

Chapter 20 - Submitting to My Best Friend's Dad by Scarlett Rossi

James.

Waking the next morning, I had expected to see Becca's smiling face next to me, but instead, I woke up alone. I wasn't sure what I was expecting from her, but after the conversation we had the night before, it was clear I was unsure of what I wanted.

Sitting behind my desk at work, I tried to focus on the countless deals I had coming across my desk. There were a variety of things, and among them were the issues with Katrine's father.

He was a ruthless Russian mobster I had gotten into business with when I was younger out of need for financial support. Our contract had recently been paid up, and no longer did I need to have ties with him—yet, he didn't want to let business go.

“Mr. Valentino, you have a visitor,” Evette said through my phone, causing me to sigh.

I knew very well who it was and what was going to happen. There was no doubt that Sergie was here once more to force me to continue our business.

Something I wasn't interested in doing.

“Let him in,” I replied with reluctance, watching as the door opened, and Evette's smiling face came into view. Followed by a tall Russian with graying hair.

“Sergie,” I said, standing t as I gestured for him to take a seat. “It's a pleasure seeing you again.”

“Is it? I had hoped we would be celebrating right now, but I can see that isn't going to be the case, is it?”

Taking a deep breath, I shook my head and frowned. “I already explained I have no interest in extending our contract. We have had a wonderful past twenty years together, but I believe it's time we go our separate ways.”

Sergie's eyes stared back at me with amusement, and as he did, I couldn't help but feel slightly nervous. No one ever dared say no to this man, and here I was stirring the pot.

"Tell you what," he finally said after a moment, "let's talk about something else that's been on my mind."

With hesitation, I situated myself in my seat, leaning back as I watched him. "What's that?"

"My daughter, Katrine."

I should have known this was where the conversation was going to go. His daughter was everything to him, and I should have known he was going to want me to be with his daughter. It wasn't going to happen, though.

I wouldn't get serious about that woman if he paid me.

"What about her?" I asked him.

A smirk lined his lips as he chuckled softly to himself. "We both know she can be a difficult girl. When she was younger, she lost her mother, you see, and I have raised her myself. So all these years of spoiling her have done nothing to help her mentality."

We both chuckled at his comment, but I wasn't sure what he was getting at. "She is a tiger, that is for sure. She knows what she wants, and she gets it."

"Yes," Sergie replied, "except when it comes to you."

There it was. The smile he wore slowly slipped away, and instead, there was something sinister in his gaze.

"What about me? I don't understand what your daughter has to do with me."

Nodding, he took a deep breath. "She wants you, and you decided after you got what you wanted from her, you would just dismiss her. My little girl is heartbroken."

"I see," I replied, sitting up straight. "Well, as I told her from the beginning... I am not interested in a serious relationship. She knew this and agreed. I told her I didn't want to see her anymore because I didn't want her to get the wrong idea, and she didn't want to accept that."

Sergie nodded again, but even though I had explained myself, he didn't seem to care.

"So you can use her and not care about her feelings?" he asked with a murderous gaze.

"No, that isn't what I am saying at all. We slept together on and off for a few months. It wasn't even consistent, and through that time, I have proof she had other lovers. Just none that were like me. I told her I was done, and she seemed fine when she left here."

The conversation was going round and round in circles, and through it all, I could see he wasn't going to let the issue go. It was becoming clear that me not extending our business wasn't really the issue.

It, instead, was the issue I had with his daughter. One of which wasn't his business.

"You're missing the point, James," Sergie replied. "She is unhappy, and that makes me unhappy."

"So buy her something new.... Shopping spree, a trip overseas... She loves things like that."

My response was a little sarcastic, but I was trying to make a point to kindly show him I wasn't interested. Even if it wasn't actually working because his gaze showed he was not impressed.

"I think there is a better solution."

Pinching the bridge of my nose to hide my eye roll, I sighed. "What would that be?"

"Take her back. You take my daughter back, marry her, and make her happy.... I will forget the contract, and we will be fine."

This man had lost his mind if he thought I was actually going to agree to something like that. I wasn't going to let anyone sit there and tell me that these were my only two options, and I had to pick which I wanted to go with. That wasn't how life worked.

"Unfortunately, I am going to have to decline that offer for two reasons."

"What is that?" he snapped with irritation. "What reasons would you give for being disrespectful to me?"

"Well, one, I'm not being disrespectful. I am being honest with you because I appreciate you and everything you have done for me. Two, your daughter isn't interested in me; she wants my money. I'm not stupid, and I won't fall for her shit. Also, I know as soon as I marry her, you will try to move in on my company, and I won't allow that to happen."

"You accuse me—" he yelled, standing in front of me.

However, I was quick and stood up as well. I stared at him. "Sit down, Sergie."

There it was.... I ordered him to do something. and by the look on his face, no one had ever done such a thing before. I knew how to get him, though. At the end of the day, he needed my company to ship his things overseas.

No other company would do business with him, and if he wanted to keep doing what he did, he had no choice but to fall in line as other companies did. It was something he wasn't happy about because I essentially had him by the balls.

"You are treading a very dangerous line right now, James. It would be in your best interest to be careful with what you plan to say next."

His warning didn't fall on deaf ears. I was well aware if I wasn't careful, he could have my head on a platter before I left the office. However, I had a plan.

For weeks, I had spent time researching everything about him I didn't know and all his businesses. Money wasn't bad for him, but he had people breathing down his neck, and one wrong move could cost the man his empire.

"I have another suggestion for you. I know of a few places that would be able to help you with the financial situation you are currently in. They need help, and you need help, so it's a win-win situation."

Opening my desk drawer, I pulled out an envelope of information I had put together for him and slid it across my desk. He was hesitant at first, but rather quickly, he accepted and stared at me.

"You think you can buy my peace with information?"

"No, I think we can come to an agreement because we both know bad blood between each other wouldn't be good for anyone. Especially for business." I gave him a pointed look that made him nod.

"You are right, but I don't like my daughter being upset."

Again with the daughter. Shaking my head, I let out a sigh. "I apologize, but perhaps she can be used in marriage to another man whose business can benefit you?"

It wasn't unheard of for crime lords to marry off their daughters or sons to benefit the business. It was simply called a strategic movement. Something I would never consider for my own daughter.

I actually found it barbaric.

"Very well," Sergie said, standing up again.

"It's been a pleasure seeing you again, Sergie." I walked around my desk to help him to the door. "I do hope next time our conversation will be on much better terms."

Stopping at the now open door, he looked at me with a smile and nodded.

"Yes, I do hope so. I will say, I am glad to know the young woman you went to dinner with last night isn't actually dating you. She is a prize to be won for sure.... I wonder if she is seeing someone. Perhaps she has time for an old man like me?"

My blood ran cold at his words, and it must have shown on my face. Laughter escaped him as he continued walking down the hall from my office, and it took me a moment to get myself back together.

Katrine had told her father about Becca?

Fear wasn't something I was often accustomed to, but if Sergie had taken a liking to her, there was no telling what could happen in the future. I was going to have to learn to keep her close and pray that it was simply a joke that he had made.

Otherwise, Becca may be in danger because of my dismissal of Katrine.