

Chapter 102 - Submitting to My Best Friend's Dad by Scarlett Rossi

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The flight went by quicker than I thought it was going to, and by the time the wheels of the plane touched the tarmac in Miami, I was ready to see everyone. I couldn't wait to wrap my arms around Allegra and spend much-needed time with her.

"If you wait here a moment, sweetie, I'll make sure they load everything into the car, and then I'll come back for you," Neal said as he stood and kissed my cheek.

Casting my gaze up to him, I smiled with a nod. "Sounds good."

Since the moment we took off from New York City, Neal had been wrapped in a fury of emotions. I wasn't quite sure what was bothering him, but I had a feeling it had to do with our trip to Miami in general. I understood he was concerned about the issues revolving around James, but he couldn't let that ruin our trip.

These plans were made long before he had told me about the issues with the Russians, and it was my job to show him that we didn't have anything to fear.

After all, we didn't do anything wrong.

It was James' problem and had nothing to do with me.

Fifteen minutes later, Neal's smiling face popped through the door of the side of the plane, and he gestured for me to follow. I had already put my coat on, and even though it was December, it wasn't exactly as cold as it had been in New York, but still chilly enough to make me want to bundle up.

"I'm glad to see there isn't any snow here," I chuckled, only to have him hold my hand as I walked down the steps of this plane.

"Yes, if I remember correctly, ice and snow don't agree with you."

"Hey, I can't help being slightly uncoordinated." I laughed, smacking his arm playfully as my feet hit the ground.

With a chuckle, he wrapped his arm around my shoulder and pulled me close to him, kissing the top of my head as we walked towards the car. "Glad that we're finally here."

I was shocked by his statement. I hadn't thought he was happy about being here, but hearing him say that warmed me. "You're happy to see your sister then and everything else that she has planned for us."

"Oh, God, don't remind me. I still can't believe that she's throwing that party."

When Allegra found out that we were booking our tickets to come down, she was so excited that she decided to take it upon herself to put together a little Christmas party to ensure that we were able to celebrate the holidays properly with her.

Even though I had asked her to come up to my father's instead, she was adamant that everything had to be a party. That was simply her personality, though, and I loved her bright and bubbly side.

"It's not going to be that bad. The party is tomorrow night, everything will be fine."

"You say that." He smirked. "But I know my sister. It will be over the top."

Sliding into the back seat of the car, Neal took his place next to me just as the driver shut the door. I was glad to be here, but my mind kept reeling over what I would do while I was here. I hadn't exactly told Neal what I was planning, but to close the chapter I had with James, I had to confront the secrets I was hiding.

It was the only way I could move forward with my future.

As the car sped through the streets of Miami, I admired the different Christmas ornaments, lights, and decorations that glittered the streets. They'd obviously recently had their Christmas parade, and though the streets were bare as it was late in the night, I could still see the remnants of streamers on the ground, the festival signs, and the store windows.

"It's so beautiful outside. I love how everybody did the lights in the city."

Lacing his fingers with mine, Neal cast his gaze out the window to see what it was that I was seeing. A smile crept across his face as he pulled me close. "Did you know that Christmas was actually my favorite time of year as a child?"

"Why is that?" I grinned, glancing at him. "Because you got tons of presents?"

"No." He chuckled to himself. "It's because it was the one time of year that everybody seemed happy and seemed to be brought together. There was no fighting. No arguing. Everyone just smiled."

I was surprised by his answer. It wasn't what I was expecting.

I knew Neal had his secrets, as did many people, and I was still waiting for the day he would tell me what he was hiding. I was a patient woman who understood that everything happens in time.

With a small sigh, I snuggled into him and continued to look outside. We would arrive at Allegra's soon, and then the chaos would consume us. We would be pushed into the arms of happiness and whatever else Allegra had waiting.

James

I was notified when Becca's plane landed at the Miami airport. I had caught wind that they were still coming down here, and knowing that they were, I wanted to know what was going on with her every step of the way.

It wasn't that I was stalking her.

It was that I simply wanted to make sure that she was safe.

That no one was going to hurt her.

It was of no surprise to me that they would be staying at Allegra's home. Once she got there, she would be out of reach, but it didn't mean that I couldn't assure she would be safe. The last few days had been hell, and Sergei had been more adamant than anything to get in contact with me.

Even Greg told me that I needed to be careful, that they had found a mole within their midst and weren't entirely sure that the person was the only one. Which meant Sergei knew I was working with the government.

Running my hand through my hair, I tried to calm down.

Allegra didn't care for me. At least not the way she used to. I had messed up, though, and now that Becca was with her brother, she wasn't going to side with me on anything, not that she ever sided with me on anything.

"Sir, Michael just called to say that they were at the apartment."

Marie's voice took me by surprise, and looking down at my phone, I realized I had been so distracted with my thoughts I hadn't paid attention to the few text messages that had come through from my head of security, Michael.

"Thank you," I said softly, gesturing for her to leave.

Working from my home office had been my best bet the last few days. My heightened security made it easier for me to get what I needed to be done because Sergei wouldn't dare come to my home to bother me.

However, I wasn't sure how long that would last when I went into the office tomorrow.

I had meetings that I had to take care of, and there was no way I could do them from home. Opening my text messages from Michael, I scrolled through to look at the photos he had managed to get for me of Becca.

There were various of her exiting the plane and climbing in the car with Neal.

One, in particular, caught my attention, and zooming in, I took a closer look. Her long hair framed her face in waves and laid gently upon the cream color sweater she was wearing over black leggings. She looked just as beautiful as I remembered, but what caught my attention in the post was how her sweater sat on her stomach.

For a split second, my mind tried to tell me she looked pregnant, but that wasn't possible. She had only been with Neal most recently, and if she was, she would have been way farther along.

"Shit... I need more sleep," I groaned, closing my phone as I rubbed my eyes.

I was starting to hallucinate now, and with all the stress I was under, it wasn't good for me. It wasn't honestly good for anyone.

Standing, I made my way out of my office, deciding to take myself to bed.

"James." A voice caught my attention as I rounded the stairs. Looking over my shoulder, I spotted Michael walking toward me quickly and furrowed my brow in confusion.

"Michael, you got back quick."

"I tried to come as quickly as I could. You need to see something," he replied, slightly out of breath.

I wasn't quite sure what was more unnerving, the fact that Michael had rushed back to show me something or the fact that he looked slightly panicking out of breath by doing so. Nodding my head. I stepped off the two steps of the stairs and followed behind him towards the front door.

As soon as he opened the door, two other men on the security team were standing there, both looking a little distraught at a closed box at their feet.

"What's this?" I asked Michael as a confused feeling ran through me.

"Unfortunately, sir, the package was left for you at the front gate, and the contents inside are a little disturbing."

Hearing what Michael said caught my attention. Who in the hell would leave something at my front gate? Thinking back to Sergei, my heart beat faster.

If he was sending a message, there was no way that it would be good.

Squatting down at a level easier to open the box, I flipped the lid and was taken back by the bloody sight in front of me.

There inside lay a bloody severed finger and with the finger was a photo of a guy that worked at my company named Derek. I wasn't sure why they would go after this guy, but it was clear in the photo that he was dead.

This wasn't just a message... it was a warning.

Looking at the lid, I noticed the note taped inside the top.

'Keep avoiding the inevitable, and there's going to be more bloodshed on your hands than you originally wanted. Perhaps we should start with the pretty little brunette that just got off the plane in Miami.'

Shock filled me reading it. The brunette they were talking about was Becca, and I had no clue how they had known that she was here.

I needed to inform Neal soon, but I would give her tonight. She would be safe tonight with my men watching the building and Neal at her side.

War was brewing. And I wasn't sure who was safe anymore.