

Chapter 2

Ava's POV

The night of Natalia's engagement party had nally arrived, and I was barely able to stand straight. After a long day of trying to perfect the decorations in the grand hall, and cooking food which could feed a million men, I hadn't had a moment to myself.

The chandeliers sparkled from the ceiling, brightening the ballroom. Beautiful owers adorned every surface, their sweet scent engulging my nose. Food and drinks were lined up on the buffet tables.

As I hurriedly descended the grand staircase, I tried to smooth down the simple blue dress I had thrown on earlier. It was my best dress, but it was even less fashionable than all the maid's clothes. To think I am the daughter of the Patel Family.

However, I didn't care much about appearances. I had learned long ago that my role was to remain in the background. And that wasn't going to change tonight.

Lost in thought, I bumped into a young man ascending the stairs. He caught me by the waist, and I held onto his hard biceps for support. His eyes looked really familiar. But no matter how I tried, I couldn't quite place where I had ever seen him.

"Are you okay?" he asked gently, his deep voice sending a utter of butteries to my stomach. "I'm sorry; I have a lot on my mind. Today is a big day, you know." he said, chuckling softly.

He was beautiful. With a sharp jawline and a smooth face, this man was denitely an angel. His plump lips looked enticing and my mind raced with thoughts of how it'll feel against mine.

"Miss!" I heard a voice shout as hands shook my shoulders. Oh wait, did I just zone out on an attractive guy? Well s**t Ava!

Shaking my head to clear my thoughts, I muttered "Yeah, I'm ne. It's nice to meet you. It's just that you're really cute and I couldn't--"

Loud laughter cut me off, and I raised my eyes to see the guy not even bothering to hide his amusement. What did I say that was funny?

Before I could ask, the cute guy, with a smirk said, "I'm happy you think I'm cute. Although I prefer attractive to cute. Seeing as I'm a man and all."

My eyes widened, did I really say that? Oh my goodness now he'll think I'm a creep or something. Uh, what do I say now to hide my embarrassment?

As if on cue, I heard my mother calling for me from below. "Ava! Come here!"

"Sorry, I gotta go," I said, feeling a mix of disappointment and relief.

"Okay, okay," he replied, a hint of disappointment in his voice. "I hope we'll see each other again sometime."

"Yeah, I'd like that," I managed before rushing down the stairs, my heart still racing from the unexpected encounter. That was intense.

Few minutes later, the guests started arriving. Each one was aunting their beautiful and expensive clothes, but I felt invisible. No one paid me any attention as they chatted and laughed, each person associating only with people of their class.

I was the youngest daughter of the Patel family, one of the wealthiest families in the city, yet nobody knew me. My mother had always made it clear that my place was to stay out of the spotlight, to be invisible so that I do not tarnish the family's reputation. My heart hurt at the thought.

I caught sight of a group of maids struggling to carry trays of food, and without thinking, I stepped in to help. It was a small act, but it was better than doing nothing and being an invisible human.

"Hey, what are you doing? You should not be serving." a voice interrupted my thoughts. It was Uncle Bertram. "Shouldn't you be mingling with the guests?"

I turned to him, forcing a smile. "Uncle, you know very well that people will run away if I go beside them. By the way, am I not the cursed daughter of the Patel family?"

"Stop that," he said, his brow furrowing in disapproval. "You cannot be saying things like that about yourself, Ava. Your father will be so disappointed."

"I'm sorry, Uncle," I replied, my face downcast. "I just..."

"It's okay," he said, his voice softening. "Just enjoy yourself and feel free at the party."

I nodded, though I felt anything but free. I moved through the crowd, hearing snippets of conversation about Liam, my sister's ancé. Whispers lled the air, lled with admiration for the man I had never met.

"That's him! He's so handsome!" someone gushed. "Wow Nat didn't tell us he was this good-looking"

That got my attention, and I peered through the crowd, nally spotting him. Dressed in an impeccably tailored suit, he looked like he had stepped straight out of a modeling shoot. Wow Liam was beautiful, although not as beautiful as the guy on the staircase.

"Wow, that must be him," I heard another guest say. "I wish he had married me instead!"

Ha! Rich people and their jealousy. I thought to myself as I took a glass of champagne from a passing waiter's tray.

I squinted to get a better look at this Liam guy, but realized I didn't recognize him at all. The name sounded familiar, but the face was a stranger. After that day, I didn't remember many things. I had tried so many times but my head hurt every time I tried to force my memories to come back.

As the evening turned into night, I began to feel a strange heat traveling through my body, a ush creeping up my cheeks. The Patel's family AC couldn't possibly be turned off right?

I excused myself, hoping to nd some relief in the bathroom. I splashed cold water on my face, but it did little to cool down the heat I was feeling.

Suddenly, my phone buzzed in my pocket. I glanced down to see my mother's name ashing on the screen.

"Ava, go to the east wing," she instructed. "I need you to get something from the guest room. It's Natalia's gift. I forgot it."

"Yes, mother," I replied, a hint of confusion bubbling up. Why didn't she send a maid? I was never allowed in the east wing.

I hadn't gotten a gift for Natalia. What could I even give her? Nothing I could give her would ever be good enough.

As I entered the guest room, I noticed the bed, perfectly made and so inviting. My body felt heavy and weak. Before I knew it, I had crossed the room and opped onto the bed, letting out a sigh of exhaustion.

Maybe if I had been more aware, if I had understood that something was off, I would have seen what was coming. But in that moment, all I wanted was to escape the tiredness, even if only for a few minutes.

I closed my eyes, welcoming the darkness that had been trying to claim its place.

I slept peacefully, not knowing that from the next day, my life would never be the same again.