

KEY TO HAPPINESS:(My mute devil)

#Chapter 11 - Read KEY TO HAPPINESS:(My mute devil) Chapter 11

Chapter 11: 11

Time passed, marking the completion of my numerous art pieces. Amidst them, one painting stood out, reflecting a depth of emotion through distinct lines, textures, spaces, and colors. My fingers traced a bird torn between freedom and confinement, a paradoxical representation of emotions and personification.

"Woah, you truly live up to the nickname of being a wizard," Xavier remarked, admiring my art. His encouragement hinted at the gallery opportunity, recognizing my unique craftsmanship. Despite the chance, my focus was on academic success rather than external recognition.

"Did my brother tell you he'd be attending the event?" I looked up at him to find him staring down at me, before shaking my head

"Well you should thank me for informing you beforehand so you better go and get prepared, I've already prepared myself mentally and physically because I know he only attends such events when he wants to criticize my works" he sighed making me chuckle.

"I've gotten used to it, so you have to also get used to it.

make sure you don't cry just because of his useless criticism okay. Now go and change, Luna packed some clothes for you" he extended his hand which I was reluctant to take after hearing what he said and contemplating the potential scrutiny my work might face.

"Don't even think of not attending; he's the major sponsor of this university," Xavier emphasized, acknowledging the influence his brother held. The realization that my art might be scrutinized, regardless of its selection hit me like a sudden stone

"I'll take my leave then" he patted my hair before leaving.

'my life is totally just like this painting, always contradicting itself'

One minute I think I'm free and the next I discover I'm not.

'Ahh! Whatever, as long as I pass the class I can take on anything' I convinced myself mentally and headed towards getting my clothes changed just to be met by the detestful eyes of some of the girls in my class which I was used to.

Walking towards them would only make the situation worst,so it's better I wait for them to leave the door

" She even got Xavier Dean tangled around her wrist" one of them said out loud as I took my seat

"Shh! Don't say it out loud,I heard she's a witch" another added and a sighed escaped me

"It's true,she lost both her parents on the same day and also killed the lady that adopt her,what an ungrateful soul" I heard them say and felt tears gathering up in my eyes not from pain but from anger

"Maybe that is why she doesn't speak"

"Not maybe,she traded her voice for her powers,but I heard from my mum that she does speak once in a while.."

"And that must be when she renews her powers right?" I heard a familiar voice and turned to find Luna behind the four girls

"Yes,and Xavier Dean must be the next target,I so much pity him"

"No darling,you shouldn't pity him but pity yourself as you might be getting suspended for defamation" they all turned to find her with a huge smile and her phone in front of their faces.

"Now that you've all faced the camera i have enough evidence to report you all" she winked making her way towards me

"Were you about to tear up?" She raised an eyebrow and I quickly wiped off the tears

Luna offered support by placing her hand over my shoulder was she presented a united front against baseless accusations. As my tears threatened to fall I blinked them back remembering I was nothing like the rumors stated.

"Do you want me to deal with them or report them to my brother so he can deal with them?" She whispered and I shook my head placing a smile on my face

"Who the hell is she treating you to report us? You better stay away from her or she might suck up the life in you"

"Who am I? My identity isn't supposed to be known by low lives like the four of you,and only brainless idiots like you guys would actually spread such childish allegations like are you still in elementary class or what?" she scoffed rolling her eyes

"Carmela!" I looked up to find my professor and other professors heading towards me.

I bowed slightly as a sign of respect and looked up to find a smile on her face.

"I see you were able to meet up as expected" she navigated towards my painting.

"What do you all think about this?" She pointed towards the painting of the bird I just completed a few hours ago and everyone nodded.

"Then it's done" she suddenly turned to face me still maintaining her smile "Although you were a junior you were always able to secure a spot when every one of your seniors showcased their works for the past two years and this year wouldn't be different.

Everyone agreed that your painting should take the open space in the gallery and next year your other class members can showcase theirs along side yours" she waved at the other professors and one of them picked up my painting

"Miss Dean" she called and I turned to find Luna with a small smile

"Hello professor Jane"

"I never expected you to meet you this way knowing how tedious your profession is" she said taking Luna's hand in hers

"Well Carmela is more of a family member to me so I'm here to support her" she placed both her hands on my shoulder

"Alright then I'll take my leave, Carmela get prepared and join us the event is about to begin" I nodded bowing slightly as she made her way towards the exit while Luna couldn't stop patting me on my back for some weird reason.

"Alright get prepared I'll be on my way" she said leaving me with the bag of clothes Xavier had handed to me and hateful stares from my peers.

I stared at the sculpture with Xavier's name under it and I could feel my brain racking to comprehend the message behind the sculpture. I found it hard to decide if it was crumpling or being made

"Des temps d'effondrement" I looked behind me to find Nix standing behind me with both his hands in his pocket. I raised an eyebrow signifying I didn't understand what he just said

"Crumbling times" he repeated not sparing me a glance "that's the name of the sculpture" he added and I nodded my mouth forming an o with my lips

"I heard that your painting got selected" he suddenly spoke up again and I nodded looking around as I no longer wanted the conversation to be prolonged, remembering the warning Xavier gave to me about my painting being criticized

"You're here, I thought you wouldn't come since the event is almost over " Xavier walked towards us just to receive a death stare from Mr Dean "What's your thoughts about my sculpture? It isn't as rough as my last one so you have to think deeply before commenting. And guess what the inspiration behind this sculpture is? it's you" he winked smiling from ear to ear as he placed his hand on Mr Dean's shoulder which I doubt was the right action to carry out seeing how the temperature suddenly dropped

"Junk"

"What?"

"How can I be an inspiration to such junk work?" He said not batting an eyelash and I could see Xavier at a loss of words as both his eyes and mouth were left wide open.

"You've finally graduated so I'm hoping to see that presentation you once spoke about unless I'll throw you out" he strictly warned and scoffed forming a fist

"How did I become brothers with such a bastard" Xavier cursed rolling his eye

"Did you say something?"

"I was wondering how you knew so much about art when you've been a businessman all your life and you know nothing more than business and that's why your life kinda sucks" he said, forcing on a smile before stomping away.

Mr Dean's comment must have hit on his soft spot for him to react like that.

I swung my hand side by side as I slowly retreated my steps while looking at my sides as if searching for someone.

"Carmela!" I heard someone scream my name

"My baby, what have they done to you" Suzy suddenly embraced me tightly from behind, she turned me to face her and she had that look I couldn't understand on her face

And why was she overreacting?

"Did he starve you? Make you over work?"

Don't worry I'm here to save you,we can run away from her,I have enough money to serve us for the first month after that we'll think of something" she said, pulling me by my hand.

I took a step backward to take a proper look at her to make sure she didn't lose a nut after staying alone with her parents for so long

"Also I did my research and that guy who bought you,what's his name?

Nix...Nix Dean,he is capable of anything so let's go before he comes here unless.."

"Unless?" I heard Mr Dean ask from behind and Suzy suddenly gasped in shock

"He's here" she came closer and whispered holding my hand tightly

"Where do you plan on taking her without my consent?" He questioned in his scary tone and I held my breath feeling suzy's hand shivering

"H..her? Oh you mean Carmela? I'm taking my sister home to get fed properly" she pulled me behind her

"Does she look like she's being maltreated?"

"Yes,the dark circles under her eyes speak a lot and I'm going to report you for human labor" I give up. I'm not even going to try saving her,I've always told her to think before speaking but she never seems to listen.

"I should be the one reporting you because you ran away from home and also stole your parents money"

Could this get even more worst than this?

Chapter 12: 12

I watched as the lady I saw when I woke up disconnected the drip I was connected to after which she cleaned up the area 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 cutlery.

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

Chapter 13: 13

I looked out the window to find a building standing solely on its own.

It wasn't as large as Mr Dean's building but it was big enough to contain an entire family. The lights that illuminated it from within made it look cozy to the eyes

"Let's go, they must be waiting inside for us" Luna said stepping out of the car

They? weren't we supposed to go home what are we doing here and where are we? My questions were left unanswered due to the fact that they never left my mouth.

"Carmela hurry, it's almost time for dinner" she said pulling me towards the door of the building just to be welcomed by a lady who seemed to be in her early forties and fifties with a stern look on her face

"You're late girls" the lady said, staring intensely at us and I could see Luna suddenly staring at her feet.

Who is this lady? My question hung in the air not getting the chance to be heard nor an opportunity for a response

"We stopped by your favorite store and bought a bottle of your favorite campaign" Luna raised up the bag we got from the store we stopped by earlier with a wild smile

"Aww, so thoughtful of the both of you, now go freshen up quickly it's almost time for dinner and Nix would soon be here" the lady winked showing us a thumbs up while Luna pulled me into the house

"She's Ken's mum so you don't have to feel nervous" she suddenly spoke up as she led the way up the stairs "although she's more of a mother figure to us, she behaves more like a friend than an actual mum" she smiled and I nodded obediently following her close up

Even though I've never experienced the affection from my mother I'm sure the lady we just walked past perfected her role as a mother figure to have others love and cherish her the way they do.

"Girls!" I heard Ken's voice as he approached the room we were in and a soft knock followed suit

"Mum's calling the both of you to come down for.."

"I was already on my way" Luna suddenly opened the door and took to her heels leaving me alone in the room

"Why is she in such a hurry it's just food" he said with a swollen face making me chuckle

"Are you scared she'll steal your mum away?" I passed my tablet to him as I made my way towards him just to have him laugh

"My mum you say? Well i sometimes doubt that cause it feels like Luna is her only child.Ah! I can't even eat my favorite food in peace anymore because Luna is around" he placed his hand on his forehead acting dramatic which made me laugh in sudden bewilderment.

"I heard your painting was given a spot" he said as he led the way downstairs and I responded with another nodd affirming his claim

"You should trust learn to trust words more than what other thinks more, didn't I tell you that yours would be picked because you're talented" he patted my hair making me smile "come to think of it since I'm now like a brother to you,my mum is also like a mum and seeing the way mum love girls...I'm surely going to receive lesser love from her" he sighed jokingly and the only response I could give was just a smile.

The term mother and brother sounded strangely unfamiliar to my ears making it harder for me to react to his words.

I could see how both him and Luna have been trying to make me feel at ease but something can never be changed.

Neither the gap of family nor the pain of betrayal from supposed family members .

"You better shut your mouth before I bath you with my plate of food!"I heard Luna's voice as we approached the dinning room

"Oh really? Aunt do you see what you're precious girl is about to do,she always loved resulting to violence" Xavier pointed at the plate before Luna and then Luna with wild eyes

"Come on kids no fighting at the dinning table"

"You can just throw them out if they don't keep quite"Mr Dean said not paying them attention

Like seriously! Are they seriously always like this?

I looked across the dinning table to find the twins exchanging glances,Mr Dean completely engrossed with his work and Ken's mum busy setting up the dinning

"I'm not throwing any one out and neither is anyone resulting to violence,I invited you all to know what you'll be getting me for my birthday not to fight"

Birthday? Is today actually her birthday? Well if only I knew sooner..I still would have done nothing

"I'll get you a new car,the latest brand at that" Xavier said with a huge smile

"I'll get you the most expensive and latest accessories"

"i think an island would do" Mr Dean said nonchalantly not looking up from his work and I could notice the joy on Ken's mum's face watching them chitchat.

The thought of getting an Island popped up. Is it that easy to get one? Well then..the life of the wealthy must be really smooth going I thought as I got closer to the dinning table and pulled out a chair

But.. If I actually had a mum would I have been this excited about her birthday? Would I have also promised her an ambiguous gift like Mr Dean just did?

That answer is something I'll never get. I thought about to take my seat but was stopped by Mr Dean who patted the vacant seat close to him without looking up from the tablet he was holding and I obediently did as he wanted.

"No island from you,no car and no accessories.

I really just want all of you to spend time with me nothing much,and Carmela.."I looked up at her to find her with a huge smile "I've heard alot about you and I couldn't wait to meet you,now you're here remember you're now part of the family okay?" I looked around the table to find everyone's eyes on me except Mr Dean before nodding.

Family..that word also sounded extremely familiar but yet still unfamiliar. I could feel something bubbling within me, not joy, not anger and neither was it pain just a strange feeling that clouded my eyes.

"Are you okay?" I suddenly heard Mr Dean whisper his hand wrapped around my waist. Blinking back my tears I nodded showing him a smile before returning my gaze to the table where Xavier and Ken were chatting

"Oh no..I forgot to bring the soup!" Xavier suddenly exclaimed making Luna roll her eyes

"I'll go get it.."Ken mum said about to stand to her feet but I beat her to it as I waved my hand

"I'll get it" I said but no words came out but she seemed to have heard

"The kitchen is there" she pointed towards the direction with a smile and I took to my own heels. Although I tried stopping my tears they rebelled and I needed to stop them.

But seems they mounted more pressure on me as memories of my late grandmother flooded in the moment I stepped my feet into the kitchen.

She never one day wanted for me to step into the kitchen as she believed my desires could be fulfilled without having to venture in this domain but here I find my self questioning the validity of her words.

I was once limited to wielding a paintbrush and pen, but now i have come to acknowledge the necessity of acquiring self-sufficiency.

Wiping away my tears I took a few seconds to survey the generously spacious kitchen, a smile graced my face as I approached the gas stove to warm up the soup. In the moments before disaster struck, a profound sense of empowerment washed over me. However, that fleeting triumph was abruptly extinguished by a colossal explosion, knocking off my glasses as I was propelled across the kitchen. My heart raced, and fear enveloped me as flames danced menacingly, rendering me immobile.

In the aftermath, I gingerly sat up, drawing my feet closer to my chest and tightly embracing my knees. Rendered speechless and bewildered, tears streamed down my face, accompanied by the thunderous palpitations of my heart against my rib cage.

The urgent call of my name, "Carmela!" reached my ears, and through tear-blurred vision, I discerned a blurred figure rushing towards me amidst the fiery chaos.

"Mum, help me!" I screamed, clinging to the hope of rescue as darkness encroached upon my surroundings.

Nix appeared engrossed in his work at the dining table not caring about his surroundings, but his eyes desperately scanned the room for Carmela, who had just arrived. He couldn't help but notice her unusual quietness and an almost imperceptible smile played on his lips as he watched her offer to go to the kitchen. His gaze remained fixated on her until she disappeared from sight. Sighing, he attempted to refocus on his work, only to be jolted by a deafening explosion from the kitchen.

"Carmela!" Luna's scream echoed, prompting both of them to rush towards the source of the disturbance. The kitchen was engulfed in flames, and panic set in as Nix called out for Carmela, unable to locate her amidst the chaos. Her desperate cry for help pierced through the tumult, compelling him to leap into action, disregarding his own safety as he plunged into the fire to rescue her.

Upon finding Carmela unconscious, a strange pain gripped Nix's chest. He scooped her up, heedless of the flames licking at his skin, and carried her out of the inferno. "Get the car key!" he barked, determined to get her to safety.

At the hospital, Carmela was rushed into the ER, leaving Nix anxiously pacing outside the room. Ken's mother handed him an ice pack, concern etched across her face. "Are you okay?"

Nix nodded, his attention fixated on his phone, as if anticipating urgent news. "I've never encountered such an incident before. I just hope she's okay."

As the suspenseful atmosphere lingered, the hospital corridor seemed to close in around Nix. Each passing moment intensified the uncertainty, and he couldn't shake the feeling that the fate of someone precious hung in the balance. The incessant beeping of machines and hushed conversations only heightened the tension, leaving Nix anxiously awaiting news that would determine his next target, action and decision.

Chapter 14: 14

My mind journey from east, west, north and even south as the thought of what just happened few hours ago kept playing in my head. I opened my eyes just to be confronted by the pills before me and I threw my head backwards before shutting my eyes back.

"Can I come in?" I heard Ken knock on the door and I opened my eyes just to find him peeping into my room

"Yes?"

"Your claim was true..the fire wasn't a coincidence" he said handing me the tablet he was holding which showed a man in black cutting the pipe that connected the gas

"Mum said a few minutes after Luna and Carmela came in a delivery man came over but he got the wrong address, and turns out the so called delivery man is the person who cut the pipe"

"And what about the documents I asked you to check out?" I dropped the tablet on the table before me

"It true, the old lady is actually the owner and founder of the construction company, but neither of her kids know about it, also she made Carmela the sole owner of the company and brought in foreign management to handle the company until she turns twenty two" he said but had a frown on his face which told me I wasn't going to like the next Information.

"What is it?"

"According to her lawyer, although Carmela was made the sole owner of the company, she would only be able to gain full access to the company when she's married, which I find illogical.

How exactly is she supposed to get married at such a young age?" He questioned the obvious and I couldn't help but roll my eyes everything seems just to clean to be true

"Next Information?" I asked as I began twirling the pen before me

"As always your assumption was right,the old lady didn't die a natural death although it was made to look natural.

It seemed like she knew she was going to be killed and asked her lawyer beforehand to make an autopsy report because she was sure her kids would care less about her death since all they were after was her wealth"he handed me the autopsy report he got from the old lady's lawyer.

I heard Luna call and looked up from the report I was holding to find her panting
"Brother!"

"What?"

"I got Carmela discharged and brought home" she said and I tilted my head wondering what was wrong with her

"Don't give me that look,she almost got injected with a poisonous substance which I can't remember it's name so I brought her home" she explained and I turned my attention back to the paper I was holding

The founder and owner of a huge construction company like T&C dies out of the blue with neither of her kids having a clue about her company,the person she made the heir is now being hunted down, despite the fact that only a few people know about her being the heir..and on the other hand I've agreed to marry her

What an interesting plot I'm about to get involved in.

"What happens to the construction company if Carmela dies?" I raised an eyebrow

"The company would be placed for auction" I chuckled hearing what he said

In other cases the company would go to charity but in this case the company would be auctioned really?

No wonder Carmela has to get out of the way,but what if the target wasn't actually her but someone else?

For one to be able to predict her going to that direction is almost a zero percent chance but..

"What exactly is your reason for bringing that girl under your care?" Luna sudden questioned interrupting my flow of thoughts. I raised an eyebrow wanting to know when she began acting so uncalled for

"You can't deceive me Nix Dean, as you never do things that never bring you profit so what's your reason?" She tapped on the table

"To get more money, she's a painter and I wanted her to make more painting which means more money for me, or better still since she needs to be married to become the sole owner of a construction company, how about I be her husband and take over the company since she knows nothing about business " I scoffed and could see her roll her eyes

"Do you think we're joking? Carmela life is in danger here" she said half screaming

"I never said I was joking about marrying her..but what if I am so what?" I stated with zero emotions

"You have to save her"

"And who said I must save her?" After all the deal between I and Zamiel was to marry her and take over her position as heir he never informed me that I'll be getting involved in any uninformed rival or war.

"She is a human being and the least you can do is pity her.."

"And I refuse to show pity" I said nonchalantly

"Are you even human? Do you know what she's been through! Even if you don't know the details but at least.."

"Listen Luna if you want to be a human right advocate I'm not going to stop you but do that outside my room" I pointed to the door trying to act calm although my inside was like a volcano about to erupt and I could see Luna's facial expression change due to the anger she's been building up

"If you don't help her then I will" she scoffed angrily before taking my leave.

"Nix I think.."

"Get out!" I said half screaming picking up the pills before me which I sent down my throat accompanied with a glass of water.

Why do I have to be surrounded with people who I don't think alike with? And why is the obvious so hard for them to notice

"You should cut down on those pills" I looked up to find Ken still standing at the door

"You should tend to your responsibilities while I tend to mine." I scoffed "Also, speak to your mum about Carmela. I think she's the best therapist we could ask to attend to her.

And don't forget to close the door on your way out" I picked up the documents stacked up beside me that needed my attention.

Carmela slowly opened her eyes, to find the world around her was a blurry haze. As consciousness seeped back, a sense of disorientation washed over her. Panic set in when she realized she wasn't in the hospital, but in her own room in Nix house.

For a fleeting moment, relief coursed through her veins, leading her to believe the fire incident might not have been as severe as she feared.

However, that moment of solace shattered as her gaze fell upon both of her hands, tightly wrapped in a gauze bandage. A surge of pain shot through her, and the vivid memory of the flames licking at her skin replayed in her mind. The reality of the fire accident struck her with a forceful intensity, dispelling any hope that it had been a minor incident.

Tears welled up in her eyes as the gravity of the situation sunk in. The gauze bandage served as a tangible reminder of the chaos in the kitchen, and the agony she experienced. Fear and vulnerability enveloped her as she gingerly flexed her fingers, testing the limits of her newfound fragility.

Alone in her room, tears rolled down her face as the aftermath of the fire unfolded in her mind, and she grappled with the emotional toll of the near-tragedy. The room, once a place of comfort, now felt like a cocoon of uncertainty. Carmela lay there, hands wrapped and emotions raw, a survivor trying to come to terms with the scars, both visible and hidden, left behind by the flames which could not be erased

"Madam" Juliet called rushing to her side and she looked up to her with tears filled eyes

"Ju..Juliet" she cried out just to be wrapped in a warm embrace from her. As they detached the hug she raised both her hands showing Juliet who wipes her tears showing her a smile

"I'm glad nothing bad happened to you.. the master has been worried about you. I even heard he got some bruises from the fire but refused to take treatment until your okay" Hearing this, Carmela suddenly felt a sharp pain in her chest.

She didn't know what his objective were, why she was brought in or why this actually happened to her. The thought of it being an orchestrated work of his enemy or rival crossed her mind but she couldn't just conclude without knowing the truth.

"Is he the medicine or just code blue?" She asked herself but her silence thought were interrupted by Luna's call.

"Carmela" she looked up with eyes full of tears to find Luna rushing towards her "It's okay,don't cry you should be happy it wasn't worst than this okay" she said wiping the tears that tenderly rolled down her face

"The doctor said your wounds weren't serious so don't worry about it leaving a major scar and I'm grateful the fire didn't burn your face how...ah! I'm not good at comforting people but I'm glad you're okay" Carmela chuckled watching her struggle with her words and same did Juliet

"That's it girl! You should keep smiling like that" she said stroking her hair backwards

"I'll have to go attend to something with Ken and neither Xavier nor the maids including Juliet is going to be around so you're left with just Nix just in case you need anything,don't hesitate to ask him okay Even if it means going to the bathroom" she said to find Carmela's eyes widen up as if they were about to suck her in

"Okay..expect that, if you're able to use the bathroom yourself then you can spare him the trouble okay" she gave her a light peck on the forehead "I'll take my leave now don't miss me so much alright baby girl" she winked before taking her leave and Carmela's eyes fell on Juliet

"I honestly know nothing about why we've been given a vacation" she blurted coming back to Carmela's side who heart felt heavy but continued smiling not wanting to burden anyone with her grief.

"Although I don't want to go I also want to go. it's been months and I haven't met with my family I'm sure they miss me.." she look at Carmela with a tender gaze followed by a smile "..make sure to eat well and take care of yourself okay.." she tucked the strand of hair on Carmela's face behind her ear "also I'll miss you" a genuine smile finally resurfaced on Carmela's face. Hearing those words seemed to have rekindled some feelings in her but there cute time was suddenly cut short as Juliet hurried out to go pack her bags.

On her exit,Carmela let out a soft sigh taking a look at her wrapped hands. She was at least glad that the academic session was already over and they were on holiday. If not , she wondered if she would have been able to pass the class.

She just prayed that her hands would recover quickly as she doubts she'll be able to live a peaceful life nor have a good day without being able to hold her paint brush.

As the clock moved in haste,the groaning of her stomach became louder and louder reminding her of the need to eat something and the fact that no matter how much she

decided against not wanting to get dependent on Mr Dean she still couldn't help it as she needed to feed.

"Weather medicine or code blue atleast he keeps me stable for the time being" she said to herself as she made her way towards the door that was left halfway closed.

Chapter 15: 15

As I took a peep into Mr Dean's dimly lit room, I was confronted by him lying sprawled on the expansive king-size couch, his tousled red hair cascading lazily over his closed eyes. The bed beside him remained untouched, a silent witness to his preference for the oversized comfort of the couch. A multitude of files, meticulously stacked on the nearby table, created an organized chaos in the room.

I observed him, noting the subtle details of his features as he slept. His angular face, usually marked by intensity, now softened in slumber. The flickering light cast shadows on his sharp jawline and prominent cheekbones. His red hair, a vibrant contrast to the muted tones of the room, hung loosely, creating a curtain over his eyes.

"Are you planning to make a painting of me?" he suddenly stirred, and I instinctively took a few steps backward. His dull and gray eyes opened, catching me off guard. The once sharp gaze, surrounded by dark circles betraying his sleepless nights, now fixed upon me. Making the room transform into an arena of tension, as if the very air had thickened with an unspoken weight.

He suddenly ran his hand through his hair and he sat up straight letting out a soft sigh "How are you doing,are you in pain?" He asked and I shook my head

"That's good. Do you need something?" He raised an eyebrow and before I could respond with a nod my impatient stomach let out and uncourteous groan

"I see,let's get you something to eat then" he stood leading the way downstairs while I humbly followed him from behind.

As I stood on the sidelines with my hands still wrapped in a gauze bandage,I watched as Mr. Dean effortlessly maneuvered through the kitchen. His movements were a symphony of precision and grace, each action deliberate and purposeful.

In the warm glow of the kitchen lights, Mr. Dean's figure seemed almost ethereal, like a god immersed in the act of creation. His hands, skilled and confident, danced across the ingredients, turning the simple dish into a masterpiece. His focused expression betrayed a deep connection to the culinary process, and the aroma of spices filled the air, adding to the sensory spectacle.

I found myself at a loss for words, captivated by the scene unfolding before me. Mr. Dean, with an air of divine mastery, transformed the kitchen into his sacred space,

blending ingredients with an artistry that transcended the mundane. As I observed him, I couldn't help but feel as though I were witnessing a deity at play with his creations.

Was he really so good at everything he does?

"Have your dish and go to bed"he said as he placed the plate filled with creativity before me and I was sincerely pleased and just wanted to watch it without destroying the masterpiece but my stomach had a mind of its own.

I watched as Mr Dean was about to take his leave, but wasn't he forgetting something?

"What do you want?" He questioned as both our eyes locked and I stretched my hands that were tightly wrapped to the tips before him just to receive a chuckle from him

"My apologies madam,I totally forgot I'd have to feed you, except that do you want anything else like helping you shower or using the restore" he raised an eyebrow and I quickly objected just to have him narrow his eyes at me.

Eitherways just feeding me was enough, at least for now.

"So would you open your mouth or should I beg you to?" He brought a spoon full of food close to my mouth which I didn't spare a second,and in a matter of minutes the entire plate was empty.

"Should I refill the plate? I wouldn't want you coming to wake me up in the night because you're hungry" he said coldly

"No"I instantly responded and he glance at me for almost a minute before taking his eyes off me Im

"Good night then,I hope I don't repeat this tomorrow and wish you quick recovery" he placed the dishes in the sink before exiting the kitchen.

I was now left to deal with the uncontrollable silence and stares from the dishes,as I stood to my feet to exit the kitchen I suddenly remembered a glimpse of the previous night. I looked around the kitchen and everything looked fine. Suddenly they were engulfed with flames startling me.

With trembling feet,I rushed out of the kitchen making my way towards my room to find the doors of my room framed in flames

"Carmela" I heard someone call my name and turned to find no one around. Fear suddenly dug deep down my stomach and peaked out its branches in my heart. Not wasting time I took to my heels, running for my dear life as I made my way towards Mr Dean's room and gladly there were no flames on his door frame which was left wide

open. Trying to stabilize myself a bit,I stopped running and walked hastily into the room trying to pretend as if nothing happened but it seems my discomposure gave it all out.

"Are you okay?" He asked but I kept staring at my feet feeling my heart race even faster and the voices getting closer

"Carmela!" I heard him call and looked up to him with tears filled eyes "F...fire" I managed to say pointing towards the door.

I looked at the young lady standing before me and the direction she was pointing at to find nothing behind her. Her hair was all over her face and she was very unsettling. She looked like she was being chased as she continuously stared at the door and back at me with tears filled eyes.

Is this what they call a trauma after an accident?

"Come over" I waved at her and in no time she was already standing close to me,I tapped the space beside me on the bed which she quickly occupied while still staring behind her. Letting out a sigh I pulled her into my arms while patting her gently on the back

"It's okay, you're safe" I said. I could feel her slowly calming down,she suddenly wrapped her hands around me and from the looks of things I doubt she was going to let go.

It was more as if she was clinging into me for her dear life.

'Seems I have a new baby to tender to'

..

"I've done as you asked, what's next?" Xavier questioned dropping his phone on the table but got no response from Luna who practically dragged them out of the house a few hours ago and brought them to a hotel for a reason best known to her.

"Luna are you sure what you're doing is right I mean what if Nix finds out"

"Then tell him I planned and did everything alone" she said coldly to Ken's question and both gentlemen seated before her suddenly exchanged glances,feeling uneasy about the whole thing,ken suddenly spoke up

"Making us stay away from home isn't really an issue,but making them stay at home, all alone,with neither a maid or butler don't you think it's too much?"

"He said he had no relationship with her so let them form one,so he can stop making excuses" Luna sighed still engulfed with her laptop

"Do you really care about Carmela that much? And isn't a week too short to form one I mean.."

"Yes I care about her that much, and three days is enough to form one with her because she has a very loveable and sweet personality, but instead I'm giving that cold hearted brother of yours a week so he better makes good use of it"

Xavier and Ken took one glance at Luna who could stop whining after Nix scolded her and then themselves.

They didn't know what she was up to but they were sure Nix was going to grill the living daylight out of them if he find out they gave the works a week's leave without his consent

"Make sure to handle the office work properly for the next seven days I don't want him to go anywhere near that place leaving Carmela alone" she finally took her eyes off her laptop screen "...and you, make sure he's unable to get through to butler Adams unless you'll be a dead piece of meat once he finds out"

"What about you, what are you going to do?" Xavier questioned feeling the responsibility given to him was getting out of hand

"As for me,I have the most important job out of the three of us, preparing a perfect gift,good enough for Nix Dean,my dear brother in a week's time" she smirked and went back to her laptop leaving the duo before her in total confusion and hell's gate.

"Like father like daughter" Xavier whispered to Ken who wasn't still use to the psychopathic behavior of the only girl between the Dean brothers

'She is surely the female version of her brother' he thought to himself pouring himself another glass of champagne.

Author Note: Hello dear readers ^_^ I hope you're enjoying your time here.

Our story is already kicking off and it is all thanks to you all.

This author here needs a little favour from you all. Please share and add to your library and also if I'm able to get five comments before the end of twenty four hours then I'll do a mass release of five Chapters.

I'll be waiting then...^_^

Chapter 16: 16

I awoke from a peaceful slumber, ensconced in a comforting embrace that stirred butterflies in my stomach. Smiling, I snuggled deeper into the warmth, savoring its

security. But a mischievous sensation prompted me to open my eyes, revealing the sleeping figure beside me to be Mr. Dean I felt my heart thudding in my chest and I created some distance between us.

Memories of the night flooded back, and embarrassment gripped me as I coiled myself into a ball.

As I opened my eyes once again, a soft smile involuntarily spread across my face at the sight of Mr. Dean's serene expression. The tranquil beauty of the early morning moment captivated me. "Why must he look so perfect even in his sleep?" I mused, pondering the allure of his slumbering form.

Suddenly, he spoke with eyes closed, catching me off guard. "Do you always stare at people that way?" he asked, wrapping his hand firmly around my waist, as he guiding me into the captivating halo of his eyes. "Don't ever look any anyone with such eyes" he spoke leaving me confused. "...have me for breakfast and spare me the kitchen duties since you're already salivating," he suddenly teased even more tracking his finger from my nose and stopped at my lips, leaving the room with a change in aura that left me speechless.

I remained frozen in the bed long after he left, the imprint of his touch burning on my skin like sunlight after shadow. My fingers trembled slightly as they hovered over my lips his last point of contact. I hadn't known a single touch could feel so loud.

The sheets were tangled around me, evidence of the night I couldn't quite categorize was it tenderness? Possession? A mistake? But the way he looked at me... like I was something rare and confusing, like I stirred something in him he didn't know how to name.

Still swaddled in silence, I rose from the bed, wrapping the sheet around myself. The cool air kissed my bare legs as I padded softly to the open doorway, drawn by the distant sound of water and the faint scent of coffee. There he stood shirtless, framed by the morning sun spilling through the balcony doors, like some cruel painting I wasn't allowed to touch.

He sensed me before I could turn back.

"You walk like a ghost," Mr Dean murmured without looking. "I'd think I imagined last night if not for the wrinkle in those sheets."

My cheeks flushed as he finally turned, eyes grazing the sheet clutched tightly to my chest. His smile was lazy, but his gaze was too sharp like he was reading a page I hadn't written yet.

"No need to be shy, Beloved," he said, stepping closer. "You didn't seem so modest when you curled into me like I was your favorite secret."

I looked away, jaw tight. I hated how he played with me with the silence I couldn't fill, and with emotions I couldn't name aloud.

But then his fingers gently lifted my chin, and I met his eyes. He studied me, this time with a softness that melted the smugness away.

"I keep saying stupid things," he whispered. "Because I don't know how to ask you... how last night made you feel." His hot breath touched the skin beneath ear region making me tense up.

My throat constricted. I wished I had words. A single sentence would've done something clean, honest, maybe cruel enough to guard my heart.

Instead, I reached for his hand.

His eyes widened when I pressed his palm against my chest right over the rapid beat of my heart.

He stilled.

"Carmela..." His voice was rougher now, unsteady. "That's not fair."

But I wasn't trying to be fair. I was trying to be understood.

The fear and panic from last night was real and the sudden comfort he gave to me was something I can never overlook.

His other hand found my waist again, pulling me closer until the space between us vanished. "Do you even know what you're doing to me?" he whispered against my forehead. "You make me want to forget how this started. Forget who bought who."

I looked up, my breath catching.

His lips suddenly fell on mine, as he nibbled on my lips while I try to comprehend what exactly was going on. He kissed me not out of dominance, not out of claim but he was gentle, like a question he didn't expect an answer to.

And I, silent as ever, stood dumb while he did his thing with my lip like an answer he hadn't dared hope for.

Days passed with him by my side, the house feeling like a prison, yet oddly, I was getting used to it. His presence, doing everything for me, even watching me sleep, which introduced a new aspect of him I never dreamed of seeing.

"You've been standing there for almost ten minutes, would you speak up or excuse me?" His question jolted me back to the present, and I struggled to remember why I came. "Book," I blurted out, avoiding eye contact, concocting a reason.

"Book?" He questioned back and I gave an affirmative nod "I've been bored all day and thought if you could borrow me a romance novel" I avoided eye contact with him as I knew I was totally speaking garbage and the reason I was actually here in the first place was totally different from that

"Check my bookshelf"

"I already did and it was just filled with business related books so that is why I came to meet you in person" I rose to my tip toe, pointing the direction of his shelf with my right hand with a huge smile on my face, like a kid feeling happy after scoring a ten in her class work

"Then doesn't that outline the fact that the rest of my books are business related"

Okay I didn't see that coming.

He suddenly waved me over "How about we practice your speaking skill" he gave me a tablet "Keep reading this out loud until I say otherwise"

Alright this wasn't what I was expecting but still with a swollen face I moved over to the other side of the table.

"Who could be behind the success of T & C construction company?" I read out the outline

"In the world of construction today, there are only a few reliable and safe construction bodies to look up to, and one of those construction bodies is the T & C company.

Although the T & C construction company was founded by an anonymous person, we can all testify that it's the best of the best..."

As I read aloud, a panic set in, but I pressed on. Suddenly, he rose, coming closer, watching intently. My heart rebelled, my temperature soared. "Carmela" I felt shivers down my spine hearing him say my name and I reflexly jolted to that. And in an unexpected intensity, our lips met-again a connection bewildering me with shock. The mix of surprise, curiosity, and intended passion lingered briefly, but he retreated, leaving me dazed.

"Go to bed without me; I have something to attend to," he said, avoiding eye contact. As he left, the sensation of our kiss remained, and I touched my lips, trying to comprehend what just happened.

My first and second kiss gone just like that.

"When exactly are you all coming back?" I questioned bluntly

"Just four more days we're almost done cross checking the information of all the maids" Xavier said from the other end of the phone

"Why is it taking so long, I mean..."

"Weren't you the one who asked for more maids so what's the hurry?"

"Nothing, just get back home as soon as possible" I said and ended the call.

I sat in the gardening chair, the cool breeze carrying the scent of blooming flowers. While my mind wrestled with conflicting emotions, questioning the sudden urge to kiss Carmela over and over again and her inexperienced reaction to my kisses only made me chuckle.

The image of her sleeping peacefully beside me in my room surfaced and a mixture of longing and curiosity lingered in my thoughts, unraveling the reasons behind my impulsive action.

I turned towards the door to find her waving at me while holding the landline phone and a smile emerged on my face as I waved her back and she gave me a look that asked If I were crazy, well that is the same question I've been asking myself but still no response, I sighed looking away. Seeing her without her glasses for these past few days makes me see her in a different light which I feel is crazy as I've never judged people based on appearance

"Someone wants to speak with you" she handed me the phone while I lazily took the handphone from her.

"Hello"

"Seems you've forgotten your old man" I let out a sigh hearing the voice of my old man. I stood to my feet, excused myself and made my way into the house, going straight to the point "What do you want this time around?" I questioned

"Seems you don't want to talk with me so I'll go straight to the point, I want to meet with her" he said excitement visible in his tone

"Who?"

"The girl who picked up the phone" I heard him say and stopped in my track wondering which planet this old man is actually from

"How about I call your doctor and ask him to book you a very nice ward where you'll get another check up done?" I scoffed just to have him sneer at me

"You shouldn't be so brutal to an old man,I called you to invite you for a business party" which I quickly kicked against "You said you wanted my share of the family business don't you? Then make sure you come over tomorrow by 7pm"

"I'll be there but if you don't keep your words I'll be sure to send you on a journey of no return" I scoffed before ending the call. I've surely missed the game of cat and mouse I used to play with my uncle. It seems it's high time I pick up from where I left.

I smiled at my reflection on the mirror,as usual my charm was still present as always I placed my hand in one of my pocket checking myself out one more time and I have to admit I do pity all the young ladies out there seeing how much I stand out in this night blue handmaid tailored suit

"Mr Dean"

"Yes" i answered with a smile still plastered on my face as I couldn't get enough of myself

"Are you a narcissist? You've been staring at yourself as if you're going to eat yourself"

"Wh.." I fell speechless seeing Carmela gracefully slip into a spaghetti-strap, midnight blue, body-hugging sequined gown that elegantly cascades down to the floor, accentuating every curve. The fabric shimmers as it traces her silhouette, creating a mesmerizing play of light. She complements the gown with a matching hand glove that gracefully extends to her elbow, adding an extra touch of sophistication. I positioned in front of the mirror,captivated by the sight, appreciating the flawless ensemble

"Why do you look dumb Mr Dean?"

"And why are you suddenly speaking a lot lately?" I questioned noticing her change in attitude and courage in the past few

"You were the one who asked me to speak too"she murmured rolling her eyes "Can you help me with the zipper of the gown I can't reach it" she turned her back to face me and I was quick to notice the fire scare that stood out at the right hand side of her back

"Except this fire accident have you ever been involved in another fire accident?" I asked pulling the zipper up and she shook her head "This was my first" she said which I found strange as the scare surely wasn't made from the recent accident she just got involved with it was rather an old scare.

"Where are we going? Are we going to your grandfather's party?" She said letting her hair down and I raised an eyebrow wondering where she heard that from "who told you that?"

"He did,when he called yesterday he said you are his grandson and he wanted to invite you for a business party and I should pass the phone to you" I sighed listening to her

"We are surely attending a business party but I wouldn't want you to get any wrong ideas. It's just for business,so make sure you always stick by my side and don't try interacting with anyone.

And to make sure of that you won't be taking your tab with you, greet everyone you come across with a slight bow and don't let anyone find out about your health condition, understood?" I said coldly raising an eyebrow while she responded with a nod.

I needed to make it clear that we weren't just attending any business party but we were going there to hunt down our prey and set the trap that would lure them in once and for all.

Chapter 17: 17

With the help of Mr Dean,I slowly climbed down the back seat of the car just to be confronted by the flash and clicks of cameras from the paparazzi's standing outside the venue settling panic In my stomach,but the same panic vanished the moment Mr Dean wrapped my hand around me his presence giving me a boost of confidence as we walked into the hotel.

I looked up to find ladies beautifully adorned with heavy makeup on and realization suddenly dawned on me that I had nothing on my face, not even an earring on my ears.

"Mr Dean,are you sure it's okay for me to follow you to your party?" I whispered and he looked down on me with an eyebrow raised

"It's just that I didn't apply anything on my face not even powder nor lipstick unlike the other women" I said looking at the floor as we waited for the elevator to open just to have him chuckle

"Can you apply make up?" He questioned and I nodded" well I'm not good at it but..I heard it's like paint,so I can at least do something modest.."

"And turn yourself into a clown" he said narrowing his eyes at me the side of his lips tugging upward. I suddenly had the urge to step on him "Just let me go home and save yourself the embarrassment of being seen with me" I murmured rolling my eyes

"There's no way I'll be able to fulfill that request as the media has a photo of the both of us together, but thankfully your face wasn't captured because your hair was all over like that of a ghost" he said with a smirk pulling me into the elevator

A ghost is that really what he thinks of me? I couldn't help but ponder why he made use of such an illogical comparison

"We still have thirty minutes before the event starts so we have thirty minutes to make you look like a human, so don't worry about my image it can never be shaken by such trivial issues"

"Image my foot. I hope you trip on something and break a leg at the party. " I murmured to myself before rolling my eyes once more just to have the elevator door open up.

I followed him diligently from behind as he led the way and the thought of the lecture he gave me all through our drive suddenly resurfaced.

Could it be he's not on good terms with the people here and that's why he's trying to vent his frustration on me?

Whatever I'll just mind my business while he minds his, I hope this party is over even before I realize I'm at one. I've never been a fan of social gatherings from the start because it makes me feel very uncomfortable and I've always found excuses not to attend one but turns out I can't even turn this one down even if I want to.

"Will you come in or are you going to keep standing there?" I looked up to find Mr Dean holding the door for me.

Is the party inside the hotel room? I asked no one in particular as I walked into the room

"Your makeup artist and hair stylist would be here in a minute, you can sit over there and read a book or whatever I'll be inside" he left, not sparing me a glance.

I took one more look at the hotel room and a gasp escaped me

Is this really what a hotel room looks like?

So spacious and big, could this be the suit I usually hear uncle mention?

But to be honest this is surely worth spending money on.

"Carmela!" I turned around to find Ken with a huge smile enveloped my face as I waved at him, and seems he wasn't alone he had two ladies following discreetly behind him

"Have you been well" he asked stroking the sides of my hair and I nodded

"Alright,I have some things to talk to Nix about, they'll get you prepared" he pointed to the ladies behind him before heading to the direction Mr Dean headed to.

"Please take a seat here so we can begin" one of the ladies said with a smile while pointing towards the couch.

I sat as she requested and the other lady started working on my hair when she kept staring at me

"I must admit you do have a very nice glow without makeup, I'll just do a very light shade of makeup to enhance that glow.."

"Don't do a light shade make it a heavy one so she can stand out with Mr Dean,we wouldn't want others thinking his past girlfriends are more prettier than his present" the one making my hair spat just to receive a death stare from her colleague

"You should watch what you say unless you don't like your job as much as I think you do.

And which other girlfriend's are you talking about she's actually the first girl I've seen with him since my years of working with his sister" she opened the box she brought in with her and brought out some brushes.

"Well rumors says otherwise"

"And rumors aren't always true" she scoffed before having a sigh "Miss please don't mind her words she sometimes speaks without thinking" She apologized and I nodded waving it off.

Rumors weren't completely true but are sometimes a mixture of the truth that is sometimes exaggerated. But either way,it really doesn't concern me as I'm neither one of his girls nor planning to be one, in fact,I still question why he brought me with him to the party his grandfather invited him to.

"Oh my, you look breathtaking" the lady who did my makeup said, bringing up a mirror and that's when the harsh reality of I was almost blind without my glasses as my image on the mirror was blurry.

It was okay not wearing it at home but what was I thinking not bringing it with me when I stepped out of the house.

"What do you think?" She asked and I nodded with an award smile

Come to think of it,after the day of that fire incident I couldn't seem to find my glasses anymore

Did I misplace it? Well if I did I'm sure someone must have seen it and would have given it to me but that didn't happen..

"Are you done yet?" I heard Mr Deans voice just to find him standing behind me

"I think the both of you are running late the party has already began" Ken said rushing out of the room "Carmela you look very beautiful and Nix I'm off" he said before shutting the door behind him and I suddenly feel this rooms atmosphere change but switched back as if it never did which I felt weird.

"Shall we?" Mr Deans voice broke the silence as he stretched out his hand which I took and stood to my feet before wrapping my hand tightly around his

"What's wrong, are you feeling nervous?" He asked slowly as he lead the way and I object shaking my head

"Mr Dean, would it make sense to you if I say I can't see anything properly at the moment?" I said putting on a smile knowing that my next sentence could lead to me getting in trouble

"Meaning?"

"To cut the long story short, remember that fire accident..Yeah, I lost my glasses then and totally forgot about it but now realization has finally dawn at me that I'm doomed." I said, still holding onto his hand tightly while I showcased a tight smile.

"In other words you're currently telling me that you just realized you have a sight defect and you've been without your glasses for days and never figured out something was wrong?" He raised his voice a bit and I nodded.

"How about I book you an appointment with a neurologist because I feel the accident from earlier also affected your brain. How can you tell me you lost your glasses for days and never realized? How exactly do you read" he stood his his tracks and faced me

"You should have said that you lost them then I wouldn't have thrown them away thinking you no longer needed them"

"You threw away my glasses?"

"Yes, because I thought you had contacts and that's why you threw it away" he said and I let out a scoff feeling helpless

"You should have asked me first!" I responded half screaming

"And you should have remembered you misplaced them,like isn't there no difference when you're using your glasses and when you're not?" He raised an eyebrow

"There is but when I wake up from sleeping the first thing I do I put on my glasses and if I don't I tend to think everyone's vision is as poor as mine.. like I sometimes feel something is wrong with my brain.." my last words came to be a whisper.

At times I'm able to see clearly without my classes and most times I find it difficult to see even while with my glasses. I believed it was normal

Just like I hoped for my fate to be like that of others.

"You must be crazy if you assume the world works the way you think"he sighed taking my hands in his and pulling me close "Cling to me tightly, unless your precious makeup is more valuable to you than personal space. Then by all means, flake off on someone else and deal with it yourself." he said with a straight face as we stepped out of the elevator and proceeded to the party.

Chapter 18: 18

I looked around and couldn't help but be astonished by the beauties surrounding us but even their silence spoke of the unknown tale of their high status which I have never had.

The feeling of inferiority washed over me and I let out a silent sigh as we walked through the crowd and approached a table where a fine man...

'a old man's I said to myself with wild eyes as he turned to face us with a smile which Mr Dean didn't return

"I thought you weren't coming?"

"Where are the papers" Mr Dean rethroted as he took his seat pulling out a chair for me as well

"Ahh,you rude kid is that how you address your old man" the elderly man said with a sigh

"You promised me that you aren't going to back out of it?"

I looked at both the people speaking in front of me and it felt like a storm.was coming from their direction which gave me goosebumps

From their conversation I was unable to tell if they were close or not

"Hello there I never thought he would bring you along" the elderly man waved at me and I gave a slight bow with a little smile.

"You asked me to bring her along"

"And when did you start listening to your grandfather?"

Grandfather? So he was the man I spoke with yesterday.

But why is Mr Dean behaving rudely with him, aren't we supposed to respect our grandparents?

Ahh whatever it's none of my business. I looked around at the people present at the party and my eyes landed back on Mr Dean who had a straight face leaving no room for emotions and then the realization of I and Mr Dean wearing the same color dress on me making me release a sigh

'Any one could think we were a couple which was far from the truth'

"Carmela" I heard a familiar voice call and turned to find Ken's mum standing behind me with a smile

"Hello" I said but it came out more like a whisper

"If the both of you don't mind then I'd love to snatch Carmela away for the moment .."

"No!" Mr Dean quickly declined not waiting for her to complete her statement leaving question marks in the air "I mean she hasn't been feeling well lately so I wanted to keep an eye on her" he was with an awkward look

"And when did you become a doctor, If she's sick then take her to the hospital" his grandfather scolded but I doubt it got into his thick skull

"Ahh! Whatever you can take her with you if you want" he sighed waving his hand and seems Ken's mum was also impatient as she took me with her not sparing a second

"How's your hand? Does it still hurt?" she asked, stroking my hair. I nodded with a smile, feeling her warm, cozy eyes on me. It felt as if she was pouring all her motherly affection into me through her gaze, and I yearned for more.

"You seem to be glowing lately. You should smile more, okay?" she said, handing me a glass, which I accepted with a smile.

"Mrs. Rena!" someone called, and a lady approached us with a polite smile on her face, which Ken's Mum returned, stretching out her hand. "How are you doing?" she asked, taking the other lady's hand in hers.

"I'm doing well. It's been long since we've seen one another," the lady replied with a calm expression, and from her aura, one could tell she was from an influential circle.

"Well, that's because I've been busy with work lately."

"And who's this delicate gem standing beside you? Have you finally gotten your son a wife?" she inquired, sizing me up and down, making me want to hide behind Ken's Mum.

"Not a daughter-in-law. Meet my daughter, Carmela," she said with a smile while stroking my hair, and clueless me just gave a slight bow.

"Wow! But you never mentioned having a daughter who is this beautiful."

"That's because she has been abroad for years and isn't a fan of being in the spotlight."

"Such a great daughter you have. I feel both her and my youngest son would make a great couple. How about..."

"I'm sorry to interrupt your conversation, but I need my partner back," Mr. Dean said, pulling me towards himself, leaving me speechless. Why do I feel like I'm rotating in a web? Ahh! I can't wait to leave this so-called party. As I tried to keep up with Mr. Dean's pace, I suddenly stumbled on something and fell to the ground, twisting my ankle with a sharp pain, as I wasn't used to heels.

"Are you blind? Couldn't you see me standing? Now look what you've done, my dress is ruined!" I heard the person I bumped into scream, but I didn't seem to care less as my ankle was killing me at the moment.

"I asked you to stay closer to me, didn't I?" Mr. Dean said, picking me up while I hid my face in his chest feeling everyone's eyes on my and embarrassment swiping all over me

A few hours earlier!

The room was shrouded in suffocating silence, the air heavy. All eyes were fixed on one person, their attention focused elsewhere. The rhythmic tapping of the keyboard filled the room, prompting exchanged glances among the onlookers, who wondered why they had been summoned so unexpectedly.

"Luna!" the old man called, receiving only a nod from her, accompanied by the forceful slam of her hand against the table.

"Why is your grandson so stubborn, Grandpa? Can't he just fall in love in peace? Must I resort to violence?" she half-screamed, leaving everyone bewildered.

"Xavier, what is she up to?" the old man whispered, met with a shrugged shoulder.

"Grandpa, how about we set up your grandson on a blind date?" Luna proposed, a crooked smile on her face.

"I've always wanted to, but it never worked," he admitted.

"That's because you never found the right person, and your planning is too outdated," she sighed. Mrs. Rena chimed in, "Then what do you expect from us?"

"I already have everything planned out. Just help me execute it," she said, sitting up with excitement evident on her face, sending goosebumps crawling over Ken's body.

"I have a bad feeling about this," he whispered to himself as Luna handed everyone a printed piece of paper. "It has everyone's role in the plan, but I'll go ahead and explain. As we all know Carmela's life is in danger, and Nix needs a woman in his life.

And for some weird reason, my guts feeling tells me Carmela is the one.."

"Isn't that ephebophile? I mean, Nix can go to jail for that... I mean, the age difference," Ken interjected.

"It's not as if he's forcing himself on her. She is going to give her consent to be with him, and that is why I'm making it our main objective to make both of them fall in love," Luna smirked before picking up her laptop.

"Grandpa, I need you to use your connections to find out everything about Carmela, even if it means the time she was born and dropped at the orphanage. Secondly, get Nix to join the company."

"Mission impossible!" Xavier screamed, tossing away the paper. "Excuse me?!"

"You and I know very well how much he hates our uncles.."

"Actually, it's a good idea," Ken interrupted, eyeing the arguing twins with an unsure expression.

"He once asked me if I wanted to become the CEO of his company as he wanted to become a chairperson," Ken explained.

"That seems like a good sign, but how exactly do we make him come after AN? He's not one to act according to one's wish," the old man replied.

"Then make him..Make Nix believe he doesn't have enough... no, sufficient power to protect what he wants. I heard from Ken that he has people on the move digging up information about Carmela; do your best to find out about her first and block Nix's connections," Luna smirked.

"And you think that's easy? Are you forgetting who your brother is?" Xavier interjected.

"I haven't, but it seems you've forgotten that I know what can trigger him. So follow my plan quietly or you can just leave," Luna retorted, eyeing him.

"If you're done explaining your grandfather's part of the plan, can I know mine?" Mrs. Rena spoke up not wanting to see the silblings during down the roof

"Become Carmela's mother. If we actually succeed in making both of them share a relationship, the world is going to talk and degrade Carmela. But if we want to stop that, we'll have to give her an identity, and who could do a better job than you?"

"Meaning?"

"You'll be attending a business party tomorrow as one of the major shareholders of AN group. Introduce Carmela to everyone as your daughter who has been abroad. With that, we would be giving her a solid step in the fight for the next Mrs. Dean, after all rumors spread like wild fire in the circle of the wealth" Luna explained, and everyone exchanged glances, wondering what could have possessed her.

"And which business party are we talking about?" the old man questioned.

"The one you'll be throwing, Grandpa. Make sure you invite your grandson and future daughter-in-law, and also don't be late. Xavier, ensure the reporters are present, and you follow what I printed out there. As for me, I have somewhere to be, so I'll take my leave," Luna said with a soft smile before exiting the room, leaving everyone in total confusion, or perhaps, amusement.

Chapter 19: 19

I glanced up at Mr. Dean, the ice pack still resting on my sprained ankle, and a heavy feeling of guilt settled in my chest for an unknown reason. He hadn't uttered a single word since we returned from the party, his attention focused solely on my sprained ankle. I watched as his phone continued to ring, but he ignored it in favor of tending to me.

"Can you move?" His voice cut through the tense silence, and I nodded, not wanting to burden him further. But as I gingerly placed my foot on the ground, the searing pain shattered my facade, and a soft sigh escaped my lips.

"Rest a bit, I'll be back," he stated calmly, picking up his phone before leaving the room.

Alone now, I sank onto the bed, the echoes of laughter and the lingering scent of the party drifting into the room. What had begun as a promising evening now felt like a distant memory, overshadowed by my overwhelming sense of guilt.

It gnawed at me, a relentless reminder of the events that had led to my sprained ankle. I had meant my words innocently, a harmless joke to elicit a laugh. But somehow, it had all gone awry.

The image of Mr. Dean's face flashed in my mind the brief flicker of annoyance before he masked it with a polite smile, helping me back to the room. Had I gone too far? Had I offended him beyond repair? The unending questions of had I echoed in my mind, each one adding to the weight on my shoulders.

As the party continued outside, I found myself retreating into a corner of the room, the silence deafening in contrast to the lively chatter I could still hear. It was a stark reminder of the discord I had introduced into the evening.

Suddenly, Mr. Dean re-entered the room, grabbing his jacket. "I have some clothes in the closet. Change into them, and you can call room service if you need anything," he said, the tone of his voice unreadable as he slipped on his jacket.

I seized the opportunity to steal glances at him, trying to decipher his mood, but his expression remained inscrutable. Was he avoiding me? Angry? The uncertainty gnawed at me, amplifying my guilt until it threatened to consume me entirely.

I wanted to apologize, to make amends, but the words caught in my throat. What could I say? How could I explain my thoughtlessness, my carelessness?

Why did his anger even burden me in the first place? I'm mainly an item he purchased and..

I could no longer keep up with my thoughts any more, as it all felt like a raging storm.

With a heavy sigh, I limped towards the closet, changing into one of the white shirts he had left for me. The fabric felt cool against my skin as I crawled into bed, the weight of guilt still hidden in a corner of my chest now settling over me like a suffocating blanket.

As I lay there, the events of the evening replaying in my mind, I couldn't shake the feeling that I had irreparably damaged something..our so called relationship or maybe something more.

But amidst the guilt and uncertainty, a small glimmer of hope flickered-a chance to learn from my mistakes, to prove that I was worthy of forgiveness or better still worthy of still being kept under his roof.

With that thought in mind, I closed my eyes, hoping that sleep would bring clarity and perhaps, a way to make things right.

Nix's heart raced as he surveyed the eerily quiet surroundings. The location he had been sent to was supposed to be a simple retrieval, but something felt off. He turned off the engine of his sleek black car, the silence deafening in contrast to the usual bustle of the city.

A chill ran down his spine as he scanned the area, his instincts screaming at him to leave but he refused. Then, like a lightning bolt of realization, it hit him-he had walked straight into the trap he was trying to avoid.

"Not again" he muttered under his breath, a bead of sweat trickling down his temple. With a quick, practiced motion, he undid his seat belt and reclined his chair, trying to make himself a smaller target.

His heart pounded in his chest as the first shots rang out, shattering the windows and windshield of his car. Glass rained down on him, leaving stinging cuts on his skin. Nix gritted his teeth against the pain, his mind racing with thoughts of escape and survival.

As the gunfire subsided, he cautiously stepped out of the car, brushing away the fragments of glass clinging to his clothes. His senses were on high alert as he scanned the area for any signs of movement.

A small smile tugged at the corners of his lips despite the danger. He knew those attacker just like he knew the back of his palm and also knew their tactics. They had underestimated him, thinking he was an easy mark.

His gaze landed on a conspicuous red box placed before his car. With wary steps, he approached it, his eyes narrowing in suspicion. But after a tense moment of hesitation, he lifted the lid.

Inside, a letter awaited him, the words written in crimson, stark against the white paper.

"Return it in three days unless you seek death."

Nix couldn't help but chuckle, a dark humor bubbling up within him. "Is this what they call a threat?" he murmured to himself, his voice laced with amusement. "They've forgotten what I'm capable of since I decided to live a quiet life...tsk tsk"

With a dismissive flick, he tossed the letter aside, his confidence unshaken. "Too bad I'm not in the mood to play nice," he mused, his eyes gleaming with something more than determination..

Turning back to his car, now riddled with bullet holes, Nix couldn't hide his annoyance. "So, I came all this way for nothing," he muttered, running a hand over the dented metal. "But at least they've reminded me of who I really am."

With a smirk, he climbed back into the driver's seat, the engine growling to life beneath him. As he drove away from the scene of the ambush, a sense of exhilaration coursed through him.

"Good for nothing idiots," he muttered with a shake of his head, the thrill of the chase already beginning to stir in his blood. This wasn't over-not by a long shot. Nix had been

awakened from his quiet life, and he was ready to unleash his demons he buried careful once again.

As Carmela slowly blinked awake, the first thing that greeted her senses was a familiar scent enveloping her. A soft smile tugged at her lips as she snuggled closer into the warm embrace of the person she was so accustomed to waking up beside. A sense of peace washed over her, and she found herself unwilling to let go of this moment.

"It's already 10 am. Are you planning to stay in bed for the rest of the day?" she heard Nix's calm, mild voice arousing her from her sleepy haze. Opening her eyes, she was met with his lazy yet vibrant gaze, as if his eyes were trying to capture every detail of her being.

"Did you sleep late after I left?" he inquired, brushing stray strands of hair from her face. Carmela remained silent, lost in the comfort of his presence, her mind still swimming in the memories of the night before..still expecting the worst but none of it came.

Nix's brows furrowed slightly, wondering if the incident from the party had left her feeling unsettled. But then, with a casual ease that only he possessed, he spoke again, "How about we go on a vacation after we get you a new pair of glasses?" His fingers rubbed against her knot brows

Carmela's heart skipped a beat at the unexpected proposal. A vacation? Just the two of them? Her rational mind tried to intervene, questioning the appropriateness of such a trip, but her heart had other ideas. It fluttered wildly in her chest, sending waves of excitement and anticipation coursing through her veins.

A small smile tugged at the corners of Nix's lips as he noticed the myriad of emotions playing across Carmela's face. "Go and freshen up. We'll be leaving in thirty minutes," he declared, sealing the decision with a gentle kiss on her forehead.

Carmela could only stare at him, her cheeks flushing a deep shade of red. Her mind raced with a whirlwind of thoughts and emotions, but all she could manage was a nod, her voice lost in the intensity of the moment.

"You don't want to go? You want more?" Nix teased, pulling her even closer to him. His lips brushed against hers in a teasing caress, sending shivers down her spine.

With a soft laugh, Carmela leaned into the gentle kiss, her heart soaring with a newfound sense of joy and contentment.

And in that moment, surrounded by the warmth of Nix's embrace, she knew that everything would be alright.. even if it was just for a moment.

And as their lips met in another tender embrace, Carmela couldn't help but feel grateful for the unexpected turn of events that had brought them here, together, in this perfect moment..she wished could last forever.

All she could hope for was that this journey would open up a new Chapter in her life-one where she would be free from the weight of her insecurities and fears. She found herself opening up to Nix in ways she never thought possible and secretly wanted to maintain their relationship.. although she knew it was next to impossible due to her current status.

With a smile on her face and a heart full of gratitude, she leaned into Nix's embrace, knowing that she was finally free,free to love even though she has to keep it a secret for as long as she can,free to live, and free to embrace the beautiful journey that life has lay ahead of her.. even though it was temporary, she wanted to lock away the bad memories in a box and focus on the good ones.

She took one more glance at Nix and the thought came like a passing wind

Could he be her key to happiness?

She wondered not getting any specific answers to her rhetoric questions

Chapter 20: 20

As I stood on the deck of the yacht, the cool ocean breeze caressing my skin, I closed my eyes and breathed in deeply. The salty tang of the sea filled my lungs, invigorating me. With a sense of excitement bubbling within me, I ran down the gangway and onto the shore, eager to explore the island that lay before us.

My eyes widened in amazement as I took in the vast expanse of the sea we had just crossed. The ocean stretched out before me, an endless expanse of sparkling blue, the rhythmic dance of the waves mesmerizing me.

I couldn't resist the pull of the water, the urge to feel the sand between my toes. With a carefree laugh, I kicked off my shoes and ran towards the water's edge. The waves lapped at my feet, the coolness sending shivers of delight up my spine.

Lost in the beauty of the moment, I didn't notice Mr. Dean approaching until his voice broke through my reverie.

"Carmela, can you help me with your phone? Mine ran out of battery," he requested, a hint of amusement in his voice as he juggled our luggage.

Quickly snapping out of my trance, I reached into my bag and handed him my phone with a smile. "Of course, here you go," I replied, watching as he took it with a grateful nod.

As Mr. Dean set off to take care of our arrangements, I couldn't resist the urge to explore the island on my own. I knew nothing about this place, but one thing was certain—it belonged to Mr. Dean.

With a sense of adventure coursing through my veins, I set off down a winding path that led deeper into the heart of the island. The air was filled with the sweet scent of tropical flowers, the sound of exotic birdsong filling my ears.

Everywhere I looked, there was beauty to behold. Lush greenery surrounded me, vibrant colors painting the landscape. I stumbled upon hidden coves with crystal-clear waters, where I dipped my toes and felt the warmth of the sun on my skin.

As I wandered, I couldn't shake the feeling of being in a dream. The island seemed to hold a magical quality, a sense of tranquility that washed over me like a gentle wave.

Hours seemed to slip by unnoticed as I lost myself in the island's wonders. Eventually, I found myself back at the shore, the sun beginning to dip below the horizon, casting a golden glow across the water.

When Mr. Dean finally appeared, a smile tugged at his lips as he watched me with amusement. "Enjoying yourself, Carmela?" he asked, his eyes sparkling with warmth.

I nodded enthusiastically, unable to contain my excitement. "It's absolutely breathtaking here," I replied, my voice filled with awe.

"What do you think about this island?" His voice, soft with the gentle lilt of excitement, cut through the tranquil breeze as we strolled along the sandy shore back to the yacht. I paused, feeling the weight of his gaze, and hummed softly, searching for the perfect words to convey the depth of my emotions.

"It's a piece of inspiration," I finally breathed, my heart fluttering in my chest as I met his intense gaze. A single eyebrow curled up in curiosity, and I could almost feel the pulse of anticipation in the air.

"Inspiration?" he echoed, his voice a husky whisper that seemed to dance with the sighing waves.

"Yes," I replied, my voice barely above a whisper as I gazed out at the sprawling beauty of the untouched island before us. "My inspirations are always dear to me, and this island... it's just too beautiful for words."

A smile played at the corners of his lips, a look of understanding passing between us. "Where are our belongings?" I asked, suddenly aware of the need to ground myself in this newfound paradise.

"In the yacht," he answered, his eyes never leaving mine.

"And the belongings you carried?" I pressed, unable to shake the mystery that surrounded him, especially in this enchanting place where reality seemed to blur with fantasy.

"Just some items that belong here," he murmured cryptically, his gaze drifting back to the island, its lush greenery and pristine shores beckoning.

I felt a flutter of excitement mingled with uncertainty in the pit of my stomach. "Aren't you hungry?" he asked, attempting to steer the conversation away from the unknown.

But I couldn't focus on trivial matters like food, not when the sheer beauty of the island had already filled me to the brim with wonder and longing.

Suddenly, I felt the warmth of his hand encircle my waist, his breath hot against my ear as he drew me closer, his chin resting lightly on my shoulder. My heart raced at the unexpected intimacy, a rush of emotions flooding through me like a tidal wave.

"If you feel this mesmerized now, my dear," he murmured, his voice a seductive whisper that sent shivers cascading down my spine, "imagine what it will be like when you see the Aurora at night."

His words hung in the air, a promise of magic and mystery that left me breathless. "I have many islands," he continued, his voice low and intimate, "but I chose this one for a reason. I knew you would be awed by the splendor of the Aurora."

"Aurora," I whispered, pondering what it might resemble. I had often heard people speak of it, but never had I witnessed one myself. I supposed today was my lucky day.

"You've never seen one?" He turned me to face him, and I shook my head. "Look at one just above us," he said. I glanced upward, only to be met with his lips. Unlike last time, they weren't gentle nor harsh; instead, I could feel every hair strand on my body rise at attention as his tongue found its way to mine, stimulating and arousing me like never before.

I felt a sudden ache between my legs, a desire to pull back from the kiss, yet I couldn't—I wanted more. But my desires were put on hold as Mr. Dean withdrew from the kiss, turning me to face away from him before placing a hot, bubbling kiss on my neck.

"Mr. Dean, I..." I began, unable to complete my sentence as a soft moan escaped my lips. I could feel him smile against my skin as he placed his lips once more on my heated flesh.

"Do you have something to say?" he asked, his voice a whisper against my ear before trailing kisses down to my shoulder. I was momentarily dumbstruck.

"Is... is this appropriate? I mean, the surroundings?" I stammered, my eyes closed, lost in the sensation.

"We can do whatever we want; no one would disturb us," he murmured, planting another kiss on my neck. I could feel my knees growing weak, and as if he sensed it, he lifted me up into his arms and carried me back to the yacht. I buried my face in his chest out of embarrassment, feeling my underwear dampen with desire.

"Wait here, I'll prepare the bathtub for you," he said suddenly, gently placing me on the bed.

Was this the end? No more? I watched as he disappeared into the bathroom, my mind swirling with confusion. When he returned, I couldn't quite grasp what was happening.

"Are you still cold?" he asked, placing his hand on my forehead. Suddenly, all the color drained from my face.

I knew we weren't doing the right thing, but was it okay to lead someone on and then abruptly stop? I wasn't experienced in these types of relationships, but one thing was for sure—my IQ was higher than his when it came to matters like this.

"You shouldn't have worn something so light. At least a jacket would have been better," he said, rubbing my palm with his. I couldn't help but scoff.

"Are you okay!?" he asked, and I wanted to scream in his face, to demand how I was supposed to be okay after he had teased me mercilessly. But instead, I kept my emotions hidden behind a blank expression. I slipped my hand out of his and headed towards the bathroom.

"Do you need any help? I can be of assistance," I heard his sly voice from the other side of the door, and I couldn't resist the urge to stomp my feet against the floor in frustration.

"Why are you so naive, Carmela?!" I screamed at myself internally before proceeding to undress and sink into the hot bathtub.

A small smile formed on my lips as I considered how easily manipulable and tease-able Carmela seemed to be. I could tell she wanted more of what I had started, but there was no way I was going to give in to her demands. After all, she's a minor, and I needed to take things slow with her.

I moved to the dining room area in the yacht where the polished wood of the table gleamed under the soft glow of the overhead lights, reflecting the gentle sway of the boat on the water.

I placed each piece of fine china with precision, the plates catching the light and casting delicate shadows. The silverware gleamed, carefully aligned in perfect symmetry beside each plate. Crystal glasses were polished to a sparkle, ready to be filled with the finest wines.

The centerpiece was a work of art itself, a lavish arrangement of exotic flowers that perfumed the air with their sweet scent. I adjusted it minutely, ensuring it was the focal point of the table, commanding attention with its vibrant colors and graceful form.

As I stepped back to survey my work, the room felt charged with a tense satisfaction, every detail of my plan meticulously executed. A smug smile curled at the corners of my lips until it was abruptly wiped away by the beep of my phone.

I picked it up, fingers trembling slightly, to find a message from Ken. As I read his words, a chill crawled up my spine, confirming my suspicions. This was not merely a threat; this was a warning laced with immediate action.

"Does bombing my house mean you'll find what you're looking for? Never," I taunted, each word a venomous echo in the silent room. I scoffed, a bitter smirk twisting my features. "Now let the game begin and let the losers drown in blood."

The hairs on the back of my neck stood on end as I heard Carmela's voice from behind me, her footsteps a whisper against the hardwood floor. I quickly tossed my phone under the dining table, the screen illuminating the shadows like a sinister beacon, and reached for the innocent facade of a bucket of ice cream.

"A game? Which game are we playing?" Carmela's voice was laced with curiosity, but I could hear the underlying tension.

"A game of ice cream,"