

Lilas.

Seated in the opulent embrace of a sleek, polished car, I am next to Salvatore. His words are engraved in the apex of my mind, thoughts and I have managed to understand that I'm living in the house of a dangerous man. A maa.

At the sight of Lead university building, I immediately grab my purse to get out of the car as soon as it stops. Salvatore is right next to me, reclined in the back seat, a silent power dynamic surrounding in his tailored shirt, one would think he is only a legitimate businessman. No one would foretell that he is a maa, a dangerous one who would threaten his way.

As his sharp eyes remained xed on the iPad, his ngers tapped with calculated precision. The soft glow of the screen illuminated his stern features, revealing a man deeply who was engrossed in strategic dealings. The car stops and I am about to get off when he speaks.

"My driver will be here to pick you after your classes. You have to pay off your debts." Salvatore says, and I remember that I still have to work for him.

In silence, I get out of his car, jamming it and walking as fast as I can. The moment I get into the building, I begin to nd my way to the bathroom to burst into a eet of tears. Frantically entering the university bathroom, I lock myself in the connes of a stall. The weight of emotions overwhelmed me and tears welled up, escaping in silent streams.

Hunched shoulders and quivering breaths betrayed the urgency of my releasing tears, seeking solace within the privacy of the tiled sanctuary. The harsh uorescent light exposed the vulnerability etched across my face, a momentary pause from the demands of the outside world.

"If only my dad was alive, I wouldn't be in this mess. If only he didn't leave me with a huge debt and an incompetent mother, I wouldn't have had to look at Salvatore."

I wipe my eyes, staring at my eyes in the mirror and biting my lips. My hair is disheveled and I don't have any intention of putting it in place. This morning, I rushed to leave the house by simply putting on a large black t-shirt, jean shorts, and my tired cream sneakers. As I'm staring into the mirror, a few girls walk into the bathroom and I place a hand over my face in order to hide the proof that I've been crying.

"I wish he would just look at me though! I don't care if Ciara is seated next to him." One of the girls who walked in says and I wonder if it's the same Ciara I know that they are talking about.

"Are you sure he's attracted to you!? It's Owen we are talking about, his dad is a f\*\*\*\*\*g millionaire. He and Ciara are a match made in heaven."

At the mention of Owen's name, I know what exactly they are talking about. I met Ciara's boyfriend. Owen, yesterday along with her other wealthy set of friends. It's a party that I should have never gone to seeing where it led me to. I walk out of the bathroom at a fast pace, away from their conversation.

I head to my next class, I am rushing in when I bump into someone and my bag falls to the ground. I look up and it's Owen. With sun-kissed blonde hair framing his chiseled features, he exudes a natural allure that turns heads. His striking blue eyes held a magnetic charm, reecting condence and a hint of playfulness. A well-dened jawline complemented by a subtle, easygoing smile added to his handsome appeal. It must be the reason why girls in college are pursuing after him like bees to honey.

At his side, Hector, the loud guy at the table is present too. I try to grab a hold of my bag but Owen picks it up.

"Lilas, right?" He asks, extending my bag to me.

"Yes." I say, collecting it as others enter into the class.

Owen stares at me, focusing on my eyes and I can't seem to understand why he is staring at me. In a second, his gaze shifts from my eyes to my lips.

"You left the party, why didn't you tell us before you left?" Owen says.

"Did you go out to meet a boy?" Hector asks before I can even answer Owen's question.

"Can you not ask her that?" Owen says to Hector, his face is serious and the smile on Hector's face fades away as if Owen has some hold on him.

"Let's sit together." Owen says and I look at him in shock. I was heading to sit by myself because I'm not in the mood to talk to anyone. I haven't moved from where I stood, why does he want to sit with me?

"Come on." Owen says and I walk past Hector to sit along with him. As I do this, the girls in the class are already seated and they are staring at us with wide eyes as if I am committing a crime. They begin to whisper about us, it is obvious that they are speaking about us.

Am I doing something wrong by speaking to him? The professor walks into the class and I take my notes out. As I'm about to open my notes, Owen's hand comes in contact with mine and I take my hands off him,

There is a slight smile on his face and I pick up my notes to begin to write. Why is he smiling? At the end of the class, I pack my notes, getting ready to leave but Owen stands along with me.

I look back at him to ask

"Would you like to have lunch?" Owen asks.