

15. Is It True?

Chapter 16 - Sweet Addiction

He's got ties - mafia ties.

The words kept echoing in Tara's head long after her dad had gone home. After that revelation, her mind was in too much of a mess to comprehend anything her dad said, and therefore she asked him to kindly leave, promising him she'd stay in touch.

"Don't do anything you'll regret, baby girl," were his parting words.

Define anything I'll regret, she wanted to retort but kept herself from voicing out the words, knowing they would only spell trouble. And thus, she only nodded at him and smiled reassuringly.

When her dad was finally out of her hair, she was left alone with her thoughts.

Could it be he was telling the truth? Was Antonio really part of the mafia circle?

Well, he does have that dangerous aura about him, a part of her reasoned.

Dangerous aura which you didn't seem to mind before, another part tutted at her.

She shook her head negatively and then made a beeline to the bathroom where she washed her face, in an attempt from her to freshen up. It didn't work all that well.

Then unable to stand the turmoil any longer, she grabbed her phone and dialed Antonio's number which the cocky bastard had saved under the name Amor. She didn't speak Spanish, but she knew the word meant love.

His deep voice greeted her almost as soon as she had called, "Hello, kitten?"

"Is it true?" Tara wasn't of the subtle type. She didn't have a diplomat's bone in her body.

"Is what true? Care to be more specific?"

She knew he knew what she meant, he just wanted her to say the words for some sick reason.

"Are you from the mafia?" She asked in a timid almost ashamed voice.

You have nothing to be ashamed of, girl. What the hell is wrong with you? He's the one leading a dishonest life! She admonished herself.

“Yes, I am,” came his simple reply.

She gasped an “Oh” at that. And before long, she was taking deep gulps of air... almost as if she had run a marathon.

She should really cut all ties with him. Mafia or not, if he truly cared for her, he wouldn’t hurt her - or force her for that matter.

“Take a deep breath, kitten,” came his soothing voice. “In and out. In and out. In and out”

How did he know she was nearing a panic attack? That was beyond her for sure, but his words appeased her nonetheless.

“Do you kill for a living?” She asked meekly, needing to know somehow.

“No,” he deadpanned in a rather amused tone.

She dampened her lips before asking yet another question that just wouldn’t let her be. “Have you killed someone before?”

“Yes.”

For some reason, she felt like she had hit a nerve with her question. She didn’t know what it was that made the affirmative response she got sound so on edge, but it did.

“Do you regret it?” She choked on her words.

She needed to know whether he felt any qualm at all doing the irreparable.

“No,” he said rather harshly.

She gathered that there was a story she didn’t know behind his suddenly clipped answers... but she didn’t dare to ask.

“If that is all, kitten, I need to go,” he said after nearly a minute or so of silence.

“Oh, sure,” she said in a distracted tone.

“I’ll see you soon, cariña,” was the promise that left his lips.

“Don’t count on it,” she said more to herself than to him, seeing as he had hung up already.

Thinking did Tara no good. Pacing around her one-bedroom flat didn’t either. So, she decided to lay in her bed.

She wished she could stop the wild tornado that had become her thoughts but she couldn't. She couldn't focus on anything but the revelations that had been spilled to her in the last twenty four hours.

First of all, she was the object of desire of one very handsome Antonio De la Cruz. Secondly, she had been so for four years now - it was no recent infatuation. Thirdly, he had ties to the mafia world. And last but not least, although he didn't kill for a living, he had killed before - and he didn't regret it.

Her head started to hurt her and she desperately tried to sleep her worries off, to forget about all that had transpired during the last twenty four hours.

She was beginning to drift off into la-la land when her phone rang.

She checked the ID and saw that it was her mom.

"Hey, mom," she drawled drowsily.

"Hey, cupcake," came her mother's greeting. "I understand that you wanted to celebrate your birthday with your friends, but why didn't you come home today? I made you a cake."

Her mother's sweetness brought her joy, and that was a welcomed reprieve from all the bottled up feelings that had been battling in the deepest recess of her soul.

"Aw, mom, you shouldn't have," she told her softly.

She was sure her mom had done it with all the care in the world, seeing as it was her birthday. And putting efforts into making a birthday cake instead of just buying one meant the world to Tara. She didn't wish to disappoint her mom by not going home... and yet, could she see her dad after their heated argument?

"Nonsense!"

Her mom's exclamation, which was rather similar to what Antonio had told about the eggs earlier, reminded her of the man's sweet and caring side.

Underneath the beautiful sweet exterior there is a killer waiting to attack. Truly a wolf in sheep's clothing.

You don't know him that much, a part of her reasoned. Give him a chance.

A chance to do what exactly? He killed someone...

Maybe he had his reasons? Give him a chance to explain.

There's nothing to explain.

“Tara? Are you there?” Her mother’s voice snapped her out of her musings.

“Yes, mom,” she assured her before adding, “let me just put something on, and then I’ll be on my way home.”