

Chapter 2 - Sweet Addiction

Getting the dress wasn't the easiest task out there for Tara as she could be picky with her clothes. She wasn't being a diva exactly, but she did enjoy having all the attention to herself at parties. One could only imagine how enthusiastic she would be since it was her own birthday party she wanted to shine at.

Nevertheless, she finally found the one after about three hours of window shopping. It cost nearly five hundred dollars. It wasn't a brand dress or anything, but it had a mix of class and sultriness none of those she had seen or tried on had.

"Girl, if you don't shine in this dress, I'm not sure what will do the trick for you," Chloe observed in a dreamy tone.

Tara's response was to smile at her friend cheekily and then tell her, "I know right! let's go look for the shoes that'll go with it now."

"Yay, more shopping!" Chloe let out happily, and soon enough they were squealing in delight. They shared the same passion for shopping... for make-up and cute boys as well.

Very typical of teenagers to like dolling up.

When they had all the party essentials Tara would need for her birthday - meaning the dress, the shoes and the bag - they decided to have a burger at a food chain.

Again, very typical of teenagers to like junk food.

Before Tara realized how time flew, it was her birthday. Her parents, who were intent on spoiling her, had rented a restaurant in one of Phoenix's most prestigious hotels.

Chloe brought all her make-up and began to work her magic on her best friend. No matter how much Tara liked dolling up, she didn't know how to go on about it. Therefore, it was only logical she'd leave the task in her best friend's hands. Chloe had nimble fingers after all and was very talented. Although her dream was to become a fashion designer, not a make-up artist, Tara always told her that she could do both if she so wished.

When Tara and Chloe emerged from the birthday girl's room, they no longer looked like teenagers, and had all the charms a woman could pretend to.

In her daring red dress, Tara was sure to attract stares. As for her make-up, it did make her look more mature. Therefore, it was a win-win, and she was sure her look would be a hit. As for

Chloe she had put on a sequined golden dress that added some more allure to her exotic-beauty charm.

Tara's mom was waiting for them at the bottom of the stairs. She had called at least three times before they decided they looked good enough and needed to get going.

"What do you think, mom?" Tara asked as she gave her her best profile, showing her that dimpled left cheek of hers.

"You look stunning, sweetie," she said, a smile stretching her lips. "You too, Chloe."

Both girls thanked her at that.

And then, they exited the house, and found a limo waiting for them to their delight.

"Mom, you shouldn't have," Tara said softly although she was jubilant inside.

"You deserve all the best, sweetie," her mom said.

The ride to the hotel was a quiet one. The girls were taking pictures of themselves while Tara's mom watched them with obvious amusement.

When they finally reached their destination, they almost felt reluctant to leave the limo.

Although Tara's parents weren't exactly poor - with her dad being an attorney and her mom a doctor - she didn't know why they decided to pay for such a luxurious birthday party.

Nevertheless, she didn't care enough to ask. She knew her parents only wanted the best of the best for her.

When they got in, a big banner congratulated Tara on her birthday.

Chloe giggled in mirth as a smartly clad waiter offered her a drink - an alcoholic one.

"I'm not of age yet," she told him before winking at him.

He was quick to blush and apologize for his mistake.

Tara busied herself with greeting her friends. Some looked at her with envy in their eyes, and some with gratitude for being invited. Most boys, however, looked at her, almost as if for the first time.

It felt good, refreshing, and brought excited butterflies to her belly.

Before long, the DJ started and her guests - of whom she barely knew the half - went wild.

She was dancing together with Chloe on a Rihanna song when her eyes fell on a man... yes, a man, not a boy. Quite literally a man, not by any means an exaggeration on her part.

He looked to be in his early twenties. He wore a navy suit that fit him well and enhanced his broad back.

Tara was immediately drawn to him, and felt almost compelled to go to her dad who was talking with the man.

She walked there with legs made of jelly and basically made a fool of herself as she staggered and almost hit the floor once she had reached them. If it hadn't been for the man's quick reflexes, she would have fallen that was for sure.

But then again, it was purely his fault she had almost fallen to begin with. It was after all whatever he had put on as cologne that made her swoon.

"Are you okay?" He asked her, and she looked up from her traitorous feet into his handsome face.

His jaw was strong and sharp, his green eyes deep, mesmerizing, and maybe even slightly amused. And don't get her started on his lips. They were neither too full nor too thin.

"Peachy," she basically purred. And immediately, a blush settled over her face.

"Something the matter, Tara?" Her dad asked in an inquisitive tone.

"Nothing much, dad," she shook her head. "I was just curious to know who your friend was."

The man beat her dad to the punch and introduced himself, "I am Antonio De La Cruz, one of your dad's clients. You must be Tara. I've heard great things about you."

She let out an oh at that and nodded her head approvingly, not finding the courage to tell him she knew nothing about him seeing as her father never spoke about work at home.

She then saw Chloe approaching them and thought sadly she wouldn't have the man's attention as she wished, seeing as her friend was a stunning woman already, and she, on the other hand, was just... Tara.

Well, just Tara, woman up! A part of her chastised her.

"I should go have fun," she then said, a smirk tugging at the corner of her lips. "I'll see you around," she said in a hushed tone for Antonio's benefit and even winked at him.

"You can count on it," she was almost sure she heard him tell her when she began walking away from her dad and his client.

Antonio was much more intense, much more confident than any man she had ever encountered. He was simply more... much more. And she wanted him, like she had never wanted any other guy in her entire life.

Would she have him? Dare she go after him?

She shook the thought away. He was, after all, oh so obviously many years her senior.