

Lilas.

I look at the room in wonder. I have never seen anything as beautiful as this before—it is three times the size of the bedroom that I grew up in. The room is bathed in soft, natural light, ltered through delicate curtains in pastel shades, casting a warm and inviting ambiance. The walls are painted lavender which exudes tranquility.

At the center of the room, there is a plush, queen-size bed which is adorned with a canopy of drapes and luxurious bedding in soft pinks and creams. I can't even believe what I am seeing—is this a dream?

At my right hand, there is a walk-in closet stocked with an array of outts and accessories. It looks like a damn boutique.

Lumen places a hand on my shoulder and I look at her. She is smiling eagerly as if I'm supposed to forget everything that happened years ago. It's not settled yet and it won't be for a very long time. I'm just treading carefully because of the information that I received about her health.

"Doesn't it suit your taste?" Ciara asks, and I turn to Mr Salvatore's daughter. She is blonde, a vision of classic beauty. Her hair is a soft and shimmering shade of blonde which cascades down her shoulders in loose, natural waves. Her fair complexion carries a healthy rosy glow, adding to her overall radiance.

"No...um." I say, unable to accept everything that has happened in a snap.

"Mom, she must be so intimidated after speaking with dad, you should get her some water." Ciara says and Lumen jumps in excitement to go get it.

I scoff silently. It feels like a blatant twist of fate for someone who isn't even related to Lumen and yet refers to her dearingly as 'mom'.

"Don't you love your room? I know it seems so fast and crazy...Lumen has told me a lot about you." Ciara says and I fold my hands, wondering what exactly she knows.

"Things like what...she left when I was only twelve years old. What can she know much about me?" I say, letting a bit of my bitterness surface in my voice and on my expression.

"Hey, please, go easy on her. Of course, I know you are angry. If I were in your shoes, I would do so too. But due to her health, I'm just scared. She is the only mother I have left and I'm also willing to accept you as my sister." Ciara says and I can't argue.

Although I'm jealous of her relationship with my own mother, she is being very genuine with me. All of a sudden, her face looks very familiar and I'm trying to remember where I've seen it.

"I'm sorry, but are you a model? You look familiar." I ask and Ciara chuckles, walking into the center of the room.

"No, I'm not a Model. My dad found out that you attend Lead university, I'm also a sophomore and my face is on all the billboards at school. It's my dad's school, so...you must have seen my face there" Ciara says and I take a deep breath.

"Your dad is really the 'King Salvatore', the same one who has several books published of his biography?" I ask, unable to believe that everyone thinks so highly of him but he is such an arrogant prick.

"Well, yes! He is rumored to be a maa, an underground business man. I mean...he owns a mining company so, of course, he works underground." Ciara says and I chuckle lightly.

"See! I made you laugh. Do you have any other questions you would like to ask me?" She says, smiling cheekily.

"How old is your dad? And how can he own a university, a mining company....it's unbelievable." I say,

"Well, the people who study my father have refused to study our generations. My great grandfather founded Lead university, hospitals and even hotels. But my father founded Lead Stones when he was eighteen. It grew massively, what can I say?" Ciara says, taking my hand and we head over to the large sized bed.

The bed sucks me in and I take off my purse to listen to her.

"I'm not gonna lie, he is a very strict man and he can be arrogant at times." Ciara says and I roll my eyes. Does she know her father is a devil incarnate too? How do I stay away from him despite living in this house?

And now, it's worse because I've gotten a job against my wishes that may require us to bump into each other.

"Also, could you help me keep an eye on him? There are just too many women, young and old who are trying to come close to him. He is married but they don't take a hint, especially those young tramps and gold diggers!" Ciara says, squeezing her hand and fuming.

I listen and I'm slightly surprised. As much as I hate to say it, Mr Salvatore is a Greek god and it's almost impossible to not fall to his allure. I cannot help but remember what it felt like when my knees hit him at that center point. It is the rst time I have been so close to a man like...enough to feel his heavy members.

Thinking about it alone causes a tingle in between my legs and my n*****s harden. Why am I feeling this way? I snap out of it when Lumen walks in.

"Here you go, Lilas. I put in a bit of glucose there, you never used to like drinking water when you were little."

"I am no longer, little. I don't need glucose anymore." I say and Lumen smiles positively like she didn't get the message behind those words.

"Ciara, I thought you were going to a college party this evening?" Lumen asks and I sip only a bit of the water that was handed to me.

"Yes, I am! Would you like to come, Lilas? It's a seniors party and everyone who's anyone would be attending. I can introduce you to my friends, my boyfriend and...you're gonna love it." Ciara says, looking at me excitedly and waiting for me to say yes.

"I'm sorry, Ciara. I haven't even gotten my luggages from my house. I didn't think I would be staying here...I have a lot to do." I say, feeling a bit uncomfortable by my mother's presence.

"Don't worry, I'll talk to her. Can you give us a moment alone, Ciara?" Lumen says and Ciara nods her head before leaving.

"Come, let me look at your face." Lumen says, touching my chin but I turn my face away. I cannot just pretend like everything is ne. I stand on my feet and she faces me.

"I know..."

"No, stop! You don't know anything. What do you know about me? You don't know anything. All these years, you have been living in this comfort, look at your house, your family...you didn't even need me or dad." I say.

"Wealth isn't everything..." Lumen says but I interrupt her.

"Come on now, don't be a hypocrite. I heard the conversation you had with dad the day you left us. Do I need to refresh your memory? Do I need to remind you how he begged you to stay for me?" I ask, unable to

look at her face.

"If you hate me so much, why did you come?" Lumen asks, following me as I try to stay away from her, somewhere I wouldn't have to see her face.

"Because I'm not like you! I don't leave my family behind. My dad taught me that. I'm not going to forgive you and neither am I going to call you mother. I am being a daughter to you but you haven't been a mother. " I say and it's like she is trying to look sad because I cannot see any sincerity in her act.

Lumen lets out a few strained snies and wipes away imaginary tears from her eyes. I'm shocked. I've seen her do this before...this act. It looks like something from twelve years ago.

"This sickness...I have it because I'm paying for my crimes against you and I have accepted it. Please, give me a chance to be a mother to you." Lumen says and I exhale.

"Lumen, please don't force it. You said the doctors gave you a eighty percent chance of life. Once you are healthy, I will leave your life and I will make sure to pay your husband every cent." I say, looking at the grand room once more.

"Fine, Lilas, I won't force it." Lumen says and all of a sudden, I feel the need to leave in order to ponder on everything and how fast my life is moving in a mere matter of hours. I need to think about something else or at least be in a different space. I met my mother today, I found out she's sick today, my stepfather is a Greek god in human form, I got my father's debt paid off and I got a job too.

I can't process all of this.

"You know what? I'll go with Ciara to that party..." I say, knowing fully well that I have never been to a party before.