

Chapter 14

I don't get much sleep after that, though I do finish my whole sandwich, hungrier than I thought I'd be. But when I push the empty plate away I stare at the ceiling in the dark for a long time, feeling disheartened.

Honestly, what has my life become?

I'm a little glad, really, that Christian never read the emails that I sent him, because they were all...lies.

Not bald lies – not attempts to deceive. But portrayals of my life that hid all the bad parts and really made everything seem a lot rosier than it actually was. Like, I spent a lot of time over the last few months telling him about this new job I got where I was making so much money doing the thing I loved: dancing.

Of course, I omitted the fact that I was dancing nearly naked and letting guys stick my paycheck into the strap of my underwear.

And I also omitted the fact that I was handing that paycheck over directly to my boyfriend, who I also said was the nicest, brightest, most wonderful guy in the world.

Except for when he turned out to be a complete scum bag willing to sell me to the mafia to pay off his debt. 1

I groan, putting my hands over my face and thinking about what a disaster this all is.

I mean, I don't even have a home anymore.

I'm a homeless stripper.

What the hell!?

This is...so not where I ever imagined my life going.





What the hell!?

This is...so not where I ever imagined my life going.

I sigh, turning over and pressing my face into pillows, and – despite myself – I burst into tears, completely overwhelmed.

I cry for a long time, mourning the disaster of my life, but I guess sleep eventually finds me. I only know for sure that I slept because the next thing I know light is pressing hot against my eyelids.

I groan a little, turning over in bed away from the bright sun shining through the window, seeking to go back into that state of oblivion...

But my anxiety has other ideas and my mind starts to race again. I mean, I have class today. What the hell am I supposed to do about that when I don't even have any clothes, let alone my books or any way to get there?

I pull myself out of bed, dipping into the bathroom for a second to clean up. I scowl when I see there's no spare toothbrush, so, completely unwilling to borrow Nico's, I brush my teeth with toothpaste and my finger before I head out to the main part of the penthouse.

My bare feet are very cold on the wood floors and I'm scowling, wishing for some socks, when I hear the click of the door as it pushes open. I go still, my eyes widening when I see a woman standing there with a vacuum cleaner and a bucket full of supplies.

She gasps a little when she sees me and then we both just...stare at each other.

She shakes herself and apologizes vehemently in another language, bowing back out of the door and pulling it closed behind her.



I'm still staring in surprise when the door to the master suite flies open and Christian storms out.

"What the –" he says, glaring at me and then pointing to the door. "Did you just open that!?"

"No," I say, shaking my head, desperate for him to believe me. "It was a woman –"

"What?" he snaps, leaning towards me with disbelief on his face. "What the hell are you talking about!?"

"I'm not lying to you, Christian!" I insist, gesturing towards the door. "It was a cleaning lady – I have no idea, I just got up –"

"What the hell is happening," a voice murmurs, and I jump and spin to see Nico's head popping up beyond the tall back of the couch. I didn't see him before – I guess he really did sleep on the couch. He rubs his head, still half asleep.

"Nico!" Christian snaps, making me jump again. God – I'm going to need to get less skittish if I'm going to be around these guys. "You didn't cancel the maid service!?"

Nico groans, covering his face and falling back against the cushions. "I'm sorry," he murmurs. "I...fell asleep. I forgot."