

Lilas.

“With you?” I say to Owen.

“Yea, who else is here?” He says and a short smile grows on my face.

“Come on.” He says, leading the way and I blink for a few seconds before following him. At my side, there are a few girls at a corner who are whispering things to each other. Are they talking about us? Are other girls not supposed to talk to him?

In the bustling university cafeteria, I navigate through the diverse array of culinary offerings. Lead university is quite different from other colleges, it was made for the elite students of politicians and the country’s greatest treasures.

With a tray in his hand, I and Owen move through the aromatic maze, my eyes lighting up at the sight of vibrant salads and sizzling stir-fries. Once again, the hum of conversation surrounds me and I nd another set of whispering lips.

“Don’t pay attention to it.” Owen says, standing by my side over the counter.

“You see it too?” I ask, staring at him while keeping the line moving.

“It’s because I have a jealous girlfriend. Ciara has fought with any girl who even stands close to me. They are worried for you.” He says and I nod my head slowly.

After lling my tray, I head over to an empty table and we take a seat together. I tuck my hair behind my ear and close my eyes in frustration. At home, it’s Salvatore and in school, it’s Ciara. I don’t even have an appetite especially after what happened this morning between Salvatore and I. Yet, I have to meet him after my classes.

“What are you doing after school?” Owen asks and I face him.

“Um...I’ve got a job.” I answer, playing with my because I have no intention of eating it.

“Wait...you are Salvatore’s step daughter. Why would you even need to work?” Owen asks.

“He is not my real dad and I don’t accept freebies.” I say, a glint of defense in the tone of my voice and Owen recognizes it.

“Oh...I’m sorry I didn’t know your relationship was uh.” Owen says and Ciara opts out of nowhere, giving him a kiss on his cheek before she takes a seat.

“Lilas! Where the hell were you yesterday?” Ciara asks.

“I met up with a few of my old friends. I’m sorry, I should have told you before leaving.” I say to her.

“No, it’s ne. My friends were meanies. You must have been uncomfortable.” Ciara says, leaning on Owen.

“How was your project?” He asks.

“I think I’m going to get an F. I was drunk this morning and that damn professor made sure to write it in the report. My dad is going to freak out when he sees it.” Ciara says.

“I told you not to drink too much, didn’t I?” Owen asks and Ciara rolls her eyes.

“We were at a freaking club. Why wouldn’t I drink?” Ciara says, raising her voice and my hands in the air.

“Well, you should accept the F and take responsibility for your actions.” Owen says and I stare at the both of them.

“Oh my gosh! Am I talking to my dad already!?” Ciara says and I clear my throat. It’s like watching a couple’s ght.

“Of course, that is what you say when someone tries to give you advice! It’s hard to have a conversation with you.” Owen says and I look at the watch. It’s time for my second class and I get up, I try to tell them that I’m

about to live but their arguments have overshadowed my voice.

It’s like I’m not even there. I head to my next class and right after it’s done, I get a text message from a number that I do not recognize.

“I am Richard and I have been sent to bring you to Lead stones.” I read carefully. I exhale leaving classes, wondering how Salvatore knows the timetable and the exact time to send his minions. As I walk out of school, golden rays dance upon my face, casting a soft glow on my features. The sun-kissed atmosphere enhances the vibrancy of the surroundings, casting a luminous aura on campus area.

As I head to the parking area, I see that everyone is staring and gathering at something. As I walk closer, there is a car parked conspicuously. It is a sleek, expensive car that exudes opulence. Its polished exterior reects the sunlight, drawing curious glances from passersby.

The low growl of the engine hints at the power within. As the driver’s side window rolls down, heads turn to catch a glimpse of the luxurious interior and a man with an intimidating stance walks out.

“Miss Lilas?” He says, waving his hands at me and everyone looks at me, I quickly walk to the vehicle and he opens the door.

“I am Richard. My boss, Mr Salvatore, asked me to bring you to the oce.” He says and I enter the vehicle before the whispering becomes more heightened.

I close my eyes, resting my body on the leather seats, trying to ease myself into the life I’m living now. In thirty minutes, the car stops at Lead Stones and the door is opened for me once again.

The rst thing on my mind is to make Salvatore aware that I don’t need his help to get to Lead Stones. I don’t want anything from him.

“Can I see Salvatore rst? I need to tell him something.” I say to Richard.

“He has a meeting. You should note that he is not someone you can just see at your convenience. You have already been delegated work, focus on that.” Richard says and I nod even though I want to scoff in anger.

I don’t spare another glance at him, walking into the company and tapping into the next phase of my life. I’m not going to forget who I am. I don’t care how much Salvatore tests me, I will choose to prevail.

“I am Lilas Light and I don’t go without a ght.”