it, so what could have caused a change of heart for him?

"Could it be?"

"Be?" I raised an eyebrow

"Could Carmela be pregnant, and she refused to keep the baby, and that's why Nix decided to bring her in forcefully? Did you seriously not hear anything important after eavesdropping on him for an entire month?" I could hear the frustration in her tone. Where exactly did she get thoughts like this though from?

"Nope, and I doubt she's pregnant if she is then the doctor would have told me" I closed the door behind me as I walked into my room

"Ahh! You're such a dummy, Nix could have told her not to..whatever, I'll come back in a few days and sort everything thing out myself okay"

"Forget about sorting things out, you'll be in deep trouble if Nix sees you anywhere near him" I scoffed before ending the call

Does she think it's easy to eavesdrop on Nix without having your heart in your throat? I have had to walk on eggshells for the past month because I didn't want to get caught by Nix and here she thinks I was fooling around.

"Forget Nix if you don't complete the assignment the professor gave to you before dawn, you'll be in serious trouble, Xavier," I said, retrieving my drawing marker from when I kept them.

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I looked around the room and it was filled with an orchestra of beeping machines, each tone signaling a vital statistic which I barely cared about its function. Amidst the mechanical symphony, I looked at the pale, fragile figure lying motionless on the bed, surrounded by the sterile hum of medical equipment, before taking a seat on the king size couch in the room.

"Introduction" I stretched out my hand receiving the file from my assistant

"Name; Carmela, Age;18. She's a mutism patient, so she hardly interacts with people, and according to the recent doctor's report, she is very low on both blood and sugar and must be taken proper care of.

As you suspected, she is the same girl you met that day, sir, and also the same person who bumped into you at the church.

Also, your second suspicion of her adoption background was right. Carmela as you suspected was adopted by the old woman who died a few months ago." Ken gave a detailed report on the young girl lying on the bed but never mentioned a thing about her involvement with anyone in the dynasty.

"She must have truly lost her memory then. I hope I didn't waste my money on this creature lying on the bed" I tilted my head twirling the pen I held in my hand

Did I make the right choice bringing her into my house and signing the contract or did I just bring forth more expenses for myself?

I already have a hard time with the kids I'm taking care of. Would I be able to handle another kid?

Well only time can tell, as of now I just need to focus on one thing my business,myself and my goal nothing much and nothing less

"Get me every information you can about her biological parents either the mother or father"

"Yes sir"

"Also, how is the contract signing going?" I placed my signature on the final page of the documents I was signing

"I've gone through the contract, and I don't just seem satisfied with it; it's as if it's not transparent enough.

Clause one and two lack enough information on the second party and clause four defies the law of contract in contract law as there is no mutual agreement between the two parties signing the contract and can easily be defined by the second party so I disapproved with the renewal of the contract and also informed the legal team to contact them"

Seems pleasing enough, I just wish all my issues get solved like this but nature and destiny decided to join hands together to say otherwise

"Sir, the chairman called to remind you of the blind dates"

"Just tell him.."

"He said, I quote 'saying you're busy, sick or having a prior appointment isn't going to be an excuse this time around unless you wish to give me a grandchild without having to get bonded in the bondage you know as marriage.

Just go see her you rascal before I have a heart attack from imagining you die single like me' that's all"

Then why doesn't he just imagine me dying single and just having a heart attack so I can live peacefully?

What's the need to turn it into a national anthem?

"Mum!" I turned to find Carmela clutching tightly to the bed sheets, seems she was having a good time in her dream

"Get the car prepared I'll be out in fifteen minutes," I said and headed towards my room.

Chapter 3: 3

I looked at my watch, and it was already thirty minutes past eight, it seemed someone was running late.

The blind date was supposed to be by eight, but it's already been thirty minutes since I arrived, and there is no trace of my so-called blind date.

"When are we going to visit the chairman?" I looked at Ken who had been seated with me across the table

"Today by nine"

"That means I have thirty minutes more to waste.

Can this be a sign from nature saying I just have to be patient and all my problems would go on their own?" I asked a rhetorical question expecting no replies as usual

"Hello," a lady dressed in a Florida pink dress said smiling from ear to ear

"You must be Miss Sunday right?" Ken inquired and I was already getting the feeling that I am wasting my time so I didn't spare her a glance even as she took her seat

"Nix.."

"Refer to me as Mr Dean, I hate it when people cross the limits" I warned looking up to find Ken shaking his head vigorously

"Oh..alright..its okay" she said nervously tucking her hair behind her ear. "I hope you excuse me for being late.."she said nonchalantly taking a sip from the glass before her. "I honestly totally forgot about the blind date, and when my PA reminded me, It was already too late.

To be sincere I never wanted to come for this blind date, but seeing you I think I made the right choice" She began swaying her tail like a dog looking for treats.

"Well since we're both here, and the table is set how about we have dinner," she said picking up her cutlery and began eating

"Don't you have anything to say, Mr Dean? I mean, this entire date was set up by the elders in our family; I at least need your consent to know if your thoughts match mine because I'd love for things to work out between us." Why is she getting her hopes high?

"Unpunctual, talkative, unethical, lack of manners, courtesy and fashion skills"

"Excuse me?" She dropped her cutlery looking at me with wild eyes

"That's my honest thought. You know I really appreciate your honesty but that doesn't change my thoughts about our meeting or your unruly behavior. We can't be together because you don't match my standards and I hate it when people act and behave without turns, so don't try getting your hopes high about me..." I pick up my coat

"Because this meeting was a total waste of time to me" I tried my absolute best to be polite and keep my words in check

"I feel your thoughts are rude so I'll take your words as an insult.." she drop the cutlery she was holding "Mr Dean with all due respect, but do you know your actions can affect the productivity of your company? I can easily ask my dad to pull out from being an investor "saying that she earned a chuckle from me as I felt what she was saying was childish

"My company wouldn't be affected one bit so please feel free running over to your dad, as I'd prefer going on a date with a little kid than with you who lacks common fashion sense," I finally stood to my feet about to get away from this unholy look she has on "I already made payments so please feel free to eat to your heart content, I'll also treat this as a charity event" I scoffed not breaking eye contact with her.

I wonder why parent's never teach their children proper manners and punish them instead of supporting them when they do wrong.. I'll have to do a better job with my little girl I wouldn't want her becoming a bit like this.

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"In a love story, who does the female lead end up with, the hero or the villain?"

"Isn't it obvious sir, it's the hero of course?" the nurse said with a smile, and a sigh escaped my mouth

"That means my dear child is going to be lonely forever.." my shoulders slumped and the thought of him brought chills to my stomach "You know, death hunts those who challenge him.. and when he takes a stroll, even fear itself takes a step backward.." I looked outside the window as I envisioned everything I said. "..because he not only strikes the physical appearance of a person but even their soul in short, he's called the devil incarnate in human form.."

"Seem this old man knows a lot about me already" I was suddenly interrupted by the devil himself.

Speaking of the devil was the only line that came to mind. I raised my left hand dismissing the nurse as he took the seat beside my bed while his assistant gave me a slight bow

"You have finally decided to visit?" I laid back on the bed not wanting to make eye contact with him

"Nope, I came to give you feedback about the girl you set me up with.."

"I know it's not going to work out so let me think about the remaining days of my life peacefully before I pass on" I interrupted not wanting to say much nor expose my little secret

"If you want to die then just do it stop threatening me with it" I heard him scoff and sat up straight

"So my threats do affect you?"

"No," he said emotionlessly, cutting my hopes short how exactly did I end up with such a grandchild?

"Then leave, I'm tired of trying to convince you" I laid back on the bed

"Well, I'd love to do that, but you'll only create a scene in the hospital and try convincing me once more to attend the family gathering, which I'll continuously refuse.."

"But why? You're still a son of that family no matter what they think so why don't you just overlook them?" I looked up to find him twirling a pen in his left hand with his face disclosing no emotions

"Because I don't want to, I told you years ago that I called quits with being the good guy, as it only makes people want to take me for granted.."

"And is that why you threatened to kill the sons of your third and fourth uncle if they don't transfer their shares to you?" I questioned just for the room temperature to drop and Nix's aura to become even darker. I suddenly found it hard to breathe but mask my discomfort with a straight face.

"Seems you've already heard of that," he said with a nasty smirk his voice dripping with a dark energy "But they failed to tell you the truth, I didn't threaten them, I meant every single word I said and that's why I shut both of them straight in the chest and if they didn't submit to my demand I surely would have sent a bullet into their brains" I looked into his eyes to find no single hint of emotions nor sympathy. They were like a dark hole ready to suck in anything at anytime

"Then what if I refuse to transfer my shares to you, knowing I'm the major shareholder of the company, what would you do?" I questioned and he snapped the pen he was holding into two and threw them in the trash can

"I'd get rid of you like I just did with that pen, the only reason I haven't fulfilled your wish of having a heart attack is that my kids are still fond of you so count yourself a lucky old man, and stop trying to get involved in my life because my time is money," he said patting me on my cheek before making his way towards the door

"I heard you brought a young girl home, who is she?" I questioned and he suddenly stopped at the door turning to face me with a dead smirk

"I see gossip spread as wildfire, it's barely been twenty-four hours since I brought her home, and seems the entire family is already aware of her existence, I think it's time someone gets punished for gossiping"

"Hey, leave the kids out of this, I just wanted to know if she is.."

"I'll say it one more time, and I hope it sticks to you; stay out of my matters, old man, unless I'll send you to your ancestors if you don't.

Who she is and why I brought her into my house is none of your business so make sure you remember that before trying to investigate me okay and if anything happens to her then prepare to have a mass burial of the Aron's.

Be sure to extend my greetings to my dear uncles so they don't forget about my existence" he scoffed before leaving the room and I fell back to my bed feeling my heart pounding aggressively against my ribcage.

This boy might not just be the root cause of my death one day but also the reason for the down fall of the Aron family

If only my brother didn't pass away so quickly then I wouldn't have to pay for the consequences of his actions by taking care of his inhumane grandson and trying to reason with his four sons.

If only he allowed his only daughter to live a happy married life with the person she chose, then maybe things wouldn't be the way they are now, and Nix could have the opportunity to live happily.

I guess so..but I believe things would have been better than it is now.

It's almost a decade since his parent's death and I've never seen that young man smile or cry, he left home without his siblings one day and came back after two years to take them back and I was never able to gather information on what he was up to nor who he associated with but one thing was for sure, he wasn't the same child I use to play catch with.

He grew up way too fast for his good which was an advantage and disadvantage for him as he only had to focus on his studies and taking care of his siblings rather than lavishing like his uncle who never expected him to get to where he currently is, since they always looked down on him as the son of a common chef who had no power nor wealth expect a little restaurant at the side of the road, but now the son of a common chef hold the key to the fate of the entire Aron family members.

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"Carmela wake up" I could hear someone call

"Carmela" they called again and I look behind me to find strange gun men standing before me. One had a sinister smile which sent strange creeps to my stomach. I could feel the fear that wasn't there in the first place slowly crawling up into my chest and my heart beat speeding rapidly.

As he took a step closer to me I took one back but it only made them laugh more

"Where do you think you're going to? Do you think you would survive if you jump off the cliff?" He questioned and I suddenly turned to my left feeling a heavy gaze on me. I felt relieved seeing a particular person that also hanged over the cliff from the other side but I couldn't tell who he was because his face was foggy. I looked at him pleading for help and although he was in no condition to offer me help I felt reassured he would do something to save me.

"Jump" I read his lip but shook my head "Trust me and jump" he said again and I looked at the gunned me standing before me. Not like I actually have any choices in the first place and so I did like he instructed.

I could feel gravity pulling me down as the wind slapped again my face, my hair blocking my vision as the whispering sounds of the wind filled my ears. The water's surface glistened like a sheet of molten silver, growing larger and more turbulent with each passing second. My stomach dropped as I pierced through the water's surface and bullets rained after me, the impact sending shockwaves through my body. The world around me dissolved into a chaotic blur of white foam and turquoise depths, as I plunged into the water's icy embrace.

I suddenly sat up feeling my heart race like crazy. I looked around to find myself in a dark room which only source of light was the dim light beside me. My hand was connected to an IV and other beeping machines that made my head ache.

It was all a dream

I said to myself but the experience felt so real that my hands were still trembling. Feeling my head spin I hurriedly took out the IV drip and stood to my feet as I tried to make my way towards the door but my vision suddenly turned foggy but it wasn't going to be an obstacle to me. I strived getting to my feet although I kept falling but finally got to the door. Turning the door knob, I was met with a lot of light making me fall to the ground one more time. I crawled my way through the hallway as I approached the stairs before me my vision suddenly turned super blurry but still I was determined to leave this place.

I rose to my feet about to take my first step on the stair but missed my footing leading to me falling. I closed my eyes shut expecting the pain to settle in but it didn't instead I felt a pair of strong arms wrapped around my waist

"Trying to run away? Little beloved" just like a spell I opened my eyes, feeling a chill run down my spine. I couldn't make out who it was due to the darkness but the fact about the effect this individual has on me is undeniable. I tried to break myself free from his grasp but his grip around me only got stronger. He placed his finger under my chin pulling my face close to him and then I lost my entire sense of rationality as his soft lips claimed mine.

"Don't ever think about leaving until I give you the permission to. You're mine " he whispered against my lips while I tried to catch my breath and process everything that just happened but was suddenly swept off my feet

"If you try escaping once more then get prepared to be punished"

Chapter 4: 4

I opened my eyes just to be met by a charming soul but everything felt a bit blurry

As the soft glow of the fading sunlight bathed the room I was in, a fine young man emerged, his presence casting a captivating aura. With a commanding height that spoke of strength and confidence, he stood some feet away from the bed I was lying at, his gaze penetrating yet enigmatic. His fiery red hair framed a face chiseled with rugged charm, accentuating the intensity of his gray eyes that seemed to hold a universe of stories.

As the sunlight danced upon his features, shadows played across his defined jawline, creating an intriguing contrast. Dressed impeccably, he embodied a fusion of style and substance, a manifestation of every girl's dream including mine.

His demeanor exuded a quiet allure, leaving an indelible impression on me.

But something about him felt familiar although I have never met with him

Am I dead and did I end up somewhere in-between life and death with such a breathtaking angel about to pronounce judgment on me?

But wait aren't angels supposed to have wings or something? And how come this one is dressed so formally? Do they also wear such clothes here?

My eyes felt too heavy so I closed them back trying to get my strength back and comprehend what was going on but it just felt like I was being drawn into a dark hole.

I could suddenly hear someone calling my name, so I opened my eyes to find someone pointing a touch in my eye and waving their hand, but I couldn't make out who it was as everything looked blurry to me

Is it because I didn't have my glasses on? I wondered trying to give an explanation to my I have been having these blurry visions.

But I could at least see things this close to me so why is everything suddenly so different now?

I blinked a few times and everything slowly became clearer and I found a lady looking at me with smile. I felt a cold liquid flowing through my left hand and a huge pen on my left thumb.

The beeps of machines could be heard repeatedly in the room and for some reason I found it annoying

"Shouldn't the oxygen mask be taken off now? Or can't she breathe without it?" I heard the voice of the person who grabbed my hand while I was running and turned to find a familiar figure, he almost had similar looks with the man I saw earlier when I first opened my eyes but the difference was he had dark hair and light brown eyes and also looked a bit younger than the first man I saw, even his height and demeanour was different

"Carmela I'll be taking off your oxygen mask, if you find it hard to breathe then give me a nod if you don't then don't respond" she said with the nicest smile I've ever received before taking off the oxygen mask I was wearing

'But where exactly am I?' I looked up to find myself in a spacious room..and the memories of the last night flooded in which led to me unconsciously touching my lips. I look up at the person beside me wondering if he was the same person from last night but I wasn't convinced enough because their voices sounded different.

Ah! Carmela you haven't even spent up to twenty four hours here and you've started kissing I wonder what would happen if I spend any more time here.

"Her vitals are normal, just feed her and give her the medications I have prescribed and she'll return to her full health in no time." The lady's voice interrupted my thoughts

"Alright" he said with a smile

"No need to see me off, I'll take my leave now, call me if anything comes up" the lady said making her way towards the door.

"Hello Carmela, do you recognize me?" I slowly sat up shifting my gaze from the lady who is about to take her leave to him as I tried to remember where I saw him

"Ha..have..we..met before?" I managed to ask and he nodded picking up a pen and a long note as he handed me my glasses

"You can write down your thoughts here if you find it hard to interact with me.

So let me introduce, I'm Xavier Dean and I attend the same university with you, also we're in the same department" he smiled

No wonder he looks familiar

'What am I doing here?' I wrote down on the paper he handed me and raised it up for him to read

"Remember why you were running? Because you wanted to run away from those people..well it turns out my brother was the one you were sold to"

Excuse you? I don't get what you're trying to say,I wanted to scream but for some reason I couldn't help but stare at his face as he smiled

"So don't freak out okay,and from what I know staying here is the safest for you"he took a seat at the bed end while staring immensely at me

"Damn! Does she even understand what I'm saying?" He suddenly stood to his feet tilting his head to the side

"I'm not dumb,I just find it hard to express myself sometimes" I voiced out finding his comment annoying

"Wow,she's also sharp tongued what a match made in heaven or maybe hell"he faced me smiling from side to side and I raised an eyebrow questioning what he was hitting at

"If you want to live peacefully in this house then I'll be giving you some tips.

The first thing you need to do is forget about running away, secondly,with time you'll get used to the way things are done here but untill then,if you don't want to get thrown out nor punished then avoid one person 'Nix Dean' who is my elder brother and your savior or offender or maybe the devil..what ever you see him as.

To be honest,he can be a demon or an angel whichever he pleases to be but most times he's a demon so be careful"

Is he actually dissing his brother before me or truly worried about me? I couldn't help but ask myself as I look up to be met by his wild eyes

"Nix Dean is usually home from 9pm to 8am,so try your best to avoid those hours okay, remember the story of the big bad wolf and the three piglets?" I nodded in response as my curiosity got the better of me

"He is the big bad wolf and you,I and one more person are the three piglets so make sure you avoid him unless we'll all lose our houses" he said with folded hands "And one more thing, we usually have breakfast at 7:30 so please make sure you're at the dinning table even if you're not hungry please,I beg you to be there to prevent the third world war from breaking out in this very house and no midnight snaking after 10pm,he can send one to jail for that if they are caught.."

Jail really? Why exaggerate? I said inwardly

"So good luck and welcome to Nix Dean's house" he showed me two thumbs up as he made his way out of the room closing the door behind him.

To be more precise I just landed in house which I believe is much better than the one I was living in but more of a prison? I guess.

Destiny surely knows how to shoot it's shot.

As if taking grandma wasn't enough,I had to get sold off to a man who's more like a demon and sometimes an angel according to the description I was given by my so called Uncle and aunt. I turned to left to find my hand connected to another IV drip and I sighed trying to come up with a plan to break myself free.

Xavier was surely right about one thing,the safest place I could be at right now is this house,but I don't plan on staying here forever,I surely need to come up with something,but what given my situation?

I reached out to the side of the bed and picked up my phone to find a lot of missed calls from Suzy and editor Damian

"He.."

"Carmela are you okay? Were you able to get away from them? Where are you" Suzy panicked from the other end of the phone and I suddenly felt at a lose

"I'm okay" I said and I could hear her sign in relief

"That's good news to my ear,but where are you staying? I even had to reach out to your editor to check if you were with him but he said no"

Well if you let me speak I'll tell you everything in details,why did I even have to be created with such a phycological patient?

According to the psychiatrist I wasn't born that way and it was due to a traumatic event,but for some reason I can't remember that event nor overcome it.

"I'm at the house of the person I was sold to"

"What?!" She screamed and I had to extend my hand from my ear a bit

"I'll..I'll also be staying here for a few days so don't worry,it's not as back as we thought" I smiled doubting if what I actually said is true especially after hearing what the strange man of yesterday said

"I hope so,call me if anything happens okay I'll try talking with my friends as well"

"Okay..bye" I ended the call to find a message from editor Damian

'Suzy told me what happened with you,I don't want you to feel pressured about your book I'll try my best to calm the readers.

Make sure to take care of yourself and call me if you need any help' it read and the smile on my face suddenly drained.

Everyone is ready to take my side and support me but can I actually help myself?

Will I be able to survive living with the so called Nix Dean or will I be succumbed to running away?

Well only time can tell.

A knock on the door called for my attention and I looked up to find a lady dressed in a maid uniform

"Madam,I am the one the master as placed in charge of taking care of you. Please feel free to reach out to me if you need my assistance with anything or you want anything" she said with her head bowed.

Madam?

That title felt kind of off because I shared no relationship with their master

"What.. what is..what is your name?" I inquired with a raised eyebrow

"Juliet "

Chapter 5: 5

I watched as the lady I saw when I woke up disconnected the drip I was connected to after which she cleaned up the are with a soaked cotton wool

"I'll help you go to the dining room" she smiled looking up to me and I nodded as she helped me get off the bed. My legs suddenly felt like jelly at first and I almost kissed the ground with my butt but thankfully her hold on me was firm.

"To be honest I feel as if this house has turned into my second duty post, please recover quickly so I can stop coming over every second okay" she sighed as well got closer to the dinning table. I am not aware how stressful her career is but the fact that ever career is stressful can not be denied

"I'm sorry," I said fixing my glasses as I sat on the seat she drew out for me

"No need to be, just eat properly and recover quickly, also don't ever get ill then I'll feel the sincerity of your apology" she smiled

"Are you threatening your patient by any chance?" I looked up to find the guy with red hair dressed in a casual sweater and a pair of black trousers walking down the stairs. His deep, hushed voice sent shivers down my spine as memories of that night returned, although I wanted to look away I suddenly felt hypnotized by his simple but yet alluring appearance.

"No..no I was...i was just trying to tell her to be extra careful with her health, since I'm done with the check-up I'll take my leave," the doctor said taking to her heels

Well I guess she is also afraid of him, but why exactly are they scared of him?

He doesn't look like a monster or anything, but still, I have to tread with care and study every single one of them if I actually want to successfully run away from here.

"Good evening brother" Xavier walked towards me taking a seat beside me just to be met by the cold eyes of his brother which turned my feet cold

"Why are you late for dinner?" Mr. Dean suddenly questioned

"You never came for dinner so I never had to set a timer for it just like I usually do for breakfast" he murmured

"Excuse you?" Mr Dean responded in a soft yet threatening tone

"I was wrapping up my assignment, I'm sorry for being late" Xavier quickly apologized but I doubt he meant it

"You must be well acquainted with our quest over here since you both attend the same art class, so I'll get straight to the point, Miss Carmela.." he called and I look up to meet his lazy eyes on me "... you must be aware of the condition in which you were brought in here so I hope you don't try anything stupid like you tried the previous night unless they would be consequences." I quickly averted eye contact with him feeling my face burning up

"If you don't know, then I must inform you that I hate wasting money, so I hope you don't make me regret bringing you into my house," he said in a cold tone that made me feel like my soul was about to jump out of my body.

"He never speaks more than a hundred words a day but I guess today is different..I just hope I'll be able to have a good night's rest today or maybe I'll be having a nightmare" hitting the plate before him with his cutlery, I heard Xavier murmured for the second time just to be met by the death stare of his brother

"Can I eat now? I'm starving." he rolled his eyes, and I suddenly felt like I was in a building with a ticking bomb that was going to explode any second.

I looked up to find Mr Dean having a bite of his meal, same with Xavier, so I also picked up my cutleries.

But then..Why was my dish so different from theirs?

I've never been a fan of vegetables from a very young age, but here I have my entire plate filled with vegetables.

Am I a human being or a rabbit?

I twirled the spoon I was holding while looking at the unappetizing dish before me while biting the bottom of my lips thinking of what to do

If I don't have at least a bite from the plate, it may seem rude, but the truth is I can't bring myself to have a bite of it..id rather fast than do it.

"You don't seem to like the dish" I looked up through my glasses to find Mr Dean looking down at me

I opened my mouth to speak but couldn't form words so I picked up the notebook Xavier had given me earlier

"It's not that I don't like the dish, I don't feel like having it" I lied through my teeth. Not even mother nature herself can convince me to eat this dish that I can vouch for

"I see, might be the side effects of the drugs you were administered. Butler!" He called and a man who seemed to be in his fifties dressed in a formal attire made his way toward us before bowing slightly

"Please ask the chef to make a more simple and healthy dish for her, because she's currently lacking appetite," he instructed, and the butler made his way towards the kitchen.

Weird. Am I getting special treatment or is this just him being an angel

"Wonderful, he suddenly seems quite observant all of a sudden" our commentator added

"Xavier, isn't this year supposed to be your final year?" Xavier suddenly choked on his glass of water. Someone never seen to learn.

"Yes"

"Then what are your plans? Do you still plan on living under my roof even after your graduation?" Mr Dean's question and the temperature in the room dropped

"We..well I do have my plans, I'll show them to you in a presentation format after my graduation which is in a few months from now" he answered not lifting his face from his plate.

Are they truly brothers or was he also bought by Nix Dean?

"Since Carmela attends the university as you make sure you take care of her since you're her senior," he said before taking his leave from the dining table

"Take care of her my foot I just feel like kicking him in the face" Xavier cursed dropping his cutlery "Don't get deceived by his good nature, this is just him showing his good side, his devilish side is even much worse than you can imagine" he sighed leaving the dining table as well.

one can say they are enemies rather than brothers just from one look.

"I miss you so much, Grandma," I sighed, resting my head on the table.

For some reason, I find myself between the devil and the deep blue sea as I'm still unaware of who this Nix Dean is and what he wants from me.

It's so weird that someone like him would be willing to pay a huge sum of money for someone like me, who would neither bring him any benefit but only bring him more trouble.

Could there be more to be more to what's happening that I am unaware of?

What could his motives be for keeping a mute girl like me in his residence?

"you must be aware of the condition in which you were brought in here so I hope you don't try anything stupid like you tried the previous night unless they would be consequences" I heard his voice and suddenly felt chilly.

Neither do I want to stay, nor can I run.

What could be the consequences he spoke of?

I guess until I can find a suitable answer to all my questions, I'll have to stay in this house and discover the connection between Me and Mr Dean or maybe him and my adoptive family since no explanation can make total sense to me as of the moment.

"Madam" I looked up to find Juliet hold a plate and a gentle smile "Your food is prepared" she placed the dish before me and was about to take her leave

It wouldn't be a bad idea to make a friend would it?

I tapped on the chair beside me and I could blankly see her refuse. I pick up the pen and sheet I used earlier

"Please spend some time with me I feel lonely" I showed her

"I don't mind spending time with you madam but taking a seat at the dining table of the master can lead to me losing my job" hearing her call me madam felt cranky especially since she was older than me.

"Please refer to me as Carmela and I was the one who asked you to seat with me. But if you don't feel comfortable how about we go somewhere you are comfortable with?" I looked up to her and could tell she was already giving up.

"Okay I'll seat but not for long okay?" I smiled giving her a thumbs up before digging into my dish

"I don't mean to sound rude.." I looked up Juliet to find her fiddling with the hemming of her skirt "Can you actually speak?" She looks up to me with curiosity filled eyes and a chuckle escaped my mouth before I nodded

"Oh, I'm sorry if it made you feel uncomfortable but..it's just that I have never heard you speak" I waved her off. I've been asked this same question In different circumstances and honestly her manner of asking felt more appealing.

"So..how did you and Master get together? If you don't mind me asking .. actually I over heard other staffs saying that he's had a clean slate and has never brought a lady home so you're the first" well I actually have the same question.

How did I and their Master get entangled ? But even I don't have that answer so I shrugged my shoulders still maintaining my smile and could see her sigh with a pout

"Must be love at first sight then" I heard her say and suddenly choked on my food. "Oh my goodness sorry, have a glass of water" she brought the glass close to my lips while I tried to gulp it down.

Any order circumstances I could accept but love.. that's like the most impossible scenario to think about.

Chapter 6: 6

The calmness and emptiness of the dinning table welcomed me. I took a look at my watch and back up at the dining room.

Did I perhaps walk into the wrong house or am I dreaming?

It's already thirty five minutes past seven and Nix was nowhere to be found, which was new, Carmela on the other hand was nowhere to be found, it seems she didn't take my words seriously.

"Good morning Uncle Adam" I greeted the butler with a smile as the aroma of dishes filled my lungs

"Good morning young master, how was your night rest?"

"It was okay. I just hope that my morning will be better. Where is Nix? Did he leave already?" I began counting my chickens before they could hatch

"No, young master still hasn't stepped out of his room" my smile suddenly disappeared from my face

Well who was I kidding? Nix Dean has never allowed me have a peaceful morning, it's either he nags me about my plans after my final year or just finds a way to annoy me.

Gone are the days when he would go on long business trips or come for breakfast without altering a word

"Do you want to wait for the young master or have breakfast?"

"I'll have breakfast without him, I have an important class this morning" I took my seat just to find my dearest brother walking down the stairs with that straight face of his that sends fear down the spine of everyone but still makes girls fall for him.

Can't believe our parents gave him all the charm and left me with nothing. Speaking of charm, I'm reminded of my last two girlfriends who dumped me because of my brother who didn't know of their existence.

Like seriously what do they even see in him?

"If you're done staring at me then eat your food properly" he took his seat while the maid served him his plate. I look up to find him taking a bite from his plate and I couldn't help but roll my eyes.

As I was about to take another bite from my plate, Carmela suddenly walked into the dining room looking as if she just encountered a tornado while her maid rushed in from behind her

"Good morning master" the maid greeted Nix with a slight bow before tapping on Carmela who was already dozing off while standing.

"Oh...I'm sorry I'm late" she bowed slightly with her eyes still closed before taking her seat and I could find my brother's keen eyes on her.

It was the first time he was hearing her voice so I at least expected him to be surprised but that wasn't the case or maybe I'm just too bad at reading his facial expression. Well I doubt I'll ever be seeing Nix's surprised face even in a thousand years.

Still with her eyes closed, Carmela picked up her spoon but suddenly let go of it making a loud cling which startled her making me chuckle while her maid slammed her eyes shut in embarrassment.

"If you're still sleepy then don't force yourself to come out for breakfast, you can ask the chef to make you something when you're hungry" Nix spoke up surprisingly to me while Carmela nodded although I doubt she heard what he is saying.

"You can go back to your room but get prepared before noon I'll send someone to pick you up..help her back" he signalled her maid who hurriedly helped Carmela up and led her back to her room.

I suddenly felt jealous of the special treatment she was receiving, I've never been asked to skip breakfast if I want to nor given the floor room no matter how much I plead

But here Carmela is getting everything on a platter of gold. Her room was suddenly changed from the second floor to the ground floor overnight for reasons personally known to my dearest brother.

"The old man spoke of the family gathering again" I let out a sigh listening to him. Why doesn't grandpa just stop bothering himself by inviting us to the family gathering?

"I don't feel like going" I scoffed and he nodded

"Same here, but that's not what I wanted to talk about. Since you're a major in fine art, how about owning the biggest art gallery in the city" his question sounded unrealistic but knowing his persona it wasn't impossible. But at the moment, the biggest art gallery in the city belongs to one of our uncles and from our relationship with them for the past few years I doubt he'll be willing to let me run it.

"Is that even possible? I mean the biggest art gallery belongs to the fourth uncle.."

"Really? Does it?" He said with a smirk and I could suddenly feel fireworks lighting up in my head

"What do I have to do?" I smiled, dropping my cutlery since we were now on the same page.

"What you are good at. A little bird told me that the third uncle's son would be meeting with the mayor's daughter tonight seeing you've got my looks and a little bit of my brains swaying her wouldn't be difficult.

I've sent a hundred million to you.." my phone suddenly beeped and I pick it up to find an alert message "..You better use it well,also there is a new car parked outside,here are the keys.." he tossed them to me and I couldn't stop the smile on my face

"Make use of what I've given to you wisely and give me good results then the art gallery would be yours" He stood to his feets,but Nix never does things without having a reason making me wonder.

"What's in for you?" I questioned

"The states project "

"But that's going to fourth uncle's company" I raised an eyebrow

"Only time would tell,I've placed a little gift in your car, you'll know what to do when you see it" he winked and I could suddenly feel butterflies in my stomach

Did I ever tell you all how much I love my elder brother? Not only is he good looking but also has good brains to accompany them... Although some times..or most of the times he acts too rigid.

Our so-called uncles have always been a pain in ass from day one so I see no reason for them to have a peaceful life as well.

..

I heard a knock for the third time but felt too lazy to answer. I sluggishly made my way to open the door and found Juliet with a huge box standing at the door

"When did you lock the door? I clearly remembered it opened when I left" I placed my hand over my mouth as I yawned trying to remember when exactly I locked the door

"Eitherways, Mr Dean said this should be handed to you and to remind you that he will be sending someone in the next thirty minutes to pick you up" I nodded in understanding and collected the box from her while she headed towards the wardrobe to pick out an outfit

I placed the box beside me as I stretched both my hands and legs trying to shake away the sleepy feeling. I already had breakfast but still wasn't prepared because I still felt sleepy unlike me.

Before sleeping for four hours was more than enough but now I can't seem to get enough of my sleep. I picked up the box wondering what I was sent and found a huge tablet and a pen with a little note in it.

"You should use this instead of the notebook to communicate, it would be more convenient" I read and a smile subconsciously appeared on my face as his act of kindness reminded me of my grandma.

"How about these?" I look towards Juliet direction and she was holding a gown on each hand "which of them do you desire to wear?" She raised an eyebrow and I thoughtfully pointed to the black gown on the left. Not sparing a second she tossed the second gown aside and brought the chosen one closer to me.

"I won't be accompanying you I hope you would be able to cope?" I nodded in response to her question before heading to change. The fact that our friendship has only been few hours but still we've been able to understand one another is something that actually amazed me because I've never had friends nor planned on having one until I met her.

Although Juliet is older, I sometimes can't overlook the childish trait in her despite her age and maybe that's why we actually click although we know nothing about one another's background.

Nix Dean on the other hand doesn't seem to be the monster his brother description printed but that doesn't change the fact that his actions towards me feels suspicious.

People never do a thing without expecting another thing in return and he clearly said he doesn't like wasting money then why actually accept me from my uncle as a commodity?

I stepped back into the room already changed and Juliet suddenly rushed to my side handing me my bag and helping me wear my sandals

"The person Mr Dean sent has arrived, we can't keep him waiting" she rise to her feet taking a final look at me before presenting me with a wild smile and pulling me towards the door

"Take care" she waved still maintaining her smile while I made my way towards the door.

"Miss Carmela" I heard my name as I approached the door and found a man in a fine tailored blue suit standing at the door, his hair neatly done with a calm and pleasant aura, he had a smile on his face that could melt the heart of anyone and I so much felt like passing out at the moment

"I was sent by Mr Dean to pick you up, you can refer to me as Ken" he said interrupting my thoughts and for some reason I felt dumbstruck

"There's no need to panic I'm his PA so you are safe"

I nodded trying to take note of the fact that even a PA could look like a CEO

"I'm prepared,we can leave now" I wore on the tablet before passing it to him to have him nod in affirmation

"Alright I'll lead the way".

He walked ahead of me leading the way to the car that was parked right outside the door but made a sudden halt. He turned to me with an expression that showed he wanted to say something but couldn't,it was as if he was fighting his inner being.

"I don't know if I'm in the right position to say this,or if this is the right time to say this but I'll advise you that no matter what never let go of Nix" he said with an anxious look

"You might not understand what I mean now but with time I'm sure you will, running away will only expose you to more danger so I advise you to stick to him."

"Why are you telling me this?" I questioned raising the tablet.

"Because I feel you might be compared to run away knowing how short tempered and harsh Nix can be,and I'm not telling you this as his PA but as his friend.He has a lot of enemies which may try using you as his weakness to hunt him down even though there is nothing between the both of you,but he is still not going to leave you in their care because he is quite possessive of everything he claims ownership of.

So make sure you keep your fighting spirit alive," he said with a smile curving his hand into a ball

Is being weak a sin? And how exactly are his enemies going to find out about me when I plan on keeping a low profile?

Well no,that shouldn't be the question Carmela. I scolded my self.

The real question should be what kind of business is Mr Dean involved in?.

Chapter 7: 7

We arrived at the hospital and I was led to the doctors office where I met with both Mr Dean conversing with the doctor.

On my arrival,she gave me a faint smile before taking leave same with man who brought me her. Leave just and Mr Dean who had a stern look on his face. I looked behind me and the door was already slammed shut

What's happening? Was I called here to have a check up on or interrogated?

"Carmela" I turned to Mr Dean who turned his chair to face me. "Come and seat here" he tapped on his lap and I subconsciously took two steps backward just to have him

chuckle as he stretched his hand towards me "Don't make me repeat myself.." his tone turned suave "..unless I don't mind punishing you right here and right now" I felt a sudden chill in my spine. My eyes suddenly lock with his and although they looked lazy it felt like a hole pulling me in my stomach fumbling not with fear nor happiness but something I totally cannot explain. Does he usually have such an impact of everyone.

"Would you seat? Or you want to be punished?"

I subconsciously took my steps towards him but hesitation could be visible in each step I took. Still wondering if to sit on his lap or standing he suddenly pulled me making me sit on his lap. As I tried to resist he wrapped his hand around my waist making his firm on me strong.

"That's like a good girl.." he smiled at me which I doubt is genuine. "You must be wondering why I brought you under my roof and paid so much for you, knowing how much I despise wasting resources, right?" He tap on my cheek while I stared at him blankly

The same words he spoke are the same questions I've been trying to come up with answers with but why ask me such a question now?

Am I about to be set free? Or am I about to face a new prison, one with stricter walls?

Come on, Carmela. You're a writer-don't let your imagination run wild. In books, the female lead is usually hit with endless rules and restrictions when faced with these kinds of questions.

Is that my fate, too?

"First and foremost," he began, his voice smooth but laced with an edge, "I'll admit I brought you here for selfish reasons. But I don't want my motives to be an obstacle in your life."

His finger trace the line of my nose while his gray eyes locking onto mine like magnets pulling me into a dark abyss.

"I'll give you one hour. Run as far as you can, and I won't chase after you."

His words froze me in place, but my body betrayed me, refusing to step back as he face approached mine. His hand around my waist tracing my waist line, making me look away but he lifted my chin to meet his smoldering gaze.

"Stay," he murmured, his voice a melody that sent shivers through me, "..and you will be mine. Forever. Mind you I don't let go of what's mine."

As quickly as he drew me in, he released me. Helping me to stand to my feet before he stood to his.

"Make sure to think about it properly" he smiled before leaving the room without a second glance. Yet the rush of emotions he stirred refused to settle.

A minute ago his PA asked me to stick to him and now he's asking me to leave if I want to

But what do I do? Why do I suddenly hesitate to leave when I originally planned on leaving at first.

I squatted running my hand through my hair, as a lot of things played in my head.

should I or should I not? I pondered

He did mention that he brought me in for personal reasons but what could they be?.

"Will she or will she not?" I couldn't help but wonder. The look in her eyes, when I made her the offer of leaving reflected the echoes of the whispered confidences that surrounded her. Strands of her hair, once neatly arranged, were cascaded in disarray, mirroring the gentle chaos my whispered words unleashed upon her composure.

There was a palpable tension in the air, an unseen force that seemed to heighten her awareness. As I whispered into her ear, her body responded with subtle nuances – a softened posture, a fleeting glimpse of uncertainty in her eyes. It was as if the whispers had the power to untangle the threads of her composed exterior, revealing the raw emotions beneath.

"Aren't you going to attend the board members meeting?" Ken asked and I sighed in frustration looking at my watch

"Do I have to be present for the meeting to be held?"

"Yes because you're the CEO and shouldn't be wasting your time seating in a doctor's office all day waiting for the response of a girl which you actually care less for"

I hate to admit it but he's right. I just want the power that will be given to me the moment she's legally mine but making the facts obvious would lead to unnecessary suspicious from her even though she has no memories and I have zero time to grant answers to these questions.

Just like when the devil gives you different options to choose from when facing a crisis, I've done the same, and now it's up to her to make her decision. But what ever decision she makes there's no way I'll be letting her go.

"Any news from her?" I questioned twirling my pen

"She was spotted in the city. I bet she'll be back home in a few days' time.

Like come on I just don't get it why is your family like this?" Ken took a seat closer to me

"Meaning?"

"You know I've seen kids have traumatic life seeing someone get killed in there presence but your daughter is the opposite, actually she derives joy from seeing people in pain

How about I get a psychiatrist too?"

"And how about you get yourself a grave in advance because I'm sure you're going to die after telling her about her appointment.

And why does everyone keep calling her my daughter she's my sister for goodness sake" I scoffed

"You never argued or kicked against anyone calling her your daughter for the past five years because you used her as an excuse to escape from your blind date,so why do you suddenly have a problem with the way we call her?" He raised an eyebrow not scared of my reaction

"Since you've become so good at understanding people Mr Ken how about you quit being my PA and go work in a canceling office or something" I rolled my eyes

"Well I'd love to but I'm afraid you won't find anyone as good as me to take over my position and I'm the only one who can sometimes speak some sense into you" he showed a polite smile although he meant otherwise. And I so much wanted to get rid of it.

I should never have hired him as my Personal assistant from the start but too bad he's just too good at what he does.

"Have you ever thought of becoming a Ceo?" I questioned wanting to see his reaction and just as I expected he never paints a bigger picture for himself

"Why are you suddenly asking me that question? Are you planning to quit your company?" I scoffed listening to him

"I can never quit my company,after all I've been through to make sure it gets to where it is today.

I'm just thinking of becoming a chairman so I can seat back and watch from behind"

"So that means you are planning on quitting your company and going after your family's firm" he raised an questioning eyebrow

"Well if you put it that way then you're right" I scoffed standing to me feets

"Let's go" I opened the door just to be met by a panting Carmela.

She wore a patient gown one hand placed on her kneel as she tried to control her breath

"Who is chasing after you?" I raised an eyebrow placing both my hands in my pocket

"I..I have a question" she stood straight placing both her hands on her waist

"Which is?"

"I want to know what your personal reason for bringing me into your life is" she spoke fluently and I took a step backward to take a proper look at her and estimate what she was up to

"Isn't it obvious? You're a bright artist and with proper investment and coaching you'll be able to make a name for yourself and also make lots of money which would be of great profits to me" I simply stated my lies and she nodded as if agreeing to what I was saying. I looked at her as she continuously sighed and a thought came to my mind

"Did you decide to stay?"

"And what makes you think so? You gave me an hour and I still have at least ten minutes" she said with a stern look

"Then excuse me, I have an important meeting to attend to and you're blocking my path as we currently speak" I said not breaking eye contact with her and I could see her take a few steps backwards as she suddenly divert her eyes

"I...I decided to stay, you can take your leave now I have to go for my checkup" she said bowing slightly before leaving

"Is it me or did Carmela just speak without fumbling?" Ken whispered from behind and I turned to give him a stern look

"Don't we have a meeting to attend to?" I spoke and took the lead.

He was indeed right about her, although it's not the first time I'm hearing her speak, I suddenly feel proud of myself for making her feel safe. With my research on her health condition I discovered that selective mutism is an anxiety disorder where

individuals, have difficulty speaking in certain social situations, but In some cases, they may be able to speak when they feel comfortable or choose to just like she just did

"Ken, make sure the best therapist in town attend to Carmela, I want her to be able to speak properly in the next six months" a smirk emerged on my face

"Why this all of a sudden?"

"The quicker she is able to speak freely and associate in various social situations, the quicker I get my money" I winked at him leaving him with the confused expression he had on

Chapter 8: 8

The spacious meeting room, adorned with polished mahogany tables and leather chairs, hums with a palpable tension as young board members exchange anxious glances. The air, once suffused with the muted rustle of papers and hushed conversations, now holds an eerie stillness.

As the imposing CEO, Nix took his strides into the room, a collective shiver seems to ripple through the assembly. Wide-eyed and huddled, the young executives find their voices hushed to mere whispers. Nix's presence alone commanded attention, his every step echoing authority that resonates with the weight of impending decisions.

Oddly, the room temperature undergoes a mysterious transformation, defying the logic of the untouched air conditioner. The atmosphere becomes laden with an unspoken chill, causing a visible release of breath from the gathered individuals. It's as if an unseen force has decided to manifest the fear simmering beneath the surface.

The board members, once animated in their discussions, now appear frozen in their seats, words caught in their throats. As Nix's penetrating gaze sweeps across the room, a silent reminder of the power vested in their position. The polished veneer of confidence adopted by the young executives begins to crack, revealing vulnerability beneath.

Each creak of the floorboards beneath his confident stride intensifies the collective anxiety. The room which was a battleground for internal struggles and unspoken fears became a stage for the devil and its puppet.

"Is there any one in this room above fourth nine?" Nix suddenly spoke up. His voice dripping with cold venom accompanied with a choking dark aura that could suffocate anyone.

Everyone quickly looked down, averting eye contact with him not wanting to bear the consequences of the actions of everyone.

Nix began going round the room in a circular motion touching the shoulders of everyone and he could feel them jerk in response to his touch.

"I made sure to fulfill all the requirements the board members of a company are supposed to meet and even gave you all a open room to show me the special skill you all boasted of the day we spoke. So why am I in this room for the second time in a year?" He looked around the room to find their head still bowed.

"Young scions, we haven't even gotten to the middle of the year and I've graced this room with my presence twice, it seems you all forgot the contract you signed right? If you want to slack behind and cause me losses, why then did you decide to join my company despite being rich heirs?" He goes back to his seat and pick up the files in front of him.

Although he had already gone through the file before the meeting he felt the need to scan through it once more and something about the file made him chuckle, sending fear to the heart of the present board members as they crossed their fingers hoping that the occurrences of the last meeting doesn't repeat itself.

"Since you all can not solve this problem I'll tell you all a story.

There was once a man who sold balloons and when every he was out of business he would release a helium filled balloon into the air and when children see this balloon they would cry to their parents demanding for one and the man's sale's would go up again, he continued like this for some time and one day he felt someone tugging his jacket and turned to find a little boy who asked, 'if you release a black balloon would it also fly?' moved by the boy's concern, with empathy the man replied 'son it's not the balloon but what's in the balloon'.

So here comes my question, what happens if the man runs out of helium and is unable to get one from anywhere? Would he be able to attract children and make his sales go up again" he questioned with prying eyes roaming around the room to see the reaction his board members had to the story he told them just to find only one person raising his hand

"Yes?"

"If the man is unable to get any helium gas, he wouldn't be able to blow up his balloons so I doubt he'll have a business, so he will have to find something else to do" the man said and a smirk emerged on the side of his face

"With that I believe this meeting is over, and I'll be waiting for a response from you all in the next twenty four hours" he stood to his feet "...I hope this will be the last time my meeting room is turned I to a class room" he scoffed before exiting the room and every board members suddenly let of a breath of relief.

They turned to Ken who was busy rubbing his palm together in an attempt to create heat but suddenly noticed that everyone's eyes were on him and slowly detached his hands from one another placing them by his side

"The room temperature is low..i think we need to turn of the air-conditioner" he said picking up his documents

"No,it's not the air conditioner, it's your boss. How do you manage to stick with him for all these years without dying from anxiety?" One of them questioned and a chuckle escaped him

"That's because I've gotten used to him and he knows my value, he'll be able to find new and competent board members in a click of his finger but he'll never be able to find a PA like me even in a hundred years to come, so you see, I'm in a safe dry land while you all are in a storming sea that can capsize your boat any moment. Also he is not just my boss he is our Boss" he said with a wild smirk before taking his leave, leaving the young board members in confusion as they awaited their fates.

In the opulent solitude of a restaurant,Xavier exudes an air of affluence as he lounges comfortably at a meticulously set table. Dressed in impeccably tailored garments from a prestigious luxury brand, his attire whispers of refinement and sophistication. The fabric of his suit, a symphony of rich textures and muted hues, drapes flawlessly over his athletic frame, accentuating his youthful yet commanding presence.

His hair made into a classic polished pompadour,while his feet coved with a black Oxford in leather.

His choice of accessories reveals a discerning eye for detail. A sleek wristwatch, its metallic gleam catching the ambient glow, graces one wrist. Its dial, adorned with minimalist markers, speaks volumes about his taste for understated luxury that could be seen from miles away. A discreet lapel pin, perhaps an emblem of a prestigious affiliation, adds a touch of individuality to his ensemble.

Seated with an air of casual grace, he projects an aura of quiet confidence, fingers lightly tapping against the fine linen tablecloth. The empty restaurant amplifies the hushed tones of clinking cutlery and the distant murmur of unseen staff. The soft glow of ambient lighting casts a warm hue, enhancing the interplay of shadows on his chiseled features.

Xavier's gaze, cool and collected, drifts thoughtfully across the expansive, vacant space. His solitude in this luxurious setting suggests a penchant for privacy or, perhaps, an appreciation for the finer things savored in seclusion. As he patiently awaits his target he heard the clicking of heels against the floor,a small smile emerged on his face which he quickly hid away masking it with a straight face as he picked up his glass.

"Mr Daniel?" He looked up from his plate to find a lady in blue fitted gown reaching her above the knees and a ironed flat hair showing him a smile

"Excuse me?" He raised an eyebrow and he could see her awkwardly taking a step backward.

"Hmm..I am Jenny..our parents set us up on a blind date," she said still standing as she awkwardly plays with the hemming of her gown.

Xavier took a look at the lady standing across him and couldn't help deny the fact that he found her cute and good looking but the fact that she kind of lacked brains was obvious.

Like who doesn't do research before meeting their dates? He wondered

"I'm sorry miss jenny but you have the wrong person, I'm not Daniel but Xavier..Xavier Dean" he dropped his cutleries wiping his mouth with the napkin beside him.

"Xavier Dean? But I was supposed to meet up with my date here" she looked away as her voice died down. Xavier observed her and find trace's of tears at the side of her eyes and his curiosity got the better of him

"Miss jenny please have a seat it would not be nice to keep a lady standing.." she nodded taking the chair he was pointing to "About your date that I doubt because I rented out the entire place because I wanted privacy but.."

"I'm so sorry, I wasn't aware of that" she quickly apologized about to stand to her feet but is stopped by Xavier

"It is okay and since you're already here, how about you join me for dinner?"

I'd love to say it's destiny we met because you wanted to meet your blind date but ended up meeting me" he showed her a simple but yet attractive smile

"Well if you insist I wouldn't mind" she finally smiled at him and he thoughtfully leaned back on his chair with both his hands crossed across his chest

"Miss Jenny.." she looks up from the glass of water she was having "Has anyone ever told you how beautiful you are?" He began to flirt but is drastically cut off by her response

"The last person who said that to me just broke my heart "

"Woah!" Xavier raised both his hands In an act of surrendering "I was just trying to compliment you" he spoke in his defense and she gave a small nod as she watch the

waiter step up her plate "I don't mean to intrude on your privacy but ...You double date cause.."

"It's not what you think. Actually I was dating someone I already have someone I want to marry but my father insists again it, he even went ahead and offered..." She broke into tears "he offered my fiance money and that baster placed the value of money over me and left" she looked up trying to stop her tears. "Actually..I'm sorry for ruining your quite time and boring you with my story.."

"No it's okay. We all need a shoulder to cry on at a point in life"he pass his handkerchief to her which she accepted without giving a second thought wiping off the tears that threatened to spill

"Thank you Mr Xavier"

"You are always welcome"

Everyone in life does deserve a shoulder but my shoulder isn't the one you need at such a time. If only you were slightly aware of the plans my brother has for you then you would have gone somewhere else to cry about this issue.

Xavier sighed still maintaining the smile he had on his face as he filled the glass in front of Jenny

"Miss Jenny, this might not seem pleasant giving to your current situation but if you don't mind can we get to know one another?" He calculatively threw his fishing hook into the sea.

Chapter 9: 9

I flipped through the file before me once more and I sighed once again

"Are you okay?" I looked up to find Nix staring down at his table

"Yes" I answered but doubted if truly my answer is ment to convince him or myself.

"Take the day off then. if you're okay then that means everything isn't going to go well today,so kindly exit my building before any catastrophe befalls it" he said emotionlessly not sparing me a glance and the thought of him never changing came to mind

He never changed one bit ever since day one we both knew and I'm glad about that but still hope for more.

"I'd also love to take the day off but I have to deal with our current competitor" I threw my head backwards on the couch

"And that's more reason you have to leave, I can deal with them by myself have you forgotten?" He raised an eyebrow and I couldn't resist the urge to smile.

Our current competitor is actually my Dad's company and knowing the fact that he has never been on good terms with my family I know he's not going to stop at anything to make sure he destroys them.

"It would not paint a good image if I allow the heir to the company destroy the company before taking charge of it would it?" I look up to find his eyes still locked on the document before him "...the war has always been behind the eyes of the public and I'd love to keep it that way. I'll take on your father and his entire board members by myself so just relax and take the day off" he said standing to his feet as he took a closer look at the book shelf behind him.

"Are you serious about giving me a day off?" I teased more

"Yes. Because it's the only one you'll be having in the next ten years to come.

And it's not really a day off because you'll have to deal with the work papers of the state contract" I looked up at him to find an unreadable expression on his face.

"Isn't the state contract supposed to go to one of your uncle's?" I questioned standing to my feet

"Was it?" He scoffed with a devilish smirk

At first I thought my family was complicated not until I met with Nix. It's either he's playing cat and dog with his family members or pirates but in either case he's always at the winning end for some odd reason.

"Would you be free this weekend?" I walked closer to his desk

"Why do you ask?"

"My mum has been asking us to.."

"And you're just telling me?" A sudden excitement elevated him as he slammed the document he was signing "...Move all my weekend schedule we'll be spending the weekend at her place" I took a moment to process what he just said

Is he her son or am I? How can he love my own mother more than me?

I wondered imagining the stress I'll have to go through by calling every individual he was supposed to meet with.

I sneered making my way towards the door but remembering the scene that may unfold in front of my house if I get home, I subconsciously took four steps backwards placing a wild smile on my face as I gently turned around to face Nix

"Why are you smiling at me like a maniac?" He questioned

"Mr CEO, if you don't mind can you spare me a room in your house?" I crossed my fingers behind my back

"I mind so go lodge at a hotel if you're scared of your family harassing you" he blurted returning his gaze to his file.

"How sure are you that I'm going to be safe at a hotel? You're the only person they fear which makes me safest under your roof" I whined

"Get out"

"Please, just this once for the sake of old times"

"Get out!"

"I'll get you the information you wanted on your first uncle"

"You will?"

"Will I?" I questioned myself turning to face the wall with wild eyes did I just say I will?

"Are you going to keep to your words or not?" The sudden change in his tone sent shivers down my spine

"Yes I will, I will" I rubbed my nose laughing sarcastically at my own words

"Alright, now get out"

I did not need to be told that twice seeing the kind of deal I just made with my boss and friend.

Why did I have to get myself involved in his family issue?.

I sighed for the nth time still trying to decide if I should go up the stairs. It's been days now and I've been stuck to the ground floor which almost felt boring if not for the company Juliet gave me when she's free. There was once a time Juliet warned me about visiting the top floor but what's the use of not trying at all but still accommodating fear?

Xavier is nowhere to be found and neither would Mr Dean be back any moment from now since it's still early. I looked around to make sure none of the maids were watching before making my way up the stairs.

Ascending the staircase, my footsteps echoed in tandem with the rhythmic pulse of anticipation. As I reached the summit, a tableau of five doors stood before me, each concealing untold stories within. My gaze lingered, drawn irresistibly to the majestic portal at the room's core—a colossal door, its presence commanding attention.

The massive door, centrally positioned, beckoned with an air of mysterious allure. Its intricate carvings whispered tales of hidden wonders, and the polished surface reflected my anticipation as if inviting me to unravel the enigma beyond.

While the other doors, adorned with varying motifs and colors, exuded their own charm, it was the monumental entrance that held an irresistible gravitational pull. But, I was only captivated by the allure of the central door, which felt like a magnet pulling me towards its direction.

Intrigued, I approached the colossal door, my hand instinctively reaching for the ornate handle. As the door creaked open, it revealed a dimly lit expanse of the room, shadows dancing upon brooding walls like silent echoes of unresolved emotions. The air, heavy with an enigmatic melancholy, embraces the space, where a canvas of obsidian curtains sways gently, reminiscent of the veiled mysteries.

I stepped into the room gently closing the door behind me, and for some reason the air in the room felt heavy.

A grand piano, draped in the hues of a somber symphony, stands as a maestro of the room, its ebony keys echoing the deep resonance of solitude. Darkened hues bleed into the tapestry, intertwining with the threads of desolation.

In one corner, a solitary chair, draped in midnight velvet, beckons introspection, a silent witness to the chiaroscuro of emotions. A solitary lamp casts elongated shadows, painting a chiaroscuro of solitude on the expansive floor, where my footprints echo like whispers of a tortured mind.

The room, albeit spacious, lacked embellishments, featuring only a large bed, a piano, and a modest light stand. Despite the minimalist decor, an inexplicable unease pervaded the atmosphere, casting a pall over the otherwise unremarkable setting.

My attention was captivated by a small photo frame positioned adjacent to the light stand. Intrigued, I bridged the gap between myself and the photograph, discovering the image of a young woman with a radiant smile, her eyes reflecting genuine happiness. The question lingered: was she his girlfriend or an ex-lover?

A stern internal admonition reminded me that her identity was not my concern, yet the undeniable beauty of the woman persisted in my thoughts.

"I'll freshen up and be back in five minutes," Mr. Dean's voice interrupted my contemplation, prompting me to hastily return the photo to its place. Panic set in as I sought a discreet refuge, dismissing the impracticality of hiding under the bed or attempting a risky escape through the window. His wardrobe crossed my mind, but my head reasons prevailed.

The bathroom emerged as the most viable option, and with a sense of urgency, I maneuvered towards its door totally wiping off the fact that he said he was going to shower.

However, a twinge of apprehension accompanied my decision, intensified by Mr. Dean's unexpected early return.

As his voice echoed through the room, questioning my prolonged conversation, a sinking realization of my predicament took hold. The idea of admitting my presence seemed mature but fraught with potential consequences. The uncertainty of facing expulsion loomed large, exacerbating the turmoil within me.

In the midst of my internal struggle, the precarious nature of my current circumstances unfolded, leaving me to grapple with the capricious hand of fate and the unsettling realization that my luck remained steadfastly elusive.

In a moment of emotional vulnerability, I found myself internally grappling with unspoken turmoil, my eyes tightly closed as if to contain the overwhelming urge to shed tears. The silence was disrupted by the uttered name, "Carmela." Upon reopening my eyes, I was met with the gaze of Mr. Dean. Despite the intention to maintain eye contact with his discerning gray eyes, an involuntary drift ensued, my focus tracing the contours of his shirtless form-an unintentional distraction that evoked a sudden warmth, causing a noticeable flush on my face.

"Why have you come here? And why is your complexion flushed? Are you experiencing a fever?" He flooded me with questions, gently laying his hand upon my forehead. The contact sent an unexpected shiver down my spine, rendering my feet momentarily immobile.

"Why do you appear so visibly agitated?" He leaned towards my eye level.

"It's not the first time we've been this closer.." his hush whisper sent shivers down my spine remarkably prompting me to involuntarily close my eyes" ..don't tell me you are not satisfied with the the last time and you are wanting more?" He blew air into my ear leaving me momentarily incapacitated. In response, I pushed him aside, swiftly propelling myself towards the exit.

Chapter 10: 10

As I observed the three gentlemen seated at the dining table, the tranquil ambiance was accompanied by a profound silence. I signed while delicately lifting a spoonful of food to my mouth.

"Camera, are you okay?" Mr. Dean inquired, and a sudden flush sensation returned to my face as I remembered the memories from moment ago.

"Was she sick?" Ken asked.

"Hmm, I thought so, but she seems okay now," he replied, and I glanced up to find his lazy eyes dancing all over my body then he suddenly winked at me before returning to his dish

'Could this be termed as flirting?' I wondered taking another bite from my plate

"You should take better care of your health, unless you might just get kicked out for always falling ill," Xavier chuckled, responding to Ken's comment.

"Just like you were thrown out of your room for catching a cold," he commented, leaving me feeling unexpectedly lost. I never anticipated that my life would become this mundane, residing with three grown men. While both Xaver and Ken chatted away their time I felt an inexplicable tug on my chair, as if an unseen force was pulling me towards Nix. I looked down, wondering what was going on to find Nix arm wrapped around my chair, I look up to be met by his eyes still locked on me. His chin resting on his other hand while he ran the other through my hair.

"You look too thin you should eat more" he passed his plate to me and bewilderment was actually an understatement to explain my current emotion.

"Carmela how did you get there?" Xavier shared his gaze between I and his brother

"You can exist the table if you're done eating" Nix cut in and I could hear Ken clearly his throat before drastically dropping his cutlery

"Oops I'm sorry how about.."

"Hello, everyone!" An unfamiliar voice interrupted the conversation. I looked up to find a lady with a warm smile. She had colorful hair clips and a vibrant charm that complemented her bright chocolate skin. I couldn't help but notice the striking resemblance she shared with the lady in the photo from Mr. Dean's room.

"When I thought I was going to have peace, Mother Nature stood against it," Xavier scoffed.

"Did you all miss me?" She approached gracefully.

"It's very obvious I didn't, maybe your dad did," Xavier rolled his eyes.

"Dad?" The sound of cutlery clattering interrupted the conversation. The young lady, referring to Mr Dean as dad, pouted.

"You finally decided to come home?" Mr. Dean spoke taking a spoonful of food and placing it before my mouth. I obediently took in the food as I observed the drama unfolding

"That's because I missed you," she retorted playfully coming to his side.

"Missed me or ran out of money?" he question and a sudden lump formed in my throat making my choke on the food I was chewing. Before I could blink twice a glass of water was brought to my lips and I hurriedly took a sip out of it before taking the glass from him.

"Hmm, it's actually both," she admitted and I could not resist the urge to look at her

"What makes you think I would grant your request?"

"Because you adore me, and I didn't run away; I just went on a long vacation without informing you. Also, don't you dare say I should be punished because I haven't committed any offense worth being punished," she asserted, taking a seat beside him.

"Dad...?" I questioned the dynamics unfolding. And a smile appeared on Nix face as he flicked his finger against my forehead before bringing his face closer to mine.

"Don't worry I don't have a child yet, but I don't mind you being the mother of my child" I subconsciously took to my feet and I could feel all eyes on me. Without hesitation, I pulled my seat back to its position before taking my seat once again

"Dad.."

"Can you please stop this drama I want some peace in my life" Xavier suddenly spoke up and I could see sparks in the eyes of the lady

"Can the both of you just get out of my house if you want to argue? I can't have two dumb head people living under my roof" Nix spoke

"Listen I've told you multiple times I have no interest in business, but you insist on wasting your money on those classes instead of giving them to me," she said, biting into an apple.

"From afar, one would think both of you are different, but just with one conversation, the smart ones can tell you're actually twins. Just your looks and genders differ; your IQs are the same," Nix remarked.

"Why am I being implicated for her actions?" Xavier questioned, adding an intriguing layer to the family drama.

"Confused?" Ken asked, and I nodded slowly, trying to comprehend the unfolding dynamics.

"There is nothing to be confused about; just remember this, and you'll be able to live peacefully here. Xavier and Luna are twins, while Nix is their older brother. Luna takes after her mom, and both boys take after their dad. She is quite clingy to Nix and calls him dad since he took care of them after they lost their parents. Twice every month, the twins fight, and once every three months, the three of them get tangled in a heated argument, just like now," Ken explained, pointing towards the trio engaged in a lively discussion.

"It's like a tradition?" I noted on my tablet, passing it to Ken, who nodded.

"A tradition only I enjoy because I get to see a new side to that cold man seated indifferently over there"

"I have decided," Mr. Dean announced suddenly. "The three of us can't stay together anymore, so in the next week, I want the both of you out of my house." He headed towards the stairs, leaving me in shock.

"If you're wondering if they would leave, then yes, but they'll be back in exactly seventy-eight hours because they can't live without their big brother," Ken reassured me, adding a touch of humor to the situation. "Just joking, he's going to freeze their accounts so they have no choice but to come back."

"I'm going nowhere because this is my father's house, no matter what!" Luna declared, establishing a wild smile on her face. She then turned to me.

"Look who we have here, the one and only Carmela, creator of 'Frozen Sun,'" she mentioned one of my art pieces, while raking a seat beside me and I greeted her with a polite smile. "I'm totally honored to have such a talented person around, unlike some people," she added, rolling her eyes at Xavier, who seemed indifferent.

"My brother surely has a keen eye for precious gems. You're surely going to make him a lot of money, unlike me," she said, still smiling, which felt a bit unsettling. How exactly was I going to make money for her brother? By selling my artworks?

"I'll be taking my leave now" Ken stood up, followed by Xavier.

"Can I crash at your place for a few days? I have an exam to prepare for, and I don't want your boss to ruin my mood."

Damn! Exams. How could I forget about my studies? It's almost the end of the semester, which means I have a lot on my plate and no time for slacking off.

"Carmela, please convey this message to Nix. I would have done it myself, but I have an important call to make. Kindly give it to him before he retires for the night," Ken requested, placing a document beside me before heading towards the door.

Feeling a sense of responsibility, I picked up the file as I bid Luna's, the sister of the Dean brothers farewell, filled with well wishes, added a lighthearted touch as I gathered the document and my tablet.

"Okay, sweet dreams, and I hope we become the best of friends, okay?" Luna winked, and I responded with a nod, resolute in my journey to address matters with my newfound guardian.

Approaching his room, each step felt like an approach to a potential danger zone. This wasn't the first time I traversed this path, yet this time, the atmosphere was different-tinged with something different. The thought of what may transpire kicked in but I waved it off knowing our relationship has not gotten to that extent and my epitome of emotions is a state of chaos.

I could hold but brew the persistent fear of 'what if' that echoed in my mind.

What if my freedom and artistic pursuits were curtailed?

Would he hinder my education, steering me towards creating art solely for his financial gain? These thoughts ran through my head as I approached his door.

A small, almost inaudible knock on his door preceded a swift response. Stepping into the dimly lit expanse of his room, he lounged on a king-size bed, his hair casting shadows over his face. The only illumination emanated from a solitary lamp, creating an intriguing interplay of light and shadow.

With an air of nonchalant grace, he navigated a document under the lamplight, exuding an aura of leisure. The subtle play of light heightened the contours of his features, adding an enigmatic allure to his presence. In this moment, he resembled a deity momentarily detached from divine duties, seamlessly blending divine essence with a captivating human allure.

"How may I help you?" he inquired without looking up, bringing me back to the present. His tone sounded unfamiliar and cold but that was none of my concern. I quickly scribbled my response on the tablet and handed it to him.

"I heard from Xavier that the end of the semester is approaching, and your exams are imminent. I've asked Ken to check with your professor about your assignments. The file contains details of missed assignments and other tasks due to your absence. Review it and commence work tomorrow. The greenhouse has been arranged for your use."

Relieved I turned to leave but paused as he called my name. A question about my earlier presence in his room was suddenly thrown at me. Nervously, I contemplated whether to reveal my genuine curiosity or offer a casual excuse.

"I don't appreciate people invading my personal space or touching my belongings without permission," he stated, maintaining eye contact.

"I'm sorry," I swiftly conveyed through writing, acknowledging the breach of privacy.

"Why aren't you speaking? Do I make you uncomfortable?" he queried, and I vehemently shook my head, emphasizing my comfort despite my speech impediment.

It was like my voice was a master of its own, coming and going as it pleased..but why the sudden change of attitude towards me? Not like I enjoyed his flirty side but still.. whatever

"Do you have a boyfriend?" Another question followed, to which I shook my head again, unsure if anyone would be interested in someone like me.

"That's good. You're still too young to have one. Focus on your studies and graduate with good results..be a good girl and stay away from bad company okay?"

"Hmm..okay" although my voice was inaudible he seemed to have heard me as a sudden smile

tugged at the side of his lips