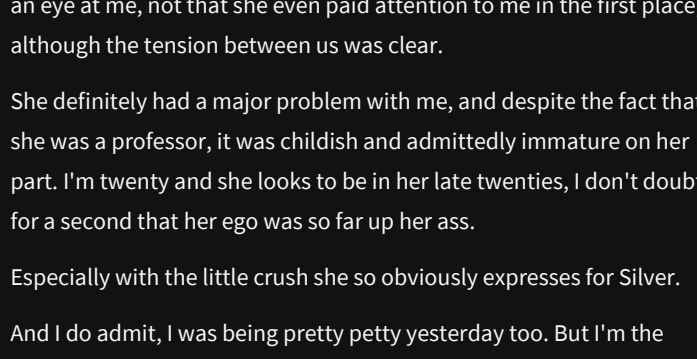


Chapter Sixteen



Crucially, Silver Ceraso gave me no indication of what or where we were going to do tonight, leaving me with no choice but to be concerned about what to wear.

Do I dress up or do I keep it lowkey?

I don't know because he didn't tell me.

Uomo.

Translation: Men.

College went pretty breezy today, Silver wasn't in class again—presuming he was out doing work. Professor Levine didn't even blink an eye at me, not that she even paid attention to me in the first place, although the tension between us was clear.

She definitely had a major problem with me, and despite the fact that she was a professor, it was childish and admittedly immature on her part. I'm twenty and she looks to be in her late twenties, I don't doubt for a second that her ego was so far up her ass.

Especially with the little crush she so obviously expresses for Silver. And I do admit, I was being pretty petty yesterday too. But I'm the student and she's the professor. Catch my dri?

Hayden couldn't be with me tonight to get ready, he was out on a mission with a few others—burthe's been hyping me via text and isn't disappointing.

The outfit I have officially chosen was a pair of blue denim, low-rise jeans that ended loosely just above my feet. They sat on my hips perfectly, and without an ounce of shame, the black g-string I had on underneath was peeking through just an inch from the top.

Sexy mama.

For my top, I wore a white cropped long-sleeved top. It had a little opening at the front, allowing just a brief view of my breasts. This top I had only worn a handful of times, though it was definitely now on my favourites list.

Performing a little spin, I tip my head back and look at the view from behind in the full-length mirror. My bottom was being hugged by the jeans and need to say I was impressed.

My outfit wasn't too outgoing, yet, it was casual ether.

I accessorised with a silver necklace that had a flower engraved pendant—my parents had given it to me as a 16th birthday gift. It also brought out my new tattoo adjusting onto my skin.

Spotting a few rings, I placed three on each finger and added a simple silver bangle to my right wrist.

My shoes were only some classic white Nike sneakers and my hair was let out and down in its natural wave of so curls.

I grabbed my Versace purse and placed in my lip balm, my personalised taser, a small packet of skittles, and a sample perfume that Hayden got given when going into Sephora for me.

Glancing at the time on my phone, it was currently 7:45 and I was already ready. I had sent a quick photo to Hayden, him replying with as many dirty emojis as he could, including some disturbing comments about me and Silver.

After sending a quick remark back to him, I shut off my phone and exited my room deciding to just hang around downstairs until Silver arrived.

Both my parents were out tonight, on a mission or something. But they both wished me luck—more my mother than my father. He was practically reminding me every second about all the self-defence strategies he and my uncle had taught me, adding a reminder to bring my taster with me as well.

But then my mother reminded him that it was Silver, that he wouldn't do anything to hurt me. Although I still saw the hesitation in her eyes before they left, trust never came easy for both of them.

I trusted myself to know I wouldn't put myself in danger, they knew that. I trusted Silver, given the little time I've known him, something about meeting him as a child had brought this sense of trust to dwell between us.

From across the room, my eyes land on my very precious Carmello "How's my baby boy?" I coo, scoping him up from the lounge he was curling around. Butterscotch purs, telling me that he was enjoying my presence.

I could never love anymore more than him.

I keep rubbing his back and aimlessly strolling us around the room as I start talking nonsense to him.

"I'm nervous, Butterscotch. And scared." I sigh when I see his blank expression, his cute little whiskers moving every time I talk.

"What if everyone's wrong about this? Yes, Silver is so goddamn gorgeous and he simply makes me starstruck—but what if he breaks my heart?" My voice cracks a little as reality dawns, a saddening feeling flares up inside of me and as if really hits, I sink down into the couch.

Butterscotch lays down on my lap, resting on his back and swinging his paws playfully at my hair. Ignoring him, I continue to relish in this saddening fear of mine.

"I'm definitely in too deep now. There's no turning back, right?" I look down at him, seeing his obvious distracted stare.

Sighing for the fifth time, I shake my head of my thoughts and fears—along with removing Butterscotch's paws from my hair and decide to take out my phone.

Hayden had sent me a message just a minute ago, making me smile a little.

Good luck Pooh Bear, no overthinking!

And then the one below makes me roll my eyes.

And if there's any spicy time, make sure to message me ASAP! What a dumbbo.

Before I could pull my phone away, an incoming call from Silver makes me freeze.

Oh shit, why's he calling?

Probably cancelling on you.

Taking a deep breath, I answer it and only think of the worst.

"Silver?" I look down at Butterscotch, wide-eyed as I wait for his reply.

"I'm outside." He replies deeply, right as I hear the sound of a car door closing in the background.

A sense of relief fills me and I nod to myself, immediately hopping off of the couch with Butterscotch jumping over me.

"Okay, I'll be out in a second." Breathe out nervously, hanging up right after. Sticking my phone into my bag, I quickly give Butterscotch a kiss on the top of his head and make a note that I had already fed him, so I didn't need to worry.

My guards open the front door for me, nodding at me once and keeping their heads down.

Exiting through the door, my footsteps halt at the top of the stairs as my sight is inhaled with the sight of a delicious-looking Silver—and his royal-blue Ferrari.

Shamelessly, I look over his appearance.

His strong legs were hidden beneath a pair of beige baggy jeans. They were loosely fitted around his torso, only bringing my gaze up to his upper half, which was dressed in a dark, khaki sweatshirt. That too was well-fitting to him, not too tight but not too loose.

I could just make out the outline of his muscled arms before shifting my gaze to his neck. Adorned with the familiar chain with the pendant of a cross, hanging loosely over his sweatshirt.

His hair was the same. The darkest shade of black, perfectly shaped around the sides and back allowed the top of his head to be shadowed upon trestles and trestles of silky hair.

Knowing what it felt like beneath my palm, my hands itched to run through it.

And finally, his icy blue gaze caught my own momentarily. He seemed to have assessed me too, this darkening look crossed his features, one that resembled a journey of both want and lust.

"Hi." I give him a shy wave, smiling just a touch as my feet begin to move again.

A few seconds later, I was standing in front of him. The aromatic smell of him consumed me, a scent of a masculine cologne that wasn't too overbearing, and that significant touch of cinnamon that I've learnt to become obsessed with.

I watch the way his eyes flicker down my body, once again, his eyes turn dark looking down at my hips, noticing the way his veiny hands flexed at his sides.

He flickers his eyes back up at me, and my lips twitch as I see him take in a deep breath silently and acknowledge me with a single nod—utterly wordless.

If that reaction is because of me, I will simply pass away.

"Showing off are you?" I gesture to one of his many fancy cars, my lips pulling into a mischievous smile.

He lets out a breathless laugh, shaking his head in disbelief and licking his bottom lip. "Maybe." He replies so lightly, a devilish smile slowly growing onto his lips.

That smile sidetracked me completely. I became distracted by his smile that could practically win over the world—despite as soon as it was there, it had vanished and his lips now remained in their straight, full form.

A silence passes between us, I could feel my small smile still linger about, only while he kept looking at me as if I was some overly delectable desert.

"Sei bellissima."

Translation: "You look so beautiful."

A blossoming heat passes through me, it reaches my cheeks almost immediately and I just knew by the twitch of his lips that I was as red as the colour.

"Grazie, D'argento." I reply in a whisper, not even sure if he had heard me properly.

Translation: "Thank you, Silver."

"You look good as well..." I admit, clearing my throat a little, becoming uncomfortable and agitated with myself.

Silver has no reaction, he remains relaxed and at ease—sort of making me envious that he seemed so chill.

"Thanks, Fiore." His lips rise a little as he opens up the door for me to enter his car, restricting my eyes from staring at him for too long.

"So, where are we going to? I manage to ask through all the deceiving thoughts in my mind, relating to how undeniably stunning he was.

He rests both hands on the roof of the car, weighing himself down as he bows his head down to look at me.

"It's a surprise." That was all he said, leaving me curious. And he sees that confusion, elaborating further with a little eye roll.

"Choose where you want to eat and then I'm taking us to the place." That still didn't explain anything, so I nodded hesitantly, and he nodded back, leaning on the car and facing his muscular back to me as he closed my car door, going to his side.

It was then silent between us as he had gotten into the car and skillfully exited the premises.

Once we were out of my neighbourhood, I began to think of where to eat. I didn't want to make him drive all the way to certain places, so I picked whatever was closest.

"We can through that drive-thru they have around the corner here," I point to the direction of it, and he nods in response, tapping his fingers against the wheel while he moves the car skillfully, swerving to the left without an effort being placed.

"You're a good driver." I point out randomly, having his head tilt in the dark briefly to look at me. An amused look across his features, receiving a glance of humour.

"Oh, yeah?"

I hum in response, watching the way his fingers continue to tap to the beat of the music.

"You like The Weekend?" I question, still staring at his tapping fingers. They stop for a moment, making me look up at him.

He shrugs, not looking at me. His face is half taken by the darkness of the car, although the headlights of others allow his lips to be presentable along with the glow of his blue eyes.

"Don't mind him," He murmurs, finally casting me a glance as we pull into the line of the drive-thru.

I nod towards the menu that glowed brightly on a digital stand, my eyes catching onto the many meal numbers.

"You're going to eat with me, right?" I stare at the side of his face, inspecting his every reaction. He remains blank as he nods, looking down at his lap and driving forward.

"Pick what you want, no pressure. I'll get whatever you get." He says nonchalantly, with no expression or glances towards me as he overviews the drive-thru.

Shrugging to myself, I picked out something mutually good. Some sort of bowl with a mix of brown rice, chicken, avocado and cheese, and a few extra spices added in. My stomach was already on the verge of growling for it.

"I'll get the number five." I tell him quietly and he nods, rolling down his window and waiting for the speaker to erupt with a voice.

Silver briefly said the order number, adding two for both of us, along with two bottles of water as I requested. After a few minutes we were handed our food and finally were on our way to this mystery place.

"So I can't even get a hint?" I pondered, pursing my lips and smiling with hope.

He chuckles at that and adjusts his lower half so his body was sunk a little lower in the chair. "No, Serenity, it's another five minutes, just wait—"

I dramatically sigh, cutting him off and receiving a freakishly scary glare from him, making me sit quietly alone instantly.

He obviously knew what he was doing as he became all smug in his jokes of ways, a sneaky smirk plastered across his lips. Suddenly, he jerks the car across the other side of the road, making my eyes bulge and my fists clench.

We were now speeding down the opposite side of the highway, along the coastline of a beach.

"Jesus, Silver, you'll kill us one day doing that." I scold, shaking my head at him. He chuckles deeply again, his hand beginning to run over his jaw in a soothing motion.

"Like you said Serenity, I'm a good driver."

Arrogant stronzo.

I say nothing, merely admiring the view of the beach we passed by. Only until we reached the end, did we pull up into the parking space outside of the beach.

When I started piecing together where we were going to be, I got an exciting feeling.

He parked the car and took the bag of food from my lap, exiting the car and coming around to my side.

A gust of wind hit me as I stood out, my hair trailing behind my back and my cramped legs stretching out.

"This was the surprise?" I ask cheerfully, looking past the so and up at the sky that littered stars and passing aeroplanes and moon that shone just as brightly as the sun did.

Once again, he says nothing, only taking my hand and leading us onto a pathway that edged further down to the other side of the beach.

The street lights made everything appear a lot lighter amongst the darkness. The closer we got to where he was leading us, the more I actually figured out what this apparent surprise was.

He had set up a paint night.

Automatically, my feet moved onto the so sand and effortlessly, I slipped off my shoes and practically ran up onto the sheet spread that was wide across the sand.

High up on the shore, there was a plastic sheet spread wide across a portion of the sand. On top of that was a wooden table, carrying tubes of hundreds of different coloured paint, along with two plastic paint pallets.

Two wooden easels perched atop the plastic mat, each with two blank canvases and a mini table on each side embellished with a tin of various-sized paint brushes.

By this point, my mouth was agape with shock and utter disbelief, if someone were to tell me what my dream date would be, this would be it.

"Silver..." I continue looking around, pure amazement shining through my eyes as I took it all in. I had no words to tell him, but simply, I turned around to face him.

Up against some palm tree a few feet away from me, his big arms were folded across his chest and the street light illuminated his features, allowing the softest glow to come across his cream-coloured skin.

"Like it?" He tilts his head to one side, observing me as I stepped closer and closer with probably the largest, beaming smile on my face.

As soon as my chin was direct across his chest, I tilted my head to look him straight in the eye and shake my head.

"Love it." I admit, looking past his long lashes and into the swirling blue irises.

His lips rise just an inch, his arms unfolding and wrapping around my hips, his hands doing their magic in making me utterly melt beneath his touch.

"I'm glad." His deep voice whispers into my ear, brushing through my brain like a dopamine reaction.

"You did all of this for me?" I bite the inside of my cheek, still not really believing that he had placed so much effort into this.

"Thought you'd like it." He admits casually, more so as if it wasn't a big deal.

I laugh slightly, almost breathless from the amount of surprise he'd put me into. "Thank you, Silver." I blurted, looking down at our close bodies.

He kisses my chin, making our eyes meet. "Welcome, Flower."

A second goes by, my heart racing beneath my chest and the butterflies in my stomach battling like crazy. This man was the highest of my dreams.

"Can we start painting now?" I rock my head to the side in questioning, focusing my gaze on my hands that adjust themselves on his biceps.

"You don't want to eat first?" It was as if I could hear the frown in his voice, so I lifted my gaze to prove my point. The creased between his brows had my mind melting, but I shook my head and tapped my fingers along his arms.

"No, how about we eat when the paintings are drying? Unless you're hungry, we can eat now—"

He cuts me off by shaking his head and laughing so, his small dimples popping out through his so, looking like a child.

"You're cute." He flutters his lips under my jaw, kissing me there and placing another just below my ear. My legs automatically turn jello, the softness of his lips up against my own skin and lingering and lingering until it's all I feel.

"And I like the way you think, Serenity." He adds, whispering delectably into my ear.

My eyes flicker to his as he moves away, they assess me while I assess him.

"You're just trying to get into my pants, aren't you D'argento?" I bite my bottom lip to contain my laugh as his blank expression and the roll of his eyes, he pats my hip once and moves a fraction away from me—just to look at me from a further distance it seems.

"I want to," He admits, casually shrugging as if it was a normal thing for him to say. My smile slowly fades and the erratic tic of my heart begins again. "But in my own moment."

With those words falling into the air, he moves on over toward the paint set-up.

I shook my head of the many visualising thoughts of us together—those obnoxious dreams digging right back up from the grave I had buried them in.

Following Silver, I decided to pick up one of the aprons from the table, tossing it around my head and hopelessly struggling to tie it around my back. I could be utterly uncoordinated sometimes.

"Here," His deep voice comes so lightly from behind me, and the graze of his fingertips brushing my own had my spine straightening and my muscles tightening.

My hands dropped as he took over the strings, the bare skin of my back being grazed by his fingertips, the coolness of his rings—just his hands. Every bare graze sent a heat shock through me, spreading goosebumps up my arms and at the back of my neck, where the cool breeze of his voice was.

"Done." He whispered into my ear, his lips secretly grazing my neck as he moved away. But before he did, he looped his pinky finger through the elastic of my g-string that was on display, casually letting it slap against my skin the second after.

I jumped in surprised, spinning around to face his devilishly smirking self.

Staring down at me deeply, Silver bites down on his lower lip attempting to contain his laughter it seems. I scowl up at him and playfully flick his bicep with my finger, doing no damage done only seeming to release that part of him he kept hidden.

A boyish laugh fell from his lips, only rising a giggle out of me too.

Shaking his head, he ran a hand through his inky hair and still chuckled lightly. I slyly moved away from him, throwing him his own apron and then beginning to gather all the different colours of paint onto my pallet.

"You know what? I'm not even going to sketch what I want to do, just going to smother it all on and hope for the best." I tell him, feeling a little proud of my confidence.

I look at him from over my shoulder as I walk over to the painting area, dumping all of my gatherings onto the small desk.

"And what are you smothering on, him?" He tests, striding over to his own station opposite mine. His tall, muscular figure looked oddly good in the apron he wore. Especially with his sleeves rolled up to his elbows—my, oh, my.

I think about what I wanted to do, even if I already knew.

There's nothing better than to recreate a view that's right in front of you.

"You."

His head snaps up from the paint he was mixing, a flicker of emotion passing through his gaze that I couldn't quite detect. I tip my head to the side, smiling confidently as I wait for some sort of denial or dismissing comment.

But what he says next makes my own smile fall right down to my ass.

"Good," He looks deeply into my eyes and shrugs. "I'm painting you then."