

He's even more beautiful tonight under the disco lights. It suddenly occurs that he is heading in my direction, and my legs begin to tremble. His eyes connect with mine, and I'm in shock when he stops right in front of me. I wish I had something next to me to hold onto; my body is not prepared to be this close to him. I'm fighting to stand, and it doesn't help that he isn't going anywhere.

Adam.

Adam.

Adam.

Here go the whispers again. I close my eyes and pray for them to stop; it was easier like this when I didn't have to stare into his gorgeous eyes. I gasp when he places both hands against my ear. I look up at him with wide eyes.

It's like he knows what's happening to my body, but that's impossible. He shouldn't know this; no one should know. There are rumors that the dark whisperers can sense all of your feelings, and now I feel like it's true from the look in his eyes. It's the only explanation. How else could he possibly know that I needed someone to stop the whispers for me?

His gaze sweeps over my face, and my lips open as a soft gasp leaves my mouth.

What are these strange feelings pulsing through my veins? And how is it possible that the whispers have stopped now that his hands are over my ear?

Chapter 8

I want to say something, thank him, anything at all, but my mouth wouldn't obey. But it's not like he's saying anything either. It's only then that I remember that it's not just us in the room. Everyone is staring at us; the space is almost tranquil except the music still blasting through the speakers.

Adam notices this simultaneously as I do, and he slowly takes his hand off my ear. His jaw clenches for a moment, but the look on his face quickly changes to unbothered as he turns to walk away.

The moment he steps away, I feel like I can breathe again. The crowd also seems to be back to whatever they were doing before the tension between Adam and I began.

"I don't know about you, but that there was incredibly hot," Abigail says to me.

I give her a confused look, "more like terrifying."

So it wasn't precisely terrifying; my body was still tingling from his nearness and his hands on my body even though it was just on my ear. I'm not sure how everyone else saw what just happened between us, but I can't explain it, even to myself.

"I didn't think that your parents would get you to come here tonight."

I stiffen at the familiar voice, and I try to keep a straight

face when I see Bryan and Aria in front of me. She's holding onto his arm, and they both look like a couple who's been together for a while. Well, that could be true since I wasn't sure when exactly the cheating had started between them. It could have been since the first day Bryan and I made it official for all I know; maybe they even saw each other before the two of us got together; anything was possible with them.

Aria looks down at my outfit, and it's the first time I feel like she sees me as a threat. She always saw me as someone that couldn't compete with her, but today I can actually see jealousy in her eyes, and she isn't trying to hide it from me. Did I really look that good for people to have these kinds of reactions towards me today? Even Bryan was looking at me as though he couldn't recognize me; in fact, it seems like he can't stop staring at me. Even Aria notices this, and she clears her throat for him to stop. His cheeks are red after he realizes that she's just caught him eyeing his ex-girlfriend, the same one she stole him from; me.

"It's nice of you to get my parents to force me to come here tonight; you two must really enjoy seeing me," I say with a fake smile on my face.

Bryan sighs, "come on, Amiera, you know that this was the only way for us to get you to come here tonight. We are trying our best to get you back. Our lives are incomplete without you in them. We want you back."

Want me back? I've thought of all the different ways that he would ask me back into his life, and this was not one of them.

"Are you both truly this selfish? Would you stop at nothing to get only what you want?" I demand. "Your wants and needs are no longer important to me. Maybe it was all I cared about in the past when I thought that you cared about me, but that is not the case anymore. I know how sick the both of you are now, and I want no part of it. You can keep begging me from today onwards, but my answer will not change. Stop pretending that you care for me when we all know that you want to save your reputation. I'm no longer the girl that you once knew; we can all move on with our lives the sooner you understand this."

Aria looks shocked by my outburst, but I've been trying to tell them repeatedly, and no one was listening to me. I couldn't understand why it was so hard for them just to let me live my life now. What more do they want from me? Should I stand next to them as their friend while they continue their relationship and be okay with all of that? Did they not see how difficult that would be for me? Of course not, as usual; all they both cared about was themselves.

"You don't have to stay here and take this," Abigail says to me.

"Who the hell is she?" Aria asks. "Your replacement for us is the creepy girl in class who's never spoken to anyone

before?"

"Leave her out of this!" I hiss, "at least she never betrayed her best friend and slept with her boyfriend!"

I grab Abigail's hand and push them aside as I walk away.

"I'm so sorry about that," I apologize. "I don't want you to get bullied because of me. This is a side of Aria I've never seen before now. I guess I never truly knew her."

She shakes her head at me, "you don't have to apologize to her. It's not your fault that she's a lying, cheating bitch. Let's not let her ruin our night. We can have some fun here without the two of them interfering."

I nod, and we both begin to sway along with the music.

"So are you going to tell me what was that between you and Adam just now?" she asks. "I didn't get a chance to talk to you about it because of Aria and Bryan."

I open my mouth to speak when I notice him a little distance away with Ashley right next to him. Her hand is on his arms, and she's trying her best to flirt with him. It's not only her; there are so many girls here that are trying their best to get closer to him.

I keep forgetting just how famous Adam is with the girls in my school. He doesn't even have to try, and girls fall for him.

"Can you excuse me for a few minutes?" I ask Abigail.

"I'll like to get some fresh air, and then I'll return."

She follows my gaze and sees what I'd just seen, and she nods without asking any questions. "Take your time; I'll be right here when you get back."

I push through the crowds and ignore some of the calls from some guys from school; it felt weird getting so much attention when I wasn't used to it before. I only wanted attention from one man, but he was too busy getting attention from all the school girls.

Before I can reach the door that would take me outside, someone pulls me back. I stare at the hand on my shoulder and look up to find Bryan. I clench my jaw and refrain from shouting at him. Who does he think he is to touch me so freely?

I pull away from him and keep some distance between the two of us, "what do you want now? Did we not already settle this earlier tonight?" I demand, not trying to hide my annoyance with him.

"I just want to talk, Amiera," he whispers. "I've done some things that I can't help but feel horrible about. I admit that I felt like I was doing what was right, but now I feel so much guilt that I don't know what to do with myself. Please believe me when I say that I never wanted to hurt you. I just started to fall for—"

I raise my hand to stop him. "You've said it already; I don't need to hear it again. Aria was always the more beautiful one to you. She was always the girl that everyone

wanted, including you. You finally have her; you finally have what you've wanted all along. I don't want to keep having to tell you to stay away from me, Bryan. Why do you keep harassing me when the woman you've always wanted is finally by your side?"

It was a question that I didn't care to hear the answer to. However, I did need to understand why the hell he wouldn't just let me go.

He's quiet as he tries to come up with an answer, and I turn to leave; I've had enough of this.

He grabs onto my arm once more, stopping me from going forward, only making me angrier.

What the hell was his problem?

I'm about to say something when someone barrels into him, spilling the drink in Bryan's hand all over himself. I look up in surprise to see that Adam was the one who'd done it.

## Chapter 9

Adam's white shirt is now wet and stained from the wine Bryan was drinking. It almost seems as though he'd walk into Bryan intentionally. But that would be insane, wouldn't it? Adam and I didn't know each other well; I haven't even said a single word to him before. Then there is no reason that he would try to protect me from my disgusting ex-boyfriend.

"Watch where the fuck—," Bryan stops himself when he realizes that he's speaking to Adam. For the first time, I see real fear in his eyes. He's scared of the dark prince. But why wouldn't he be? Adam had this aura about him that scared anyone that didn't happen to be horny girls out to get him into their beds and between their legs.

Adam doesn't even bother to apologize; he pushes the exit door behind us and storms outside.

I shake my head at Bryan and don't bother wasting any more time speaking to him. Instead, I push open the door and follow behind Adam. Unfortunately, I do not see him anywhere. Where did he go? There are a few people inside the pool and others by the bar, but none of them was him. My eyes close in on the small gate to the right. That's the only place that he could have gone.

Was I doing the right thing by following someone as dangerous as Adam out into the lonely woods? Because that



was what laid beyond those tall walls. This was totally unlike me, but I can't stop myself whenever he was concerned. Besides, where has being a good girl gotten me in life so far? Absolutely nothing.

I bury my fear and push the gates open. I don't get far, however. He's right in front of me, leaned up against a tree, almost as though he's waiting for me.

Did he somehow know that I was following him? Did I tell him that I wasn't some creepy stalker? But would that be the truth because I was indeed acting like a stalker by following him out here?

My feet are frozen, and I don't know whether to run back to the house or run to him. It didn't matter, however; my feet weren't going anywhere for a while.

My eyes widen when he takes a step in my direction. Oh God, he's coming to me.

I feel a hiccup leave my throat, and I want to die from embarrassment. This is the first time something like that has ever happened to me. Surprisingly, this time, the whispers have stopped, at least for now. Could it be because of his touch earlier?

My eyes travel lower to the stain on his shirt, and I want to help him remove it for some reason. I don't even understand why it's bothering me this much.

"Are you looking for me?"

I don't know what to say; I mean, the truth was loud and clear; why else would I be out here in the dark by myself?

Of course, my lips remain sealed; whenever I'm near him, my mouth always chooses that opportunity to become mute.

He's close to me now, and I've forgotten how to breathe. I feel exposed under his experimental gaze, and I want to ask him to stop looking at me, except I don't want him to stop, do I? Even though I'm shocked by the feelings of having his eyes on me like this, something I've wanted for a long time, by the way, I still enjoy it in some twisted way.

"Do you still love him?"

I'm taken aback by his question, but I already know who he's talking about. Bryan. He was the last person I wanted to be thinking about right now. Adam was the one person that made me forget about him, and now he was bringing him up to me.

I think about his question some more, even though I don't want to.

Did I still love him? I did, but I didn't want to admit it to myself or anyone else. People would think that I was stupid for still loving someone that hurt me the way that he did.

I may still love him, but that's okay, isn't it? Love doesn't exactly disappear in a day; that is when you truly did love someone, however, not like the love Bryan and Aria had for me.

"I do," I whisper. It's the first words I've spoken to Adam, and it just happened to be my confession to still loving my traitorous ex-boyfriend, who I also happen to hate with a passion.

Apparently, it was possible to love and hate someone at the same time.

My eyes are drawn right back to the stain on his shirt, and he catches me this time.

"Does it bother you that much?" He asks in a throaty whisper. I don't have time to comprehend his question when he grabs the edge of the t-shirt and shoves it over his head, leaving his chest bare in front of me.

My jaw drops, and I can't stop staring at how smooth and shiny it is. I'm suddenly hit with a strong desire to touch it. I've certainly forgotten about everything now that he's standing in front of me shirtless. I've surely forgotten that I'm out here with the dark prince himself all alone in the dark woods. I've surely forgotten that I'm far away from everyone else to call for help if I needed it. I've even forgotten that my parents would kill me if they knew what I was up to. And I've definitely forgotten how to freaking breathe once more.

How does he know that it's been bothering me? Please tell me he can't read minds because that would be extremely embarrassing; I've already been embarrassed enough already, I didn't need any more of that.

But do I even care about any of that right now? The

answer is clear and straightforward; no. All I care about right now is reaching forward and touching him in the most intimate ways possible. It's like my body has absolutely zero control around him, and I want to scream in frustration, not in frustration that I have no control over my body; no, I'm frustrated that I haven't touched him as yet.

It couldn't possibly be healthy wanting to touch someone this badly, could it? I barely knew this man, for crying out loud.

Lies.

You know him.

You've studied him for years. You've painted him, drawn every feature of his face, dreamt of his pretty eyes every night. Cried yourself to sleep, wishing he was touching you.

You know him more than you would let yourself admit.

I don't know what's happening to me, but I do realize that I'm walking towards him. I feel like I'm under a spell, and it's a damn strong one.

Adam watches me like a hawk; he's very aware of my body getting closer to his, but he does not move away; he stands still like a stone and let me come to him.

I hesitantly raise my hand, just one; I'm too scared to use both hands right now. Adam exhales loudly when I finally touch him, and I think I do the exact opposite. I inhale as deeply as I could, taking in as much of his scent as

possible. Something about the smell of the wood-paneled

finally touch him, and I think I do the exact opposite. I inhale as deeply as I could, taking in as much of his scent as possible. Something about the smell of the woods mixed with his own aroma has my heart racing and my body wanting more.

I suddenly decided that this is not enough; I need more. I lean closer to him and inhale once more before pressing my lips to his chest.

Adam goes rigid in front of me. It's only then that I realize what I've done, and my head shoots upwards to look up at him, scared of how far I've gone.

I gasp at what I see next.

Adam's eyes are entirely black; it's as though I'm staring into one of his dark holes even though I've never seen him create one before.

What have I done?

## Chapter 10

He steps back from me until there is enough room between us for a car to pass. I can't tell what he's thinking exactly, but I know that he doesn't want to be near me anymore; I'm sure of that much. His apparent rejection hurts me, but I'm more concerned about what he will say next if he's ever going to speak to me again.

What was I thinking? Did I go around kissing guys on their chest now? I've never been this bold or rebellious before. All I know is that this invisible pull between us is causing me to act this crazy. I'm shaking with nervousness as I wait for him to say something. His eyes are growing darker by the second, and I know that I should be afraid, but all I feel now is worry. I continue to watch him cautiously, and he turns around to face the woods; it seems like he's trying not to look at me anymore. He rubs a hand down his face, and I make a step forward towards him; I wanted to apologize, that was all.

"LEAVE. . ."

I'm shocked by his command, and I pause midway. I don't make another attempt to move forward, not after his order for me to leave. I knew that he was about to say something to hurt me, but I didn't think he would command me to go like that. I try to calm my aching heart, but it's so hard to do.

But why is it even aching? I should feel nothing but embarrassment for my actions. However, even though I felt some shame, there was also a mixture of stronger emotions. Some of which I didn't even want to admit to myself, a part of me knew that eventually, I wouldn't be able to hide from it.

"I'm s-sorry, I don't know what came over me." I try to apologize from afar; what I did was insane, and I don't know how to explain to him that I had no control over my own body. I also don't know how to tell him that I've never done something like this before, not that he would believe me. But somehow, I also feel like he knows this already; he knows what he's doing to my body, he knows it's not natural, and he knows that it's only him that's bringing about these changes in me. He knows that I've wanted to touch him for a long time; he knows that I've wanted him to feel me also. Even now, my body was wide awake and desperate for just one touch from him.

"GET THE HELL OUT FROM HERE!" He shouts louder this time. I flinch at his tone, this was the last thing I expected him to say, and it stung like a bee.

Still, I can't find the strength to move from the hole I'd dug with my shoes from pressing on the ground too hard. I can understand that he's angry that I'd kiss him out of nowhere but does he still have to be this harsh towards me? I'm startled and broken-hearted; it's hard to move when I feel so empty inside. One rejection was hard enough, but

feel so empty inside. One rejection was hard enough, but two? I mean, Bryan wasn't technically a rejection; he cheated. And it's not like I confessed to liking Adam either.

No, you only did much worse than that, didn't you?

He suddenly turns back around and crosses the distance between us. I gasp when he grabs my hair roughly in his, pulling my head back so that I'm staring directly into his gloomy eyes now. There is so much darkness and loneliness but still, somehow to me, they're the most beautiful eyes I've ever seen. I feel lost in them, and for a moment, I forget what I've just done; his warm breath tangles with my own, and I want to close the distance between us. Neither one of us is saying anything, and the sudden reminder of what I did earlier is the only thing that's preventing me from making another big mistake.

"Go," he growls. "Now."

His words give me a rude awakening.

My eyes widen in horror, and I feel tears form in them as I turn and run out of the woods, away from him, away from the person I want to be as close to as possible. I don't know why I have to be this weak; why do I make people do these things to me? Why should I cry for someone I barely knew? Just because he spoke roughly to me?

I don't waste any time as I open the gate and rush into the house. I need to get out of here quickly; I don't want anyone to see me like this. People would think that my tears



were because of Bryan and Aria, and that was the last thing I wanted to see all over my feed when I opened my phone. But at the same time, I didn't want anyone to suspect that I was out there with Adam all alone. If word got out, it would surely reach my parents, which would be the worst thing that could ever happen to me right now.

"Hey!" Abigail calls out to me just before I reach the exit.

"What's wrong?"

I wipe the tears away from my face and try to be strong, "I just need to go home." I tell her.

She studies me with concern but eventually nods her head and opens the door for me. "I understand. We can talk tomorrow in school. I hope you feel better, Amiera."

I nod and thank her before finally escaping. Hopefully, no one except her saw me like that. Even though I barely knew Abigail, I trusted her. Which was probably not the wisest decision considering how much I've been hurt recently by the two people I counted on more than anything.

I didn't care about either one of them right now, however. Now I was too consumed with sorrow and embarrassment. I enter the limousine waiting outside for me and drop myself onto the seat with tears streaming down my cheeks.

I can't even imagine what Adam thought about me now. He must feel that I'm a lunatic for pulling a stunt like that. A guy takes off his shirt in front of me, and the first thing that I

do is kiss his naked chest?

What the hell was wrong with me? I was never like that before. Bryan and I did things together, but we never went all the way, and I've never felt the need to be close to him the way I needed to be near Adam tonight. I still have no idea what happened back there, but I think it's safe to say that Adam would never want to be in the same room with me again.

All the times I've done things with Bryan not once did I ever initiate anything; he was always the one to start kissing and touching me. I always went along with it until I thought he was going too far, then I would stop him immediately. He would get annoyed, but he never forced himself onto me; it was one of the things I had loved about him.

Everything was different with Adam, however. So, so different. Tonight, if he had only touched me back, I wouldn't have wanted him to stop. I would have let him do whatever he wanted to do with me.

My thoughts frighten me to the point that I want to go in a corner and hide. . . From myself. No one should have so much power over me. No one.

From today onwards, I'll never forget his reaction to me touching him. It doesn't help that it felt so good. His skin was a lot smoother than it looked, and if I licked my lips right now, I would probably be able to taste him.

"What's wrong with me?" I groan against the seat

"What's wrong with me?" I groan against the seat.

Was his rejection not enough for me to stop thinking about him like this? Why couldn't I have just stuck with admiring him from afar? It was much easier back then when he didn't know that I existed. Now, I'll always be the crazy girl that kissed his chest without his permission.

Why did he have to go and remove his shirt in the first place? I still didn't understand how he knew how much the stain on his shirt bothered me. And why would he go through all that trouble to please me? He was nice enough to remove it because of me, and I just had to reward him by being a complete psycho.

'Do you still love him?'

Why did he ask me that? I stare out the window and look up to the bright moon as I try to answer my own questions.

Why did it seem like he was concerned about what I felt for Bryan? Did he really care if I still loved him? He didn't say anything else after I confessed that I did, so how did I know what he really felt after my confession? I had so many questions that I didn't think I would be able to sleep tonight.

Was it possible that he did bounce into my ex-boyfriend today because he was trying to protect me? My heart warms at just the possibility of that being true.

I don't think any of that will matter anymore after the mess I made tonight though.

mess I made tonight, though.

What was wrong with me? Why did I have to do something like that? How is it that I have no control over my body around him? He was dangerous indeed, but not for the reason I've heard about my entire life. He was dangerous because he made me feel things that should be illegal.

I needed to get a hold of myself before I entered my home; if my parents saw me like this, they would know that something terrible had happened, and I'm not up for being questioned by them right now.

I exit the limo and walk up to the gigantic door that opens upon my arrival.

The moment I step inside, my parents are already there waiting for me. I can't imagine what they have been thinking this entire time; even though they did this just for me to forgive Aria and Bryan, it was the first time they'd ever allowed me to attend a party. They must have been crazy with worry about what trouble I've gotten myself into.

Should I tell them that I kissed the dark prince's bare chest and let them deal with me to end this torture?

"Why are your cheeks so red?" My mother asks suspiciously.

My heartbeat accelerates, and I try to think of a lie.

"It was my first party, mother," I try to explain. "I'm not used to the environment; I guess that's why I'm a bit flustered."

"Did you speak to Bryan and Aria?" My father questions me. Of course, they would ask this question; it's all they're concerned about.

"They tried speaking to me, yes," I answer him. "But I wanted nothing to do with them, just like I've been telling you multiple times before. I can't just forget what they did to me in a day; it will take some time before I forgive them."

If I ever can forgive them, I don't say this to my parents because I don't want them on my back every single day over this matter.

"I'm exhausted. Can I go to my room now?" I ask.

My mother looks to my father, and they both sigh, "go ahead."

I quietly excuse myself and rush towards my bedroom. I shut the door as soon as I reached it and threw myself onto the bed.

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~ADAM~

Lizzie pushes me onto the chair and places my shirt out of the way, revealing my chest to her. I go rigid when she starts kissing my naked chest; why can't these kisses compare to that one kiss from earlier? I kept seeing her vibrant red hair sprawled over my chest as her soft lips touched me. It was one simple touch, one f\*\*\*\*\*g touch, and it made me almost lose my f\*\*\*\*\*g mind. How were they even that soft? I've had many lovers in the past, but no one's

ever had such soft lips.

Damn it. I close my eyes, and it somehow makes it easier to see her face; she isn't here with me right now, but I can still see her so clearly that it's like she is with us in the room.

Her messy yet exotic red hair is begging me to touch it, and her eyes are daring me to come closer.

"Okay, what the hell is wrong with you today?" Lizzie asks as she tries to catch my attention.

It's only then that I realize that her shirt is off, and she's now only in her underwear on top of me.

"I think that I'm close to finding the flaming whisperer," I tell her. I admit this to her, but I refrain from telling her who it is and the strange pull of emotions I feel whenever I'm around her.

She stills on top of me, "are you serious? Who is it, and why are you only just telling me this?" she demands.

I sigh and lift her off me, "I'm not sure as yet. I need to get closer to her before I can confirm this. I don't want to tell you who she is until I'm certain that it is her."

Her brows scrunch together the way it always does when she's angry. "I still don't see why you can't just tell me."

I can quickly tell her, but for some reason, I can't find it in myself to do so. I don't think it's just because I'm not sure

if it is the girl I suspect yet; there is more to it, but I can't just put my finger on it.

I see her in front of me again, like I've been doing ever since she boldly kissed my chest earlier tonight. I lost control back there, and I can't ever let something like that happen again.

I also don't know why her saying that she was still in love with that asshole upset me so much. I tried hard to hide my reaction from her, but it was f\*\*\*\*g killing me inside to know that she still loved him, or even loved him at all for that matter.

What gives her the right to love anyone? But what gives me the f\*\*\*\*g right to ask that question?

I guess these were all the reasons that made me think that she had it in her to be the flaming whisperer. My kind has been waiting for her arrival for decades now. We've read countless books about her and what to expect. There were even books about the flaming whisperer and the darkest whisperer of all; me. There were books written about a whisperer who could create multiple black holes at once, and I was the only one of my kind capable of doing it. It's why my family has always known that I would be the one to find her. But did I really see her? I couldn't just sit back and wait for the festival to find this out. I wanted to know beforehand.

To do that, I'll have to get closer to her; but was that

To do that, I'll have to get closer to her; but was that such a good idea after nearly losing my mind tonight?

I've been warned of the intense feelings that would rush through my body the moment she entered my life, and I have to say that these emotions fit the description and warnings perfectly.

"Why have you been acting distant with me?" Lizzie demands. "Is it because I was away for a while? Did someone else manage to snatch you from me?"

I lazily lift my eyes towards her, "you know that you've had my heart since the very beginning. Why do you ask such silly questions?"

She narrows her eyes before throwing her head back and laughing. "Of course, you can't forget about me so quickly. I mean, I'm Lizzie; men go crazy for me. It's us against the world, Adam; it always will be. There is so much for us to do. I didn't go hunting for things that could aid in our plans just to have you slip through my fingers like that."

I shake my head and grab her waist, pulling her back on top of me, "Slip through your fingers." I hiss. "Never."

Even though I say the words, another image of the strangely beautiful girl pops back into my head.

I couldn't sit still until I found out more about her; I needed to know everything. . . Every. Single. Detail.



Chapter 11

"Amiera, you have to get up now." I hear my mother shouting above me.

What time was it? I didn't care; I didn't want to go to school today. I couldn't sleep at all last night, and I sure as hell did not want to see Adam today after what happened between us yesterday.

I always took things to another level, but this time I've crossed the line. What if Adam decided to tell everyone at school? What would happen then? I could see all of the girls laughing and pointing at me with their judgmental gazes. I've spent my entire life facing people that threw insults at me; I've been bullied more times than I can count. One would think that I would have learned to at least keep away from people like Adam.

I couldn't believe that I was this stupid; I'd already been through so much embarrassment; what was I thinking would happen when I willingly followed Adam out into the woods?

"Mom, I don't want to attend school today," I say, my voice muffled against the pillow. I didn't want to show too much emotion for her to grow suspicious. The last thing I wanted was for her to do some digging into the events of the party.

"Amiera," she sighs. "You have a perfect attendance record; you cannot mess it up now."

How could losing one day of school be bad for me? It's not like it was benefiting me in any way; I still couldn't bring forth the flames.

The school was useless if it couldn't even help me learn the basics, or maybe I was the useless one. Maybe I was incapable of ever doing well in life; Lord knows that would explain everything about my depressing life.

"Amiera!" She stresses my name.

I know that there is no winning this argument, so I force myself out the bed. When I reach the mirror, I'm greeted by swollen and dark eyes. Just great, everyone would take one look at me and know that I've been crying the entire night. Or I could blame it on staying up late at the party; that sounded much better. Hopefully, I won't be the only one looking like this today. When I left, half of the party-goers were already intoxicated and were sprawled out everywhere. As far as I know, they could still be in that house. Though alcohol didn't affect my kind for far too long, we usually snap out of it quickly. I wouldn't know for sure since I've never had it, but I've seen others of my kind, and within a few hours, they are usually back to themselves.

I nod at myself in front of the mirror and put on my determined face. I could do this.

I could totally do this. No one would make me feel less of myself today; I won't let them.

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I can't do this.

I'm staring at the school's entrance, and I can't find the motivation I need to enter.

I always do this; I stare at myself in the mirror and tell myself that I can do something, only to realize much later that I was wrong. By that time, it's always too late for me. I look behind me towards the exit and consider skipping school for the first time in my life—fear of what my parents would do if they ever found out quickly changes my mind.

"Amiera!"

I spot Abigail running towards me with a smile on her face, "I'm so glad I ran into you here."

I was delighted to see her too, having some company to walk into this dreaded place was exactly what I needed today. I was hoping that she wouldn't ask too many questions about yesterday, however.

"You look better today," she beams.

I totally think she said that just to try and be nice to me; I saw myself in the mirror earlier; I did not look any better than yesterday. I think I look much worse.

I take a deep breath and follow her into the school's entrance. Thankfully, no one seems to be paying us any attention, at least for now. Everyone pretty much looked the same as me, needing as much sleep as possible.

When I enter the classroom, Adam is nowhere to be

found, and I breathe a sigh of relief. But the truth remained that he usually entered class right on time or five to ten minutes late, sometimes much later. I start to relax a little on the chair, but a part of me still wants to see him. That part of me is disappointed at the chance of him not showing up today. I try to wipe those emotions out of my heart and mind. I had no reason to be this upset about not seeing him in class. I should be happy; this meant that I didn't have to be embarrassed when I saw him.

And then I feel him; I know he's here without even looking up. I do my best to keep my eyes stuck on the book in front of me. I don't want to look at him; still scared of what he'd do when he sees me.

There are satisfied sighs around me, and I know that all the girls are staring at him. This time, however, even the guys seem to be excited over something.

"Damn, she's gorgeous. I can't believe she's back."

Abigail's words prompt me to look up and what I see next makes my heart sink. There is a beautiful blonde standing right next to Adam, she's even more gorgeous than Aria, and that's saying a lot.

"I think she might be Adam's ex-girlfriend, Lizzie," Abigail whispers to me. "Rumors have it that they had a pretty shitty break up last year. Maybe they're deciding to get back together; that's the only reason I can think of for those two to be seen together."

I couldn't believe this. I touched his chest and even kissed it when this entire time, he could have been in a relationship with her. I felt sick to my stomach. How did this make me any better than Aria?

Aria knew about you; you knew nothing about this girl, I tried to remind myself. Again I was blaming myself for no reason.

"Good morning, class," the teacher greets us. "Just a few more days for the much-anticipated festival. Who's excited?"

Everyone begins to cheer in encouragement, excluding me.

"Are you not excited about this?" Abigail asks me with curious eyes.

I shrug my shoulders, "at first, when I first found out about the flaming whisperer, I was beyond excited at the thought of someone like that being present around us. However, after attending that event every year and not seeing it happen to anyone, I'm sort of not believing it anymore. What if it's just some made-up story to make school more entertaining?"

Abigail laughs, "I get where you're coming from, but I still have my faith in them. I don't know if it will be a boy or girl, but I'm crossing my fingers that it will be a woman. I mean, how cool would that be?"

I was happy that at least one of us still had faith in this

story. But I would only believe it when I see it.

My eyes go back to Adam, and I'm filled with so much envy that I feel a fire burning within my veins. I'm angry that he showed up today with her, and I'm mad that she's flipping her hair and batting her eyelashes up at him. I should be the one there; he should be looking at me, not at her.

As if reading my mind, he stops looking at her and puts his full heated gaze on me. The pen drops from my hand, and my lips part slightly. Immediately my heartbeat picks up, and I feel a burning sensation in my belly.

Somehow, I'm turned on all over again. My body feels like it's alive again, and I want to walk over to him and straddle his lap. His gaze lowers to my lips, and my body shivers from just the thought of his finger touching me there before leaning down and giving me a deep, passionate kiss.

Lizzie realizes that she no longer has his full attention, and she follows his gaze to see him staring at me. Her eyes narrow the moment that she gives me a once-over. I've been looked at like that before, many times by my own friend, ex-friend. She doesn't see what Adam can possibly be seeing in me; she doesn't understand why he's looking my way. Maybe Aria always thought the same; perhaps she always wondered why Bryan was with me in the first place; I'm sure that she wasn't the only one that had thoughts like that before.

Lizzie leans into Adam and seductively touches his chin

wondered why Bryan was with me in the first place; I'm sure that she wasn't the only one that had thoughts like that before.

Lizzie leans into Adam and seductively touches his chin before she turns him to face her. She's trying to tell me that he belongs to her and to back off. I can read that easily. She has nothing to fear; however, Adam is not interested in me the way she thinks.

But if that was so, why was he even looking at me like that? Was there an ulterior motive?

Chapter 12

"Are you okay?" Abigail asks, drawing my attention back to her. Her eyes are filled with curiosity as she waits for me to answer her.

Did she notice something? Was I indeed that obvious? But when have I never been?

"Yes, why do you ask?"

She quirks a brow, "maybe it's because you're staring at Adam and Lizzie with a look of vengeance on your face. I thought that look would have been directed at Bryan and Aria; I must say I'm surprised that it's for those two instead. While your ex-boyfriend can't stop looking your way, your eyes have been glued to the forbidden dark prince. I'm surprised, that's all."

I blush at her words, "I- uh. . ."

What did I tell her? And what did she mean by Bryan couldn't stop looking my way? I didn't notice him looking at me, but it's not like I was paying attention to him to know whether that was true or not.

"You don't have to tell me if you don't want to." She cuts me off. I loved this about Abigail; she never tried to force me to tell her anything. Aria was never like that; she always insisted that I told her everything about my life even when I wasn't comfortable talking about certain things. I should stop comparing the two of them; they were both different in



their own ways.

I sigh; maybe it would be better if I actually opened up to her. Saying it out loud might help me hear how crazy this is; I needed someone to ensure I strayed from Adam. If she could remind me that he was supposedly dangerous and that everyone around me would go crazy if anything ever happened between us, then maybe, just maybe, I would stop thinking about him so much.

"The truth is that I keep hearing these whispers in my head whenever I'm around Adam. It's weird. I don't know how to explain it. But that day at the party, when he placed his hands above my ear, somehow it stopped, and I don't know why I felt like he knew what he was doing. I know it sounds crazy, but there is just this look in his eyes that tells me he knows more about me than I do. At the party, I followed him out into the woods."

Abigail is now gaping at me, "YOU DID WHAT?" She shouts and ducks her head when the teacher looks at us.

"I know; I don't know why I did it," I whisper when she stops looking our way. "I just lost control over my body; I couldn't stop myself last night even if I wanted to."

"How are you not intimidated by him? I would be scared out of my mind to follow any one of his kind out into the woods all by myself. I know they haven't exactly tried to take over the world as yet, but it's still written in the prophecy."

Of course, the stupid prophecy that will never come

true. Why was that even written in the first place?

"That's not all," I tell her.

Her eyebrows raise in shock, "I can't possibly think what could top this."

I take a deep breath before I begin to try to explain what happened. "I sort off . . . Well, it's a long story, but the night ended with me kissing his bare chest. He took off his shirt in front of me, and the first thing I did was kiss him there. I know I'm crazy, and I honestly think that I'm losing my damn mind, but I did it, and I feel like it's the worst thing that I could have possibly done yesterday."

Abigail drops the juice she was drinking and spills it all over the table. She quickly cleaned it up before it could mess up our books or before the teacher could notice us again. I was already not her favorite student; I think I wasn't any teacher's favorite student since I couldn't create fire; I made them look bad since it made it look like they couldn't teach properly.

"Now I know you're just messing with me," she says to me. "There is no way that you're brave enough to do something like that. Scratch that; there is no way you're INSANE enough to do that."

I wish that were the case, but clearly, I should stick a paper on my forehead that called me crazy so that people would stay far away from me.

"It's up to you to believe me or not, but that's what

happened. I haven't been able to sleep since last night. I can't get over it. I don't understand what made me do something so crazy either. It was like I had no control over my body."

Abigail's eyes are wide, and it's a wonder how they haven't popped out of her head as yet.

"I can't believe this," she whispers, "you've always been this innocent girl that never broke the rules. Then Bryan breaks your heart, and it's like you've snapped into this bad bitch. Which isn't a bad thing, so you don't have to look that way. But wait, what was his reaction after you made such a bold move?"

I sigh as I remember the way he shouted for me to leave last night. From the stories I've heard about Adam, he's usually the type to welcome a woman into his bed quite easily. I can't tell if the rumors are accurate however, it could just be stories from the many girls that have always wanted just a taste of him.

The ringing of the bell snaps me out of my thoughts. I can't help but watch Adam and Lizzie walk out of the classroom. They are perfect for each other; they match in every way possible, even in the way that they both walked. She is the kind of woman everyone would expect to be Adam's girlfriend, not someone like me.

"Let's get something to eat," Abigail says as she senses my foul mood. I follow her out into the cafeteria; after

collecting our food in the trays, we walk towards the first empty tables that we see.

"So," she says after taking her first bite. "Are you going to continue the story? I hope I'm not making you uncomfortable; you don't have to tell me unless you want to. I just want to make that clear to you. However, I am excited to know the rest of the story. I don't think I'll ever know what it's like to have such an eventful night with a dark whisperer."

My cheeks are red now, but before I can respond, I see footsteps heading our way. Part of me wishes that it was Adam, but I know that it would be impossible. Adam hasn't looked at me once since I entered the cafeteria. Lizzie has had his full attention ever since she caught him looking at me earlier. He's finally started avoiding me, and I can't blame him. What I did yesterday was unforgivable and, not forgetting, insane.

I'm just grateful that he didn't tell anyone in school, at least as yet. If he'd done that, there would have been a lot of comments being sent my way. But none of that was happening so far. Everyone was too busy admiring the lovely couple even to look my way, which should be a good thing, except I am not happy in the least.

Why would he even bother about me? I was clearly irrelevant in his life. He would be preoccupied now that his ex-girlfriend was back in his life. And I still wasn't even sure if

she was still his ex or if they were back together.

Someone clears their throat, reminding me of where I was. Still in the cafeteria, dreaming about Adam.

I'm surprised to see Bryan, well, not all that surprised. I did see footsteps coming towards me earlier.

"Why are you here, Bryan?"

"I just want to talk to you." He says. "I saw you go into the woods last night . . . And I'm not sure what time you came back out, but I did notice Adam returning . . . I just want to make sure that nothing happened to you out there."

I want to laugh at his bogus concern. Why was he pretending to care about me now? Why now, out of all the days we cared about each other? I'm sorry, all the days I cared for him. I didn't believe that he was finally growing a conscience.

"What I do or don't do from now on should not be your concern anymore. Don't you understand that by now?" I snap.

What did I have to do to get this guy to leave me alone? Why couldn't he see that it wasn't his place to worry about me anymore or, in this case, pretend to worry about me.

He rubs his face in frustration, "how can this not concern me when I still care for you?" he demands. "I'm allowed to care for you, aren't I? I'm not heartless, Amiera. Adam is a f\*\*\*\*\*g dangerous guy; I don't think you should ever have anything to do with him. You're smarter than that

ever have anything to do with him. You're smarter than that. I understand that you may be trying to get back at me for everything I've done for you. But don't you think that you're overdoing it now? I mean, if you needed to get back at me, couldn't you choose a less dangerous guy than Adam? Pick anyone else. Just don't destroy your life by entertaining someone like him."

My eyes shoot up to him in annoyance. Out of everyone to see me following Adam into the woods, why did it have to be him? And why does he think that I'm doing this to get back at him? Did he really believe that everything was about him? Could he not see that I was trying my best to limit any sort of physical contact between the two of us?

I'm about to express my annoyance with him when someone joins us.

My lips part when I see Adam standing to the side of me, much closer than Bryan.

His tongue is against his cheek, and I don't know how to read the emotion on his face. He doesn't even pay any attention to Bryan; in fact, he acts like he is invisible to him.

He leans down and places both of his hands on the table in front of me. I hear myself hiccup as he leans in closer so that our faces are inches apart. Once again, I'm embarrassing myself in front of him. When did I ever hiccup this much before?

He pins me with his gaze, and I think I forgot how to

He pins me with his gaze, and I think I forgot how to breathe. "A bunch of my friends and I are having this movie night, be there tonight. . . ten, at my place."

He straightens himself and pinches his t-shirt right above the spot I kissed last night. I don't know if he did that to tease me or if I was reading too much into it. Either way, I can't help the rush of images that bombard my mind all at once.

I press my legs together and swallow hard.

"Tonight. I'll be waiting."

I gape at him, obviously in shock that he said that to me in front of Bryan and Abigail. In fact, I'm shocked that he even said something like that in the first place.

I don't have time to respond to him as he pushes off the table and walks away from us.

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## Chapter 13

I can't help but watch Adam walk away. Today he is dressed in blue jeans and a white t-shirt. He doesn't even try to look good but still does. He's the type of man that could wear anything and still look irresistible. I notice that Lizzie is nowhere around, and I wonder if he waited for her to leave to speak to me. He didn't try to come to me while she was sitting next to him and running her fingers through his hair, so he might have waited for her to leave first. I shake my head; I had to stop doing this to myself. I needed to stop thinking about the two of them.

"What the hell happened between the two of you yesterday?" Bryan demands. Obviously, he heard every single thing that Adam just said to me.

Of course, I'm not about to tell him everything that I did last night. But I'm not doing it because I'm scared of his reaction; I'm not going to answer him because it's none of his business.

"Shouldn't you be next to Aria?" I ask him. "She's looking around for you right now," I tell him.

She had just entered the cafeteria and was indeed looking around for him. What would she think if she saw him standing right next to me?

He follows my gaze and mumbles something under his breath before he makes his way towards her.



When I return my attention to Abigail, she is staring at me with wide eyes, "okay, I believe you now."

I want to laugh, but I'm also extremely nervous about what just happened. Did Adam really invite me to movie night at his house? That didn't make any sense to me. Yesterday he looked as though he never wanted to see me again in his life. What was with this change of heart all of a sudden? And why would he invite me when Lizzie was in his life?

A boy and girl could just be friends, Amiera; he doesn't have to be inviting you to do any funny business.

But is it even okay to be friends with someone like Adam? I didn't have a problem with it, but everyone else will surely do. Just look at the way Bryan reacted earlier, and his reaction should be the least frustrating. There were still my parents and siblings, who, by the way, still hadn't returned as yet from their respective trips.

"Did you see how pissed Bryan was?" she asks. "He's such an ass; after everything he did, does he expect you to care what he thinks?"

I shake my head, "I want nothing to do with him. I have no idea why he's still trying to be relevant in my life."

He indeed was an ass. Shouldn't he be concerned about why his current girlfriend is over there in the corner having a heated argument with Adam's brother, her ex-boyfriend? He was still looking my way even though she was doing that

right in front of his eyes. I wish he used to pay me this much attention when we were together. But no, he chose to 'care' about me after publicly humiliating me and dumping me in the worst way possible. Now he expects me to forget everything and be what, friends with him? Ha. He had another thing coming.

Aria wasn't any different either; she also chose to act as she cared about our friendship only after betraying my trust.

Both of their actions are ridiculous; they've been cheating behind everyone's back, and now that they are out in the open, they choose to be hung up on the people they mistreated. At this point, I think both of them are just looking for more attention.

"I can't believe that you've been invited to one of Adam's movie nights. He rarely ever invites anyone, only the people closest to him. Why do you think he did that? Do you think he wants more from you? I mean, you did kiss his chest and all. . ."

"Shhh," I whisper. We were still in the cafeteria, and people here loved to listen in on conversations. I didn't want that story being told all over school.

She puts a finger over her mouth, "I'm sorry."

"It's okay," I tell her as I grab the tray from the table.

"I'm not sure if I'll be able to go; you probably have already heard about my parents and how strict they are when it comes to those things. They aren't very fond of Adam and his

family either, just like all of the elders around us. You know that they have this crazy idea that they would be the doom of us all. But as we can see, Adam and his family are totally normal; everyone else is the delusional ones."

Including me, yesterday I've proven that even I am a bit crazier than Adam or his family would ever be.

She nods, "I too believe that they take things a bit too far. If I try to say anything in their favor, my parents look at me as though I'm insane. There is no changing our parents minds about their kind. I blame the prophecies; they should not even exist. I haven't seen a single one of those things come true as yet."

I push the chair backward and walk over to the bin, Abigail following me closely behind.

"My parents are the same."

But something in me wants to meet Adam desperately. Maybe I want him to think better of me; I didn't exactly leave a good impression on him. I can't explain it, but I need him to see that I was not crazy, at least not totally. I want him to like me.

I pause and take a moment to think about those forbidden thoughts. I want Adam to like me? I didn't even realize that my body wanted something like that.

"Ah, are you okay?" Abigail asks me.

It's only then that I realize I'm standing with the tray in

realize that my body wanted something like that.

"Ah, are you okay?" Abigail asks me.

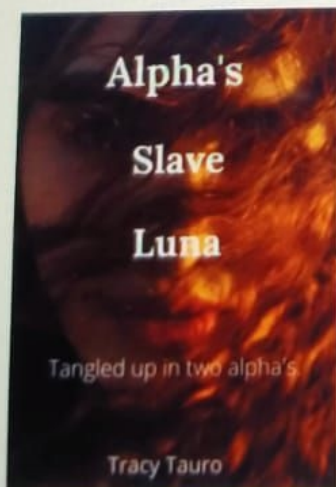
It's only then that I realize I'm standing with the tray in hand right over the bin. I've been like that for more than a minute, just lost in my thoughts. I can't imagine how that must have looked to her.

I quickly dump the leftovers into the bin and force a smile on my face, "I just have a lot on my mind."

"I'm sure it's about Adam," she winks at me. "I think that you should go tonight. I just don't know how you're going to convince your parents."

I have no idea why Adam invited me to movie night tonight at his home, but I know I can't tell this my parents. I needed to make up a believable lie that would give me the free pass that I needed.

Either way, I was going to be there.



## Alpha's slave Luna

My parents died of starvation when I was ten, and I was forced to work in...



Tracy Tauro