

Chapter 177 Doctor's Orders

Fiona and I had dinner together and spent some time with the baby, before I returned to my study to meet with Kayden in the late evening. I had to get some wheels turning tonight, working this new lead that we uncovered today with the help of our friend “Zigzag.”

I pulled up a map of Blackout Casino on my computer.

It was a huge, sprawling property comprised of six different high-rise structures and multiple outdoor attractions, including a concert amphitheater, a golf course and several different swimming pools.

“You think they’re holed up there?” Kayden asked from over my shoulder.

“Good a place as any to hide out.”

In fact, the more I thought about it and studied the resort map, the more likely it seemed that yes, Lucas and Scarlet could be staying in this place while trying to keep out of sight. Nothing like hundreds of thousands of drunken gamblers and tourists to hide behind, if you wanted a safe and comfortable place to try to hide in plain sight.

Trying to find two individuals in that place... that would be more difficult than looking for a needle in a haystack. More difficult than looking for a particular strand of hay in a haystack.

“We need more information,” Kayden grumbled, giving voice to my own thoughts.

“Yeah. A lot more. This place...”

I got up and paced over to the printer, which was still spitting out pages and pages of maps that I’d started printing. I picked up a stack of warm paper from the print tray and scanned the sheet that happened to be on top. It was a detailed view of the golf course, which covered several acres of land just on its own.

“This place is fucking huge. We’re going to need to narrow the scope way down before we go in there.”

A knock sounded on the door. It was Cal – I could tell from the particular way he rapped his knuckles hard on the wood, four times fast.

“Hey, boss,” he said with a slight bow after Kayden opened the door. He led three other men into my study behind him; they were all carrying crates heaped full of small electronics.

“Fuck.” I looked down at the contents of the crates after the four soldiers lined them up on the table. That was a lot of recording devices.

“I think we got ‘em all, at least.” Cal grimaced, casting his eyes down to the recovered spy gear. “Took a while but we swept all the common areas. Anywhere you could get without a key.”

“Thanks, guys. And you took pictures of the places where you found them?”

“Before we took them down, yeah. I emailed them to you already.”

I dismissed the Gammas and headed back to my computer, opened up that email and started scanning the photos my men had just taken while scouring the palace for bugs.

I wanted to see where exactly Scarlet had been looking. What she had been watching.

I was trying to guess at what she had accomplished with all this spying. What, if anything, she had been able to dig up and was planning to try to use against me.

Fiona

“What do you feel like doing tonight?” Nina asked. “We could watch a movie while the guys are working and the sweet little screamer is finally sleeping.”

I chuckled at her description of Alexis. “I don’t know. I feel like I wouldn’t be able to concentrate on a movie right now. Too much stuff on my mind.”

“Fair enough. Maybe we just scrounge up some snacks and chill. I could paint your nails if you want.”

“That sounds perfect.”

I actually had been eager to have some time alone to finally catch up with my friend. I was seeing a lot of Nina lately, but Alexander or Kayden were always around, or she and I were actively working on quieting down the baby.

I waited till we’d collected our items – some chips and drinks and my nail care kit – before I started in on what I wanted to tell her.

“Nina, I figured out what happened to my father.”

She whipped her head up, polish wand frozen in mid-air. It almost dripped onto the table but she noticed in time and put the wet brush back into the bottle quickly. “Girl, what? What happened, and how’d you find out? And when?”

“It was actually on Lexi’s birthday. Remember when you stayed the night and then Alex had you go with Kayden...”

“Yeah... you went into labor right around then.”

“Yeah. Right after you left, Alex sat me down and told me he needed to tell me something...”

Nina’s unblinking eyes were wide and round while she waited for me to take a steadying breath and continue.

“It was his uncle. My boss, Conrad. The CEO at Crescent. He killed my father.”

“What?! Why???”

I answered this complicated question thoroughly, starting at the chronological beginning, now that I knew that part, and worked my way up to the present. I told her Nina about my interview with Iris as well as Conrad’s confession to Alexander, including every detail I could think of.

“Holy hell,” Nina grumbled when I was done. She’d finished painting my nails while I told the long story. “That is some shit, Fiona. How are you and Alex doing with all that?”

“We’re doing okay.”

Nina arched an eyebrow. “That okay didn’t sound totally okay.”

“Yeah, I don’t know. It is a weird situation, but honestly, he and I are good. I think we’re actually closer than ever. We have talked about all of this a lot over the past week. A lot.”

“But...?”

“Well, it’s unrelated to all the family drama, actually, but there is something frustrating that’s been going on.”

“What’s that?”

I blew air out the side of my mouth in a gesture of exasperation. “We haven’t had sex in weeks.”

Nina winced, like just the idea of this physically hurt her. “That’s gotta be tough. Is it because you have to keep waiting, after the baby...?”

“No, it’s been long enough. I mean, that was the reason at first. But now it just seems like there’s no time, no opportunity. Every time things get started with us, the baby cries, or something else comes up to interrupt.”

“Ugh. That does sound frustrating.” She flicked her eyes around my face then squinted at me. “Girl, you need some TLC, ASAP. I can see it now. Mm-hm. That’s not just fatigued from you get up late with the baby. You need your boo time. I bet you’ll feel all kinds of refreshed once you get some D.”

“Crass, Nina.” I giggled, leaned back in my chair and started idly blowing on my wet fingernails.

“But true,” she mumbled, smiling with closed lips.

She started cleaning up the manicure stuff, making sure the polish bottles were closed before putting them back in the bag with the other nail supplies. But before she finished she paused and brought her eyes back up to mine.

“Fi.” Her voice was back to serious now. “I’m real sorry about your dad, babe. All that stuff... every bit of it is awful.”

“Yeah.” I exhaled heavily. That was a true statement, and a complete one. There was nothing more to be done or said about it.

“Lemme hug you. Just careful with your nails, k?”

“Okay.” Nina shuffled over and wrapped me up into the world’s most awkward hug. I was seated and she was leaning over me, and to keep my damp nails out of her hair I had to hold them out in the air. She embraced me tightly regardless, and the hilarity of my awkward body position started me giggling again.

She pulled away and resumed her seat across the table, smiling. “You’re a tough cookie, you know. Toughest bitch I ever met.”

“Funny, I think the same thing about you.”

Nina grinned. Then her smile drooped a bit when she added, “Listen, how would you feel about me going around your parents’ place to check on your mom? I know you two aren’t in touch, and probably won’t be, but I could at least see how she is and let you know. If you want.”

“That would be great, Nina. Thank you.”

“And another thing, I know I’m not like, Babysitter Of The Year of anything, but I’m learning, and I can take care Lexi sometime so that you and Alex can go have some adult time. Let me do that for you, okay? Just let me know when and I’ll be here.”

“I know. Thanks, Nina.”

“I mean it.” She gave me a faux-stern glare. “Dr. Nina’s orders. You need to get you some lovin’, stat.”