

KEY TO HAPPINESS:(My mute devil)

#Chapter 51 - Read KEY TO HAPPINESS:(My mute devil) Chapter 51

Chapter 51: 51

I blinked away the tears, letting out a deep sigh. Confronting Nix seemed futile, and attacking him would be suicidal, surrounded as I was by his security.

"Nix," I called, trying to free myself from his grasp. His hold only tightened, and I caught a whiff of alcohol.

"Are you drunk?" I asked, attempting to turn toward him, but he pulled me closer.

"No, just a few glasses," he murmured, his voice slurred. He was vulnerable, a perfect target, but I despised attacking from behind. I wrenched myself free and swiftly struck a pressure point on his neck. His eyes widened in surprise.

"Sweet dreams," I whispered with a smile as he stumbled backward, collapsing onto the bed.

My thoughts were interrupted by my buzzing phone. I checked the caller ID: TA. But who was TA?

Damn, all this plotting made me forget I was still a student.

"Hello?" I answered, but there was silence on the other end.

"H..."

"Help... please help me," a desperate voice finally said, and I felt a surge of panic.

"TA, what's wrong?"

"Nicholas Boucher is after me, please help," she cried.

"Where are..."

"Find that bitch at all costs and make sure she's alive," I heard Nicholas's voice in the background and scoffed at the realization. He had shown signs of being a scoundrel the first day we met, but I had hoped he was better than that.

"Why are my assumptions about people always wrong?" I wondered, glancing at the unconscious Nix on the bed.

"Don't speak much. Send me your location and make sure you're properly hidden, okay?" I instructed, ending the call. I tossed the bathrobe aside and opened my suitcase. There was no time for neatness. I grabbed a pair of shorts and a hoodie, dressed quickly, and tossed a gown into one of the shopping bags I had brought back. I wasn't planning on returning to the Dean's house, and if I did, it would only be to collect my bags after the dining party. I slipped on sneakers and grabbed another shopping bag containing my new shoes.

"Goodbye, Nix Dean. I hope we never cross paths again.. but If we do, one of us is going to the netherworld," I said, slamming the door and heading to the elevator.

As I checked my phone for TA's message, the elevator doors opened, revealing Tommy.

"Where are you headed?" he asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Do you have a motorcycle or car I can borrow?" I took a step toward him.

"There's one in the basement," he replied.

"And the key?"

"Here." He tossed it to me, and I took off running.

"If your husband asks where you are, what am I supposed to say?" he called after me, but I didn't answer. There was no point.

I drove to the location TA sent me, noting how quiet the area was and not wanting to alert a single soul, I parked the motorcycle and picked up a rod from the ground. I moved cautiously, but my pace quickened when I heard TA scream.

"You want a job with good pay, and I'm willing to give it to you. Why must you ruin the fun by trying to negotiate?" Nicholas said, slapping her. Making my blood boil, and my grip around the rod tighter.

"Hey, motherfucker!" I shouted. Calling the attention of Nicholas and his thugs

"Who the fuck are you?"

"I was once your admirer, but now I'm your biggest hater." I swung the rod in the air as the thugs rushed me. I dealt with them swiftly and turned to Nicholas.

"Wh... who are you?" he stuttered, stepping back in fear.

"You acted so brave the day we met, but it seems you've forgotten me. What was it you called me? Carmela la peintre?" I raised an eyebrow, stepping closer. He retreated further but I swung the rod, hitting him hard on the head making him stumbled, clearly dazed.

"It seems you have a habit of drugging girls. I won't blame you for it because, like you, I also have a habit of killing people.." I narrowed my eyes on him "...But then your case will be different, unlike mine. I'll help you get rid of that bad habit of yours." I struck him repeatedly on the leg with the rod.

"Carmela!" someone shouted, but I was too consumed by my anger to care. I continued my assault until someone pushed me away, causing the rod to fall from my hand. I turned to see Tommy, his eyes wide with shock and fear.

"You'll kill him," he said, his voice trembling. I wasn't ready to explain my actions to him, nor did I care if he was part of his brother's plot. I walked away without a word, not sparing him another glance.

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Nix stirred in his sleep as the first rays of the morning sun filtered through the curtains, casting a golden glow across the room. The warmth of the light roused him from the depths of unconsciousness. His eyes fluttered open, squinting against the brightness, and he instinctively turned his head to escape the glare.

As he moved, a sharp, throbbing pain pulsed at the side of his neck. He winced, reaching up to touch the spot. His fingers brushed against a heavy, swollen vein, tender and warm to the touch. Memories of the previous night flooded back Carmela's sudden desperate, tear-filled eyes, the force of her strike, and the sudden darkness that followed.

Nix groaned softly, the ache in his neck a stark reminder of her fear and the misunderstanding that had driven her to such a desperate act though he wasn't aware of the root cause of it. He shifted, pushing himself up onto one elbow, and glanced around the room. The bed beside him was empty, the sheets cold where she had lain.

His heart sank as he realized she wasn't there. The room felt eerily quiet, the only sound the faint rustling of the curtains in the morning breeze. Nix's mind raced, a mix of worry and fear tightening in his chest. He needed to find her, to understand what was on her mind, to make things right. But first, he had to gather his strength and push through the pain radiating from his neck and deal with the old man who had forced him to drink last night.

As he made his way out of the room, the sitting room was empty as expected, leaving him only one option, the dining room.

Not caring about his disheveled appearance or his hazy look, he made his way to the elevator and navigated to the dining room. But she wasn't there.

Seeing the look in Nix's eyes, Tom felt the food he was chewing slowly choke him, while the old man avoided eye contact, knowing he had played dirty the previous night but unwilling to admit it. Xavier and Luna exchanged glances, wondering why the atmosphere had suddenly turned so tense and why everyone was so quiet. Meanwhile, Tom pondered whether to tell Nix about his wife's actions last night.

As the tension reached its zenith, Nix's face twisted in anguish. His eyes blazed with fierce desperation. Then, he erupted. "Where is my wife?" he roared, his voice reverberating through the room like a thunderclap. Maids trembled, backs pressed against the walls, while family members recoiled, gasping for breath as if the air had been sucked from their lungs.

"Can someone tell me where my wife is?" he demanded again, his tone menacing. Tom, visibly shaking, forced himself to swallow his food.

"She... she ran away," Tom stammered, his voice barely a whisper. Luna's glass slipped from her hand, shattering into countless fragments, while Nix's cold, piercing stare fixed on Tom.

"She what?" Nix's voice dropped to a deadly whisper, but Tom couldn't repeat it, knowing it might spell his doom.

Frustration surged through Nix. He grabbed a vase and hurled it toward the maids, who gasped but quickly silenced themselves, terrified of drawing his wrath.

"You sit there and tell me she ran away... Why are you all so incompetent?" he screamed, his fury a tangible force. Fear gripped everyone except the old man, who feigned ignorance as he rose from his chair, attempting to escape.

"I know this is your doing," Nix hissed, stepping closer. His anger was a living, breathing entity, threatening to consume him. "You ignored my warning, and I'll make sure you regret it," he vowed, his eyes blazing with a dark, unholy fire, his voice as cold and deadly as a winter night.

As he exited the dining room, Tom ran after Nix, hoping to find a way to soothe his anger. But as the elevator doors closed, trapping them together, Tom's voice faltered.

"She... she almost killed Nicholas Boucher yesterday," he began, glancing at Nix, who seemed not to listen. "I tried stopping her, but she asked if I was part of your conspiracy."

I'm not sure what happened between you two, but I hope it doesn't end with one of you six feet under." Tom's gaze dropped to his shoes as Nix stepped out of the elevator.

"Conspiracy?" Nix thought to himself, returning to his apartment. "What could have happened between them last night to make her this angry?"

He recalled walking into the room and finding Carmela watching a video on a laptop.

Laptop!

It hit him. He rushed back into the room, found the laptop on the floor, and picked it up. After searching through its contents, he found the video. Snatching the laptop, he knew only one person could have orchestrated this: the old man.

"Goodbye, Nix Dean. I hope we never cross paths again. But If we do, one of us is going to the netherworld," Carmela's faint but determined words echoed in his mind. She wasn't playing games.

Desperate, he searched for his phone and dialed Zamiel's number.

"He.."

"Is Carmela still coming to the dining party?" he interrupted, his voice trembling with anxiety. Zamiel answered quickly, sensing the urgency, and the call ended abruptly "Yes..what happened?"

He never wanted things to turn out this way, but now, he saw only one way to end this deadly game of hunter and prey.

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Zamiel let out another sigh of frustration, watching Carmela take another shot. He wasn't sure how to explain the situation to her, knowing that no matter what he said, she was bound to take it the wrong way. With a sigh he signaled the bartender to leave.

"Carmela, I think it's time we head out," he said, but she paid no heed, lost in her own world.

"Babe," came a soft voice from behind. He looked up to find his fiancée, beautifully dressed, but he couldn't spare a moment to appreciate her beauty as much as he wanted to. His happiness was overshadowed by the turmoil caused by his childhood friends entangled in a game of cat and mouse.

"Nathan is here," she whispered, and Zamiel felt a breath of relief.

"Alpha One is here, Carmela," he said, tapping her shoulder. She donned her mask, placed her purse to the side, and held her gown in one hand as she rose to her feet.

"What are the chances that I won't end up dead today?" she suddenly questioned no one in particular. "Death isn't an option... I still have scores to settle with Nix Dean," she murmured to herself, making her way toward the parking lot.

The guards lined up with their heads slightly bowed, a silent acknowledgment of her presence.

In the dimly lit parking lot of the bar, a line of imposing bodyguards stood at attention, their presence a clear warning to anyone considering trouble. Clad in black suits and dark sunglasses, the men formed an intimidating human barricade, their expressions stern and alert.

At the forefront of this formation were two black Maruti Gypsies, their rugged frames standing out in stark contrast to the sleek luxury vehicle parked between them. The Gypsies' powerful silhouettes projected an aura of readiness, as their engines radiated heat from a recent drive.

Nestled between the two Gypsies was a black Lamborghini, its glossy exterior gleaming under the dim lights, reflecting the faint neon glow from the bar's sign. The Lamborghini, a symbol of opulence and power, seemed almost out of place in the gritty surroundings, yet it commanded the most attention.

Beside the Lamborghini, a chauffeur waited with the car door open, his posture professional and composed. He stood by the vehicle with an air of practiced patience, his eyes scanning the surroundings for any sign of movement.

"Power," she said, the side of her lips raised in a sardonic smile as she approached where the chauffeur waited.

Nix turned to find Carmela standing poised in an elegant black dress, the ruffled off-shoulder design highlighting her graceful neckline and shoulders. The dress, a masterpiece of delicate tulle, cascaded down to the floor, its intricate layers creating a stunning silhouette. A daring slit revealed one toned leg, adding a touch of bold allure to her ensemble.

Her hair was adorned with sparkling stones, each gem catching the light and shimmering like stars. The elaborate hairstyle complemented the sophistication of her dress, enhancing her regal presence.

A mask concealed her identity, adding an air of mystery to her appearance. The mask, adorned with intricate patterns, framed her face perfectly, allowing only her expressive eyes and mouth to be seen. Her heart-shaped lips were painted with a rich cherry red lipstick, standing out vividly against the monochromatic palette of her attire.

Nix wanted to smile and compliment her looks but, remembering the situation they were in, he maintained a straight face, hiding his identity behind the mask he wore.

As the car door slammed shut behind her, the engine roared to life, and just like that, they were on their way to the gathering of harmony, as some called it, a night of prey, as others termed it, and the occasion of sinister events, as it was supposed to be referred to.

They drove for hours in silence, not mentioning a word to one another until Nix noticed that Carmela still wore her ring and hadn't discarded it.

"Are you married?" he questioned, wanting to gauge her response, but she only looked out the window.

"In legal terms, yes. In other terms, none of your business," she scoffed, and he didn't know how to react to her response. "I'll make sure I cause you no harm. I'm sure Alpha Three must have told you about my reasons for wanting to attend this function, even if not the details of it. Just help me get in, and you can bid good riddance to me," was all she said before the car fell back into silence..

...

As I stepped out of the car, old memories rushed in, they weren't clear but still I could tell how happy I was then.

The Dalton house hasn't changed much over the years it was almost the way it was when I left except for maybe the chance of maids and retouch of paint to the building

"Catch me if you can" I saw the younger version of me scream as she ran past me with a smile on her face, I turned to the garden and there she was in the hands of a man who's face wasn't visible yet but from the way my younger self reacted I could tell he was my father, mum stood with a big tummy at the side and anyone could tell without words being said that we were a happy family but everything got ruined by one person

"Shall we?" I turned to find Alpha one offering me his hand which I took as he led the way up the grand stairs.

Security stood at both side checking and confirming invitations and identity and I couldn't help but clench tighter to his hand feeling the rush of nervousness in my stomach, but surprisingly they just bowed their heads and made way for us

"You seem surprised" he suddenly spoke up and I nodded "we weren't checked.."

"There has been a new update in the system, each power and rank have their own color masks to make it easier to differentiate them." he informed

As we stepped inside, the grand ballroom glittered under the soft glow of countless chandeliers, casting a warm light over the sea of elegantly dressed guests. Each person was adorned in sophisticated black attire, creating a striking and mysterious atmosphere. The women wore gowns that flowed like liquid shadows, adorned with intricate lace and shimmering sequins. The men donned sharp tuxedos, their crisp lines adding to the event's sense of timeless elegance.

Every face was hidden behind a unique mask, adding an air of intrigue and anonymity. Some masks were delicate and lacy, barely obscuring the wearer's features, while others were elaborate and adorned with feathers, gems, and intricate designs. The masks ranged from classic Venetian styles to more modern, avant-garde creations, each one telling its own silent story.

Soft music played in the background, and I couldn't resist the urge of familiarity with the entire place, starting with the weird familiarity I got from Alpha one and the way he sounded much like Nix. I've shaken my head several times saying I could be hearing things since I've spent lots of intimate time with it but still it couldn't change the reality of things.

"Just one more night and I'll be done with everything concerning the Dean's and Daltons" I said letting out a soft sigh

"Alpha one" a man called with excitement as he approached us "it's a pleasure finally having you back at such gatherings" he said but Alpha one didn't respond he just nodded his head and walked on while the man chased after us

".. there has been rumors that you are going to join the fight of become the heir so why didn't you take Alpha two help? Marrying her makes you the automatic heir and.."

"I guess you're lacking on the gossips, cause if you weren't then you'd know I'm already married" the air got a bit awkward seeing the man before us stiffen before we resume our step

"I didn't know you were married" amusement lingering all over my voice as we took our seat at one of the tables

"You weren't observant enough to take note" He raised his hand showing off his finger "I'm not sure what you're planning but I'd advise you hold back until everyone is relaxed and unwary, I'll be taking my seat at the high table.."

"Why is your wife not here?" I interrupted him as I didn't want to talk about what I was up to

"I can simply ask the same as your partner isn't here as well" he retorted and I scoffed, he is a hard one to play with "I don't want my husband to be open to danger if I introduce him to this world..." I said simply

"..or maybe I'll be the one in danger if I get to know his world" I murmured to myself unsure of what the right answer to his question was.

"You can say the same for my case but we got a little misunderstanding and she's really upset"

"You love her?" I said with a teasing smile but I got no response from him, even his composure was unreadable

"Even if you don't love her as long as your intentions are genuine I'm sure she'll forgive you.." our chat got cut off by a man who approached us leading us to the seats ment for the occasion

We got to the grand hall, where three long tables formed a U-shape, two tables faced each other lengthwise, while the third stood prominently at the head. Hundreds of chairs lined the sides of the facing tables, creating an impressive display of symmetry and grandeur. At the head table, ten grand chairs were meticulously arranged, each symbolizing a rank of importance, with the highest rank seated in the center.

The tables were adorned with an array of dishes catering to both vegetarian and non-vegetarian palates. The sumptuous spread included exotic fruits, fresh salads, succulent meats, and delicate seafood, each dish artfully presented. Between the plates, an assortment of expensive wine bottles gleamed, their labels showcasing renowned vintages. Crystal glasses sparkled beside polished cutlery, reflecting the opulence of the feast.

As everyone settled into their seats, the maids took their positions beside the chairs, poised and ready to serve with flawless precision. Their presence added an air of refined elegance to the already majestic setting, ensuring that every guest would experience the height of hospitality.

Alpha One took his seat at the center chair, and I took mine beside him. Soon, Zamiel and his fiancée, as well as Alpha Four and his father, joined us. Yet, the person I urgently wanted to see was nowhere to be found.

As the maids prepared to pour water into everyone's glasses, they halted at the raised hand of Alpha One.

"Forgive the late appearance, this old man has a lot going on," came the voice I had been waiting for. I turned to see him seated in a wheelchair, being pushed in by none other than my replacement, who wore a plain black gown covering and a mask.

"Shall we?" Alpha One said as he and Ella took their seats. The maids began serving the dishes, but the atmosphere was heavy, charged with a mix of conflicting auras and complex emotions. The air felt thick with tension, as if it was holding its breath, waiting

for something to break the silence. Each person seemed to radiate fear, anger, sorrow, and anticipation, creating a chaotic yet strangely cohesive blend.

The silence was oppressive, amplifying every slight movement and breath. The weight of unexpressed emotions hung in the air, threatening to suffocate anyone who lingered too long. It was the kind of quiet that felt like it could erupt at any moment.

This atmosphere was expected, as no one knew who would emerge as the next heir. Some were trying to curry favor with potential heirs, while others sought to change their fates by backing the future leader.

Complicated, right?

Regardless, I was here to kill, and I was determined to do so. I munched on a spoonful of food, but my lack of appetite and time made it difficult to swallow. My thoughts were interrupted when Alpha One placed a saucer with bunny-shaped apples before me. Memories of Nix doing the same flooded my mind, but I composed myself and let out a deep breath.

"What a show-off," someone muttered in French. I didn't react. Instead, I pushed my dish aside and began eating the apples as refusing them would only draw unwanted attention.

"Alpha One never ceases to amaze us. He initially refused to contest for the dynasty heir but now suddenly wants us to make him heir, defying the dynasty law of marrying within the dynasty," Grand Alpha Four remarked.

"Don't be like that, Grand Alpha Four. It isn't compulsory to marry within our own circle, but we should at least marry someone of similar class and status, not a nobody," Ella added and I couldn't resist chuckling, drawing everyone's attention.

"Oh, I'm sorry," I said with a small smile as I munched on another slice of apple. If I were her, I'd surely be perturbed not only was she rejected by Nix Dean but also by Alpha One. She must be lacking a lot.

"Alpha One seems not to have enlightened his wife on courtesy," Ella added and despite the fact that I wasn't his wife I felt the impulse to retort.

"Says someone who spends the entire day at the shopping mall," Zamiel's fiancée responded, and the battle of words began.

"I bet your store wouldn't make sales if I decided not to go there for a day," she shot back, and this was my cue to join in.

"Your absence would be a relief. Her store thrives on genuine support, not empty boasts from someone who has failed to contribute meaningfully to society."

"What do we call them in Spanish? 'Tonto'?" I asked, turning to Zamiel's fiancée with a smile. She returned the smile and replied, "Sí, sis." Her response seemed to infuriate Ella, who slammed her hand on the table. The noise startled everyone, but before any further conflict could erupt, my so-called grandfather intervened. He placed a steady hand on Ella's arm, silencing her.

"I'd love to excuse myself," he said, rising gracefully from his seat. I seized the opportunity and excused myself as well, citing a need to use the restroom.

I followed him at a cautious distance, careful not to draw attention. My steps were deliberate, avoiding any movement that might appear suspicious to those observing the CCTV cameras. As I slipped through the door behind him, I heard him call out, "Carmela!"

Before I could respond, a sharp pain pierced my neck. The world around me began to blur as a needle delivered its payload. My vision swayed and darkened, and I felt a disorienting weight pressing down on my consciousness. The last thing I registered was the cold, metallic taste of fear before everything slipped into unconsciousness.

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Everything suddenly felt surreal. The weight of the moment pressed down on my chest, heavy and unrelenting, but backing out wasn't an option..

not anymore.

"Are you sure she won't kill us when she wakes up?" Ken's voice cracked through the silence from his corner, thinly veiled nerves lacing every word. His fingers drummed against his thigh, betraying the composure he tried to hold.

Xavier chuckled, low and dry. "If you were this scared, you should've stayed back and handled the business in Nix's absence," he said, not bothering to glance in Ken's direction.

But Ken's anxieties were the least of my concerns.

Tom, Luna, Zamiel, and his fiancée were still at the dining party, keeping up appearances, trying to keep the suspicions at bay. Yet the old man's unwavering gaze lingered on the painting before us, his silence more telling than any accusation. It was only a matter of time before cracks began to show.

The painting was a masterpiece a surreal landscape where the sun hung suspended in a crystalline sky, its pale rays spilling like icy ribbons across a frozen expanse. Blues and whites dominated the canvas, kissed by threads of silver and faint traces of yellow that hinted at a fragile dawn. The light was soft, diffused, almost hesitant, casting the whole scene in a fragile, frozen hush. It bore the title Frozen Sun, Carmela's work.

Despite my efforts, I had never managed to acquire it. And this old man... he was the reason why.

"We won't be able to stop her," he finally said, his voice as still as the scene on that canvas. "Nor talk her out of whatever she's set on doing."

My jaw tightened. "So what do you suggest?" I asked, one brow lifting, though I already sensed his answer would carry more weight than comfort.

"Take her away while she's still unconscious. Take her far away... and make her forget everything." His voice carried a quiet plea, one I wanted to ignore more than anything.

I wasn't fond of this old man, never had been. But on this matter, we were aligned, Carmela had to be taken away. That much, I agreed to.

But make her forget everything?

Never.

"Untie her," I ordered Xavier, my tone leaving no room for hesitation as I stepped closer to where Carmela lay motionless. Her chest rose and fell in a shallow rhythm, unaware of the storm building around her.

"I've fulfilled my part of the bargain," I said evenly. "Now it's your turn. Where is the remaining half of the seal?"

The old man let out a light, humorless laugh, his eyes glinting with that infuriating calm.

"It's with her," he said, nodding toward Carmela.

My brow arched. "With her?"

"She took it with her the day she decided to escape," he replied, lips curling into something between a smirk and a sneer.

"So, if she doesn't remember where it is... there won't be an heir to the dynasty?" My words were sharp, my patience thinning.

He tilted his head, the smugness never leaving his face. "The dynasty will devour itself. Once word gets out that the seal is missing, every viper will bare its fangs, and the fight for power will end in blood."

"Every dog biting its master," I murmured, staring hard at him. "You planned this from the very start, didn't you?"

He didn't answer. Silence was the only confession I would get from him.

"Leave before someone notices," he said at last, brushing past me, his presence fading like a shadow at dusk.

I exhaled slowly and bent, lifting Carmela in my arms, cradling her as though the weight of her unconscious form could steady the storm in my mind. Bridal style.. how ironic.

"Inform Luna and Zamiel," I said over my shoulder, "tell them to cover for us. If anyone asks, they're to say we never left the party."

Without another glance at Xavier, I headed for the secret passage the old man had shown me, its cold stone walls swallowing us whole as the door shut behind.

We arrived at the parking lot and the moment I helped her into the car and took my seat at the driver's side her eyes widened as though the pieces of a long, twisted puzzle had finally fallen into place.

"You've been pulling the strings all along," she whispered, her tone laced with disbelief and something darker.. betrayal maybe

I didn't answer. Not immediately. As the hum of the engine filled the tense space between us, the road stretching like a narrow lifeline ahead. The shadows of the night clung to the edges of the windshield, and her breathing came quick, shallow, erratic.

"Why didn't you just tell me?" she pressed, her voice rising slightly, fighting the restraint of her bound wrists. "Why let me think I was fighting this alone? Was this your plan? To drag me back into your world, to chain me to your madness?"

"I didn't want this," I said finally, my voice low but unyielding. "Not like this. But you left me no choice, Carmela. You were going to burn everything down, including yourself. And I can't let that happen."

"Can't let it happen?" she scoffed, a hollow laugh escaping her lips. "Or won't let it happen because it ruins your control?"

I glanced at her, briefly, just enough to catch the glint of her eyes in the dim dashboard light. There was this fire there, accompanied with bound, and even betrayal. It was like she was still a storm I hadn't learned how to contain.

"You think I want to control you?" I muttered. "Then you're wrong. I want to keep you alive."

Her silence was heavier than her accusations. Her head turned away, as her gaze lost in the streaking dark of the night beyond the window.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked after a beat, quieter now.

"Somewhere they can't reach you," I replied. "Somewhere you'll have time to remember.. on your own."

Her breath hitched faintly at that word remember. She didn't trust me, but I know something in her tightened at the possibility that what she'd lost, what they'd tried to erase, was still somewhere inside her.

"You'll regret this, Nix," she murmured, her voice carrying both a warning and a promise I knew would actually fulfill no matter the amount of time it will take

"I already do," I whispered.

...

His hands moved with unsettling precision, not rough but not gentle either just efficient. I tugged against the restraints, testing them, my wrists already sore from the earlier struggle. The room smelled faintly of damp wood and old fabric; the walls, a dull beige, seemed to hold their breath, as though they too feared what might unfold.

He stepped back, watching me. "Stop straining yourself," he said flatly, rolling his sleeves up to his elbows. "You'll only bruise your wrists, and that's the last thing you need."

I glared at him, the questions burning hotter than the ache in my arms. "Who are you, really? Nix? Nathan? Alpha One? Or just another liar in a long line of men who think they know what's best for me?"

His jaw tightened, but his expression remained unreadable. "Does it matter what name I used? Every version of me was trying to keep you alive."

"Alive for what?" I snapped, the words cracking in the air between us. "For your plan? For the seal? Or to keep me under your thumb like the rest of them?"

His gaze flicked away for a brief moment, landing on a battered wooden table across the room. On it lay a small black case the kind that didn't belong in a place this run-down. Something about it tugged at my mind, a phantom familiarity I couldn't quite grasp.

"You're angry," he said finally, his voice low. "Good. Anger means you're still fighting. I'd rather deal with that than the silence you wore when I first found you."

I pulled at the restraints again, the sound of the rope scraping against the metal frame echoing in the cramped room. "Untie me," I demanded, my tone cold. "If you want me to remember anything, start by treating me like I'm not your prisoner."

He walked over, leaned close enough that I could see the faint cut running from his temple to his jaw one I hadn't noticed before. "You're not my prisoner, Carmela," he murmured. "You're the key. And keys don't get to choose the doors they open."

Something in his words chilled me more than the room ever could.

My pulse quickened as the subtle rocking of the boat became more pronounced, a reminder that I was adrift and trapped on someone else's terms. The faint hum of the engine thrummed beneath the floorboards, steady and unhurried, like the heartbeat of a predator that knew its prey had nowhere to run.

I shifted slightly, testing the restraints around my wrists. The rope had been tightened with careful precision; every tug only seemed to dig the coarse fibers deeper into my skin. A faint sting accompanied the movement, and I exhaled sharply to steady myself. Who would have known that the great Nix Dean knew exactly how to keep someone in place with ropes without drawing unnecessary blood.

On the polished nightstand beside the bed sat a crystal decanter half-filled with amber liquid, its facets catching the morning light like a thousand tiny knives. A glass rested beside it, half empty, or perhaps half full its scent carried the faint trace of aged scotch. The presence of such a thing here made my stomach twist it wasn't just a room, it was a cage disguised in refinement.

I strained my ears for the source of the creak I'd heard moments before. Nothing followed, only the whisper of waves lapping against the hull and the muted murmur of distant voices too faint to decipher but enough to remind me I wasn't alone on this vessel.

A thought began to form, cold and deliberate if the methamphetamine hadn't worked on him, then either he had neutralized it... or he had never truly been as unhinged as the reports suggested. That possibility made my skin prickle.

I had slipped the drug his late uncle asked me to feed him into the jug of water in his room to prevent suspicious.. but then it was still under probability if he took it or not.

"Still dreaming of victory, Carmela?" a voice finally came, smooth yet cutting, from the doorway I hadn't noticed swing open.

I froze.

The silhouette that stepped in carried the kind of composure only someone entirely in control could bear.

The sight of him, so at ease in his own skin, sent an involuntary chill down my spine not from desire this time, but from the gnawing realization that my plan might have failed spectacularly. His damp hair clung to his forehead, dark and tousled, the drops tracing

patterns down his jaw before falling to his collarbone. The tattoos coiled like sleeping serpents, shifting as his muscles flexed with every languid step he took toward the window.

"You look surprised," he said casually, lifting the heavy drapes with two fingers to let in more of the morning light. The ocean gleamed like polished steel beyond the glass, the horizon vast and merciless. "What? Did you think a little trick like that would bring me to my knees?"

I swallowed hard, my fingers curling against the restraints that dug deeper into my skin. Impossible. I made sure the dosage was strong enough to bring down a man twice his size.

"Don't look so pale," he continued, his voice dipped in mockery now, "I told you once you underestimate the things you don't fully understand." He turned his gaze back to me, his eyes sharp as a blade slipping into its sheath.

"W—what did you do?" The words left my lips before I could restrain them, a brittle whisper barely carried by the salty air.

He smiled a slow, knowing, and dangerous smile. "I should be the one asking. What did you do, Carmela?" He stepped closer, his presence heavy as he leaned down just enough for me to catch the faint scent of his cologne mingling with the sea breeze. "Because whatever game you're playing... it ends here."

My heart thudded painfully against my ribs. The room, with all its velvet and polished wood and flowers, felt less like a sanctuary now and more like a well-decorated cage.

The words slithered through the room like venom, chilling the already tense air. His smile didn't reach his eyes those eyes were a storm now, a whirlpool of secrets I couldn't yet name. My muscles tensed instinctively, every nerve screaming at me to prepare for whatever came next.

"My enemy?" I echoed, forcing my voice to stay steady, though my fingers itched against the restraints biting into my wrists. "So, the man who kissed me under the moonlight, who shielded me when the crosshairs were aimed at my head... was that all just a performance?"

He tilted his head, as though studying a piece of art whose meaning only he could decipher. "Performance?" he repeated, chuckling darkly. "You still think you're the audience here, Carmela? No... you were the stage."

The words settled heavy between us, a riddle and a threat wrapped in one. I wanted to spit something back, but the weight of his presence pressed against my chest like a stone.

"Then what's your game?" I pressed on, refusing to let the silence stretch into surrender. "If I'm the stage, what are you building? A massacre? A legacy? Or just another graveyard with a better view?"

His grin widened, sharp as a blade catching the light. "You'll find out soon enough. But here's the difference between us..." he leaned in, close enough for his breath to ghost over my cheek, "...you kill because you're told to. I kill because I choose to."

A tremor ran through me not fear, not entirely, but something colder, something that warned me the man before me wasn't Nix, not Nathan... or perhaps he was both, twisted into something worse.

Chapter 54: 54

"Who are you, Nix or Nathan?" I asked, my voice trembling as his lips curled into a knowing smile.

"Who am I?" he repeated, stepping back from me. "I'm your enemy."

The words hung in the air like a curse, and in that moment, the room seemed to darken around me. The atmosphere shifted, morphing from calm to something far more sinister. It felt as if a storm had descended, choking the air, making it thick and oppressive. Shadows twisted on the walls, coming alive with a malevolent energy, and the temperature dropped, leaving a chill in its wake. Every beat of my heart echoed in my ears, a relentless drum of panic, as if the room itself was suffocating under the weight of the enmity that had suddenly filled the space.

"I should be grateful," he continued, his voice laced with contempt. "Through you, I got my existence. But damn you for meddling with my plans." His words sent a shiver down my spine, and I couldn't help but wonder if this was the real him or if he was possessed or if this was simply his true nature revealed.

"I'm not your husband," he sneered. "No... I'm not Nix. I am his demon, as he likes to call me. And I have no intention of keeping you alive, but this human in darkness inside of me won't let me harm you." His eyes widened with a dangerous glint as he slammed his hand on the table, the sound reverberating through the room, making me jump as fear gripped my heart.

He approached me with deliberate steps, unbinding my hands and dragging me toward the bow of the cruise. I swallowed hard, seeing nothing but the endless expanse of the sea before us. "Since he won't let me kill you," he said, his voice a low growl, "I'll let you go."

"Go...?" I stammered, shivering as the cold sea breeze brushed against my skin.

"Yes. Get out and never return!" he shouted, the suddenness of it startling me. I couldn't comprehend his twisted logic how he could hate me so much yet refuse to kill me. He was giving me my freedom, but it felt like he was sentencing me to death instead.

"One... two..."

"Wait! Hold on, let's talk this through," I pleaded, stepping back as I frantically searched for something anything to defend myself with. But all I found were ropes, anchor chains, and a fire extinguisher.

"Give me that ring," he demanded, pointing to my finger. I hesitated, raising an eyebrow in confusion, but he ignored me, rubbing his forehead as if in frustration. "And the leg chain too. I don't want him finding you after I get rid of you," he sighed, exasperated.

Reluctantly, I took off my wedding ring and handed it to him. Without a second thought, he tossed it into the sea. I moved closer to the fire extinguisher, crouching down as if to remove the leg chain, but instead, I grabbed the extinguisher and swung it at his head, hoping to jolt Nix back to consciousness. But instead of retreating, he cursed at me, his fury reignited.

In that moment, I realized that my only option was the sea.

I prepared to flee, but before I could move, he yanked me by my hair, dragging me closer as he fumbled with something in his other hand.

"Change of heart, huh? How about a taste of your own medicine?" he hissed, struggling to remove the cap from an injection one I had prepared with my own hands for the old Delton. Panic surged through me as I fought to free myself, kicking the injection out of his hand and scrambling to grab it.

"Are you planning to kill me?" I panted, raising the injection defensively.

"You didn't think twice before using this same drug on Nix, so why should I?" he shot back, his eyes locking with mine in a battle of wills.

He was right at least partially. I hadn't hesitated to use it on the man I knew as my husband who had kept secrets from me. But then if I knew he was Alpha one would I have hesitated? The question gnawed at me as we stared each other down, the seconds stretching into an eternity before I tossed the injection into the sea.

"Kill me if you dare," I scoffed, challenging him, and I saw the rage in his eyes flare to new heights as he stormed toward me. But then, suddenly, he halted, clutching his head with both hands.

Was the drug finally taking effect?

"Shit!" he cursed, and all I could think about was my own safety. I turned to flee into the room, but his coughing stopped me in my tracks. I turned back to see blood dripping from his hands.

"Nix," I whispered, barely audible, taking a hesitant step toward him. But he staggered back, shaking his head.

"Run... he'll kill you once he's back. I can't hold him for long," he rasped, and before I could react, he lunged toward the sea, disappearing over the edge.

I pressed a hand to my mouth, paralyzed with indecision.

Save him or...?

Let him drown

"Carmela, you can't repay kindness with evil," I scolded myself, my mind racing. "Even if he had ulterior motives and hasn't been the kindest, he's still kind..or at least his pretense of being kind is worth saving him" I sigh convincing myself.

As the sun set over the horizon, casting the sea in a golden glow, I stood at the edge of the cruise ship, my eyes scanning the waves for any sign of Nix. Without a second thought, I stripped off my elegant gown, revealing the sleek black underwear beneath. The wind whipped through my hair as I took a deep breath, then with a fierce cry, I leaped off the ship's railing, my body arcing gracefully through the air before plunging into the turquoise sea below.

The water rushed up to meet me, cool and enveloping. I sliced through the surface with powerful strokes, my arms propelling me toward Nix with a singular focus, to save him from the waves. The sea spray glistened on my skin as I swam with all my might, my heart pounding in my chest as I searched desperately for him.

"Will I reach him in time?" The thought gnawed at me as I dove deeper into the sea, the water darkening around me. My eyes scanned the murky depths until, finally, I spotted him his body limp, his eyes closed as if surrendering to the abyss.

Fear surged through me, but I pushed it aside, forcing my arms to move faster, stronger. I reached him, grabbing his arm and pulling him upwards with all my strength. He was heavy, unresponsive, but I refused to give up. Wrapping an arm around his waist, I swam toward the surface, my lungs burning from the effort. The water pressure built in my ears, but I focused on the light above, willing us to reach it.

Finally, we broke through the surface, gasping for air. Nix coughed, his eyes fluttering open, and I pulled him close, holding him afloat. The cruise ship loomed nearby, and with every ounce of strength I had left, I swam toward it, dragging Nix along.

My muscles ached, my body screaming for rest, but I pushed on, my eyes fixed on the ship's ladder until we finally reached it.

As I held Nix, I felt his warmth, his life returning to him, and it was as if a surge of energy coursed through me. I helped him back into the room, guiding him to the bed where he sat, still dazed.

"Let me grab a towel," I said, hurrying into the bathroom. I found one and returned, watching him strip off his wet clothes. There was so much I wanted to say, but I held my tongue, knowing that blame could still find its way back to me.

The room was silent as I dried his hair with the towel, my thoughts racing with questions what would have happened if I hadn't reached him in time? Why hadn't he tried to survive? My thoughts were interrupted by his cough.

"I'll get you some water," I murmured, excusing myself as I made my way to the kitchen.

The cruise ship has actually turned out to be luxurious and not as cranky as I imagined.

The kitchen unveiled to being as a culinary paradise, its sleek, high-gloss finishes gleaming under the soft lighting. The air was filled with a sweet aroma that promised indulgence, but I had no time to savor it. As I reached for a glass, I felt familiar hands wrap around my waist, and I turned to find Nix behind me. Before I could say a word, his lips crashed into mine like a stormy wave rough and unrelenting.

The intensity of his fury, his passion, overwhelmed me as our mouths collided in a fiery explosion. The luxurious kitchen around us melted away, leaving only the two of us, lost in this tempestuous embrace.

His hands grasped my face, holding me in place as he devoured me with his kiss. I felt the scratch of his stubble, the pressure of his teeth, and the warmth of his breath. It was as if he was trying to consume me whole, to claim me as his own.

I met his ferocity with my own, our lips battling for dominance. The world around us faded into the background, leaving only the sound of our ragged breathing and the soft moans that escaped our lips.

The marble countertop pressed against my back, cool and unyielding, as Nix's body pinned me against it. His hands roamed my skin, leaving trails of fire in their wake. I felt the heat building between us, a spark ready to ignite into a blazing

Chapter 55: 55

The early morning sun found its way through the cruise window, casting a soft, golden light over the room. Carmela slowly stirred awake, her eyes fluttering open to the warmth of the day. She raised her hand, letting the sunlight play across her fingers, and

noticed the large diamond ring on her finger catching the light, sending tiny rainbows dancing across the room. A smile touched her lips, though she couldn't quite understand why the sight made her smile.

"He seriously jumped into the water to get back the ring," she thought, her smile fading into a pout as she pulled the bed cover closer, tucking it under her chin.

"You seem happy," Nix's voice suddenly broke the morning's quiet. Startled, she turned to look at him, but the moment their eyes met, the smile on her face disappeared.

"How was your night, Mrs. Dean?" he asked, his voice smooth as he reached out to tuck a stray lock of hair behind her ear. But Carmela recoiled from his touch, her heart quickening with unease. Without a word, she grabbed the handcuffs lying beside the bed and snapped them onto his wrist, chaining him to the bedpost.

"What was that for?" he asked, watching her intently as she slipped out of bed and headed towards the bathroom in search of a robe.

"Nix Demon, or whatever you call yourself, it's time we got on the same page. I can't have you trying to kill me for no reason," she said, planting her hands on her hips as she glared at him.

A smirk tugged at the corners of his mouth. "You sure are observant. How did you know I wasn't Nix?"

"He never calls me 'Mrs. Dean,' and..." She cut herself off, her frustration growing. "Can you just answer my question?"

He simply scoffed, his demeanor annoyingly calm. "I'm hungry. Get me something to eat."

She raised an eyebrow, surprised by his audacity. "I'll answer your questions over breakfast," he added, his tone making it clear he wouldn't be rushed.

Reluctantly, Carmela nodded and walked to the wardrobe, returning with a simple t-shirt and trousers. "Wear them," she instructed, tossing the clothes at him before turning and heading towards the kitchen, her mind racing with the questions she still desperately needed answers to.

As Carmela stepped into the kitchen, she instinctively reached up to gather her hair, twisting it into a loose bun at the nape of her neck. The kitchen, with its polished surfaces and stainless steel appliances, was bathed in the morning light filtering through the portholes. The quiet hum of the ship provided a soothing backdrop as she considered what to prepare.

She opened the fridge, her eyes scanning the contents until they settled on a carton of eggs. A small smile tugged at her lips. Eggs were simple, versatile, and exactly what she needed. She turned towards the counter and noticed a collection of fresh vegetables, their vibrant colors standing out against the cool tones of the kitchen. An idea sparked in her mind.

Pulling the eggs from the fridge, she set them on the counter and reached for a cutting board. With practiced hands, she began chopping the vegetables, the rhythmic sound of the knife against the board filling the space. She wasn't entirely sure what she was making yet, but the ingredients felt right together, and she trusted her instincts.

After a moment's hesitation, she poured a drizzle of oil into a pan, letting it heat up before adding the chopped vegetables. The sizzle was satisfying, the scent of sautéing peppers, onions, and tomatoes quickly filling the air. She sprinkled in a pinch of salt, a dash of pepper, and a few herbs she found in the spice rack. The aroma was inviting, and comforting.

Finally, Carmela cracked the eggs into a bowl, whisking them until they were smooth, then carefully poured them over the softened vegetables. She stirred gently, watching as the eggs set, binding everything together. When the dish was done, she plated it with a firm smile, satisfied with the simple yet nutritious meal she had created. A quick glance at the counter led her to a glass, and she filled it with fresh orange juice to complete the breakfast.

"A nutritious meal for a healthy day," she murmured to herself, patting her shoulder lightly with a hint of pride as she took in the finished dish. The simplicity of the moment gave her a brief sense of peace, even as the storm of uncertainty loomed on the horizon.

Carmela placed the dish on the dining table, the quiet clink of the plate on the polished wood echoing slightly in the stillness. Without another word, she turned on her heel and made her way back to the bedroom. The moment she stepped inside, she found him halfway dressed, fumbling awkwardly with his free hand as the other remained securely fastened to the bedpost.

"Are you going to undo this?" he asked, pointing to the handcuffs with a raised brow. His tone carried a mixture of irritation and mild amusement, but Carmela simply shook her head in disapproval.

"Listen," he began, his voice taking on a slightly pleading edge, "if I wanted to kill you, I would have done it when you were asleep, right?" He paused, watching her reaction as she reluctantly nodded in agreement. "But I didn't, and I wouldn't. So, please uncuff this it's really uncomfortable," he whined, the slight hint of desperation in his voice almost making her smile, but she suppressed it, shaking her head once more.

"Even if I wanted to kill you, I couldn't," he replied, his tone steady as she maintained eye contact. "Nix wouldn't allow it." She watched him carefully, considering his words. After a long, tense moment, she finally relented, unlocking the cuffs but ensuring she kept a safe distance from him.

"So, where's my food?" he asked, rubbing his wrist where the metal had left faint red marks.

"Dining table," she answered curtly, turning to lead the way. "And remember, you'll have to answer all my questions," she added, her voice firm as she glanced back at him. He nodded in agreement, following her out of the room.

When they reached the dining table, his expression quickly shifted from curiosity to disgust as he eyed the dish she had prepared. He hesitated before taking a seat, his brow furrowed in displeasure.

"Is that even edible?" he asked, his tone laced with skepticism. He looked up at her, raising an eyebrow. "Don't get me wrong, but where did you learn to make this?" His question was met with a roll of her eyes, clearly unimpressed by his critique.

"It's edible," she responded slyly, a hint of defiance in her voice. "Don't judge a book by its cover," she added with a scoff. Watching his expression, she saw him gather his resolve before he took a cautious bite. He chewed slowly, then let out a deep sigh.

"It's bland but edible," he admitted, taking another bite. The corners of his mouth twitched as if he were forcing himself to continue eating.

"So, what's your deal?" she asked, crossing her arms as she leaned against the table, her eyes narrowing with suspicion.

"I want Nix to become the dynasty heir, and only you can make that happen," he stated bluntly, his gaze locking onto hers.

"Meaning?" she pressed, her brow furrowing as she tried to decipher his intentions. His vague answer only fueled her curiosity and concern.

"Never mind," he waved her off, sensing her unease. "I promised to give you an answer, and I will." He paused, taking another bite before continuing. "The reason I'm not killing you is because we have a common enemy. And the enemy of my enemy is my friend," he said with a casual shrug.

"You mean you also have grudges against my grandfather?" she asked, her mind racing as she tried to piece together the puzzle.

"Your... No, I'm talking about your father," he corrected, his eyes darkening as he watched her reaction. Carmela's breath hitched, her heart skipping a beat as confusion clouded her thoughts.

"What do you mean, my father? He... he's dead," she stammered, her voice trembling slightly as she searched his face for answers. The look of disappointment that crossed his features made her stomach churn.

"Well, Nix did say you lost all your memories," he said slowly, as if piecing together the information himself. "He also mentioned you should check the tablet on his desk for something. I'm not sure what exactly." He hesitated, scratching his head as if trying to recall more. "Oh, and that you should stop building anger against that old man because he's only trying to help you... and..."

"And?" she urged, her patience wearing thin as she leaned closer, hoping for more clarity.

"Hold on, I'm trying to remember..." He paused, tapping his chin thoughtfully. "Ah, yes. He said that you should be patient. We'll get information from Zamiel and the others in seventy-two hours, and you must make sure you remember your memories by then," he finished lazily before returning his attention to the dish, picking at it with a lack of enthusiasm.

Carmela let out a deep sigh, her mind reeling from the answers he gave her. She sank into a chair opposite him, the weight of his words pressing down on her chest. What exactly had she forgotten? And what was she missing? The answers seemed tantalizingly close, yet just out of reach, buried somewhere within the fragments of her lost memories.

Chapter 56: 56

I glued my eyes to the CCTV footage on this tablet, trying to scan every pixel, every frame, every moment. And desperate to recall something, anything, but my mind was completely blank.

I sigh in frustration as my shoulders slump in defeat. I've watched this footage a dozen times already, but nothing stands out. Except the familiar faces of my mother, the old man and the suspicious behavior of an unfamiliar man on mask, there were no clues whatsoever and it felt like my brain was a sieve, and every attempt to remember something just slips right through.

I rub my temples, feeling the tension build up within.

"Why can't I remember despite my efforts?" I wondered about feeling hopeless.

I was there, and I am sure I saw and knew something I shouldn't have and that's why this unknown villain is after me.. But everything was just a haze. No matter how hard I try to focus on the grainy images, willing my brain to cough up even the smallest detail. A glimpse of a shirt, a snippet of conversation, a glimmer of recognition. Anything.

But it was all just static. Noise. Frustration kept mounting up and I let out a growl of exasperation.

I slump back into the bed, the tablet slipping from my grasp.

I looked up from the tablet I was holding and was greeted by the graceful figure of Nix... no, I mean his demon, reading a book. Anyone unaware of his personality switch would think they were the same person, but the reverse is actually the case. One is talkative, while the other prefers his quietness. One is mischievous with dubious thoughts, and the other is law-abiding but naughty.

They share the same body, but they are complete opposites.

"Have you been able to recall anything?" he suddenly spoke up, and I bit down on my lips, wondering if I should answer his question, knowing I was still going to give him the same response I've been giving for the past thirty-six hours.

"How exactly did you start sharing the same body with Nix?" I responded to his question with another and he sighed as he turned the page of the book he was reading. "You know, you're a bit scary. I wonder how Nix is able to cope with you.."

"Scary, you say?" He closed the book he was holding and looked up at me. "The scary one is your husband. I'm just a part of him that had to force myself out." His words sounded unrealistic, but I had no choice but to believe.

"So... when did you force yourself out? What prompted it?" I sat up straight, setting the tablet aside as I finally found something else to focus on.

"Now, when was that... ah, that's it. That day he was in a mental asylum, something tragic happened, and he couldn't handle it. So I had to come out." I wanted to imagine the situation, but I doubted my imagination could do justice to what he spoke of.

"But how did Nix end up in a mental hospital?" I questioned, expecting a fitting response. Instead, he picked up his book once more and returned his attention to it.

"Did he, by any chance, kill those..."

"Nix never kills... the innocent, I mean. Not that he's a saint, but he isn't responsible for those deaths," he shunned me.

"Then who is responsible?" I retorted.

"His roommate... actually, you are responsible. If he hadn't helped you escape, he wouldn't have been locked up in a mental asylum in the first place."

"But..." I tried to retort but was at a loss for words.

"You want to know why I want you dead so much? Then I'll tell you. With you gone, I'll be able to become one with him. But with you around, he'll never accept me. Not only did you abandon him when he needed you the most, but you also betrayed him," he scoffed. I could feel a sense of guilt building inside me, although I couldn't remember what I had done to deserve such a harsh punishment from him.

"When will Nix wake up?"

"Why do you ask? So you can finish him off?" I rolled my eyes, wondering why he needed to answer my questions as if we were on a battlefield.

"Neither you nor I are good enough for him. He can only live peacefully after both of us are gone from his life," he spoke. Although his words were simple and understandable, I still couldn't comprehend them.

If he isn't good enough that's his problem why drag me into it?

"Meaning?"

"Let's make a deal." He sat up straight, his eyes gleaming with mischief as he placed the book aside and rose to his feet.

Why do I have the hunch that I'm not going to like what he's about to say?.

. . .

My heart raced inexplicably, a chill seeping into my veins, turning my palms pale. The sun blazed high in the sky, casting a deceptive brightness, but despite its warmth, shivers danced down my spine at the thought of what was about to unfold.

It had been over seventy-two hours, and all I could do was wait for Zamiel's arrival. Nix, however, remained asleep for reasons I couldn't fathom, and another unsettling feeling gnawed at me something unexpected was about to happen.

But... but... but...

Even my thoughts felt weary. All I wanted was to end this twisted game, to live a normal life if possible, to learn a thing or two about cooking, and to make my career flawless. But...

"The sea is beautiful, isn't it?" The soft footsteps approaching and the warm tone addressing me made me wonder what destiny truly had in store.

I longed for a flawless career, yet I never seemed to escape the dark world's inescapable web.

"What do you plan on naming this piece?" His question stopped my hand, heart, and mind. I sighed, taking one last look at the incomplete painting before me, then set down my brush.

My paintings had always reflected every stage of my life, but this one was different. It wasn't about my life or my choices. Though unfinished, it brought me an odd sense of peace.

"Don't you despise me?" The words slipped from my tongue as I picked up another brush, carefully highlighting the strokes I'd previously created.

"Do you want me to?" he responded.

"Then do you love me?"

The world seemed to hold its breath. The only sound was the waves crashing against each other, as if time itself had paused, even the water refusing to flow.

"Don't answer me. Just don't love me." I turned back to my painting, but a sudden roar of a helicopter interrupted. Its rotors sliced through the air as it descended toward the cruise ship.

From the opposite side of the ship, a sleek speedboat emerged on the horizon, its engines roaring as it cut through the waves. A group of rugged-looking men manned the boat, each wearing sunglasses and gripping firearms, exuding an air of confidence and authority as they closed in.

The helicopter hovered above the deck, its downdraft whipping my hair.

"Nix, Carmela, get in quickly!" Zamiel shouted, lowering a rope like ladder, but my attention was drawn to the speedboat, now just a yard from the ship's hull.

"Climb!" Nix nudged me urgently.

"Go first, I have to pick something up." I took a step backwards and I could see uncertainty in his eyes "I'll be back i promise I just can't leave this painting here" I picked up my unfinished work and saw him nod as he began climbing.

As I took my first few steps on the ladder, I was stunned by the sound of a bullet fired at me, I looked up and could see Zamiel mutter something under his breath but that wasn't my concern as I held tightly on the ladder as the helicopter suddenly began moving

"What's going on?!" Nix finally asked the question I wanted to but we got no response, instead more bullets were fired at us

"He found out that Carmela is alive?"

"What! I thought you said he wasn't suspicious?" Nix roared back

"I thought so but..." their conversation was interrupted by more bullets and I unconsciously let go of the painting I was holding.

My memories we're incomplete and I doubt I could continuously rely on what others say or what they believe is true to live on. If I truly want to get my revenge then the only way is reliving the life I badly wanted to run away from.

If he wants me then he will have me.

I took a deep breath and grasped the rope ladder attached to the helicopter, my heart racing with anticipation as I let go, the wind rushed past me, whipping my hair into a frenzy and I felt a rush of exhilaration mixed with a hint of fear as I sliced through the air.

Time seemed to slow down as I descended, the helicopter's rotors thundering above me. I felt weightless and free as the sea rushed up to meet me, its surface glistening like a thousand diamonds.

The water splashed as I hit it like a blaze ball, the impact knocking the wind out of me. But I didn't have time to catch my breath or swim, I could see Nix screaming and trying to jump after me but it was of no use as this was my choice and decision to make.

Chapter 57: 57

Karma had finally caught up to me, and it was not a lie.

The soft, rhythmic chirping of birds filtered through the fog of my sleep, pulling me slowly back to my consciousness. As my senses sharpened, I became aware of the muttering voices surrounding me, low and indistinct, not far from where I lay. The warmth of sleep faded, replaced by a chilling realization as I felt the cold, hard surface beneath me.

There was no doubt that I was lying on the floor; the biting cold seeped into my bones, making my body stiffen. I resisted the instinctive urge to shiver, forcing myself to remain still.

Cracking one eye open, I saw a narrow beam of sunlight sneaking through a small window above, casting faint, angular shadows in the dim space. My heart skipped a beat as I took in my surroundings. Thick, iron bars encased me in a cage like cell, the metallic scent of rust mingling with the dampness in the air.

Panic threatened to claw its way to the surface, but I swallowed it down.

"Not now, Carmela," I urged myself to stay calm.

The voices beyond the bars continued, unaware that I was awake. Straining to catch their words, I maintained the pretense of being asleep, hoping to gather some crucial information or even a clue. But my breath caught in my throat as I heard what they were saying.

"You've got some nerve coming all the way here to treat me like this," one man said, his tone laced with contempt. I squinted through the bars and saw a man in a lab coat standing beside another man dressed in simple black clothing. They seemed to be watching something I couldn't see.

"Call it whatever you want, but I'm just trying to protect what's rightfully mine," the man in black replied, his voice cold and calculating. "Even you must agree that we can't lose to the same person twice. I never gave up my right to Carmela as my betrothed, and I won't let anyone steal it."

A chill ran down my spine. "Wait... who exactly are they talking about?" I wondered, my mind racing. "It can't be me, right? This whole situation can't be some messed-up triangle, right?"

The man in the lab coat scoffed. "Took you long enough to realize, after letting all my efforts drown in the rivers," he retorted, but his partner just picked up a glass filled with a jelly-like liquid, his expression unreadable.

"If only you had done your job discreetly that day," the man in black continued, "then Alpha Two would have been engaged to Alpha Four, not One, and we wouldn't be in this situation. Our families would have been the most powerful in the dynasty, and you'd rule while I and my wife toured the world. But no, you had to ruin everything."

"I ruined everything?" The man in the lab coat snapped. "Don't call yourself righteous, you demon. What did you do when I gave you another chance to amend things?"

"Amend?" The man in black laughed, a bitter sound that echoed off the walls. "Sometimes I wonder if your brain is like a system that needs to be updated after a certain number of days. You sent the person I wished to kill to the same place I was at. Did you forget why I was locked up there?"

The lab coat man's eyes narrowed. "You could have used your talent on him. After all, you love making art pieces from human bodies."

"And then what? Kill him and lose my right to compete as heir? Don't put all the blame on me. You're at fault too for our plan backfiring. If only you had injected him with whatever concoction you created, he would have gone insane, and the blame for those deaths at the hospital would have been pinned on him. But no... he managed to escape, not just me but also jail."

"That fucking bastard!" The man in the lab coat cursed, turning to input something on the huge computer system set up on one side of the room.

Despite their argument, the aura in the room wasn't suffocating. Both men seemed calm, focused on whatever they were doing. But I still couldn't tell who they were, they both wore masks and I had no idea why they wanted to frame Nix or what their plot entailed. One thing was certain, the man before me wasn't my father and both Nix and his demon we're mistaking.

I didn't know why Nix's demon said all those words, but I would stake my life that he wasn't my father. The father I remembered was gentle and loving, not full of hate and twisted madness.

"I'll leave her in your care. I hope you get the job done properly this time," the man in black said, standing to take his leave. The man in the lab coat didn't respond, but it didn't seem to bother him.

"If you're done listening to our conversation, come here," the man in the white coat called out, his voice like a cold breeze on a winter night, sending shivers down my spine.

My body betrayed me. My heart raced, my palms sweated, and my breath caught in my throat. It was as if my body recognized this kind of fear, but my mind didn't. The feeling of being summoned to face something I'd rather avoid or stay miles away from was all too familiar.

A familiar dread crept up my legs, like an old friend I'd rather not revisit. My mind went blank, but my body reacted on autopilot, as if it knew exactly what was coming.

But my brain couldn't recall why I was so afraid.

What was it about this man's voice that triggered such a strong response?

I searched my memories, but they seemed shrouded in a thick fog. All I knew was that I felt a primal urge to run, to escape, to hide.

My body trembled, my muscles tensed, ready to flee. But my legs felt heavy, as if rooted to the spot. I was trapped, caught between the instinct to escape and the need to find out the truth.

I bet this is the sign of unwanted change.

. . .

The wind seemed to have come to a sudden stop, and even the birds went quiet as only the clicking of heels against the marble floor could be heard. No one dared to stand in her way or stop her, as they feared not only for their jobs but for their lives.

Her gown swayed side to side with her hips, and the eye catching thigh chain she wore peeked through the slit of her dress.

Though half her face was covered by a black mask, the demeanor she exuded was dangerous. As she approached her target, her hand swiftly picked up the double barrel rifle lying on the table. She aimed at the sky, and in just a matter of moments, the peaceful ambiance was shattered by the sound of the gun being fired, hitting a bird in the sky and startling the person beside her out of the blue.

"You take too long to aim," she said, but was met with the disapproving eyes of the owner of the property she had just trespassed on.

"They say the patient dog eats the fattest bone," he responded, taking a seat on the couch behind them.

"That's just a myth, not reality, Mr. André Dubois. In reality, the patient dog starves." A smirk played on her lips as she placed the rifle aside and took a seat opposite him.

"To what do I owe this visit, Alpha Two?" The question sounded serious but still amused her as she took off her sunglasses.

"Miss Delton... I'd prefer you refer to me as Miss Delton, not Alpha Two. That title sounds quirky, don't you agree?" She narrowed her eyes at him, and as expected, got no reaction. This was exactly why she chose him he was a puppet she could use, a puppet no one would know had a master.

"You must be aware that the selection for the next dynasty heir has been delayed, but that's not a priority because we already know who's going to be the heir."

"What do you actually want from me, Miss Delton? Accommodating your unannounced visits over the past year has sincerely been a pleasure, but I bet even that pleasure comes with a price, doesn't it?" He poured wine into a glass before him, showing off a polite smile.

"I'll make you the president in exchange for you being my person." The air between them suddenly thickened with unspoken words. Their eyes locked in a silent standoff. Every glance was a challenge, every breath an unspoken accusation. The room suddenly felt smaller, the space between them charged with a tension that neither could escape. Neither willing to back down, the tension suddenly cracked with a soft chuckle from André.

"You make such good jokes, Miss Delton."

"But it's no joke, Mr. Dubois. Although you belong to our world, you are a righteous man, and this attribute of yours is what I like the most about you," she smiled, taking a sip from her glass.

"I appreciate that, but no matter what you do, I doubt I'd be able to reach the presidency. Firstly, I have competitors like Louis Moreau and Benoit Lefebvre, and not to forget, my political party isn't as strong as theirs."

"Leave the worrying to me, Mr. Dubois, and prepare yourself. No ifs or buts, because once I make up my mind, it's hard to change it," she said, standing to her feet.

"You'll receive an invitation. Make sure to be there."

"But.. "

"I'll take care of the obstacles before you and be your shield. All you need to do is secure that position." Her steps resumed after she said that, and Dubois couldn't help but sigh as he picked up his phone and dialed a number.

"She's about to make a move," he said, but the caller at the other end ended the call without giving a single response.

As Carmela approached her car, a smile tugged at the corner of her lips as she saw the figure awaiting her. She quickened her steps.

"Babe!" she called, and he turned to her, stretching out his hands, which she ran into.

"Why didn't you call me when you arrived?" she pouted, taking off her mask, but he lightly smacked her forehead and put her mask back on her wanting to conceal her identity.

"I didn't want to interrupt your work," he smiled, placing a peck on her forehead. She scoffed, taking a step away from him.

"Why do I feel your love for me is wavering, Damian Floquet?" She raised an eyebrow, but he only chuckled, leading her to the passenger seat.

"My love never wavers. I just want us to fulfill our duties as fast as we can and leave this world behind," he said, closing the door after her before rushing to the driver's seat.

"Where are you headed this time?" he inquired but received only a smug smile in response.

"My little secret, Mr. Floquet," she winked

Chapter 58: 58

My footsteps echoed after me as I walked down the hallway, not even a breeze dared to come here without the scientist's permission. No wonder no living thing that valued its life dared to step their feet on this floor.

"You're back so soon?" He questioned upon me stepping my feet in his office and I couldn't help but roll my eye.

"After two months?" I scoffed, taking a step closer to him to find him busy with one of those works of his.

Doesn't he ever get tired?

"Aren't you giving her a lot of freedom?" he suddenly aimed his arrow at me, is he really bent on ruining everything I've worked so hard on? "That's the difference between you and I.." I began trailing my fingers on the cell bar's. Carmela was first locked in. "You tend to make captives feel like one and I tend to do otherwise."

We're still yet to confirm if your experiment from the other day was a success.."

"It was" he retorted with a killer look and I couldn't help but shrug my shoulders.

"You are only 99% sure out of a hundred and that one percent troubles me greatly especially after seeing the commotion that happened during the event.."

"It was just a small electric problem...and if my experiment was a huge fail then would you be living lovey-dovey with her?"

Although he sounded rude, he did have a point, she wasn't the same Carmela who threatened me when I tried deceiving her to stay away from Nix..but still I can't take any chances.

"How about we test that one percent?" A silly thought came to my mind as I picked up the scissors on his table.

"Meaning? Don't tell me you're planning to perform another murder?"

"Off course no" I waved my hand with a smile on my face as I tossed the scissors aside
"if truly she has forgotten everything I don't want her to have the image of me being a serial killer in her head..naa..I can't allow that" I tapped on the fish tank in the room and for some weird reason felt I had to keep my distance from it.

"How much do you trust Andrè Dubois?" He threw a question I couldn't seem to fathom

"I don't get it?"

"It's obvious Carmela is planning to give him her full support and you know what that means" he narrowed his eyes my way

"He'll become the president?"

"Exactly, there are other candidates who have solid grands in the dynasty and strong influence but why did she choose him?"

I looked at the huge screens at the side of the room and couldn't help but chuckle,he had his eyes everywhere at every time..he surely did make himself the god he wanted to be

"Andrè Dubois is like a dog,loyal to whoever holds its collar..and right now Carmela is the one holding his collar while I'm the one who controls her..

We've successfully postponed the dynasty heir coronation and we're about to have the seal in our possession. Having someone with a high political stand would only make it easier for us to have the dynasty in our palm" I stretched both my hands imagining myself in such position and the thought of it sent shivers down my spine making my hair stand

"Quit daydreaming and put your plans into action..the only way we can succeed is if you keep that child under your control and get rid of Nix Dean..

He's the villain so you have to play your part as the hero maturely,now if you'll excuse me I'd appreciate if you give me my space"

I felt like smashing his head till it squished like a watermelon but I still needed him to achieve my aim.

He always has his face mask on, concealing his identity from even me, his partner, I guess we both share something in common trust issues.

I can't trust him and he can't trust me making us even.

Well he's the least of my problem and if I plan on getting rid of each and every problem of mine then I'll have to do it accordingly starting with Nix Dean.

Let's see how he'll react seeing the one thing he treasure most in my possession.

"Hey babe where are you?" I tilted my neck being met with silence then a sudden thud sound

"I just left the Benoit Lefebvre estate and I'm headed to Louis' birthday party..why do you ask?"

"How about I tag along?" I didn't really need to ask as her every movement is reported to me but I also needed to ask incase she disapproved

"Mr Floquet, tell the truth, do you already miss me?" And this was what I loved more about her in the past two months she's been living with me

She had the sweet, sour and bitter sides.

I've experienced her sour side and now it's her sweet side and I hope it never switches to her bitter side

But was she always like this with Nix?

"No" I smirk

"lies...Meet me at the entrance of Moreau villa by seven don't be late okay"

"Okay" I ended the class as I swung my hand with a smile

"No matter what I'm never letting her go back to you Nix Dean."

. . .

The night turned a deaf ear to the world and a blind eye to the activities that went on in it.

As the number of people at the Moreau estate increased, so did the secret of the building. Gaze of warmth,admire,hatred and concerns all fell on Louis But he didn't care as all he wished to do was to enjoy his time before taking up the responsibilities of the nation on him.

Damian and Carmela walked hand in hand into the hall, attracting the attention of few who were aware of their identity and showed fear through their gaze,others who complimented their combustibility and others who tried to tear them apart with his gaze

"I dont plan on spending much time here so I'll go get the job done" Carmela whispered about to take her leave but he drew her back into his arms coming to are level "Aren't you forgetting something" he whispered and she looked at him with raised brows

wondering if she had forgotten anything she needed to complete what she ought to do. As she opened her mouth to speak, she was silenced by his lips making her chuckle the moment their lips detached as she tapped on his nose "Naughty" was all that came out of her mouth before she resumed her steps.

Feeling satisfied with his actions, he turned to the direction he felt the death gaze from but could no longer find his guest making his smile grow even wilder

"This is going to be fun".

"F**k!" Carmela exclaimed as she bumped into a waister, spilling all the contents in the tray he held on her clothes

"I'm so sorry madame, I'm sorry" he brought out his handkerchief about to help her clean up but is stopped by her with a forced smile "it's okay, please just watch where you are headed next time" Her words gentle but yet felt like a scolding to him but still he didn't feel the need to hold a gurge as he was paid extremely well to do such a small task.

"Excuse me where is the rest room?" She approached a maid who pointed to the room in their opposite direction making her curse her luck, she just wanted to get the job done once and for all but here she was touring around the house in search for a rest room . Without thinking twice, she barged into the room, and the moment the door clicked the electricity supply went off making her wonder if it was normal as there were still power supply outside the room.

Feeling weird about the whole situation, she turned to take her leave but the door was locked.

"Hello, can someone hear me?" She called out but got no response instead all she could hear was footsteps approaching her. Attacking wasn't an option since she was unaware of who she was facing nor could she see since the room was dark and so she prepared her self in advance.

Seeing the person approaching her get even closer, she took a few steps backwards until she was backing the door

"What do you want?" The word finally sloped out of her tongue with no hint of fear but suddenly felt shivers run down her spine as the person wrapped his hand around her waist pulling her closer to him "You.." he said their faces an inch away from one another. She felt her guard fall flat in the presence of the stranger before her as she forgot to breath depriving her lungs of the oxygen it needed "Breath.." He said brushing his lips against hers and leaving her clueless "Huh?" but instead of a response he snatched her lips with his, slowly bedding her tongue with his as they mixed their DNA's. His tongue invaded every corner of her mouth as it continued playing tag with hers and a mischievous smile formed on his lips against hers seeing how she still couldn't catch up with him after all these while.

Carmela on the other hand didn't protest instead she melted in his arms, as she slowly placed her hands over his neck pulling him closer to her while his other hand cupped her face.

But her eyes sudden flew open as realization of her actions dawned on her

"Who are you?" She took two steps away from him as she panted for breath "Beloved" Nix called as the light came back on and she raised an eyebrow giving him the questioning look

"I'm sorry I thought you were my wife" his tone none challent as he raised his hand showing off the ring he was wearing

Chapter 59: 59

"An Old Cuban cocktail," Tommy ordered, taking a seat on the stool. He received only a nod from the bartender, who returned to his previous task.

"A glass of Vieux Carré and a French 75," came a voice that was tiny yet bold, resonating with a clarity that commanded attention despite its delicate volume. She spoke sparingly, but her words carried an audacious presence, cutting through the surrounding noise with striking audibility. Her accent, reminiscent of a siren's song, wove a melodic and enchanting quality into her speech, captivating all who heard it with its ethereal charm.

"A minute, ma'am," the bartender said, bowing as he picked up a few glasses and mixed their contents. Tommy watched curiously, wondering why she was being served first despite his earlier order. He remained calm, intrigued by the unfolding scene.

"Excuse me, but.. " His words caught in his throat.

She was a vision of striking contrast and allure. Her dark skin gleamed with an almost otherworldly beauty, highlighted by her captivating Bambi brown eyes. The dark eye makeup she wore intensified her gaze, making her eyes pop with a haunting allure that silently instilled fear in those who met her gaze. Despite the small cloth partially obscuring her face, her presence was overpowering a dark, heavy aura that spoke volumes without a single word.

Her gown, cut high to reveal a hint of her thick thigh, was adorned with a delicate leg chain that accentuated its graceful curve. Yet, it was the butterfly-design waist beads that truly captivated him. They peeked through the open sides of her gown, their intricate patterns accentuating her waist and adding an element of ethereal beauty to her already formidable presence.

"Yes?" she asked, tilting her head. Tommy found himself at a loss for words, his throat dry. "Rude," she commented before turning on her heel and walking away. Tommy, confused, turned back to his drink, wondering what had just happened.

"Are you ready?" A hand on his shoulder made him turn to find Xavier, whose face was swollen.

"What happened?" Tommy raised an eyebrow.

"I just met with Louis Moreau," Xavier said, his tone dramatic. "He seemed so happy. I doubt if I should tell him that today is his last day on this sweet earth while he's enjoying these lovely, expensive drinks." He raised his glass theatrically, and Tommy couldn't resist rolling his eyes.

"No wonder Nix couldn't trust him with this mission. He always gets lost in his own world," Tommy said, shaking his head as he set off to find the reason he was brought to this extravagant celebration. All he needed to do was attach a tracker to her and get out, but how?

As if his prayers were answered, he spotted her storming toward the garden. Without a second thought, he rushed after her, but suddenly lost sight of her.

"Nix is going to kill me if I don't get this done!" he muttered, running his hand through his hair as he frantically searched for a solution. Suddenly, he was on high alert as he felt someone sneaking up behind him. Before he could react, a heavy kick landed in his stomach.

Looking up, he saw the lady from the bar glaring down at him, her eyes cold as she clicked her tongue.

"Useless!" she spat, about to leave. She stopped when she saw Tommy getting up.

"Who are you?" he demanded, but his question was met with a blow, which he quickly blocked. He pulled her closer, holding her hand behind her back.

"And why did you just attack and insult me?" he asked as she struggled to break free. He wasn't planning on letting her go until she gave him an answer. However, she had other plans and delivered a brutal kick to his groin, making him stumble backward and fall to his knees.

She turned to face him, pointed a finger, and then curled her hand into a fist as if suppressing her anger before striding away..

Struggling to his feet, pain radiating from the brutal kick he'd just endured, he cursed his luck for ever getting involved with that woman. He should have just stuck to finding

Carmela. Now, not only had he lost his drink, but he had also failed the mission that brought him here.

The night had spiraled into a nightmare, and with each passing second, he realized how much he had missed a critical opportunity. The frustration boiled within him as he reached for his phone. The moment he picked up, Nix's commanding voice cut through the noise, "Come to the parking lot."

Determined, he pushed through the agony and started making his way back to the party, only to be greeted by chaos. The once elegant gathering had descended into pandemonium. Guests were screaming, shoving, desperate to escape. Had the deed already been done? He wondered, his eyes locking onto a waiter sprinting in his direction.

"What happened?" He demanded, grabbing the waiter by the arm and pulling him back.

"Mr. Moreau just got assassinated," the waiter stammered. The news didn't surprise him, but it intensified his need to get out of there fast.

"Is there another way out?" He asked, his voice low and urgent. The waiter hesitated, clearly weighing his options. With an impatient sigh, he dug into his pocket, slipping some cash into the man's hand.

"Follow me," the waiter muttered, leading him toward the kitchen. As they reached the back door, the waiter paused, turning to him with a dramatic flair. "We never met," he said before opening the door and swiftly shutting it behind him, leaving Tommy staring at the closed door in bewilderment.

A shout pulled him back to the present. "Let's go!" Xavier was waving frantically, urging him towards the car. Without another thought, he ran, adrenaline driving him forward as they drove into the night.

Elsewhere, Carmela leaned out of the car window, her fingers gliding through the cool evening air as it rushed past. The night was quiet, the hum of the car's engine the only sound breaking the stillness. As they sped down the deserted road, she released her hair from its confines, letting it cascade freely, the wind catching it and sending it swirling around her face. For a brief moment, the tranquility of the night embraced her, offering a rare and fleeting sense of peace amidst the chaos that had overtaken her life.

"What's going on in that head of yours?" Damian's voice cut through the silence, soft but probing. She turned to him, a faint smile playing on her lips as she withdrew her hand back inside the car.

"Park the car," she murmured, her voice low but commanding. It was enough to make Damian's hand tighten on the steering wheel as he quickly complied, pulling the car to a stop by the side of the road.

"Are you feeling sick?" Concern laced his words as he unbuckled his seatbelt, ready to check on her. But Carmela didn't respond. Instead, she unfastened her seatbelt with deliberate slowness, then, in one smooth motion, slid across the seat, straddling him.

"Wh.." His question was cut off as she placed a finger against his lips.

"Shh, Mr. Floquet," she whispered, her voice holding an edge of playful danger. Damian swallowed hard, his heart pounding in his chest as he tried to make sense of what she was doing. If she decided to kill him right now and dump his body, he realized, there would be little he could do to stop her, despite their differences in strength.

"Car..." His voice wavered, but the word died on his lips as she closed the distance between them, capturing his mouth with hers.

This wasn't the first time they had kissed, but there was something different now, something intense and deliberate in the way she kissed him. She was yielding, yet there was an unmistakable force behind it, as if she were claiming him piece by piece. Damian's hands moved instinctively, sliding from her back down to her waist, his touch hesitant yet eager, as if he were trying to decipher her intentions. But the more he kissed her, the more he realized he didn't understand her at all.

"Car..." he managed to breathe against her lips, his chest heaving as he tried to keep up with the whirlwind she had unleashed. But before he could say anything more, she broke the kiss, retreating to her seat with an air of indifference.

"Boring," she muttered under her breath, turning her gaze back to the window. The sudden shift left Damian stunned, his mind reeling as he tried to grasp the meaning behind her erratic behavior. Still struggling to catch his breath, he refastened his seatbelt and restarted the car, resuming their journey. But now, he couldn't help but steal glances at her every few moments, trying to unravel the mystery that was Carmela.

"Is it normal?" she asked, breaking the silence once again, her voice deceptively casual.

"What?" Damian responded, a wary edge to his tone.

"Being horny on my period," she said bluntly, her words direct, with none of the coyness he might have expected. The straightforwardness of her statement hit him like a punch, and Damian couldn't stop himself from biting down on his lip to keep from grinning.

"She's mine," he thought with a possessive satisfaction, stealing one more glance at her as he drove.

Chapter 60: 60

Damian checked his watch for what felt like the hundredth time, then cast another anxious glance at the door. Still no sign of Carmela. His patience was thinning, but Ella, seated comfortably across the room, seemed utterly unbothered by the tension that had settled since Carmela's arrival. She appeared detached, as if nothing happening around her concerned her in the least. Damian sighed heavily. If things were going to go according to his plan, he realized he'd have to take matters into his own hands.

He walked briskly to Carmela's room and knocked, his knuckles rapping against the wood with a sense of urgency. When no response came, his frustration grew. He hesitated for a moment before turning the handle and pushing the door open. The room was cloaked in darkness, the heavy curtains blocking out all traces of the morning light.

"Damn," he muttered under his breath as he crossed the room, yanking the curtains open. Sunlight flooded in, banishing the shadows and illuminating the disarray within. On the bed, Carmela groaned in protest, immediately pulling the blanket over her head to shield herself from the intrusive light.

"Babe..." Damian's tone softened as he took a seat beside her on the bed. He gently tugged the blanket down, revealing her frowning face. Her eyes, half-lidded with sleep and irritation, met his, and he couldn't help but feel a twinge of guilt. "You're late for school," he whispered, his voice coaxing, almost pleading.

Carmela only grumbled in response, clutching the blanket and trying to pull it back over her head. But Damian held firm, refusing to let her retreat into the cocoon she had made for herself.

"I don't want to go anywhere," she mumbled, her voice muffled by the pillow. Her reluctance was palpable, and for a moment, Damian couldn't blame her. If it weren't for the necessity of this trip, he would have gladly let her stay, especially since it meant she'd be out of his sight, where he couldn't keep a close watch on her.

"Just this once, you can skip any other trip," he promised, his tone earnest as he pulled her up into a sitting position. But as soon as her eyes met his, he noticed her dull and heavy eyes that were filled with exhaustion, and carrying a hint of something he couldn't quite place his heart skipped a beat. She was more than just tired; she was drained, on the edge of something deeper.

"I'll drop out if I'm forced to do anything against my will again," she warned, her voice firm, the threat hanging in the air between them. Damian felt a chill run through him. Her tone left no room for argument, and for a moment, he was at a loss for words. All he could do was nod, acknowledging the gravity of her words, as he watched her rise from the bed and make her way to the bathroom.

As the door clicked shut behind her, Damian remained seated, his mind racing. He had always known Carmela was strong-willed, but this was something different. She was drawing lines, setting boundaries, and it was clear she wouldn't tolerate them being crossed.

...

My eyes continuously scanned every student walking in, hoping to catch sight of what I so desperately sought. But there was no sign of her. I glanced over at Xavier and Luna, who hadn't stopped bickering throughout our entire drive. Tom sat beside me, resting his head lifelessly against the window, while my only hope, Luzy, remained focused on her laptop.

When did she join the gang? Wasn't it just a month ago? Yet she already blended in, understanding how things worked around here.

It was after the incident at the sea. I was furious with myself for being unable to keep my demon on a leash. And then, Ken showed up with Luzy a month ago.

"Nix... someone wants to see you." I looked up from my screen to find Luzy standing behind him. I wasn't sure what he meant by bringing a child into my house without permission, but he better make it quick and worthy of my time.

"Mr. Dean, remember me?" She peeked out from behind him with a small smile.

How could I forget the girl who had once tried to strike a deal with me?

"I told you I'd be back when I had something of value, didn't I?" she said, dropping her backpack on the table before taking a seat.

"Did you come all the way to Paris for money?"

"Mr. Dean, you really should be careful with your words, especially when I'm the only one with the key to solve your problem." Though her tone was calm, I could feel the threat lurking beneath it.

"What do you want?" I demanded.

"I don't want money. I want a family." I'd be lying if I said I understood what she meant. I took another look at the seventeen-year-old sitting before me, trying to figure out her angle, but nothing was clear.

"Don't get me wrong. I can't live with those selfish people I'm supposed to call my parents especially after seeing this." She turned her laptop toward me, and the pieces began to fall into place.

"I hacked into our security cameras to delete footage of me stealing money, but instead, I found this." She looked at me, her voice steady, though tears threatened to break through. "They let that bastard Damian murder my grandmother, and they're still helping him for money. I can't wrap my head around it."

The pain in her voice was undeniable, but what made her so sure I could help her? Was this another setup?

"Who is Damian?" I asked.

She retrieved her laptop, typing quickly before handing it back to me. At first, the screen was blank, but slowly, images appeared two profiles with different names but the same photo.

"Everything here is fake, including the names." She unzipped her backpack and pulled out a tablet, placing it in front of me. "I wanted to see if he was truly an editor like he claimed, so I did some digging. Turns out he's using someone else's identity. The first name is his, but the surname isn't." She zoomed in on the second profile, showing that it listed him as an officer.

"This profile almost fooled me until I double-checked the name." She pulled up another photo. "They share the same name, but as you can see, they're completely different people. The real Damian died during a terrorist operation. He could claim plastic surgery if anyone caught on, but..." She zoomed in on her tablet. "He's neither an editor nor a police officer. He belongs to the dark world, and he's..."

"A psychopath who kills for fun." She sank into her chair, her face pale. Despite being just a teenager, there was a weariness in her eyes far too much for someone her age. Her talents were undeniable, but it pained me to see her entangled in this mess. With the right guidance, she could become something extraordinary.

"But what makes you think I'll help you?" I asked, my voice sharper than intended. Her silence lingered for a moment before she let out a bitter snort.

"I'm not sure why she trusts you so much, but she told me to show you this. She said you'd understand." Luzy pulled a small box from her bag, placing it in front of me with an air of finality. My pulse quickened, but I kept my distance, eyes narrowing as I tried to make sense of it.

"Goodness!" Zamiel's exclamation broke my focus. He rushed to my side, his eyes wide with disbelief. "How did this get here?" His fingers traced the box, a smile creeping across his face, though I sensed the unease behind it.

"What's inside?" I asked quietly.

"The other half of the seal," Zamiel whispered, his eyes gleaming. "But without the DNA of both mother and child, it can't be opened."

DNA? My mind raced, grasping at fragments of a past I thought I'd buried. The seal had been crafted by Carmela's mother one half given to me, the other missing all this time.

"We'll need Carmela and her mother's blood to open it," Zamiel added.

"Open what? It's already open," Luzy interrupted, her voice casual.

"What do you mean?" Zamiel frowned.

She shrugged, flipping the box open. "The lady with the black mask already opened it. She's the one who brought me to Paris. She gave me your address and told me to give this to you." She pulled a letter from her coat and dropped it on the table. My heart pounded, dread blooming inside me.

Carmela? No, it couldn't be her. She'd been under constant surveillance by the scientists. No one could've reached her.

"Luna, take Luzy to her room," I said, trying to steady my voice. Once they were gone, I picked up the letter, my pulse quickening.

"Protect her," it read. Simple, but the words clawed at something deeper. I opened my desk drawer, searching for a similar letter I'd received years ago. But it was gone.

"Where did I put it?" I muttered, standing abruptly. There was only one place left the safe. I pressed the button beside the bookshelf, revealing the hidden compartment. There it was. I held the old letter in trembling hands, comparing it to the new one. They were identical, down to the signature.

"Is it possible to forge someone's signature?" Zamiel asked, uncertain.

"Not one signed in blood," I replied. "It's nearly impossible to replicate. There's always some subtle difference. But here... there isn't."

"Isn't Carmela's mother dead?" The words felt foreign, absurd even. But I had to ask.

Zamiel nodded, though hesitation clouded his expression. "Yes, but... her face was disfigured beyond recognition."

The room spun. I hadn't been able to attend her funeral, trapped in the mental health hospital at the time, but I'd heard the news of her death her and her unborn child.

"If she's truly alive, she knows everything," I whispered, dread gnawing at me.

"Not just everything," Zamiel added grimly. "She knows every move we make."

My chest tightened. If Carmela's mother had stayed hidden all these years, what was her plan? And why now? We were trying to save her child, but where had she been? Why stay in the shadows?

"We need to keep a close eye on Carmela," I said, dialing Tomlin's number. "She might be her mother, but we still don't know if she's the reason Carmela is in danger. Let's hope for the best." My voice trembled with desperation.

Zamiel sighed, his usual bravado gone.

But it wasn't Carmela's mother that haunted me it was the war I felt on the horizon. A woman capable of faking her death and infiltrating our inner circle wasn't to be underestimated. She was far more dangerous than we realized.

"You called for me?" Tom's voice pulled me from my thoughts.

"Yes," I said, straightening. "Place Luzy under our highest protection. And get me everything we have on Tamila Delton."

And that's how we got here.

Tom has been sulking ever since we returned from the birthday party, all because of his encounter with a girl. From his description of her, there could only be one person with that kind of temper.

"Amina Sorrentino," Suzy and I chorused together. I turned to her and our eyes locked in a silent exchange. The weight of our unspoken thoughts hung between us...but I doubt she grasped the gravity of the name she mentioned. After what felt like an eternity, I reluctantly looked away, the intensity of the exchange still lingering.

"It can't be?" Luna finally broke the heavy silence that had fallen over us.

"Who is she?"

"She's the woman Tommy crossed paths with," Suzy said, passing her tablet to me and turning her laptop screen toward them.

Was I to interpret this as good or bad news?

Amina Sorrentino is of mixed Nigerian and Italian heritage. Still celebrated for her beauty on screen despite her young age she became a figure of intrigue and fear after a director's attempt to exploit her ended with his body found dead in an elevator, no evidence pointed to her neither was she investigated but those who were present were aware of the situation and threat's exchanged by both the director and Amina.

Her background as the only daughter of an Italian mafia slowly surfaced and no one dared stand in her way though few knew she was also tangled in the darker aspects of our world.

She had grown up with us in the dynasty's special training center and was Carmela's best friend. But after the incident, she vanished, only to reappear as one of the most sought-after and beloved actresses and models on television.

Still my question of how she got involved with our mafia dynasty is still left with a huge question mark, as rarely does different mafia dynasties work together.

The sudden return of both her and Tamila, Carmela's mother stirred unsettling thoughts in my mind "Could they be working together?"

"Damn No..I must be overthinking this" I closed my eyes, throwing my head backwards.

I needed to take things one step at a time, despite the uneasy tension tightening in my chest.

"Let's forget the Amina issue for now, who actually picked out this disguise for Nix?"
Tom finally spoke up eyeing me

"I've been wanting to ask same question..who said if he wore just glasses and dress simple no one would recognize him?"

What irrelevant questions.