Chapter 15 SCHOOLED

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SOPHIA SAT ON her seat, as her course mates walked into the classroom before lectures for that day would commence. Most of them were shocked to see her while some sent curious stares her way. Obviously, they would be shocked after not seeing her for weeks.

But that was the least of her problems. She couldn't stop thinking about how Lucas had behaved with her. When he hugged her and said something in Italian, she was shocked. She couldn't believe he had hugged her. When she had gone out of her shock, she hugged him back to tell him thank you and that was when she realized that not everything was meant to last. He had pushed her away and was back to his normal, cruel self. And, he just walked away, leaving her a confused mess.

"Buona fortuna sorellina," Those were the same words he had uttered to her.

She couldn't shake it off no matter how she tried. It was always with Chase she hoped she learnt to speak and understand Italian, but at that moment, it was worse. The need to know the language was gnawing at her and she desperately wanted to know what Lucas had said.

"Where did you disappear off to?"

Sophia flinched and turned. When she saw the person that had spoken behind her, she placed her hand on her chest and breathed out in relief. "You scared me, Maya"

"Was that your brother?" Another person asked from her other side. "You never told us you had a brother"

Sophia turned to the other side and glared at the other person. She pursed her lips. "Alessia"

Maya and Alessia were her close- no, best-friends from high-school.

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Maya was the cool, reserved type while Alessia was the big softie portraying herself to be the party and crazy type-she actually was. Sophia was just...the shy, naive and innocent one.

"What?" Alessia shrugged her shoulders. "I was only asking if he was your brother"

Sophia frowned. "Who?"

"The guy -" Alessia looked towards the door as if anyone was there. "The one who walked you to the class and hugged you"

"Why would you think he's my brother?" Sophia asked. She didn't want to talk to them about the whole dilemma she was in. Not yet. Not until she found a solution.

"Well, you're not the type to date anytime soon. Plus, you both kind of had the same eye color,"

Sophia shook her head. "Lucas is anything but my brother. And yeah, so what if he has the same eye color with mine? It's nature. Someone out there too has the same eye color with me and it doesn't make them my brother"

"Whoa," Alessia smiled. "Calm down inno-"

Alessia was cut off by Maya. "Would you please tell us where you've been all this while? You had us worried, not to talk of your Nana" There. That was the typical Maya; the one who cares about everyone's wellbeing. It wasn't like Alessia doesn't care too. She does, but in her own crazy way.

Sophia blanched at the mention of her Nana, and she turned to Maya. "Is she alright? I hope nothing bad has happened to her?"

"She's okay now. I don't know what she was told, but she stopped searching for you after that. And-, "Maya opened her bag and brought out a white envelope which was crumpled by the sides, "She asked me to give you this. I'm sorry its crumpled though. I used to bring it to college every day with the hopes that you'd come one day"

Sophia collected the envelope. "Thanks a lot, Maya. I'll read this later"

Maya gave Sophia a hesitant stare. "Are you sure you don't want to do that now?"

Sophia had a slight suspicion that Chase was behind whatever her Nana must've been told to calm down. Whatever it was had to be written there, and she didn't want either of them to know about it. "I-No" She gave them a tight-lipped smile before putting the note in her bag. "I'll read it later. I'd love to catch up with you two first"

'Well then -"Alessia called out. "Do you care to explain what someone as dangerous as Luca Romano was doing here with you? And hugging you like that? Are you both a thing? Is that why you suddenly disappeared from home?"

"What do you mean we're a thing?" Sophia asked, turning to Alessia.

Alessia slammed her palm on her forehead. "Even after disappearing for weeks, you know nothing about life. It means you both are dating. I was asking if you guys were dating?"

Sophia replied. "Luca and I aren't a thing, Alessia. And what makes you think he's dangerous?" She knew just how dangerous Lucas was, no one needed to tell her about that, but did that mean everyone knew too? Was seeing the both of them together the reason she got most of those shocked and curious stares from people since she had walked into her class?

"Who doesn't know Lucas Romano is dangerous?" Alessia said. "I'm not making it up, trust me. Ask Maya, you know she won't ever support me in something like that"

Sophia didn't need to turn to face Maya because the latter replied. "Yeah, he's dangerous. Heard a lot about him,"

"His cousin is worse" Alessia leaned in, so her stomach was over the table and whispered to the both of them so no one would hear

Sophia could hear the loud sound of her heart beating wildly against its ribcage in her ears. She didn't need anyone to tell her it was Chase that was being talked about. "What?" She blurted out louder than she should have done.

🎁 +120 Points at most

Alessia glared at Sophia, her blonde hair falling over her face because of the position she was in. "Are you mad, Soph? Do you want anyone to know we're talking about them?"

"What did I do?" Sophia frowned with a pout on her lips.

"Don't speak too loud. You're going to draw attention to us," Alessia pushed back her silky locks back over her head. "Now, tell me. How don't you know Chase Romano when you know Lucas to the point of hugging him?"

"I know Chase, a lot." Sophia wanted to add but kept her mouth shut.

Alecia's eyes widened. "You know him? Does he know you?"

Sophia nodded.

That was when Maya dragged Sophia by the shoulder. "What the fuck are you doing with those people? They're dangerous. Do you know what they do for a living?"

"They kill people" Sophia tried not to shudder at her own indifference.

Maya let go of Sophia's shoulder and whisper-yelled. "Are you out of your mind, Soph? You're getting yourself involved with people from the mafia," Sophia froze, and Maya continued. "Mafia as in, M-A-F-I-A. Those are the type of people you're getting yourself involved in,"

She didn't know what exactly the meaning of a mafia was, but she knew it was a dangerous organization. They sold illegal drugs and all sorts of weapons. Some were even engaged in human trafficking and rape, if not worse.

Sophia turned to Maya. "That's very dangerous"

Alessia snorted out loud. "Didn't you know they were in the mafia all this while? How did you even end up with them?"

Sophia blurted out her next words absentmindedly. "I got kidnapped"

Her two friends chorused out a shriek. "What the fuck?!"

The moment Sophia realized what she said, some of their course mates

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were sending snickers and warning glares their way to reduce their voices or shut up.

"You got kidnapped? How?" Maya whispered.

"I'll tell you about it later. Please, I need to read my Nana's letter," She began to search for the letter in her bag.

Maya and Alessia stared at each other before nodding slowly. "Okay," They chorused.

"Thanks" Sophia whispered and tore open the white envelope. She then unfolded the note and started reading, her eyes running over the tired handwriting of her Nana.

Soph,

You had me worried for days after your sudden disappearance hope when you read this, you're in good health. I hope you're as okay as I was told. But you know, I'm a bit upset with you. You didn't tell me you were going to fly out of the country with your boyfriend for important work with him. You didn't even tell me you had a boyfriend. How about your studies then? I hope you'll be able to adjust with your studies when you both come back.

Anyway, I hope you're happy with him. You're a very understanding girlfriend to even ignore your studies for him. I'm a bit upset about that too, but I'm proud of you. You're finally growing.

Ahh! You also didn't tell me your boyfriend had plans for my treatment. I know you won't be back when I leave for London for my knee surgery. He said you wanted it to be a surprise. Well, he even came to see me at home and said you were sending your regards before you both left. I still don't understand why you chose not to see or visit me before leaving. I hope he's helping with your nightmares; you know?

I'm cringing at my poor attempt in writing this letter right now and my handwriting. I know this isn't the best letter either. Anyways, bye. Take care of yourself and make sure you're there at the airport when I return back.

Your Nana,

Bye.

🎁 +120 Points at most

Sophia folded the paper and stuffed it in her bag, tears glistening in her eyes. Her Nana didn't exactly point out what she wanted to, but Sophia clearly understood it. It was even harder that her Nana had been lied to. Boyfriend? Was that the excuse Chase could come up with?

But it didn't matter, right? He helped her Nana. He didn't let the old lady get worked up while looking for her. And as a plus, he had even paid for her treatment. The knee surgery she and her Nana had chosen to ignore.

Sophie felt a familiar warm hand on her shoulder before the owner spoke up. "Wanna talk about it?" It was Alessia.

A lone tear slid down her cheek. "He's paying for my Nana's treatment. He's paying for her knee surgery,"

"Who?" Maya asked.

"Chase," Sophia wiped her tears with the back of her palm.

He was so confusing and bipolar. One moment, he was rude and cold, and the other, he would be the total opposite. She couldn't even understand him.

It was as if he only did bad things to her and good things to others around her.

"You're confusing me; you know?" Alessia said, earning a glare from Maya. "I'm not good at fixing puzzles. I want you to do us good by explaining this whole situation," None of them could take her words to heart. She was only saying it to lighten the mood.

"I-,"Sophia gathered her things and stood up. "I'll tell you about it. But not in here,"

"Yess!," Alessia grinned and stood up. "Thank goodness we aren't having any lectures till the next two hours, and you're going to tell us how you've been treated there because you don't look like someone who has been kidnapped,"

"Alessia," Maya gave her a stern look.

That was their usual lifestyle. Maya, being the mother and caring one of them all while Alessia being the carefree one. She always got scolded by

Maya, but it never decreased their love for each other. They all loved each other to the moon and back.

Alessia rolled her eyes and continued speaking, totally ignoring Maya. "You're also going to tell me about Lucas Romano –" She placed her chin on her fist and stared into the space dreamily. "I've always had this crush on him since forever"

"Aren't you supposed to have a boyfriend?" Sophia asked.

Alessia frowned and looked at the both of them. "That fucktard is a boring ass now. Trust me, you don't want to know"

They all laughed.

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"Buona fortuna sorellina,"

Lucas threw another punch on the boxing bag in the gym as his own torturous voice played in his mind.

"Fuck. Fuck. Fuck,"

Fuck his self. Fuck his lips. Fuck his mouth. Fuck his heart. Fuck his emotions. Fuck him. Dammit. Fuck Chase.

Chase.

He was the reason. He was the one that had made Lucas do what he did earlier. He asked him to walk Sophia to her class and wish her good luck. To make her happy. That was all Chase told him to do. He didn't ask him to call her baby sister. It was his darned heart that made him do it. Being so close to her and helping her hold her bag and books had made him feel like that. Like...like an older brother protecting his little sister. Something he had never done for Valerie because she was home-schooled. And it made him call her baby sister.

All because of Chase Romano.

Chase had told him that even if he hated Sophia, nothing would ever change the fact that she was still his...

No. No.

He shook his head. He wasn't going to think about it. He wasn't going to think of, or even acknowledge Sophia Bennett as that. She was the result of an affair. An affair between his own mother and Agosti Bennett.

He was meant to hate her. She was using the same charm on every single fucking body in that mansion. That was the same charm her father had used on...

No. No.

Agosti was the cause of all their problems. Sophia was meant to be innocent. She was just unlucky to have a father like Agosti.

He threw another punch on the bag, ignoring the blood seeping from his knuckles. "Darn it! Fuck you Agosti! Fuck you!"

Immediately, the door to the gym flew open hitting the wall with a bang.

"Lucas!" Valerie rushed to him and dragged him. "Stop it! You're bleeding!"

Lucas shoved her away and kept on punching the bag.

"Buona fortuna sorellina,"

Seeing this, Valerie knew he was going to end up with something worse than a bloodied knuckle. She had to calm him down, so she did the first thing that came to her mind.

She pushed the boxing bag and stepped in front of Lucas, earning a punch from him across her cheek. That was the moment Lucas stopped.

It stung. Badly. But Valerie didn't move. She stayed there, rooted to the spot. "Why did you stop? Continue. You needed something to punch, didn't you? See me. Punch my face,"

"What the fuck is wrong with you, Valerie?" Lucas snapped, pulling her in to check the bruise he had left on her. She had a broken nose. "You shouldn't have stepped in there. Now take a look at your face"

"I took a lot more worse than this during training, remember?" Tears

🎁 +120 Points at most

welled up in her eyes. "But this doesn't hurt as much as seeing you do that to yourself"

Lucas stepped back and ran his hand through his hair. "I-I called her baby sister"

Lucas stuttered and he hated himself for that. He wasn't taught to do that. Sophia was the reason for that. Valerie stuttered for the first time when Sophia came. Luciano did, and he had done it too.

Sophia had been the reason for a lot since she walked into their lives. That should make him hate her, but he couldn't bring himself to do that again. Ever since that fucking hug, all his reasons to hate Sophia had all flown out of the window.

"Sophia?" Valerie's excited voice pulled him out of his thoughts. "You called her baby sister today? Is that why you're upset?"

Lucas was taken aback for a while and he abruptly turned to her.Valerie wasn't meant to know the truth.Why didn't she sound surprised, confused or shocked?

"Do you-,"

Valerie cut him in. "Do I know the truth?" She smiled and crossed her arms over her shoulder. "Yes, I know. I know the truth that you and Chase have been hiding for eighteen years. The truth that Sop is our sister"

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