

KEY TO HAPPINESS:(My mute devil)

#Chapter 41 - Read KEY TO HAPPINESS:(My mute devil) Chapter 41

Chapter 41: 41

"Hubby!" I called with an innocent smile, not failing to catch the mischievous expression on Nix's face. Mischief sparkled in his eyes, with a smile of indecency playing on his lips.

How did I get here?

It wasn't jealousy or anything like that. I was on my way out when a sudden nosebleed had me rushing to the women's room. After cleaning up, I received an urgent call from our TA.

"What trouble have you gotten yourself into?" she demanded, sounding panicked.

"Excuse me! What are you talking about?" I responded, feeling lost and oblivious.

"The professor said, and I quote, 'Ask Carmela to submit three portrait drawings of Tomline Dean in the next seven days.' If you don't complete this, it's going to affect your scholarship."

"What the f..? I thought we were on holiday break. And who is this Tomline Dean?" I cursed.

"Yes, I thought the same too... but it seems the professor is under pressure from some authority figures. But that's not the main issue. The issue is where you're going to find Tomline. I did some research and found out he's a final-year student who doesn't attend classes but aces his exams. No one knows what he looks like," she explained. Frustration welled up inside me as I ran my hand through my hair.

I ended the call and splashed water on my face, trying to figure out who I had offended to deserve this sudden punishment.

"Tomline Dean..." I muttered, biting my lip. Why did his name sound so familiar?

"Tomline Dean... Tomline Dean... Nix Dean! They have the same surname, so they might know each other." I said half jumping

I hastily grabbed my bag and phone, heading out of the bathroom. My steps faltered as I was confronted by a sudden commotion caused by a woman claiming to be Nix's betrothed.

What were they doing here? Wasn't the restaurant supposed to be closed for a private event the owner was hosting?...

"Oh my, could Nix be the owner?" I wondered as I made my way closer to the scene just to find the big guy.

The restaurant hummed with muted chatter and clinking silverware as I approached Nix, my heart pounding in my chest. I needed him to lead me to Tomline Dean, submit those portraits, and secure my scholarship all while cementing my role as Mrs. Dean.

"Hubby are you done with your business?" I asked, stepping closer. For a fleeting moment, I thought I saw a smile play at the corner of his lips, but it vanished as quickly as it came, leaving me questioning my own imagination.

"Oh my..." I feigned surprise. "Hello, Mrs. Betrothed. I didn't know we'd meet here again. What a small world we're in" My voice dripped with sarcasm as I took a seat beside Nix.

"You seriously chose this?" She sneered at me, her eyes flicking back to Nix over my shoulder. "Well, isn't it obvious why he chose me? I'm obviously prettier, smarter, and..."

"You're a leech trying to feed off him!" she retorted. I swiftly grabbed Nix's hand, sensing his desire to intervene. This was my battle to fight.

"Leech?" I stood, pulling out my phone. With a few taps, I brought up my profile. "Can you read this?" I shoved the phone in her face before pulling it back with a click of my tongue. "Never mind I'll read... Artist Carmela, whose surname is unknown to the general public, is a student at the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts. Although just a student, she is worth fifty to two hundred million dollars." I glanced at the screen, ensuring they were indeed talking about me. "Fifty million dollars... Damn, I'm a hot commodity in the market" I grinned, still staring at my phone.

"It's clear who's the leech here. I don't even have my family name, yet I'm worth this much. Without your family name, you're nothing." My tone was even, my gaze unwavering.

"I'll kill you if you say that again," she spat, stepping closer. And a smirk curled on my lips at her impulsiveness.

"You're nothing without your family name," I repeated, watching her fist fly towards me. I caught it mid-air. "Too slow. Try harder." I teased her with a wink, as I stepped aside watching her hurl a flower vase in my direction.

"You daughter of a slut," she cursed and I knelt down, picking up a red rose from the floor. "One dirty mouth you have there. I must commend you, but I'd advise you not to curse my mother."

"Unless..." she started, but I cut the rose petals, leaving only the stem. Smiling, I advanced without warning and pricked her with it.

I smiled even more as she gasped, clutching her throat and chest. While I turned to Nix, whose questioning look bore into me. I shrugged, sighing. "She won't die. That is.. if she gets to the hospital in the next thirty minutes. Anyway, I've lost my appetite. I'll see you in the room." I walked away without a backward glance, feeling my anger surging through me.

My eyes did not leave Carmela until she disappeared from my sight. Her fists clenched despite the smile on her face. Her aura had shifted, and I turned to the woman gasping for air, wondering what on earth Carmela had done.

I picked up the rose stem, examining it for anything unusual but found nothing. "Help," I heard Ella croaking, trying to grab my arm and I couldn't help but scoff.

"You just couldn't stay away from trouble, could you?" I said flatly. I had no intention of getting involved in their feud. Because her demise would only work to my advantage.

"You're obligated to protect me," she whispered desperately.

"You're mistaken. I'm only obligated to protect the real daughter of the Dalton family, and you... you are just a substitute." I paused, watching her despair. "But I'm a generous man, so I'll help you. Call a doctor or take her to the hospital in the next twenty minutes." I instructed the security personnel, then walked away.

"Manager," I called as I entered the elevator and he followed. "Send the dishes I ordered to my room, along with a glass of orange juice and a chocolate cake." I instructed before the elevator doors opened once again to reveal my room, noticing the door was ajar.

I walked in, ready for an ambush, only to spot Carmela's blood-stained shirt on the floor. "What in the name of the lord did I get you into?" I muttered, frustrated.

But , I heard her voice coming from the bathroom as if in a feud "Carmela!" I called, knocking fiercely on the door. "Open the door, Carmela!"

The door creaked open slightly, revealing her head. "Are you okay?"

"I need a tampon," she said, avoiding eye contact.

"A tampon?" I repeated, confused. "What's a tampon?"

She sighed, her face falling. "You can ask for a gun and I'll provide it, whatever you want, but you'll have to tell me what this tampon is for me to be able to get it."

She chuckled softly. "You're cute."

"What?"

"Can you get me a sanitary pad? It's not a tampon, but it serves the same function," she explained, looking away. I nodded, stepping back to have her jam the door close

Women. Such a confusing creation.

I placed a call to the manager, requesting for the sanitary item before heading back to the bathroom. There, I found Carmela soaking in the bathtub, her chin resting on the edge, staring intently at the floor.

"What are you thinking about?" I asked as I walked in, catching her eye roll at my question. Was she annoyed with me, despite my innocence in whatever was bothering her? Or was this one of those mood swings they say women experience at times?

"When are we getting married?" Her question landed like a ticking bomb in my ears. I sat down on the side of the bathtub, my hands instinctively moving to gather her hair into a simple bun to keep it from getting wet.

"Why the hurry? We still have time. Don't worry, I won't extend the contract. A year is a year," I said, but she gave no reaction. "Since you started bearing the title of Mrs. Dean today, then today marks the first day of our marriage. We can make it official tomorrow at the courthouse. But I must ask, why did you suddenly wear the ring you once rejected?"

I watched as she raised her hand, examining the ring. "I've been bullied ever since I was young, and today I finally got the chance to strike back. What better revenge than taking the position she lost?" She turned to me with a mischievous smile. "And I don't get it. Why is she so fixated on marrying you? I don't see what she's so obsessed about," she added, her face mocking.

"If you were in her place, wouldn't you want to marry me as well?" I teased, tapping her nose. but she shook her head in objection.

"I wouldn't, unless there was a benefit. If this were my novel, the reason she's so keen on marrying you would be because you hold a position of power, and being your wife would give her influence." Her explanation, though sounding like fiction, held a ring of truth. Marrying into the Dalton family would solidify my standing against other competitors for the dynasty's heir.

"I know it's out of place to ask since our marriage is a charade, but when will I meet your family?" Her question caught me off guard.

"Your paternal family, not maternal," she clarified, biting her lip nervously. I took a deep breath, choosing my words carefully. Despite the progress in our relationship, Carmela's vulnerability made her sensitive to words.

"Whenever you want," I replied with a smile, lighting up her eyes like twinkling stars.

"Really?" she asked for confirmation, and I nodded. But her next words left me speechless.

"Can you arrange a meeting with Tomline Dean for me?" Her request confused me.

"Who is Tomline Dean?" I asked, seeing her face fall.

"Don't tell me you don't know him. He obviously has the same surname as you," she retorted.

"Beloved, there are tens of thousands of people with the surname Dean. It doesn't mean they're related," I said softly, trailing water down her back to have her sigh

"I'm doomed," she whispered, her voice just loud enough for me to hear.

"What's wrong?" I asked, puzzled by her interest in meeting a stranger.

"I got a call from our TA. The professor wants me to present three portraits of Tomline Dean by the end of the week," she sighed, frustration evident.

"But you're on holiday," I added, watching her nod.

"Our TA hinted that she's under pressure from higher authorities, and if I don't submit them, it could affect my scholarship," she explained. Her words sounded absurd. I was the one sponsoring her education, a fact kept secret from everyone, including the professors. Who would dare bully my woman?

I stood, texting Tom some instructions to check on the activities at the university

"Have you always been this tall?" Carmela suddenly asked, making me smile as I placed aside my phone

"You just noticed?" I retorted, setting my phone aside, I turned to find her head in both hands.

"Are you okay?" I asked, rushing back to her side. She nodded but looked away, blinking several times.

"I'm okay. I think I'm dizzy because I haven't had breakfast. Please, help me with the towel," she pointed to it with a wry smile. But that didn't change the fact that I felt worried about her. I hurriedly brought it to her, wrapping her in it before carrying her back to the room.

Chapter 42: 42

Carmela sat in the opulent hotel room, the lavish feast before her ignored as she gazed out the window, lost in her thoughts. The festival outside was a cacophony of music, laughter, and fireworks, but none of it reached her. Her mind was consumed by the mysterious call she had received earlier that evening.

Professor Mallory, usually so composed and distant, had called her in a rare state of agitation.

"Carmela, please talk to Mr Dean" she had urged. "Help me plead so I won't lose my job..."

Nix Dean..

The name rang in her ears, familiar yet unfamiliar. Was he just another businessman, or something far more significant? She watched him now, sitting across from her, his focus unwavering from the screen of the laptop before him. He seemed like a deity engrossed in the minutiae of his own creation, his fingers dancing over the keyboard with practiced precision.

The sound of plastic scraping against glass drew her attention. She looked down to see a sleek black card beside her plate. "Get yourself a dress for the wedding," his solemn voice instructed. She bit her lip as mischievous thoughts bubbled up.

"What if I use all your money for shopping?" she quipped, waiting to catch his attention

"It's an unlimited card, Beloved.. And even if you do, I could sell four to five Lamborghinis to refill the account," he replied, his tone calm and measured but still he didn't look away from the screen before him. Her jaw dropped, the word "Lamborghini" echoing in her mind.

"How... how many Lamborghinis do you have, if I may ask?" She set her cutlery down, her full attention on him now.

"Ten to fifteen.. I guess. Collecting them was an old habit of mine ," he answered absently, still engrossed in his work.

"Can I have one?" she blurted out, earning a questioning look from him. She tucked her hair behind her ear, scrambling for an excuse. "Erm... since I'm going to become Mrs.

Dean, it wouldn't look right if I continued using public transport. And even if I insist, you'll have to convince me otherwise," she lied, hiding the true reason she needed the car.

As a scholarship student in a department filled with wealthy, spoiled brats, she was constantly the target of their ridicule. They once even forced her to drink a carton of spoiled milk just because they didn't want to waste it, and she had complied to avoid even more trouble that day.

"I'll think about it," Nix's voice brought her back to the present. Without thinking, she jumped up and kissed his cheek.

"See you in the courthouse, Mr husband," she said, startling him a bit before grabbing the card he dropped on the table before heading towards the elevator.

This marriage was going to be a win-win situation, and she had plans installed to ensure that. f

Once in the elevator, she dialed Tom's number. "Hey!" she greeted cheerfully when he answered, a smile naturally spreading across her face. "Let's go shopping. I'll buy you whatever you want."

There was a dense silence on the other end. "Did you rob someone?" he finally asked, his tone half-joking.

"Not someone, but a bank," she replied with a sly smile, looking at the credit card Nix had handed her. The future, uncertain and thrilling, stretched out before her, filled with possibilities.

...

I stood before the courthouse, watching it buzz with people streaming in and out, each absorbed in their own pressing matters. The unpleasant throbbing in my head intensified, making me shut my eyes swiftly for a brief moment as if my brain was being electrocuted. Goosebumps formed on my skin as the early morning breeze grazed my bare arms, and I clutched the chain of my bag tightly.

I had originally planned on wearing the suit trousers and jacket I bought from the mall, but Nix Dean had other plans. This morning, a makeup artist and hair stylist arrived at my doorstep, in courtesy of him.

Now, I wore a green cropped blazer and tailored skirt paired with white toe-bow pearl block heels. My hair, was styled into bouncy curls, and was partially held back with a white ribbon bow hairpin. I wondered why he made me go shopping if he already had plans for my attire. He even asked me to bring the new clothes along to court, as if he intended to return them.

"Ma'am, the young master is waiting for you inside," the butler said, taking the bags from my hands. With a deep breath, I walked into the courthouse, feeling both my head and heart throbbing as if warning me against proceeding.

As I pushed open the heavy doors, a swirl of emotions crossed my face. My eyes widened slightly, my eyebrows arched with a hint of apprehension. I took a deep breath, squaring my shoulders as I steeled myself for what was to come. My lips pressed into a thin line, and my hands fidgeted subtly with the chain of my bag. With a hesitant step, I crossed the threshold, my eyes scanning the unfamiliar surroundings. The sound of my heels clicking on the floor echoed through the hallway, punctuating the silence. Despite my efforts to appear composed, a faint tremble betrayed my nervousness, revealing the turmoil beneath my reserved exterior.

My eyes found Nix, who sat regally, exuding an air of quiet authority in a green handmade suit that perfectly complemented his confident demeanor. The vibrant color accentuated his piercing eyes, which seemed to gleam with an inner light. His movements were fluid and graceful, like a panther claiming its territory, as he settled into the chair.

The suit, tailored to perfection, showcased Nix's chiseled physique. The fabric seemed to ripple with subtle tension, as if alive and responding to his every move. The delicate stitching and intricate details shimmered in the light, imbuing the overall ensemble with an aura of quiet sophistication. His steady gaze on me made me stiffen, but then he looked away, speaking in a foreign language to the man opposite me, who was clearly a lawyer. The man looked in my direction with a small smile before turning back to Nix.

"Young madam," the butler called, and I nodded, understanding the hint. I took my seat beside Nix as the lawyer placed two documents before me.

"With this, you'll be officially married in the eyes of the law," he said, pointing to the marriage documents. "And this," he gestured to the documents beside them, "contains the terms and conditions of your one-year contract."

My eyes clouded with a mixture of fear and unease. My brow furrowed, and my lips pressed together as if holding back a secret. My posture stiffened, and my hands clenched into fists, revealing a subtle tremble. I could feel the color drain from my cheeks, leaving a faint pallor. My gaze became distant, as if transported back to a haunting memory. The throbbing ache I had been trying to suppress resurfaced like a persistent echo from my past. Without thinking, I picked up the pen and placed my signature on both documents.

"Congratulations, Mr. and Mrs. Dean."

As I rose from the chair, a jacket enveloped me like a gentle cocoon, its softness a stark contrast to the turmoil inside me. I turned to face Nix, my eyes locking onto his as he stepped closer. With a tender gesture, he reached out and pulled both sides of the

jacket together, wrapping me snugly in its embrace. The fabric whispered sweet comfort as it enveloped me, its warmth seeping into my very being.

"Shall we?" Nix asked, his hands encircling mine, his fingers intertwining with mine in a gentle yet firm grasp. The gesture felt both reassuring and protective, like a shield against the world. With a compliant nod, I followed him out of the courthouse and into his car. I was still uncertain where this marriage would lead our relationship, but I hoped for the better.

"Are you sick?" he asked, and I quickly objected. "Then why do you look pale?" he questioned.

"I'm worried. A friend of mine is in the hospital, and I feel bad for not visiting," I lied, but he wrapped his hands around mine.

"I'll drop you at the hospital and pick you up in an hour. Did you bring the clothes I asked for?"

"Yes, but what are you going to do with them?"

"We're going on a trip, so you'll need them," he said, resting his head on the headrest, his hand still entwined with mine as if he didn't want to let go.

It was a relief that I was going to the hospital, as it was time to bring my plans to life. Marrying Nix was the first step; now it was time for phase two. As I looked out the window, the side of my lips formed into a smirk. A mute I am to the world by day, but a demon by night.

Chapter 43: 43

"The devil finally decided to show herself," I heard Dr. Scott say as I stepped into his office. I resisted the urge to roll my eyes. "You seem all decked up. Where are you headed or coming from?" he inquired with a sly smile. I raised my left hand, displaying the diamond ring I was wearing.

"I got married," I said, taking my seat. He didn't look surprised at all, as if he had expected it.

"Then I guess it's high time to proceed with the next stage of our plan, right?" He placed a specimen cup before me, and I nodded.

"Besides being friends with my mother, have you been able to find out anything on Nix?"

"Sorry, no, but I have news that would excite you... it's time for a new heir to be chosen."

"A new heir means the seal would need to be used," I interjected, "and I have half of the seal." I looked up at him, and he nodded.

"Well, the other half of the seal seems lost somewhere in this universe, but I hope we get to it. I've always wondered how you managed to act like a mute for so long and fool your grandfather into believing you're dead."

I picked up the surgical blade, running it through my palm. "Even I wonder if he's a fool. After all, he made me what I am. Does he seriously believe I could be easily killed?" I tilted my head, filling the specimen cup with my blood.

I surely deserve an acting award for convincing the whole world that I'm a helpless mute. Pretending wasn't difficult, but retrieving my memories was the hard part. After waking up, I found myself in an orphanage. What the manager told me never sounded convincing, seeing how I could assimilate different business strategies and even hack the orphanage's security like a professional at such a young age.

After some months, Dr. Scott found his way to me, introducing himself as my mother's younger brother. He conducted tests on me and concluded that my memories were being suppressed by a drug. With the help of the orphanage manager, Mrs. Joel, who I referred to as Grandma, I began therapy but still didn't regain my memories. My therapist said there was nothing more he could do since it was my consciousness that didn't want to remember. But I knew who my enemy was, and so we began our plan.

I didn't want my grandfather to suspect my survival, so I needed someone powerful enough to shield me, someone whose actions couldn't be questioned, someone who could turn the world inside out to achieve what he wants.

Grandma introduced Nix Dean, but she was murdered before I could think of a way to bring me into Nix's life, but it seems she had it all planned, as he showed up after her death.

"A little bird told me Nix Dean was betrothed to you," Dr. Scott said, smiling from ear to ear.

"Not me. The daughter of the Dalton family. I'm clearly not their daughter."

"You can continue saying that, but it will never change the truth that the person claiming to be the daughter of the Dalton family is just an imposter made to take your place."

"Well, I wish her the best of luck, as I plan on bringing down the entire Dalton family." I placed Nix's card before him. "Get the painting back. I'll come and take the card when you are done," I said, wrapping my hand in the bandage.

As I rose to my feet, a chill ran down my spine. The pieces were falling into place, but the path ahead was shrouded in uncertainty. The real game was about to begin, and in

this world of deception and power plays, trust was the rarest currency. With each step, the weight of my mission pressed heavily on my shoulders, but I was ready. The devil had shown herself, and the stage was set.

"This amount of blood will be able to unlock the chest where the painting is," I said, placing the cap back on the specimen cup before making my way towards the door.

"I don't think I'd be able to block Justin from finding you. He's just too determined," I heard Dr. Scott say as I reached the threshold.

"Then let him find me," I commented, continuing my way back to the receptionist.

Aside from meeting with Dr. Scott, I needed to undergo a thorough body check-up. I couldn't tell him about the blurry images I'd been seeing, the immense headaches, or the continuous nosebleeds. It would only worry him. He had already lost his sister and almost lost me once. If he found out I was having any health challenges, he'd cancel the entire plan, which I strictly opposed.

The stakes were high, and every move had to be calculated. With each step, the weight of my secrets grew heavier, but revealing them now would be too dangerous. The plan was set in motion, and there was no turning back. Let Justin come find me, after all I still needed enough support to be able to bring that psycho family down and I was ready for whatever lay ahead.

"Good morning ma'am, how may I help you?" The receptionist asked with a pleasant smile which I returned "I have a CT scan appointment"

"Name please"

"VIP" I said and she nodded as she typed on her keyboard and then looked up with a smile

"This way please, Doctor Orléans has been expecting your arrival" she said leading the way.

I stepped into the office, the nurse closing the door with a soft click behind me. The man sitting at the desk looked up, his eyes narrowing.

"I wouldn't say it's a pleasure to see your face," he said, his voice dripping with disdain. I couldn't resist rolling my eyes.

"As if I am pleased to see you, wish I had killed you that day," I retorted, maintaining eye contact. The tension between us was palpable, the air thick enough to suffocate anyone else present. Then, unexpectedly, he smiled a slow, sardonic curve of the lips.

"I missed you, my girl," Zamiel said, advancing toward me. He wrapped his arms around me, and despite my efforts to push him away, he was stronger than he used to be. Desperately, I kned him in the gut.

"Stay off me," I spat, shoving him back.

His grin widened as he steadied himself. "Your attitude remains the same even after so many years." He limped slightly, still trying to balance himself. "I must say, my best friend became a big shot without her family name. I was at your school auction; your piece was a hit."

I nodded, taking a seat. "I even saw a guy who looked like Nathan, but I guess I was mistaken," he continued, seating himself across from me.

"Who's Nathan?" I raised an eyebrow, watching his face fall.

"Don't tell me you don't remember."

"Remember what?"

"When we were kids, we underwent severe training as heirs of the Mafia dynasty. We weren't supposed to know each other's names but were referred to one another by the titles of our families. Nathan belonged to Alpha One family, you were Alpha Two, I was Alpha Three, and then there was Alpha Four. Alpha Four was the most competitive and refused to relate with us.

But you, Nathan, and I became friends. Since you were the youngest and only girl among us, with extraordinary skills, we all knew you would be the heir. We hoped you would choose one of us as your husband."

"Really?" I looked at him skeptically.

"Yes. Nathan and I took special care of you, but.."

"But?" I prompted.

"Nathan's care for you was more like an obsession." I stared at him, uncertain whether to believe his story. My memory was fragmented, but something about his tale tugged at my subconscious.

"So why did you come to see me? You could have gone to your uncle for anything."

"You're the owner of the hospital, and I prefer professionalism. Since I came to you instead of consulting my uncle, you must understand I want my results to be kept secret." My tone was serious, maintaining eye contact.

"Please change into the clothes behind the curtain so we can proceed," he replied in a professional tone. I nodded, rising to my feet and moving behind the curtain to find a neatly folded blue gown.

"If you don't mind me asking, why do you want a CT scan?"

"I want to make sure I'm okay. You know what I've been planning and who I'm up against. I can't afford to fall ill." His silence was telling and pressuring although he wasn't looking at me

"The truth, Carmela," he pressed, reading my mind. I sighed, slipping into the gown.

"After finding out I was alive, did you ever visit me in the orphanage?"

"No, it would have been too suspicious. We weren't supposed to make friends, but it wasn't a secret that we got along well."

"Hmm," I murmured, stepping out from behind the curtain. He leaned against the table, watching me.

"Why do you ask?"

"I've been having blurred images of someone from the orphanage, causing severe migraines," I admitted, omitting the part about the nosebleeds.

He fetched a notebook and pen from a drawer, placing them before me. "Make a sketch."

"Why?"

"I heard from your uncle that your memories were being suppressed by a drug. Its effects might be wearing off. Make the sketch," he insisted, removing the pen cap. I took a deep breath, trying to recall the image. Within minutes, I had a rough sketch. I handed it to him, watching his intense scrutiny.

"The drawing looks like Nathan."

"Nathan?" I echoed, still puzzled by the name.

"Yes, but he left the training ground before your event happened." His reaction made me feel there was more history between Nathan and me than I could remember....Like untold tales

"Forget Nathan. I heard it's time to choose an heir for the dynasty," I changed the topic.

"They can handle that without me. I'm not getting involved." He tossed the sketch aside.

"Why?"

"Carmela, I swore an oath as a doctor to save lives, not take them. I can't become the heir they're looking for." I chuckled. He had always been this way, refusing to take part in the affairs of the dynasty although he was raised as a Mafia.

"Shall we?" He opened the door, making a slight bow.

"Of course," I replied.

I wasn't sure who Nathan or Alpha Four was, but my instincts told me that one of them held the key to the seal I sought, and my instincts never lied.

Chapter 44: 44

With a composed look and a measured smile, I slid into Nix's car, finding him engrossed with his laptop. As soon as I settled in, he swiftly closed it.

"How was it?" he asked, taking my hand in his.

"It..."

"How did you get injured?" he interrupted, his fingers gently tracing the bandage wrapped around my hand.

"I... I bumped into a nurse carrying some surgical tools, and this happened," I lied, trying to sound casual and reasonable.

"Be more mindful of your surroundings..I wouldn't want you dying out of the bloom" he said, tucking a stray lock of hair behind my ear.

"You wanted to visit your family, right?" I asked, studying his face. His expression remained unreadable. "We've been invited for a family dinner, and we'll also be spending some days there. That's why I asked you to bring your clothes."

I nodded in understanding, but before I could respond, my phone beeped with a notification. I picked it up to find a message from Zamiel.

"A little gift for you," the message read. I tapped on the link underneath it, biting down on my lip to hide the smile creeping onto my face. It was an invitation to the Alpha Four dining table.

"Bonus gift: old man Delton has been battling a heart disease for the past four years, which is supposed to be a secret," the next message read. I looked out the window, unable to suppress the smile any longer. This was more than a gift; it was the key to the downfall of the Delton family.

The Alpha Four dining table is the annual gathering of the four powerful families that make up the Mafia dynasty. This year, it would be hosted by Alpha Two, meaning it would take place in one of Delton's islands. With everyone wearing masks, it would be easy to conceal my identity and say hello to my dearest grandfather, who must have missed me.

But the problem was how I would attend this event since we were currently headed to visit Nix's family house, where we would be staying for a few days. The event was in forty-eight hours. Time was running out, and I needed a plan.

"We're here," I heard Nix say. I looked out the window and saw the car had already come to a stop in front of a huge white gate. The gates opened slowly, and I expected to see a building, but the opposite was true.

Huge trees lined both sides of the driveway, and the car drove down the smooth tarmac path in the center. I looked out, hoping to see something other than trees and flowers, but there was nothing else. It felt like the gate had opened into another world, one filled solely with nature's creations. I found myself smiling as I gazed at the green landscape before me.

We drove for almost ten minutes before we arrived at what was not just a house, but a mansion. Maids and servants stood on either side of the entrance with their heads bowed, as if a deity was passing by.

The car doors opened simultaneously, and I climbed out at the same time as Nix. I realized I had been wrong to call the building a mansion; it was much more than that. I found myself in front of a structure so grand, it defied description. The mansion stood like an architectural marvel, its magnificence almost overwhelming. The sheer size of it was the first thing that struck me; it seemed to stretch endlessly, a labyrinth of luxury rising out of the lush green landscape.

The exterior walls were a pristine white, gleaming under the sunlight with an almost ethereal glow. Tall, imposing columns framed the entrance, each one intricately carved with designs that seemed to dance and shift as the light played upon them. The façade was adorned with elaborate stonework, where every curve and angle told a story of meticulous craftsmanship and timeless elegance.

Massive windows lined the mansion, their glass so clear and reflective it was as if they were portals to another dimension. Above the windows, grand arches and balconies jutted out, wrapped in vines and flowering plants that added a touch of vibrant color to the stark whiteness. The main entrance was a set of enormous double doors made of dark, polished wood, inlaid with gold and silver patterns that caught the eye and refused to let go.

The surrounding gardens were no less impressive. Immaculately manicured lawns stretched out in all directions, dotted with fountains and statues that seemed almost

alive in their perfection. Ancient trees stood like guardians, their branches reaching out to provide shade and their leaves whispering secrets in the breeze. Pathways of cobblestone wound through the gardens, leading to hidden alcoves and sitting areas where one could lose themselves in the serene beauty of the surroundings.

It was not just the grandeur of the mansion but the harmony of its elements that made it indescribable. The way the architecture blended with nature, the meticulous attention to detail, and the sheer scale of it all combined to create an experience that transcended mere words. As I stood there, taking it all in, I felt a profound sense of awe and wonder, as if I had stepped into a dream or a fairy tale, a place where the ordinary rules of reality no longer applied.

"Welcome home, young master," a man dressed in a polished black suit with a pair of glasses perched on his nose bridge and a tablet nestled safely in his hand greeted with a bow. But Nix didn't respond; instead, he walked ahead of the man as if he didn't matter, reminding me of one thing: the life of wealth I was about to return to.

As expected, the house was quiet, the only sound being the clicking of my heels against the tile floor. Not even the footsteps of the maids could be heard, the best gift you could give to a wealthy person: quietness. Just like the poor love money, the wealthy prefer quietness as they feel the only time they could achieve something meaningful is when peace and quiet reign in equal proportion.

"Young master!" A man in his mid-sixties, dressed in butler attire, called as he approached us. "It's a pleasure to have you back, young master." He turned to me with a smile. "Madam," he greeted with a bow.

"Where's my grandfather?"

"He's in his study room with the second young master," he responded. Nix nodded, removing his hand from mine and placing it around my waist, pulling me closer to him.

"Are you ready?" he asked, maintaining eye contact with me while I looked away, wondering if I was really ready. I had my bow and was about to be handed an arrow to hit my target, but why did I suddenly feel nervous? As if sensing my nervousness, he bent down, placing a peck on my forehead before placing another on my lips.

"Don't worry about anything, just be yourself because that's your charm," he whispered, giving me goosebumps while I held onto his jacket, feeling my knees wobble. He had this effect on me that I couldn't deny, no matter how much I tried.

As we resumed our steps, I smiled as his words rang in my ear.

"Be myself?"

Really? Being myself meant returning to the way my grandfather made me, a heartless and emotionless killing machine whose only aim and desire is to kill.

As we approached the entrance of the study room, I couldn't help but feel a surge of excitement mixed with curiosity. The door, seemingly unremarkable, was actually a high-tech security marvel. I watched as it silently scanned Nix's presence, verifying his identity before granting access. As it slid open, I stepped into what felt like a clandestine hideout rather than a simple study room.

The room was bathed in a soft ambient light that highlighted the meticulously organized bookshelves lining the walls. Each book was perfectly aligned, giving the impression that no detail was too small for the owner. At the center of the room, a sleek, modern table and chair commanded attention. The table was dominated by a massive computer screen, hinting at the advanced technological resources at the owner's disposal.

To one side of the room, a plush, oversized couch invited relaxation, offering a stark contrast to the otherwise utilitarian setup. The blend of comfort and high security gave the room an aura of both refuge and command center, and I could sense the dual purpose of the space: a haven for intellectual pursuit and a nerve center for operations that require utmost discretion and security. It was almost like my grandfather's study room, if not more advanced.

"See who we have here, grandfather," the person I believed the butler referred to as the second young master spoke, standing at his feet. "Your favorite grandchild." He came closer, placing his hand on Nix's shoulder, which he shrugged off, disgust visible on his face.

"I don't know if anyone told you, but I would be delighted to be the first to say this: your life is toxic, and so is your touch, so don't try affecting me with it," Nix said, dusting his shoulder, and I could feel the tension growing between them.

I bet I forgot to mention that the wealthy also prefer seeing themselves as enemies as much as they prefer their peace and quiet, and that's one of the reasons my own grandfather sought my death.

Chapter 45: 45

The old man settled into the couch beside Carmela, his eyes gleaming with a mix of amusement and calculation. "My granddaughter-in-law looks pretty," he remarked, his tone deceptively casual. I couldn't shake the feeling that he had a hidden agenda. "There must be something special about you to make my grandson visit," he added, his words laced with a chuckle that Carmela echoed, though I found nothing amusing in his statement.

"If you're done interrogating my wife, perhaps you'd let her rest? Our journey was far from pleasant," I said, gently pulling Carmela to her feet and leading her towards the

door. My grandfather's kindness always came with strings attached, and I was wary of his true intentions.

The butler was waiting just outside "The butler will show you to our room," I whispered to Carmela, who nodded in understanding.

"You act as if I'm going to bite," the old man called out as I closed the door behind her.

"We both know you can do more than just bite, and that's why I'm here," I replied, taking the seat across from him. He settled back into his chair, a shadow crossing his face.

"You're truly your father's son," he scoffed. "You know about the hostility between our families, yet you married her."

"Because we have a duty to her," I interrupted. "And don't forget the promise you made to my mother to protect her."

"That promise is why you were betrothed to her in the first place," he retorted, raising his voice. I sighed, realizing we were back to square one, ensnared by a web of commitments and obligations. "You're the first child of my first son, and I've already lost him. I can't bear to lose you too."

"You have your promise to my mother, and I have mine to Carmela's. You have taught me that a man's word is his bond," I pressed on, though I doubted he would relent. "To protect her at the cost of your life? And what power do you think you have to protect her?" he sneered.

"The power of being the heir of this dynasty. Nathan becoming the heir has always been your dream, hasn't it?" The room fell into a heavy silence. The old man's dream had always been to see my father as the dynasty's heir, a dream shattered by his death. In his grief, he had tried to mold me into my father, dyeing my hair black and enrolling me in training as Nathan, forbidding the use of my real name. After my stint in a mental hospital, he sent me to the States to start anew for reasons known only to him.

"I couldn't pass down my looks, but I passed down my stubbornness," he mused. "I was too stubborn to see why your father kept you from our world. Now I understand, and I'm trying to rectify my mistake."

"You're too late, old man," I interrupted, watching him look away with a sigh. "I want revenge." I picked up a pen from his holder, the metal cold against my skin. "I don't seek power to protect her, but to avenge my parents. Remember your duty to Carmela. Without her, you wouldn't have just lost your son, you would have lost your entire family."

"These brats never listen," he muttered, his eyes fixed on the table. "What do you want me to do?" he questioned with raised eyebrows

"Protect Carmela. She may be from the enemy's bloodline, but she is not the enemy. The old Dalton is hunting her, and even though she has lost her memories, anything could trigger them. I want her to stay here while I attend the Alpha Four dining table," I explained and he remained silent, his expression inscrutable.

"She may be a weapon, but she's still a child. And despite being a child, she remains a weapon..a double-edged sword," he remarked with a smirk.

"Meaning?"

"Does the one you want to protect truly need protection?" His voice took on that cryptic tone I despised. "I've kept an eye on your wife. Her memories may be suppressed, but her body remembers. Just a little trigger could bring everything back you say."

"What are you getting at?" I snapped, frustration boiling over.

"Nothing. I'll keep my end of the bargain. Do as you wish," he said, standing. "I'll ask the butler to prepare what you need for the Alpha Four dining table. But for now, let's focus on our own family dinner. I'm sure it will be filled with plenty of drama, especially with you attending."

As he left, the air seemed to crackle with unspoken threats and hidden meanings. The suspense was palpable, and amidst it all, a flicker of awaiting threat which I could not dispose of.

...

Carmela's heart raced as the butler led her through the labyrinthine hallways of the opulent mansion. The shadows seemed to flicker with unseen eyes, and the sensation of being watched gnawed at her nerves. She tried to maintain a composed facade, but her discomposure was evident in the tight grip she had on her purse and the darting glances she cast over her shoulder. The butler's voice broke the silence, smooth and almost conspiratorial.

"The fourth floor belongs to the young master," he said softly, pressing the button for the elevator. Carmela nodded, stepping into the lift. She forced a smile as the butler bowed and the doors slid shut, sealing her in a metal box that felt both protective and confining.

Once alone, her mask of confidence slipped. She fumbled in her bag, retrieving her phone with trembling fingers. Dialing Zamiel's number, she held her breath, counting the rings. He picked up on the third, his voice a languid drawl that did little to soothe her nerves.

"Yes, little bunny," he greeted, laziness evident in his tone.

"I need your help," she blurted out, her voice barely steady. She quickly outlined her predicament, her words tumbling over each other in her urgency.

"So you want to attend without letting your husband know? Hold on, you're hiding your identity from him?" Zamiel's voice sharpened with interest.

"Yes," she confirmed, her tone edged with desperation. Silence followed, thick and heavy, until it was broken by Zamiel's sigh.

"You'll have to pretend to be someone's partner to get in, and I won't be able to help you with that because I'll be going with my fiancée. But I know someone who can help."

"Who?" Carmela's eagerness was palpable, her determination hardening her resolve.

"I'll try talking to Alpha Four, but don't get your hopes up."

"I understand," she replied, nervously tucking a strand of hair behind her ear.

"As for your outfit, I'll send someone to deliver and pick you up. Remember the secret casino I run?"

"Yeah," she replied, her mind racing ahead.

"Good. You'll meet them there." The elevator chimed softly, indicating her arrival. Hastily, she ended the call, not bothering with formalities, and stuffed her phone back into her bag.

As the doors opened, Carmela stepped out, momentarily awed by the sheer luxury that surrounded her. The Deans were clearly swimming in money, evident from the lavish decor and the immaculate design of the apartment. But the grandeur only heightened her sense of unease. She couldn't shake the feeling that every smile she encountered hid ulterior motives, and that her only true ally in this gilded cage was her husband.

Taking a deep breath, Carmela approached the apartment door, noticing it was slightly ajar. The sound of breaking glass caught her attention, and she wondered if someone else lived with Nix. Cautiously, she entered, only to be astounded by the familiar figure she encountered.

"I'm sorry I broke your dish. I know how much you hate having people in your apartment, but the butler served too many pastries, and I just wanted to keep..." The voice trailed off as the man turned to face her, wide-eyed.

"Carmela!"

"Tom!" they both exclaimed in unison. As Tom scrambled for an excuse for being in the Dean residence, Carmela struggled to fathom his role in the Dean household.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, taking a few steps toward him, observing his nervous fidgeting.

"Actually, I should be asking you that," she continued, raising an eyebrow. "Are you by any chance a part of the Dean family?" She watched him nod reluctantly.

"Actually... Nix is my older cousin. Tomlin Dean is the name," he admitted, making her scoff.

"You're Tomlin Dean? Why did you never tell me you're the cousin of the same person I've been bad-mouthing for months? And why did you never mention know your surname is Dean?"

"Ahem... you never asked," he replied, shrugging. "Also, I never told you he was my cousin because you'd start walking on eggshells around me."

"True," she interjected, making Tom chuckle.

"Now it's your turn. What are you doing here? Have you finally found a way to pay him back?" He raised an eyebrow, watching her as she took her seat beside him.

"Hmm, about that, not really. We're married." She showed him her ring, and his expression fell, but not quick enough for Carmela to notice as he placed by a smile on his lips.

"Now you're officially my sister-in-law," he said, rising and making his way to the kitchen to dispose of the broken plates. "I'll take my leave now; it's almost time for dinner, so I have to prepare." He smiled, but Carmela couldn't help but notice how lifeless it seemed.

"Don't be late, okay?" He winked still trying to maintain his former demeanour before taking his leave, his uncharacteristic behavior leaving Carmela puzzled and a bit concerned.

Chapter 46: 46

The room fell into a suffocating silence, the kind that presses against your skin and wraps around your throat. I flinched as Gift's girlfriend screamed, her voice piercing through the still air. My gaze dropped to the gun in my trembling hands, and then lifted to her, clutching her bloodied face. Her white gown was streaked with crimson, a grotesque contrast.

How did I get here?

The memory struck without warning Tommy abandoning me in Nix's apartment, the three maids entering the room in a perfect line, each carrying a sleek black box.

"Master asked us to prepare you for dinner," one announced. Before I could respond, another was already tugging at my jacket.

"Hey, hold on." I jerked back, uncomfortable with the idea of undressing before strangers.

"Madam, please, let us do our work."

"Then do it in a proper place..not the sitting room," I snapped.

Without a word, they guided me down the hall, moving like a single, disciplined unit. With a reluctant sigh, I followed.

In the room, they stripped me down to my underwear. The mirror caught my eye, and for a fleeting second I was back in my mafia training days where the body was stripped of identity, discipline was genderless, and the rules were merciless.

They worked quickly. A black flared gown, snug at the wrists with billowing sleeves, slipped over me. A fine net hose sheathed my legs, and a white corset was tightened around my waist until my breath came shallow.

One maid tended to my hair wetting, blow-drying, straightening while another wiped away my makeup, layering powder and color until a stranger stared back at me from the glass.

White slipper heels were buckled onto my feet, a butterfly clip nestled into my hair, and a diamond necklace clasped at my throat. Then, as if rehearsed, the maids stepped aside.

Footsteps.

I rose instinctively, and before I could turn, a pair of hands settled gently on my shoulders. My gaze lifted to the mirror where Nix stood behind me, his reflection smiling.

"My masterpiece," he whispered.

I returned his smile, noting how the sharp lines of his black tuxedo amplified his effortless charm.

"Let's go."

He extended his arm. I slipped mine through his, and together, we made our way toward the door.

"Do you know what we face on a battlefield?" Nix asked as we approached the elevator.

"Enemies?" I replied, raising a brow.

"Exactly. This dining table is a battlefield. Aside from your allies, everyone else is an enemy," he said just as the elevator doors slid shut, his words hanging in the quiet hum of descent. When the doors opened again, we stepped into a bustling living room.

The dining hall unfolded before me, a vision of elegance and silent hostility. A long, polished mahogany table stretched across the room, its surface gleaming beneath the glow of a grand chandelier. High-backed chairs upholstered in dark leather stood in perfect formation, awaiting their occupants like soldiers in rank.

The table itself was a canvas of temptation crystal platters bearing tender roasts, silver trays piled with vibrant vegetables, and porcelain bowls releasing wisps of fragrant steam from their soups. Baskets of warm bread and delicate pastries completed the display, a feast fit for royalty. Yet despite the abundance, the room pulsed with unease. The ticking of an ornate clock on the wall seemed louder than it should, marking the silence like a warning drum.

Nix pulled out a chair for me, his gesture deliberate, almost protective, before taking his own seat at my side. Slowly, the family began to file in, each dressed in black, their presence heavy with unspoken tension. Tom settled close to me, inclining his head respectfully toward Nix. Across the table, the second young master took his place, a striking woman in white at his side. Between them sat a little girl, her bright smile the only light in the room as she kept stealing glances at Nix and at me.

Nix's grandfather took his seat at the head of the table. The silence was palpable, tension crackling in the air, until a familiar female voice shattered it.

"Hello, people. The princess is back."

Luna's voice cut through the silence like a blade, her smile radiant though her eyes betrayed a sharper edge. She was draped head to toe in black, a jacket tossed carelessly over her shoulder, revealing a strapless lace corset beneath. Her hair was sleekly tied back, a small purse swinging at her side with every deliberate step. Behind her, Xavier followed in a tailored black tuxedo. Clearly, black was tonight's theme.

"My princess," Nix's grandfather greeted warmly. Luna wasted no time, gliding to his side and pressing a kiss to his cheek.

"I missed you," she purred, her smile unwavering.

The second young master scoffed under his breath. "Hypocrite."

Luna only rolled her eyes, unfazed, before leaning down to brush another kiss across Nix's cheek. She then slipped gracefully into her seat beside Xavier, ignoring the tension brewing around her.

Despite the room now being full, the silence pressed in heavier, thick with unspoken rivalries. This was no dinner..it was a battlefield, just as Nix had warned.

"Master," the steward who had earlier escorted Nix and me into the study stepped forward, bowing respectfully to Nix's grandfather before addressing the room. "Everyone will be served according to their latest health reports. Young master and Madam are exempt, as they missed the check-up."

"It's not as if we were expecting him," Gift, the second young master, muttered darkly.

"Gift," Nix's grandfather warned, his tone sharp. But he only looked away, sullen.

"The dinner is to conclude in thirty minutes," the steward continued evenly, "after which all members will proceed to the practice room."

Practice room? My brows knitted. Isn't dinner supposed to end with sleep, not training?

"Don't look so surprised," Tommy whispered at my side as the maids began serving dishes. "This is just the beginning."

I glanced down at my plate an assortment of vegetables: tomatoes, spinach, cauliflower, and other greens I couldn't even name.

"Madam," the butler explained, bowing slightly, "the chef prepared this specially for you. It aids reproduction.."

A low chuckle from Tom cut him off.

"Apologies, butler, but you've chosen the wrong dish to serve to her. She doesn't like eating vegetables," he said, his tone almost mocking.

"It's fine, I'll eat something else," I murmured, dismissing it with a wave. But before I could push the plate away, Nix quietly replaced it with his own already cut neatly into small pieces.

Silence reigned once more. The only sound was the clinking of cutlery. Yet, Nix sat calmly, as if immune to the tension, carving apples into tiny heart shapes with his knife.

"Xavier," Nix's grandfather finally spoke, breaking the quiet again. "I hear you now own the largest gallery in the States?"

"Who said I own it? I feel more like an employee, seeing how closely your grandson monitors me..." Xavier trailed off, realizing too many eyes were on him. He straightened with a practiced smile. "Yes, Grandfather. You heard correctly."

The old man gave a single nod before turning his attention elsewhere.

"Luna, how is your cosmetics brand doing?"

At once, Luna's face brightened. "Thriving, thanks to my big brother's backing." She winked playfully, drawing a soft chuckle from the old man. His gaze shifted to Nix, who remained entirely unmoved, absorbed in his plate.

"Tomline..."

"Grandfather, I went back to school," Tom interrupted before the old man could continue. "So don't expect anything else from me." He downed his drink with an easy smirk.

The old man's chuckle carried a trace of disapproval. "The youngest and the most stubborn. Finally returning to school after failing as a musician."

Tom rolled his eyes. "I've already heard enough from brother Nix. Spare me the lecture. I would've been successful if you supported me, but.."

His words cut off with a yelp as an apple struck the side of his head. Laughter rippled quietly around the table.

"You have a habit of straying off track," Nix said calmly, still focused on carving apples into perfect little shapes. The brief levity softened the heavy air.

"Carmela," the old man said, turning to me. "I heard you attend the same university as Tomline."

"Yes, Grandfather," I replied with a polite nod.

"Gift."

The shift was palpable. The cheer faded as every gaze followed the old man's words to the other side of the table.

Gift set down his glass with deliberate care. "Well, Grandfather, I'd be doing much better if your precious grandson hadn't sued my company over land he has no use for."

"Says who?" Nix finally spoke up, not even glancing up from his knife. "You own nothing there only trees."

Gift leaned forward, his voice sharp. "Five million per month and sixty million yearly for maintenance. Your workers not only harmed my animals, they broke my fence as well, killed two of my rabbits, injured four more. And you think I shouldn't take legal action for unauthorized use of my property?"

Nix's knife paused. Slowly, he lifted his eyes, locking his gaze with Gift's. The room froze in the weight of their silent clash.

When did Nix Dean become such a petty man?

"Cicila," Nix called softly.

"Yes, uncle?" The little girl answered at once, padding toward him. Nix lifted her onto his lap and slipped her a slice of the carved apple.

"But Nix, he's.." the woman beside Gift began.

"I'd prefer if you kept silent," Luna cut in coldly. "Your place is in the staff quarters."

"Luna!"

"Don't call my name," she snapped. "Sometimes I wonder if you have any sense at all, even with two children to raise. It's barely eight months since your wife died, and here you are..parading around with the nanny." she narrowed her eyes at the both of them

"Luna, mind your words," the old man warned, his tone heavy.

I bit into my apple, savoring the sweetness. This was better than any cinema, sharp, unfiltered, and playing out right before me in 3D.

"Grandfather.." Gift's girlfriend began, but the old man silenced her with a raised hand.

"I've lost my appetite," he said, pushing his chair back. "Let's move to the practice room and end this evening quickly."

The atmosphere shifted. Chairs scraped as he stood, his authority heavy enough to stifle further protest.

"The first half is over," Tom murmured, rising as well, his lips curling.

"Time for the second round."

Chapter 47: 47

"Sister-in-law... or should I call you Mrs. Dean?" Luna's voice carried a teasing lilt as she approached me. I stood up, and little Cicilia clutched my hand, pulling me outside for a moment.

"Take care of her," Nix murmured to Luna, placing a gentle kiss on my forehead before walking in the opposite direction.

"Isn't he coming with us?" I asked.

"No, the practice room is off-limits for him," Luna replied, entwining our arms together. "I always knew there was something special about you. Seeing you draw my no-fun brother out of his shell and hypnotize him into marrying you within a year..." She trailed off, her pupils dilating despite the smile on her face. "What's the secret?" She gave me a light push on the shoulder, making me chuckle.

I knew it was best to keep the terms of our marriage a secret, so I looked away, feigning shyness.

"We only found out about your marriage a few hours ago from Grandpa. How long has it been? And how far along are you?" I turned swiftly to face her, puzzled, and saw her nodding towards my stomach.

"What?"

"You should wear looser clothes in your condition. He was always buried in his work and never looked at a single woman. But who would've thought he'd be the type to throw caution to the wind?" She smirked.

"Aunt, are you going to have another baby like my brother?" Cicilia tugged at the hem of my gown.

"What? Baby? No, I..."

"Cicilia, your aunt is too shy to admit it, but don't worry. We'll have another baby, okay?" Luna said with a knowing smile as she walked into the room before us, the door closing immediately after she let go of it.

I pushed open the heavy, soundproof door and stepped into the practice room. Immediately, the sharp, tangy scent of metal hit my nostrils, a distinctive odor of steel, iron, and gunpowder mingling in the air, driving me down memory lane. It was a scent I had grown to associate with focus and discipline, though it was always a bit jarring at first.

The room was vast, its high ceilings and wide, open space creating an almost cathedral-like atmosphere. Light filtered through a series of narrow, high windows, casting a soft, diffused glow over the array of weapons meticulously arranged along the walls. Each weapon was carefully categorized and displayed: swords and knives glinted on one wall, arranged from the shortest daggers to the longest broadswords. On another wall, firearms were mounted, each row dedicated to a different type of pistols, rifles, shotguns all polished and gleaming under the overhead lights.

The room felt more like a well-organized armory than a practice space. The weapons were not just tools for training; they were an impressive collection, each piece owning its

history and purpose. My eyes moved from the ornate hilts of the swords to the sleek barrels of the guns. Knives were my thing, but if I showed off my skills before everyone, it would surely look suspicious. So, I made my way towards the wall where the guns were arranged.

At the far end of the room, various target practice objects stood ready: dummies designed to simulate different combat scenarios, paper targets with concentric circles for marksmanship, and even a few more unconventional targets, like hanging ropes and swinging bags, for testing agility and reflexes.

As I walked further into the room, my heels clinked softly against the polished floor. It felt like this was my domain, a place where I could hone my skills without interruption. The soundproofing ensured that no noise escaped, allowing me to practice with the intensity and focus that my training required for this mission. For me, this room was more than just a practice area it was a sanctuary where discipline and dedication came to life.

"What do you think about this room?" I turned to my side to find Gift's girlfriend standing beside me with a straight look and a heinous smile playing on her lips.

"To be honest, although the room isn't as vast as the one we used for training, I'd be lying to say it wouldn't be useful... right, number 006." I choked on my breath hearing what she said. I turned to take a proper look at her face, but she wasn't familiar. Maintaining a straight face, I turned to her, trying to keep my composure.

"I wish I could share your fond memories with you, but I doubt that is possible. I'd love to take my leave." I turned to take my heels, but my heart stopped hearing her next comment.

"Why the rush, Karmèla Dalton?" She called me by my birth name, and my feet froze on the spot. The sudden beeping of the security alarm caught my attention, and I looked around the room to find it empty. The door automatically locked, and the laser security system suddenly turned on. I cautiously stood, not wanting to get burnt by the laser light.

"I wonder how your grandfather would feel when he gets to know you're still alive?" I turned to find her standing by the arranged knives and swords.

"What do you want?" I spoke cautiously, stepping closer to the arranged guns. "Isn't it obvious? Your demise. I wonder how the Deans would feel if they found out you're the heiress of a deadly mafia dynasty."

"Don't..." My sentence was abruptly cut off by the sharp hiss of a knife slicing through the air. The blade tore through my sleeve, and a surge of fresh blood flowed from the wound on my hand, making me hiss in pain.

"We've always hated you from day one and prayed you'd die during training, but no, your three princes in shining armor were always there to rescue you," she scoffed. "I even went as far as to electrocute you, but no, that stupid Alpha had to get involved and kept saving you time after time." She threw another dagger at me, and though I ducked, the laser light burned my arm.

"What would you gain by killing me?" I retorted, trying to buy time.

"I won't get anything from your grandfather, but there's someone who's ready to provide me a bountiful life if I deliver your head," she winked, throwing another knife. This one cut through my chest, and I bit down on my lip, trying to suppress a scream.

I had no memory of what she was talking about or who she was referring to, but one thing was for sure I had to end her existence.

I moved swiftly, grabbing one of the shotguns, and opened fire on her, but fell to my knees as another laser light burned my skin.

"Carmela!" Tommy's voice echoed from the speaker above. "There's a button close to you. Press it to deactivate the laser system," he instructed. Desperation fueled my search for the button that could save my life.

I muttered silent prayers of gratitude as I finally disabled the laser system. But my relief was short-lived; a bullet struck my left shoulder.

"Do you want to know the truth? I had fun killing your mother."

With a surge of fury, I stood, pointing the gun at her while she brandished a dagger. "Lily, does it ring a bell? Well, I doubt it, because I've always been in the shadows," she taunted before throwing another dagger at me which I caught and pulled away from my chest.

The room fell into a suffocating silence, the kind that presses against your skin and wraps around your throat. I flinched as Gift's girlfriend screamed, her voice piercing through the still air. My gaze dropped to the gun in my trembling hands, then lifted to her clutching her bloodied face. Her white gown was streaked with crimson, a grotesque contrast. My wrist bled as the dagger cut through my skin.

"Lily!" I heard Gift call, rushing into the room. He made his way towards her while Tommy rushed towards me. "Someone call an ambulance!" he screamed, guiding her towards the door and shooting me a deathly glare.

"You made a mistake of not killing me twice, I'll be back," Lily whispered with a scoff.

I grasped the gun tightly. "Lily," I called, turning to face her. Before she could respond, I pulled the trigger, releasing a bullet into her head. The finality of the act settled over the room like a heavy, oppressive shroud.

"Little bunny!" I heard Zamiel's voice in the back of my mind and swiftly shut my eyes close, feeling my head pound. I was met with a large field and a girl standing before me, while I pointed my gun towards her instead of darkness. "It's against the rules to kill a member, do you want to get killed?" He said, snatching the gun I was holding. "You've made the mistake of not killing me, I'll be back for you," the girl said in a whisper before taking her leave. "No matter what Lily does, don't react, after all, she's your cousin, bunny," he said, and I raised an eyebrow. "Lily," I said, opening my eyes to find her dead on the floor, while Gift was screaming his guts out, but for some weird reason, I was unable to make out what he was saying; it was as if I was present but also not present in the room, at least this was the end of Lily's Chapter and a revelation of an unknown enemy I thought as everything turned blank.

Chapter 48: 48

I watched the CCTV footage for what must have been the hundredth time, my eyes tracking every flicker of movement on the screen. Each replay thickened the tension, as if the shadows themselves were conspiring against me. And there it was undeniable proof. Lilly wasn't just another viper slithering around our world, she had truly set her sights on Carmela.

The clip burned itself into my mind Carmela cornered, her voice steady despite the danger. "What do you gain from killing me?" she asked, her words like tempered steel cutting through the suffocating silence.

Lilly's reply came with a sly smile, the kind only born of malice. "I gain nothing from your grandfather. But there's someone willing to pay handsomely for your death."

I froze the footage. Her words echoed inside me like a shot ricocheting off walls. If old man Dean hadn't sanctioned this, then who had the resources, the gall, and the motive to hunt Carmela under my protection?

I leaned back, dragging a hand across my face before letting my gaze drift across the room. The shelves stretched from floor to ceiling, rows upon rows of leather-bound files and brittle pages, more archive than library. Each spine carried a secret, neatly catalogued, indexed like a history of sins. My finger traced the L section until it landed on the name that had already poisoned my thoughts.

Lilly.

The dossier was cold in my hand, heavier than paper should ever feel. I had only flipped the first page when the door creaked open.

Dean stepped in. His weathered eyes flicked from the file in my hand to my face, reading me with a calmness that felt rehearsed. Without a word, he lowered himself into the chair opposite, the weight of years bending his shoulders.

"You knew Lilly and Carmela were sisters," I said. The words came out low, taut, each one sharpened by restrained fury. "And you never thought to tell me?"

For a long moment, he said nothing. The silence was thick enough to smother the room. Finally, Dean exhaled and spoke, his voice gravelly, each syllable final.

"Leave tomorrow. Go back to the State. Forget this world and stick to the one your father gave you."

My brow arched, and heat surged beneath my skin. "Excuse me?" I leaned forward, voice edged with steel. "This concerns my wife, old man."

His jaw clenched. He looked away, as though the truth was too ugly to meet my eyes. "Did you expect me to reveal that Lilly is Carmela's cousin? That her hatred runs so deep she'd rather see Carmela buried than breathing?"

The word hit like a gunshot. Cousins? My disbelief cracked through the room. "Dalton had only one child."

Dean shut his eyes briefly, as if bracing against a ghost of the past. When he opened them, guilt lingered there, raw and unmasked.

"Dalton and I... we were friends once. Brothers, even. We married best friends, women bound to us by loyalty and history. But everything changed when the truth came out. Our wives... they weren't just women with secrets. They were daughters of rival mafia clans. Bloodlines steeped in vendetta."

His voice faltered. Yet the confession spilled, steady as a blade slicing open an old wound. He spoke of fractured alliances, of nights when bullets replaced words, of vendettas passed down like heirlooms. Each detail painted a clearer picture; this wasn't just hatred. It was generational. A legacy of war that had found its way into Carmela's veins, a tragic inheritance she never asked for but could never escape.

"My father's death," I cut in, my voice sharp enough to split a stone. "You told me it was my uncles."

Dean's face collapsed under the weight of memory. His hand trembled slightly as he rubbed his temple, like the truth itself burned his skull.

"They were complicit," he admitted, each word dragging regret behind it. "But Dalton's son pulled the trigger. And I..." his voice cracked, "...I looked away. A pact was made. Survival over truth."

My chest tightened, the ground tilting beneath me. Heat surged in my veins until my hands clenched into fists.

"And the experiments on Carmela?" My voice dropped, low and venomous. "You knew."

The silence that followed was deafening. It pressed against my ears harder than a gunshot, harder than the footage I'd just replayed. He didn't answer because he didn't have to. His silence was guilt carved into flesh.

"You'd rather I run?" I let out a bitter laugh, hollow and jagged. "You who dragged me into training, broke me until I bled, built me into a weapon just so I could survive? And now you want me to forget?"

Dean's eyes glistened, not with tears, but with something worse a pleading. A quiet desperation to be understood. But I was past mercy.

"You let my father die. You let Dalton's sins stand. You've lived a coward's life, old man."

The words cut him, though he didn't flinch. His reply came soft, almost a whisper, a truth he'd tried to bury under decades of silence.

"Her father won't bow to threats. If he could use his own child as bait..." His gaze finally locked with mine, steel against steel. "...do you think he'd hesitate to claim another life?"

The room seemed smaller then, suffocating, the air thick with unspoken wars. I stared at him, the man who had shaped me, lied to me, betrayed me and realized that every secret he kept wasn't just about survival. It was about preparing me for the inevitable war I was already standing in.

"My father never stopped fighting," I shot back, voice steady with conviction. "Neither will I. If I find out you had a hand in this, you'll lose more than my respect, you'll make me your enemy."

The words cut the air between us, final and sharp. I didn't wait for a response.

As I left him drowning in silence, the weight of our fractured bloodline hung heavy over me. This was just the beginning.

"Young master," the doctor bowed as I entered the room where Carmela lay. The sterile air reeked of antiseptic, yet tension thickened it still.

"How is she?" My question trembled beneath the mask of composure I forced on my face.

"I was informed about her condition. Since she has amnesia, her memories can return at any moment or bit by bit. But those are merely my hypotheses. I'd advise a brain scan, that's the only way we can know what's happening in there." he said with a bow before excluding himself

Her stillness in the bed struck harder than Dean's confessions. In that moment, one truth seared into me: I'd tear apart every secret, burn down every alliance, before I let anyone take her away from me.

Her skin was warm beneath my hand as I lowered the fabric. The scar stretched pale and ugly across her back, and my chest tightened. I had always suspected. Now I had to be sure.

The surgical blade trembled in my grip. If I was wrong... No. I couldn't afford doubt. With a sharp slice, the wound reopened, and blood welled hot and fast, soaking the sheets. The smell of iron filled the room. My fingers pressed into the cut, slick and trembling, until they touched something cold and foreign.

A grain-sized tracker. I held it up between my bloodstained fingers, rage twisting in my gut. What kind of father carved a leash into his own child?

"Nix," a voice broke through the haze. Tom stood frozen at the door, the box in hand. His eyes flicked to the tracker, then to my bloodied hands. "You..."

"She's been tagged like an animal," I snapped, laying the device on a handkerchief. "Her father's eyes were on her the whole time."

Tom's jaw tightened, but his voice was calm. "Destroying it will only tip him off. And with Lilly gone, he'll move faster. We need Carmela's memories back before he makes his next move."

I rose, meeting his steady gaze. "The old man's favor is gone. We're on our own."

"Then we move in silence," Tom said simply. "It's better that way."

His composure steadied me. But before I could reply, he reached into his coat pocket and handed me a blue envelope stamped with a crest I hadn't seen in years.

"One of the maids said it was for Nathan," he explained.

Nathan. My name from the academy days. Only a handful of men still alive would know it. My pulse quickened. I dismissed Tom and turned back to Carmela, working quickly to clean and bind the wound I'd carved into her. She stirred faintly but did not wake.

When she was safe, I slit the envelope open. Inside, a single slip of paper.

10 am. The mall.

The message was sparse, but heavy, like a gun pressed to my temple. My hand tightened around it. Whoever sent it wasn't just calling me out they were pulling me back into a world I had once tried to bury

I looked one last time at Carmela. Her breath was shallow, her skin pale, but she was alive. And I would keep her that way.

I slipped the note into my pocket and stepped into the corridor. The silence of the house pressed in on me, thick with secrets and unspoken threats. Every second between now and ten a.m. could decide whether I brought answers back to her or never returned at all.

Chapter 49: 49

"Do I really have to go shopping? I don't feel like going out," Carmela protested as the car rolled to a halt in front of the mall.

With a faint smile, I cupped her face, searching her eyes for an answer that wasn't there. They were blank, unreadable.

"Are you scared?" I asked softly. I already knew the answer but I still asked. She sighed and looked away. Ever since she regained consciousness, she had been distant, avoiding conversations with me whenever she could. I had made her agree to be my wife for a year, but I hadn't mentioned the dangers that might come with it. Her reaction was understandable.

"You can stay by my side if you want. I just have to meet someone briefly, then we'll leave."

Her gaze snapped back to mine, troubled. "What if you get hurt because of me?"

I frowned, unsure what she meant, but she quickly rolled her eyes, slipping from my touch. "Call me when you're done," she said flatly, stepping out of the car.

There was something different about her now. She wasn't the same girl I had met in church the mute artist I used to visit at the orphanage. That girl was gone. Something in her eyes, her aura, her entire being had changed.

The sharp beep of my phone pulled me from my thoughts. Zamiel. He had sent me his live location. With a sigh, I tapped on it and drove off.

The place he led me to was empty eerily so save for one table set with flowers, drinks, and cake. It didn't look like a café at all.

"Did you get dumped?" I asked dryly as I slid into the seat opposite him.

"Dumped? Please." Zamiel chuckled, raising a brow. "This isn't for me, it's for you. I've been engaged for six months with no wedding in sight, and you have been engaged for a few days and boom, already married."

"Maybe you're just not man enough to take up responsibilities," I teased, narrowing my eyes.

He smirked. "If 'responsibilities' mean getting killed, I'll pass. How's my little bunny doing? I heard she was attacked yesterday." His tone was lazy, but his knowledge was unsettling.

"You seem to know more than enough," I said flatly.

He nodded, growing quiet for a moment before exhaling. "Carmela..." He glanced around, then locked eyes with me. "She's started regaining her memories."

His words didn't sound convincing, but I stayed silent, letting him continue.

"Remember when you went looking for her after the incident, and she didn't recognize you? At that time, she did have amnesia. But after you left, her late mother's younger brother found her. He started therapy, and it worked partially. She recalled fragments."

I narrowed my eyes. "And you never thought to tell me this when you dragged me into marrying her? Were you trying to save her... or kill me? If she recovered memories, why doesn't she remember me?"

"My intentions haven't changed," he said firmly. "And like I said, only part of her memory came back. She even stopped by my hospital and asked me to help her attend the Alpha Four dining. I agreed. But she's planning something reckless; she wants to attack the old man. And I can't allow that."

"Why?" I asked, leaning back.

"Because she's aiming at the wrong person." His eyes darkened. "Years ago, I overheard my father and her grandfather talking about a drug. Something about what happens if its effects wear off. That's when I learned she was still alive. After digging, I found this."

He slid his phone across the table. Surveillance footage from the training academy.

"Look closely," he said, zooming in. "Her grandfather asked my father for a memory-suppressing drug. And in this footage, you'll see the old man point a gun at Carmela's mother. But watch he hesitated. He didn't want to shoot. It was staged. If he hadn't, the

sniper in the shadows would have killed both him and Carmela. To save her, he pulled the trigger."

"So it was orchestrated," I muttered. "To make Carmela hate him. And let me guess the real mastermind was her father?"

Zamiel nodded grimly.

"I met with the old man once under the guise of a medical checkup," he continued. "He admitted his son won't stop until Carmela is buried. He begged me to give her the same drug, to keep her memories locked away. But that won't solve anything."

"So what's your plan?" I pressed, already tired of his riddles.

"She's been a weapon from the start," Zamiel said, his tone sharp. "So let's use her wisely. The past always returns, and she's the very past her father fears most."

"And how do you expect that to work?" I scoffed. "She doesn't remember his face. No pictures. And if the rumors are true, he had surgery after killing his wife."

"It's true," Zamiel admitted. "But three people knew him: Carmela, the old man, and Lily. Lily's dead. The old man can't help. That leaves one option to remind Carmela of her past with precise, undeniable information."

His eyes gleamed with a mix of determination and resentment. He already had a plan I could see it. And he wanted me to be part of it.

"What's my role?" I asked.

"Carmela doesn't know you're Nathan. I promised to introduce her to one of the Alphas. I was going to send her to Alpha Four, but I don't trust him. You'll take her instead. She's your wife, after all."

"And?" I prompted, noticing his hesitation.

"The old Dalton wants to meet her. She won't go willingly, but you'll make sure she doesn't cause havoc."

I rolled my eyes. "Whatever." Rising from my seat, I adjusted my jacket.

He leaned back, studying me. "How's your demon?"

I froze, then smirked faintly. "Scared I'll go berserk?"

"No," he said quietly, his tone sharper than usual. "I'm scared you'll fall in love with her. And when she's gone... you'll tear the world apart."

We locked eyes. He knew more than he was letting on. Could he have been behind the cut Carmela had when I picked her up from the hospital?

"Are you sure Carmela only asked you about the party? Nothing else?" I asked coldly.

He nodded, too easily. But I knew Zamiel better than that. He was a wolf in sheep's clothing always calculating.

"This meeting never happened," I said, turning for the door.

"Who the hell are you?" he called after me with a raised brow.

I smirked, not bothering to answer.

Because in the Alpha world, heirs weren't brothers. We were threats. And if anyone found out about this meeting, the consequences would be bloody.

..

"Aunt Carmela, can you please help me check why he's crying?" Cicila tugged on the hem of my dress, and I showed a little smile as I bent over to see what was wrong with her baby brother in the stroller.

"Cicila, how about you let Uncle Tom take care of you and your brother today? Your aunt isn't feeling well," Tommy came closer to us, handing me a bottle of water, which I doubted I needed. I've been walking on eggshells lately, not wanting to get questioned about what happened between Lily and me in the room last night, and surprisingly, everyone has been acting normal, except for Gift, of course, as if nothing happened. I killed someone on their property, and instead of calling the police or being asked my reason for such an action, they decided to take me out shopping.

"I'll take the kids with me. I was asked to give you this," he brought out a card from his pocket. "If you need me, call me, okay?" he smiled, and I just nodded, watching him take the kids away.

Now, what to do? I am still clueless about who Lily was working for, and there's no way I could ask her since she's no longer in this world.

"Damn, Carmela, I shouldn't have killed her!" I exclaimed, my teeth clenched in regret. As I delivered the final blow, fragmented memories surfaced, revealing a life more pitiful than I had imagined a life where even my own cousin despised me and prayed for my demise.

What kind of existence had I endured?

"Carmela!" A voice called out, interrupting my spiraling thoughts. I rolled my eyes in frustration. Couldn't they see I needed a moment to myself?

"Carmela!"

"What is it, for goodness' sake?" I snapped, ready to lash out, but stopped short when I saw Editor Damian's perplexed expression.

"Are you okay? Is someone bothering you? Why are you so on edge?" He bombarded me with questions, stepping closer. Before I could answer, two burly men in black suits appeared, creating a barrier between us.

"Mrs. Dean, are you okay?" one of them asked.

"Excuse me, who are you?" I replied, utterly confused.

"Your husband asked us to ensure your safety," the other man said, while Damian's eyes bore into me, demanding answers. How could I begin to explain, especially after being warned to stay away from Nix?

Chapter 50: 50

"What do you mean you married him? I warned you explicitly to stay away. He's dangerous, and now you're telling me you're his wife? Did he threaten you? Are you in danger?" His voice trembled with anger and fear.

I leaned back, arms crossed, staring intently. His concern was palpable, but its true source eluded me. Initially, I believed it stemmed from my past as a mute girl, abandoned by a loveless adoptive family. But now, I sensed deeper motives at play.

"Editor Damian," I interjected firmly, forcing him to meet my gaze. "Could it be you have feelings for me?"

"Excuse me?" He seemed taken aback.

"If not, then why this concern?" I retorted, irritation rising. "Why worry over my safety and choices?"

"Your grandmother entrusted me to look after you," he insisted.

I scoffed. "If I were truly pitiable, perhaps I'd believe that. But she knew I can fend for myself."

"Please, hear me out," Damian pleaded, placing a badge on the table. It was a police badge, his name and photo prominently displayed. He motioned for me to sit.

"I shouldn't tell you this," he began, "but I'm undercover investigating Nix Dean."

"Why?" I asked, hoping for answers.

"He's a serial killer, elusive and dangerous," Damian confessed, his voice low. "I'm gathering evidence against him."

As he spoke of Nix's atrocities, my thoughts raced. Could this man really take down someone so formidable? Just because he thinks he can.

If Nix truly was a killer, then our paths were destined to cross, for I was no stranger to darkness.

"So, you plan to arrest him?" I pressed.

"If I must," Damian replied cryptically. "But if the law fails..."

"What then?" I demanded.

"I'll do what's necessary," he said ominously.

A cold smirk crossed my face. If Damian thought he could outwit Nix, he was gravely mistaken. My loyalty was clear.

"Do what you must, Officer Damian," I declared, locking eyes with him. "But know this, I will protect my husband at any cost."

As I left, thoughts of Nix Dean and his secrets affairs haunted me.

Come to think of it I never truly had proper information about him, but eitherways this game had just begun, and I was determined to see it through.

I arrived at one of the stores in the shopping mall and couldn't help but scoff at the diligence of the guards Nix had assigned to me. Their presence was like a constant reminder of the complex web of danger and protection surrounding my life.

"Madam, how can I help you?" one of the staff members approached me, her tone polite yet curious. A mischievous smile crept onto my face. As Nix's legal wife, it was only fitting that I carried myself with the appropriate air of authority.

"Your finest and latest gown design, please," I requested, my voice steady. I needed a gown for the Alpha Four meeting, and who better to provide it than my husband's resources?

"We recently received these gowns imported from New York," she said, stepping forward with a collection of exquisite dresses. "They are black, dramatic, body-skimming gowns by Tarik Ediz."

I stood up to inspect the gowns on display, noting how the mannequins failed to do them justice. Both dresses featured high thigh slits but with distinct designs. The first was crafted from a black net-like material, fitted around the waist, and off-shoulder. The designer had ingeniously created a floral pattern with the same material. The second gown was a mix of black and grey, with a one-shoulder double-hand top adorned with glass stones. Choosing between them was unexpectedly difficult, and I found myself momentarily at a loss for words.

"Give me both," I finally decided, my voice firm. The staff member nodded and hurried off to prepare my selections.

It had been a long time since I indulged in shopping. This was my chance to make up for it, and I intended to savor every moment.

I made payments as I held both bags in one hand as I walked out of the store but the vibration of my phone called for my attention. Seeing the name of the caller, a smile formed on my lips

"Hello"

"You seem excited little bunny" Zamiel said from the other end of the phone and a chuckle escaped me

"What's up?"

"i just finished speaking with Alpha one and he agreed" the sound of good news made my heart lip and I threw the shopping bags I was holding over my shoulder "be at the location I told you before 8pm the party starts by nine"

"Okay, I'll..." My smile suddenly faded when I saw Ella Dalton standing very close to Nix. Anyone might think I hated her because she was betrothed to Nix, but that wasn't the case. In fact, I hated her because she not only tried to take my place in the Dalton family but also covered up their crimes.

"We'll talk later. I have to go," I said, ending the call and shoving my phone into my pocket. With confident strides, I approached the duo, but I stopped as the reality hit me hard. Nix wasn't my husband, even if he was by law. Ours was a marriage of convenience, where I needed to pay him back for the so-called loan my adoptive family owed him, while I used him as a shield to get my revenge. His personal life was none of my concern, nor his doings.

I abruptly turned and dialed Tommy's number on my phone. "Carmela!" I looked up to see him waving at me with his phone in his hand as he quickly made his way towards me. "Where are the kids?" I questioned.

"With Luna and Xavier. So, what's up?" he asked, grinning from ear to ear.

Honestly, he surely had his own alluring charm just like Nix, one that could make anyone desperate to have him. It seemed attractiveness ran in the blood of the Dean family.

"How about you become my boyfriend?"

A smile spread across my face as I remembered Tommy's reaction to my question. He looked like a little puppy being bullied, and I still couldn't get the image out of my head.

"Let me help you carry the bags," I said from behind him, making him jolt as if he had seen a ghost.

"Are you bent on seeing me dead?" he sighed loudly, making me chuckle. "It's not my fault you're so scared of your cousin," I pouted, taking one of the shopping bags from him, but he snatched it away.

"I'll carry the bags. Nix would have my head on a platter if he found out I let you carry these bags."

"Stop being overdramatic. You're aware of the terms of this marriage, so why pretend?" I raised an eyebrow, and he just shook his head. "It's pointless saying anything to you. Just do as you wish, but don't play such pranks like the one you did at the mall again," he said, walking ahead of me.

I looked around and saw our car was the only one present. Luna had said she was headed somewhere with the kids, and Xavier was with Grandfather, so where could Nix be? I wondered, checking my phone. It was just a few minutes past eight, but I couldn't help but wonder where he had headed off to. The last time I saw him, he was conversing with my substitute, and I didn't want to intrude.

Whatever. I don't really care as long as my plans aren't affected.

"I'm going to shower and then head straight to bed. Don't expect me for dinner," I said, snatching my shopping bags from Tommy before heading towards the elevator. I was in a good mood, and I could feel it in my bones. Maybe it was because I would be meeting my old man tomorrow or the fact that I would be getting my revenge. I couldn't tell which reason it was, but I wanted to savor the moment.

"Hello," I answered my phone on the second ring as I walked into Nix's apartment.

"I got it," I heard Uncle Scott say from the other end, and my smile only grew wider. It seemed even karma was on my side. I was going to get my revenge and become the heir of the dynasty. I just needed to get the other half of the stamp since Uncle had already found one. But who would be in custody of it?

That's an issue for another day. For now, I just had to focus on the task at hand.

"I'll come visit once I get a chance," I said, ending the call before tossing my phone onto the bed and stripping off my clothes as I made my way into the bathroom.

The seal was about to be in my possession, and so was the power I needed. But why do I feel this was just the calm before the storm? Even if I managed to get my revenge, becoming the heir wouldn't be easy, knowing how keen Alpha One and Four were on getting that same power. But if I used the seal and made myself the heir, and then destroyed it...

"Fuck!" I screamed, running my hands through my hair in frustration.

Who in hell made the rule that for one to become the heir of the dynasty, the seal must be stamped on a legal document?

As if sensing my frustration, the electricity went out.

"Goddamn!" I screamed again, searching blindly for a towel but instead finding a bathrobe, which I wrapped around my body as I made my way back into the room. There was no electricity except for the laptop screen, which provided a little light. I frowned, wondering what a laptop was doing on the bed and who had placed it there. But the images on it caught my attention.

It wasn't a photo but a video. As I watched the door open, I stepped closer to find Nix's grandfather walking into the study.

"You knew Lilly and Carmela were sisters but never thought to inform me?" Nix said, maintaining his composure, but his eyes spoke volumes.

Wait, what? How did he supposedly know about my relationship with Lily?

"Run?" Nix's grandfather suddenly said, bursting out laughing like a maniac.

"You let your son's murderer walk free, afraid to make an enemy of your dearest friend, but I won't. If I find out you helped Carmela run away or interfered with my plans for revenge, then be ready to make an enemy of your grandson because I won't hesitate. She's a weapon, and I'll be sure to make proper use of her," he warned, sending goosebumps crawling over my skin.

Revenge? Enemy? What is going on? Who are the Deans, and why do I feel like I've been entangled in a web that I can't escape?

My breath hitched as I stared back at the screen, my heart pounding wildly in my chest. The room seemed to close in around me, the walls creeping ever closer as the video replayed.

A cold sweat broke out on my forehead. Was I the puppet or the puppeteer? The question echoed in my mind, a maddening loop that blurred the lines of reality. My vision swam, and my hands trembled as I struggled to process the betrayal.

But was I the one who was betrayed, or was it the other way around?

I almost jumped out of my skin, feeling a strong hand wrap around my waist, but the realization of who it was did nothing to soothe my racing heart.

"Beloved," Nix whispered, his tone seductive as he rested his chin on my shoulder and pulled me closer. But my eyes filled with tears, blurring my vision. I was lost, unsure of how to react or what to do. Should I confront him or play dumb?

Did he bring me under his roof just to take his revenge? Or was he using me, just as my grandfather had? The questions gnawed at my sanity, each one a dagger twisting deeper into my mind.

What state of confusion is this?