

Chapter 11 - Sweet Addiction

When Tara laid down on the guest room's bed that night, her thoughts were spinning and spiraling wildly. She could only consider herself lucky she had snatched the attention of a man such as Antonio, who was not only a man of the world but also several years her senior, and thus, much more mature than she was.

And yet, from what he told her, he seemed quite enamored with her, and had been so for a few years already - like her. But while she tried to forget about him at each and every turn, not missing a chance to go on dates, even though said dates were never really a success albeit not entirely unpleasant too, Antonio had nurtured his feelings, and kept an eye on her and sent her beautiful roses and a card each year for her birthday.

What was she to do? Could she give in to him? Sure, Antonio was a really attractive man but he was dangerous - for her heart. She knew that given some time, he'd have the ability to either break her or make her.

"Argh," she hit the innocent pillow with her fist, sending it flying across the bed.

She crawled until she got it back and then did her best to sleep. But to no avail.

Maybe a shower would do me some good? She told herself.

But the problem was she couldn't possibly put on the same dress she was wearing. With her pride, she hadn't dared to ask for a change of clothes, afraid he'd have a woman's clothes laying around for her to grab, and yet ashamed of asking for some of his.

Steeling her resolve, she rose to her feet, and made a beeline to Antonio's room which was just across hers, and of which the door was left slightly ajar.

She knocked softly, and when she received no answer, instead of dropping the subject, she decided to enter his room. When she did, she was almost surprised by how neat it was. But there was something too neat and too clean about it all.

There was no such thing as perfection in this world, and yet this man was the very definition of it in her book. Even his flaws contributed to that image in her head somehow.

As she neared his bed, she called his name softly, "Antonio."

He didn't stir at first. The second time around, he woke up with a start, straightening up into a sitting position immediately.

His unfocused eyes settled on her, without seeing her, and he said “Fabiana?”

Her heart stung with the rejection. Who was this woman he had been dreaming of?

Then, as the fog lifted from his vision, and he realized who had entered his room, he said softly, “Is something wrong, kitten?”

“I... I...” she stammered on her words, not knowing what to say.

“Don’t tell me you came seeking me out. My heart couldn’t possibly handle it,” he told her teasingly.

She rolled her eyes at him and became less tongue-tied immediately. “I was wondering if you could lend me a pair of shorts and an over-sized t-shirt... if you don’t mind of course.”

“Oh, I definitely do not mind,” he drawled huskily as his eyes darkened.

“I just want to take a shower,” she justified herself.

“No problem,” he said, a smirk adorning his face. “Want me to join you?”

Her eyes widened at his suggestion.

“I am Joking - only joking - kitten,” he said as he rose to his feet. “I can be a gentleman.”

As he stood up, the sheet that had been covering him fell to a heap on the floor, revealing seemingly endless acres of taut muscle. And Tara couldn’t help but stare. She was after all a woman, and he was one fine man.

A small scar caught her eyes on his chest and her eyes narrowed. It was somewhere above his right nipple. It was round and it looked old but she still couldn’t help but ask as she approached him, “What’s that?”

“It’s ugly, isn’t it?” His smile was kind of rueful at that.

“No,” she breathed out, her gaze fully focused on that small round scar.

He took two steps forward and she remained frozen in her spot, unable to move. “It reminds me of a time I’d rather forget but I am who I am because of it.”

“I understand,” she told him softly before dampening her lips.

He leaned forward and she, like the wanton woman she had become for him, closed her eyes in an expectant manner.

But Antonio didn't kiss her. He only rested his forehead against hers. "You don't," he said in much the same tone as hers, "But I appreciate your effort to do so."

Her brow furrowed at that and she put some distance between them before asking, "What do you mean?"

"I can't say," his eyes hardened a little bit as he straightened up, "not now at least."

"Will you ever tell me?" She pouted.

"If you accept to be mine, I will," he deadpanned before reaching out for her.

She thought he was going to grab her and bring her body flush against his. But he did nothing of the sorts. Instead, he just put the strap of her dress back on her shoulder for it had fallen. She had not bothered with it.

"You should not enter a man's room so easily, kitten," he told her with a fond smile. "But then again, you're too innocent to think anything of it."

"I am not innocent," she all but hissed at him.

"Really?" He cocked an eyebrow at her. "Should I be having any concerns regarding your virtue?"

She puffed her cheeks out and he chuckled at her reaction.

Really, Tara? You're too childish. No wonder he thinks you're too innocent for your age. Her reasonable side tutted at her. And her lips thinned at that.

"Don't make that face, kitten," he said softly. "I was just teasing you."

"I know," she all but bit out.

Can you say childish again?

"Sorry," she said on a sigh. "I don't know why I'm reacting this way."

"No worries," he said before adding, "So, we're sharing that shower or what?"

She narrowed her eyes at him in response. "Do not make me swear..."

She didn't get to finish her sentence for he exclaimed, "I'll behave and stop teasing you. I promise."

And then, he gave her the clothing she needed, and she told him good night a second time before retiring to the guest room.

One sole question roamed her mind when she left his room. Who was Fabiana?