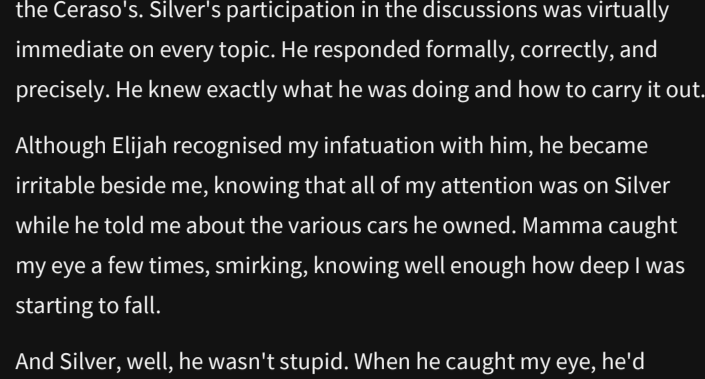


Chapter Twenty Two



The dinner went by dreadfully slow.

It was boring. As I expected it to be.

But having the complete view of Silver talking business, being serious, and doing that demanding thing he does so naturally was quite the entertainment.

I enjoyed it fairly too much.

Elijah tried to talk to me again, but I refused, telling him I wasn't in the mood for chit-chat. That wasn't a lie, but it wasn't the truth either.

If it were Silver that had asked me what my favourite food was, I would have happily gone into great detail about each of my favourite meals.

My parents did most of the talking, which was mostly business with the Ceraso's. Silver's participation in the discussions was virtually immediate on every topic. He responded formally, correctly, and precisely. He knew exactly what he was doing and how to carry it out.

Although Elijah recognised my infatuation with him, he became irritable beside me, knowing that all of my attention was on Silver while he told me about the various cars he owned. Mamma caught my eye a few times, smirking, knowing well enough how deep I was starting to fall.

And Silver, well, he wasn't stupid. When he caught my eye, he'd discreetly smirk before slipping away the mischief.

Every time our eyes met, my heart beat faster. He was purely angelic, despite the fact his small smile was more devilish than angelic.

As we stood outside the restaurant, the Ceraso's had the valley bring up their cars, while our own personal driver stood outside the car, waiting for us to enter.

Everyone said their goodbyes, Silver and I were the only two who didn't engage, so I stood in front of him, shielding his view to me.

Upon facing him, the curious glint in his eyes sent butterflies racing through my stomach.

"Did you eat enough?" He asked me, digging his hand into the pockets of his pants.

I half-heartedly shrug. To be honest, I didn't as the portions were the size of my palm, although it was delicious.

"I guess." He lowers his head to look at me, with no emotion in his gaze or face, I could tell he sensed the lie.

"Are you free the rest of the night?"

This sensation is rippling through my body. I couldn't put a name to it, but I was pleased that he had asked. My teeth fumble with my bottom lip, and I direct my focus to my parents, who are standing by the car, conversing with the driver.

"I am..."

Bringing my gaze back to him, I find that he had never left me.

"Why don't you come home with me? I'll cook for you." He tilts his head to the side, observing me.

A little smile crosses my lips at the thought of it. I glance again at my parents, contemplating.

Fuck it, Serenity. Have a little fun.

"Okay." I look up at him and smile, receiving a small one back from him.

Taking a step back, I look between him and my parents. "Let me just tell them—"

He shakes his head, cutting me off. "Don't worry. I'll go speak to them."

Before I could protest, I watch as he strode over to my parents, confidently walking the path as if he owned the world.

His muscles move through the fabric of his shirt, his hand running through his dark locks as he faces my father. Shaking his hand, he says a few words, and Papa's eyes find my own, narrowing in on me before going back to Silver.

I could feel my heart beat out of my chest, anxiousness crawls my skin as Mamma grins widely, latching onto Papa's arm and happily nodding, agreeing with whatever Silver was saying.

A few moments, Papa nods once and looks over at me again, saying a word or two at Silver.

Seconds later they shook hands again. Warming my heart and shocking me all at once, Silver leaned down and gave my mother a brief hug and she lightly hugged him back, winking at me in the process.

Turning back around, Silver made his way back to me.

My parents slid into the car and the Ceraso's had already taken off, my parents following soon after.

Leaving Silver and me alone, once again.

"What did you say?" I suspiciously place my hand on my hips, staring up at him in wonder.

Silver's lips twitch for a moment, before returning to their natural straight form, holding his hand out for me to take.

"That's between your parents and me."

Rolling my eyes, I figured I'd find out sooner or later and just took his hand in mine.

He leads us to one of his many cars, opening my side of the door as usual.

"Elijah was talking to me about all of his many cars..." I mention, catching the attention of his eyes rolling.

"What'd he say?" He asks as if he doesn't even want to know what he said.

"I wasn't paying attention, too distracted I guess."

"Distracted?" He folds his arms over his chest, leaning up against the frame of the car door. "Mhm," I swing the belt over my body. "With you."

He places his hands on the roof of the car, swooping down to kiss my cheek, a faint smirk crosses his lips, taking me by surprise.

"I'm glad it's not just me." His gentle whisper causes fluttering around the insides of my stomach, leaving me in a heated position as he closes the door and crosses sides.

We were back on the road, Silver tearing through city traffic as I handled the music. I educate him on some of the songs I play, and he pays close attention, almost appreciating the information.

Or me.

"So, this song is about Harry Styles, considering that the title of it is called 'Style' I laugh at the irony and Silver manages to be an amused brow. "Taylor's iconic though," I state, turning the song up a bit.

"Like that Lana one too?"

I turn my head to him and nod repeatedly. "Exactly! Both iconic women."

He nods his head slowly, lazily scanning the road in front of us.

I hum along to the lyrics, not screaming them as I usually would—for Silver's sake.

The mansion we pulled up to was different to the one the Ceraso's lived in. It was more modern, less big, but nevertheless a mansion.

It was all whites and creams, with strong security gates similar to mine.

As we circle the house, he brings the car right outside of the entrance and parks it. The engine and music were turned off, and we were both out of the car, Silver leading me up the travertine staircase.

"Is this your own?" I asked, my gaze fixed on the arched doorway constructed of more marble.

"Mhm," he hums as he scans his palm on the digital screen that authorises him to enter his house. He had no guards surrounding the house, allowing curious thoughts to creep in.

"How come you've got no security?" I enter behind him, the doors closing and locking on their own. He turns to face me, casually switching on the lights with his thumb.

"I do. Since I'm here, I sent them home for the night. If necessary, I have backup security across from me."

I raise my brows in surprise, nodding while looking around the entryway.

"Come on," He nods his head forward, I follow closely behind him, visually inspecting the interior.

"Your home is pretty." I admit, becoming aware that we had entered a kitchen. Silver chuckles and runs his hand through his hair.

While I go take a seat at the counter, I desperately try to feel comfortable. As lovely as my dress was, all I wanted to do was sit down and eat normally without thinking about the fabric itching my skin.

"Silver?" By the unsteady tone in my voice, I gather his attention by him turning around, frowning slightly.

"What's wrong?" He comes around the counter, his tall figure closer to me now.

One of my hands reaches for the fabric of my dress, releasing it from my stomach so that my stomach rolls don't hinder his sight. "Do you think I could borrow some clothes? This is kind of killing me." I mumbled nervously, the fact that I had to ask him for clothes was slightly awkward, but I'd rather be comfortable.

Silver's lips curl slightly, his blue eyes sparkling under the light. He nods and extends his hand in front of me, clearly leading me somewhere.

We climb some steps, passing many white locked doors and distinct artwork frames hanging on the walls—the art was unique, which I appreciated. I could walk around every corner of his home examining the artistry and their stories.

Once I walk into a room, my eyes are drawn to the enormous king-sized bed with a black frame, as well as the duvet and covers. It was neatly made, and the remainder of the room was marred by dark furniture, except for the white walls.

It was clean, really clean. It looked as if no one lived there.

"Is this your room?" I walk in further, taking a seat on the edge of the bed.

"Yeah," He replied from a closet he walked into, his deep voice muffled from the distance.

"Thought so." I murmur to myself, adjusting to the dark room. He had a terrace in his room too, the curtains were open wide, allowing the view of the city from afar to reflect brightly.

It was stunning.

"I've brought you a few options in case it fits too big." His voice snaps me back to reality, I stand and face him while walking out of the closet.

He was holding sweatpants and t-shirts that looked twice my size, but I said nothing, merely nodding gratefully.

"They're small on me." He offers them to me, slightly clearing his throat as I examine them. His uncomfortable movement makes me laugh.

"Thanks, D'argento."

Nodding, he steps back and looks me in the eye.

"I'll be downstairs cooking you something up. You'll be okay finding your way back down?"

"Yeah, I'll be fine." I give him a small smile as he turns around and exits, clicking the door shut behind him.

So cute.

Stripping off my clothes, I exhale briefly at the immediate freedom I had from the dress. I quickly slip the smallest-looking pair of sweatpants, having to tie a knot at the side of my waist.

Pulling one of the t-shirts over my head, I let it fall to the middle of my thighs and glance at myself in the mirror. I looked like an Omnipa Loompa—but strangely, I loved it.

The oversized clothing sags on me, but I ignore it as I neatly fold the other garments he took out for me and placed them on his bed.

I took my dress into my hands, and because it was silk, I couldn't fold it, so I wrapped it around my waist and slung it over my arm as I walked out of his room.

I walk back down the same path we came in with, admiring the paintings further this time.

As I hit the bottom of the staircase, the delicious smell of food hits me and I almost immediately fall in love. I follow the aroma like a drooling dog and return to the kitchen to an even tastier-looking Silver.

He'd untucked his shirt from his slacks, letting it fall freely down his body. All of his buttons were undone, revealing his slightly tatted chest to me.

He was busy chopping something in front of me while also frying something in the pan behind him. I use this chance to place my dress down and creep up behind him, expecting that he'll scream and I'll have something to use against him.

It was more the opposite.

"Silver!" I laugh, smacking his shoulder. He'd picked me up right behind my head, his arms around my neck. He shakes his head, my arms looping around his neck as I wrap my legs around his waist, his arms pulling me closer to him.

"Too big?" He eyes my clothes—his clothes, his body. A darker shade of blue coating his gaze as he travels his eyes back to mine.

"A little," I admit and shyly press my hands against his chest. "It smells good by the way."

Placing me on the counter in front of him, he continues to dice but starts to talk to me in the process.

"How are classes going?" I lean back on my hands, tipping my head back and staring at his eight-pack of abs dumbfoundedly.

"They're going..." I admit, prancing away from his very toned chest. Those icy eyes of his were partially staring at what he was cutting and looking at me as I talked.

"We have papers due next week...I've done nearly nothing."

Biting my lip, I begin nervously thinking of all the crap I had to do to complete. I was just confused with life and not really focusing on school—yes, physically I'm there, mentally, nope.

"Do you need help or are you just not concentrating?" All of the contents he had been dicing had gotten thrown into the frying pan, making that satisfying sizzling sound while he begins to stir and add spices.

"A little bit of both," I murmur, cautiously eyeing his backside. That ass though.

"I'll be your study partner if you want." He turns his head over his shoulder, immediately making my eyes snap up with a bluish coating my cheeks.

Silently, I pray he hadn't seen me checking out his ass, but when that heart-breaking smirk creeps onto his red lips, I know that he had definitely caught me.

With a dark gleam in his pale blue eyes, he lowers the lid on top of the pan and slowly turns, taking long, powerful strides toward me. My head tilts up to look at him because of his size. Silver's hands rest on the counter beside my thighs, his eyes capturing mine.

"What do you say? Do you want me to teach you how to concentrate, Silver?"

When his lips brushed mine, my eyes flutter shut. I part my lips for him, ready for him to devour me.

"Yes," I respond, feeling his mouth closer to mine.

He slowly kisses me, but the yearning within me escaped and devoured him hungrily. He devilishly smirks against my lips and backs away, causing me to groan.

"Distraction is exactly what leads to inattention, Flower."

Moving away from me, my hands fall back down to my lap and I hold back a pout from my frowning expression. "What does us of promises have anything to do with school?" Silver chuckles and his dimples peek out from beneath his cheeks, checking up on the pasta he was cooking up.

"It's an example. You get distracted too easily. If you want to pass this semester, you'll need to learn control."

Hu ing, I simply disregard his comment and refocus on his movements.

"Business class kind of sucks right now without you there." I tell him, and he turns his head briskly to look me in the eye, tugging up his lips slightly.

"Why's that?" He raises a brow, pouring the fresh pasta into a bowl and beginning the sauce.

"Well, Professor Creepy is acting like a petty high school girl. Her crush on you is affecting my mobility to work."

Stopping his movements, he turns around completely with an inch of a frown. I tilt my head to the side in confusion when he crosses his arms and stares at me sternly.

"What do you mean, Serenity?"

His colder voice catches me off guard, along with the protective emotion swirling on the edges of his cold, blue gaze.

Gulping, I play with the ends of his baggy shirt layered on me like a blanket.

"Well, I'm sure you're aware that she likes you or something..." I quickly glance up at him, seeing his brow now raised. "She thinks of me as a competition or she's jealous—I'm not sure, but every time I try to participate she ignores me."

Realising that he wasn't aware of this, Silver briskly clenches his jaw and frowns at my own frown.

"I can get her fired."

My eyes turn wide and my head snaps in his direction, cautiously taking steps toward me. Once reaching my shocked self, he grasps my chin between his fingers and starts brushing hair away from my face.

"I'll get her suspended and she'll never look your way again. It's not fair to you." He murmurs and strangely, I believe every word he says.

Getting her fired was tempting, but I would just love to see the look on her face if I kissed Silver in front of her.

"It's fine, Silver. With you there, it won't be an issue." I shrug, wrapping my arms around his neck. Silver brushes his thumb over my cheek, looking into my eyes in a daze.

"I won't always be there, Serene."

I smile slightly. "I know."

Leaning up, I kiss his cheek and his eyes twinkle, patting my hip as he moves away and back to the food.

"Is it nearly done?" I peek my head over his shoulder from my position and catch the sauce looking graciously delicious.

"Mhm." He hums.

While he cooks, I briefly talk to him about what I needed help with in some of my classes over the next few minutes.

Finally, he delivers me a heaping bowl of delectable-looking pasta, and I sigh contentedly as the aroma wafts through my nose.

Silver takes a bottle of what appears to be whiskey and pours it a quarter of the way into his glass before setting the bottle beside him. As I dive into my food, I reach for my heart and roll my eyes dramatically as I fall in love with it.

"I want you to cook for me every day." I deadpan. Silver says nothing, staring at me from behind his glass of whiskey.

"Good?" He asks.

"Amazing," I mutter.

I eat in silence, relishing every string of spaghetti and savouring every spice and deliciously cooked item that is placed in front of me. By the time I was full, I put the fairly empty bowl down next to me and washed my mouth down with water.

"What's one thing you treasure most?" I randomly blurted, finding my curious gaze travelling along his every feature.

He scoops, shaking his head with amusement. "Nothing," he says plainly, looking off into the distance.

I shuffle to my feet and step in front of him. His eyes were suddenly fixed on me, with no emotion but merely blue behind them.

"Is there really nothing that is special to you?"

Something passes through his expression, it was only there for a split second but I caught it before his face went back to his stoic facade.

"No." He replies again, I keep in a sigh, staring up at the ceiling and wondering what I treasure most.

"Can I ask you something else?"

He softly nods, wrapping his hands around my waist and playing with the fabric of his own shirt over my body.

I was nervous to ask due to the outcome of my question, the answer might just be not what I was looking for. But I was willing to give it a shot in order to not waste any more of my time or the beating of my heart.

"Do you want to be with me?" I lean back to look up at him more intimately, only to see the confusion in his gaze. "Is what you feel for me temporary or are you willing to give us a shot?"

I continue, "Because if this is all just a test, then I don't want anything to do with you."

A sigh falls from his lips, almost an exasperated sigh.

He brushes a hand on my cheek, shaking his head slowly in disbelief.

"Who has hurt you?"

My heart stops for a moment. Memories of my past love come to mind and I have to physically force myself not to dwell upon the insignificant memories in front of Silver right now.

The question alone makes shivers run up my spine.

Silver could clearly see the sudden horror in my expression, evident that he had hit a nerve of my own.

But he continues with his words.

"I promise that my every intention is right. I've never felt like this with anyone before, Serenity."

My heart rate begins to speed up again, my trust issues slowly slide away as he continues to assure me that he won't be breaking my heart.

"I'm willing to take this," he motions to us, "as fast or slow as you want. Just know that my every interest is you and only you."

I feel myself slowly fray with this every word. His whisper of promises kept me from thinking of the worst. The next moment he made was a kiss on my cheek, and then another to the corner of my lips, before finally landing on my plump lips.

He kissed me once, a slow meaningful kiss. As if to seal the promises.

"Okay," I replied back just as softly as he was speaking to me before. I could hardly form words for what he had spoken of, but I was more than happy that he felt as I did.

"Is this too fast, Silver?" I frown, giving into my hesitant thoughts. He shakes his head, completely disagreeing.

"Not at all." He smirks, licking his bottom lip. "My attraction to you is almost obsessional. Whether it is too slow or too fast, my lure for you will not stop growing."

I smile. Him being open about his feelings for me increased every feeling I had for him to another level.

He was slowly slithering his way into my heart and I wasn't going to stop him.

"Want to watch a movie?" I wiggle my brows and he laughs so, I, it was so genuine that I genuinely forgot that he was emotionally most of the time I was around him.

"Sure." He replies, swinging his arms over my shoulder and leading me out of the kitchen with a full stomach and a heavy heart.

"What do you want to watch?"

He led us to some sort of theatre room, it looked absolutely insane. I plopped down and got comfortable on the lounge in the far back, snuggling up in the clothes I was buried in.

Silver begins to switch everything on and then passes me the remote before slipping out of the room for a moment.

I still waited on his response, now also waiting on his arrival. When he returned to the room, his arms were now studded with blankets that looked to be warmer than him.

He piles all of the blankets on top of me, and I barely get a word in to tell him that it was fine and that I didn't need three thick blankets on me.

Coming down alongside me, I smear half of the covers onto his lap and snuggle up against his chest, while his arm went around me and drew me closer.

"You're picking." I toss the remote into his lap earning a quick glance from him.

"That's a lot of pressure." He says sarcastically and I laugh loudly burying my face into his chest.

"Do you watch a lot of movies?" I flicked my gaze up at him while his own remained on the tv as he flickers through all of the movies.

"No."

I frowned slightly, but then it occurred to me that if he was a mafia boss, he probably didn't have time for it.

Looking back at the screen, I focus on the one movie he had stopped on. "This is my all-time favourite movie." I tell him, a gradual smile spreading over my lips. I figured he knew that already according to how he had clicked onto it and the movie started rolling.

"I know." He smirks, and the voice of Flynn Ryder begins to fill the speakers.

Tangled was one of my all-time favourite movies as a child. And it's all in one of my favourite comfort movies to his day.

"Have you seen it before?" I whisper, my eyes gleaming at the sight of the precious golden flower.

From the edges of my gaze, I see his head shake no.

"You'll love it."

Focused on the screen, I feel his lips graze the side of my neck, his cool breath fanning the skin under my ear. Those lips that had only devoured mine countless times now, brush against the lobe of my ear as his deep voice whispers.

"I'm sure I will."