

SHAMELESS WITH MY FATHER'S MAFIA BEST FRIEND

CHAPTER FOUR

SNOWFLAKE....

Early Saturday morning, Lilliana was still deep under her covers dreaming when her phone rang. The loud ringtone disturbing her sleep and forcing her to wake up. Groaning, she patted the space under her pillow for her phone ...were she left it the night before with her hand and dragged it toward herself. She swiped her thumb across the screen to receive the call and flipped onto her back, placed the phone on the pillow next to her ear and said "hello??"

"Am I speaking to Miss Barnette??" An unfamiliar feminine voice politely asked from the other side of the phone. The girl frowned, quickly getting her phone from the pillow to look at the screen for the caller ID but was greeted by the words unknown number. She pondered for a second on what to do next before replying "yes??" Unsure if she should even still be talking to the stranger.

"Miss Barnette, you're speaking to Agnes from the veterinary clinic ...I'm calling to let you know that your puppy is okay and ready to come back home" Lilliana sighed in relief, inwardly face palming herself for unnecessarily freaking out and sat up straight.

"oh, I'll come get her at.." she pulled her phone back a little to look at the time on the top of the screen before saying "....10:30??" She disconnected the call after she and the woman had agreed on the same time.

Tossing the bed covers off of her legs, she crawled out of her bed. Suppressing a yawn, she made her way toward her bathroom for her everyday morning routine. She stopped in front of her mirror and pushed her hair back with a headbelt. She grabbed her toothbrush from inside one of the drawers, applied a toothpaste on it and brushed her teeth while her bathtub filled up with warm water before stripping out of her pyjamas and stepped in the tub for a change.

She stepped out 30 minutes later, just when the water was starting to get too cold than normal for her body to withstand. Her fingers were pruned from having spent a long time under the water. Wrapping a towel around her wet body, she slipped her feet in their comfortable sleepers before making her way to her walk-in closet. She put on a pair of blue denim shorts and a white tank top, matched everything up with a pair of white Nike sneakers before heading back in the room and sat in front of her mirror to do her make-up and restyle her hair.

Satisfied with her look, she grabbed her phone from her bed and requested an Uber before leaving her room. She walked down the stairs into the kitchen, looking for something to eat while she waited for her cab to arrive. On impulse, she opened the oven to check if her father had made her breakfast like he always did but found nothing. The man hadn't come home last night.

Sighing, she opened one of the cabinets and pulled out a box of her favourite cereals. She placed it on the kitchen counter before walking to the fridge to get the milk. She grabbed a bowl from the ones drying on the dish rack and walked around the kitchen counter to sit on one of the kitchen stools, pulling the box toward herself. She poured its contents in the bowl before adding milk and started eating.

Her phone lit up minutes later, with a text from her Uber driver letting her know he was waiting outside. She got up and walked to the sink. Opening the faucet, she quickly rinsed the dirty bowl and placed it back on the rack to dry before leaving the house.

"hey" she greeted, jumping in the backseat of the Uber. The driver gave her a polite nod and started the car, he drove the girl to her destination.

He stopped in front of the animal clinic sometime later and the girl stepped out of the car. She made her way inside the hospital and said "hello, I'm here to pick up my puppy" stopping in front of their front desk.

A girl in scrubs and a volunteer tag on the left side of her chest smiled politely and asked "what's the name of your puppy??"

"Snowflake, she's a pomeranian" the girl checked the puppy's name in her computer before looking up at Lilliana with a smile and said...

"Wait here for me and I'll go get Snowflake for you" Lilliana nodded and went to sit down in the nearest empty chair in their waiting room. Her wait wasn't that long and the girl approached her, cradling a white ball of fur in her hands.

"Here's your Snowflake" she said, carefully placing the puppy in its owner's open arms. Recognizing its name, the puppy's ears pecked up in interest and it slowly raised its head revealing its doll-like eyes.

"Hey" Lilliana whispered, happy to be reunited with her small friend and gently scratched the area behind its ear earning herself a chirpy bark from her companion. Snowflake was an emotional support dog, on her therapist's recommendation ...her father gifted it to her right after her mother died to help her deal with her trauma. Chuckling softly, she looked up at the girl and mumbled a small thank you before putting Snowflake in her bag and left the clinic. She jumped back in the Uber and the driver drove her back home.



LATER THAT DAY

Bored, with nothing much to do and the heat outside unforgiving. The girl had decided to spend the rest of her day relaxing by the pool. She walked down the stairs in a red one piece swimsuit and a pair of sunglasses, a towel loosely hanging on her forearm and a book in her hand while

the other was wrapped protectively around her puppy. She put Snowflake down when she reached the bottom of the stairs and walked into the kitchen with her rubber toy.

She fixed herself a cold drink before making her way out the sliding door onto the poolside and carefully placed her drink on the little table between the two tanning chairs along with her book. Unfolding the throw in her hand, she spread it over the plastic chair, picked Snowflake up to put her on the chair and gave her the rubber bone toy before making herself comfortable. She laid on her back under the beach umbrella while her feet soaked in the sun and grabbed the book from the table. She pulled down her sunglasses to protect her eyes from the bright pages as she read, absent-mindedly stroking Snowflake's furry back. The puppy shamelessly purred like a cat enjoying its owner's affectionate attention.

She looked up at the sound of a car driving into their driveway and from a distance saw her father's black Maserati. The driver's door opened and her father stepped out of the car but to her surprise, he wasn't alone. He walked around the car and opened the passenger door. A woman stepped out, dressed in a purple pantsuit and the two made their way into the house.

Curious, the girl put a bookmark between the pages and slammed the book close. She carefully took Snowflake in her arms and snaked her feet back in her flip-flops before hurrying back inside the house through the sliding door. Stepping into their living room, Lilliana found the woman sitting on the L-shaped white leather couch. Her head turned at the sound of someone joining her in the room.

She got up when she noticed Lilliana and approached the girl. Smiling, she reached out her hand and introduced herself "hello, I'm Belinda ...Belinda Lambert and you must be Jay's daughter Lilliana, I've heard a lot about you" and yet I know nothing about you, the girl wanted to say but that would be rude. Instead she nodded her head returning the woman's friendly smile and accepted her hand.

Ignoring the nickname she used when referring to her father, she said "nice to meet you" giving her hand a firm shake before letting it go. Seeing the woman up close she couldn't help but take in her beauty, she was short and curvy, dark skinned with a natural midnight black afro crown on her head.

"And who's this little fur ball??" Belinda mused, reaching out her hand to give Snowflake a scratch behind her ear. One that the puppy gladly accepted leaning into her hand.

"Her name is Snowflake, say hi Snowflake" as if understanding the human language, the puppy let out a bark to greet her new friendly acquaintance making Belinda chuckle softly.

"Where's my dad??" Lilliana asked, seeing as the ground floor was empty.

"Oh he went upstairs to freshen up," Belinda informed sitting back down on the sofa.

The girl bent down to carefully put Snowflake on the tiled floor and asked "Should I bring you something to drink?? Water, tea, coffee or maybe some juice??" making her way into the kitchen to prepare something for herself to have for lunch.

"no I'm fine, thank you" Belinda politely refused.

Lilliana shrugged, pulling the silver grey steel door open and looked inside the fridge contemplating on what to make. Deciding on a sandwich, she took out all the necessary ingredients to make it and put all them over the kitchen counter. She grabbed a butter knife, a packet of rolls and proceeded to prepare the sandwich. Slicing the bread roll in half to add all the ingredients; butter, cheese slices, ham and lettuce before closing it.

"Hey princess" her father walked in just as the girl was pouring pineapple juice in a glass and walked around her to get to the fridge.

"Hey dad, who's your guest??" She asked, nodding in the living room's direction.

Jackson took out a bottle of water, unscrewed its lid and said "Oh you've met Belinda" before taking a sip of the water. Lilliana hummed, holding the sandwich between her fingers and took a bite. Chewing on the piece of bread, she let out a satisfied groan at the taste and turned to her father waiting for his response.

Feeling his daughter's gaze; the man lowered the bottle and nervously explained "...she's the company's advocate, someone is trying to take over the company ...I invited her to discuss that" insinuating the professionalism of their meeting before throwing the now empty bottle in a trashcan. He walked out of the kitchen and made his way up the stairs presumably to his office, taking Belinda with him.

The girl finished her lunch and cleared the kitchen counter, putting everything in the sink before leaving the kitchen with a fresh glass of pineapple juice in her hand.

"I'll be outside if you need me" she informed no one in particular, heading toward the sliding door and stepped out of the house back onto the poolside, this time leaving Snowflake inside. She walked to the tanning chairs and, stopping at the edge of the pool, took off her sunglasses before jumping into the blue water. She swam around for some time before deciding it was enough and hiked herself out of the water. She grabbed her towel from the chair and used it to dry her hair before sitting down, and once again made herself comfortable on the tanning chair she had been sitting on earlier. She opened her novel and continued where she left.

Time passed and the sun retreated back to its resting place behind the clouds. Allowing the moon its turn to shine unnoticed by the girl. She was so engrossed in the story that she didn't even hear when her father was calling out her name. Stepping outside onto the poolside, Jackson approached his daughter and touched her shoulder to get her attention "Lilliana??"

The girl jumped startled and quickly shut the book in her hand close before looking up at her father "huh?? Do you need me for something??" She asked, the man frowned.

"I've been calling you for the past five minutes now, what are you reading??" On reflex the girl pressed the book closer to her chest and stuttered...

"n..nothing, it's just a silly novel" she lied, the book was a dark romance novel with scenes she very much liked to keep to herself only. Not even her closest friend knew what she was always reading or half of her fantasies.

"Well it's late for you to still be outside, let's go inside ...dinner is ready" the man informed before leaving, taking her empty glass along with him. Lilliana sighed, looking around the poolside. Only then realising just how dark it had become around her. She blamed the poolside lights for making her believe it was still daytime and got up from her sitting position.

With the book still in her grasp, she grabbed her phone and throw before making her way back into the house. She went upstairs to put on something over the swimsuit before joining her father at the dining table for dinner. Only to find out Belinda hadn't left yet, and as if to make matters worse was sitting on her father's right hand side in her mother's chair. Not wanting to cause a scene and embarrass her father in front of his business associate, she took a deep breath in and sat in her usual seat on her father's left hand across the woman. The three had their dinner together in a peaceful silence.

After dinner, Lilliana went upstairs to her room to sleep and her father requested an Uber for Belinda "don't worry Jay, we'll tell her next time" the woman said comfortingly and planted a soft peck on the man's lips before lowering her body in the backseat of the car and left in it. Jackson turned around to walk back inside but stopped when he noticed a familiar car's headlights approaching. Letting out an exasperated groan when he saw his friend sitting behind the wheel and waited.

The car pulled up in front of him where the Uber was parked seconds ago and the driver's door opened. Damon stepped out still in his work clothes and walked around the car toward Jackson. The two friends made their way into the house, and up the stairs to the man's office.

"Did you tell her??" Damon asked, sitting outside on the balcony next to his friend with a glass of whiskey in his hand.

"Is this why you came??" Jackson asked, Damon shrugged. The reason why he wasn't present earlier was to give him time to deal with the situation that was Jackson breaking the news of his relationship to his daughter, but seeing how defensive and hesitant he had become from his question, Damon guessed things hadn't gone according to plan.

"So you didn't??" He stated, looking down at his glass. His hand swirling the golden liquid around in the glass before bringing it up to his lips and took a sip. Jackson sighed, turning away from the view of the distant rainbow lights that were the city and leaned against the railing.

"I wanted to tell her but I got nervous.." he started, looking up at the dark night sky and smiled at the stars, his late wife. Juliana believed stars were the souls of every person that leaves this world behind. He couldn't help but wonder if she was looking down at them at that moment, listening

to their conversation?? Would she approve of what he was doing?? What would she have done if instead of him it was her in his shoes??

Looking away, he continued "...I just don't know how she's going to react, she's still dealing with her mother's death"

"It's been a year, Jack," Damon reminded him, making the man let out another sigh. Why did it feel like yesterday then?? He had somehow managed to move on from his wife's uncalled for death but Unlike him, Lilliana only looked fine on the outside. She still avoided talking about her mother's death. The last time she visited her mother's grave was during her funeral and her panic attacks had only just stopped.

"I don't want her to think I'm trying to replace Juliana" he said honestly, and it was Damon's turn to sigh. He placed his hand on Jackson's shoulder and gave it a gentle squeeze in understanding. He was there, he saw how his friend suffered stuck between his own pain and his daughter's pain. He had to force himself to stop being a grieving husband for his wife to be a strong father for his daughter.

"All I'm saying is think about it, I mean ...I'm not one to talk about feelings but I don't think Lilly will be happy finding out about her father's relationship from a stranger rather than from her father instead" he said before walking back in the house, giving Jackson time to think about his words and his next step of action.