

## Chapter 9 - Sweet Addiction

To say Tara hadn't imagined her birthday to play out the way it did wouldn't cover the half of it. And although it was a surprising turn of events, it wasn't one she minded. After all, she was with the man she had been pinning after from afar for years.

Antonio had never shown her an ounce of affection in the scarce times they had met by accident. Hell, he had even gone as far as to tell her he didn't know her two years ago.

So, she was stuck on that still. Who could blame her?

But now, she found out to her surprise and utter delight that he was the one behind the roses each year. Antonio was her silent admirer. She wondered why he had not made his move but chose not to ask, for fear of finding out he used to think she was puerile or something.

Yes, she didn't have the best image of herself. She had grown up like a spoiled albeit sheltered daddy's girl who barely knew wrong from right, who barely knew friends from foes. And all through high school, she had been much too awkward to have many friends. Back in New York, she had had for sole friend Carmen with whom she still kept in touch. And in Phoenix, it was all she could do to keep up with the lively and beautiful Chloe.

She didn't think she needed many friends to be happy, she was satisfied with having Chloe by her side, always supporting her. It was enough, really. But she still longed for a man. Deep down, she had always wanted to have a boyfriend, but never had the chance to be asked that fateful question. Sure, she had gone on dates, had a few dates here and there, but nothing too much.

She confessed all of the above in her own way to Antonio when they finished eating, and were sitting on the black sofa of the spacious living-room, "I am not a sophisticated girl. I barely have any experience as you already know. Will you be okay with that?"

She had to ask. She had to know his opinion regarding the subject.

"Will I be okay with that?" He repeated in disbelief, putting emphasis on the okay part. "Are you out of your damned mind, kitten? I'd be thrilled to be your first, and even more elated if I were to be your one and only."

"I..." She was at loss for words.

"I am seeing too far ahead," he said in an apologetic tone before grabbing her hand in his and bringing her to his mouth. He placed a kiss on the inside of her wrist, right where her vein was apparent.

God she hated her pale skin which made her veins stick out that much more.

“Why are you frowning?” He asked, and she snapped out of her reveries.

“I don’t know what to say, Antonio,” she said after a small pause while averting her eyes and standing up.

“You don’t have to say anything. I understand that all of this can come across as shocking, but I have wanted you since day one.”

Her heart started drumming loudly in her ears, and her breathing grew labored at that.

“Kitten, are you okay?” He asked while rising to his feet as well.

“I don’t know what to think,” she let out while looking him straight in the eyes.

“Don’t think then,” he said in a husky tone, “Feel.”

Saying that, he placed his hand on the skin covering her wildly beating heart, and the butterflies in her belly did a somersault at the rather intimate gesture.

Antonio leaned down slowly, probably giving her time to back away should she want to, but she wanted him too much to listen to common sense and follow reason.

Standing on her tiptoes, she met him halfway, bringing their lips together in a dance as old as time itself. A dance of passion, lust, desire... every carnal feeling out there was present with them.

She felt his hands on her waist and he was soon bringing her up so she could wrap her legs around him, which she did without thinking twice about it.

While he grabbed her by her ass cheeks, and then steadied her with his hands on her bare thighs, she realized that her short black dress had ridden up and was no longer covering anything but the essentials.

Oh well, who cared? She was an adult. And besides, they were alone anyways.

When she felt his hard-on against her covered center, she went from turned on to hell-a horny in a nanosecond. Her juices had already ruined her underwear, and they carried on with the damage by running down her thighs.

When she freed her mouth, because - well, let’s face it - breathing was a must, she didn’t think she could handle more without offering herself on a platter to him.

“Put me down,” she let out breathlessly while he was busy sucking on the juncture between her neck and her collar bone.

“What for?” He said in a strained voice.

Think of a reason, Tara, she told herself. Think!

“You’re rushing me,” she said after some time.

And he straightened up quickly and was soon placing her back on the floor.

“When did I ever do that?” He bit out, eyes narrowed on her, and she felt like a little girl about to be scolded.

“By kissing me,” she shrugged with feigned nonchalance, when the truth was that she was very tense.

“I want you,” he all but growled the words out, “I believe I made that abundantly clear already. I am barely coherent when you’re in the same room as me.”

Antonio was being absurdly honest about what he felt... and instead of it being sweet in Tara’s book, it scared her, and sent her running for the hills.

“I need time to process this all,” she told him simply.

“Seriously?” He was astonished, and it showed in the tone of his voice. “Why did you follow me out of the club then? Why did you allow me to kiss you, to hold you and have you close?”

Because you make it so easy. Because you bring out the inner slut in me.

Those were the answers that came to her mind but which she didn’t dare voice out.

“Give me one month to think it through,” she bargained with him.

“I have waited for four long years to be with you, what’s a few more weeks?” He let out on a sigh. “On one condition,” he added after a while and she cocked an eyebrow at him in question, “I don’t want you to date any man in this month.”

“I think I can handle that,” she quipped.

“And don’t go back to your flat just yet, spend the night with me.”

His conditions weren’t formulated as requests, rather as demands.

And weirdly enough, she found his dominating side enthralling.

She was sick, and officially and irreversibly doomed. Deep down, somewhere, she knew it. But she stalled.

“No funny business,” she told him in a voice that she had wanted stern but that only served to make him smirk.

“None, cariña. I swear,” he said while holding his right hand above his heart.

“Good,” she said.

“Good,” he echoed after her.