

Chapter 128

DAMIAN

I looked up the stairs, checking to see if she was heading down the stairs. She wasn't. Not yet.

What a surprise she would get tonight, I thought.

With what was no doubt a goofy smile on my face, I touched the ring safely nestling in a box deep in the linings of my pocket. It felt like lead was there, a pound of it. I felt my smile slip a little bit as I thought of what this night would bring. I was nervous as hell about proposing to Amelia even though I was entirely sure that she would not refuse me. I wanted to do it right. I wanted the moment to be perfect for the both of us. Sighing, I willed my lips to speak the right words when the time came to declare my love for her, to ask her to marry me.

Perhaps a simple 'I love you. Will you marry me?' would be best.

Or not. The direct approach wasn't always the best, especially in romantic situations.

"What are you shaking your head for?" Amelia asked in a voice I could detect the humour in.

I raised my head to look and then just... stared. Damn but she was beautiful. Drop dead gorgeous. So beautiful that for one long moment, she literally took my breath away. I had to consciously tell myself to breathe.

The black strapless gown she wore fit her curves to perfection. The diamond choker called attention to the hint of cleavage she was showing and the highlights in her hair. She looked as though she had stepped right out of the pages of a fashion magazine.

Smiling at me, she continued coming slowly down the stairs.

"It looked like you were having a conversation with yourself right there," she said. "What was it about?"

"Never mind that." I caught her hand in mine as she came down the last stair. I pressed her hand to my lips, kissed it until pretty spots of colour rose in her cheeks. "You look exquisite. You must be the most beautiful woman in the world. You have to be."

Her giggle was a melodious sound that warmed the blood in my veins.

"Oh come now, Damian. You know... we both know that you are flattering me."

"I know no such thing. I'm saying what I see, and what I'm seeing is perfection."

I stepped aside, leaving her path to the door clear. "Shall we?"

"Yes please." She mimed fanning herself with her clutch purse. "If I stay here for much longer, I think I will spontaneously combust from your excessive praise."

With Amelia's arm in mine, I walked her to the car.

The restaurant I had chosen for our date was about twenty minutes drive from the house. It was a really good one, a plush one if I did say so myself. Amelia was quite the expert on all things food so I had also chosen the place for it's unmatched cuisine. The chef was said to be the best in the city. From the taste of the food I had before coming here, there was no reason to doubt that conclusion.

Amelia's hand tightened on my arm just as we were walking through the door of the restaurant. I turned to see what had got her hesitating.

"Is the place closed?" Amelia asked as she looked around the place. "There is no-one else here but us. Don't they have any more customers?"

"Oh... that."

She whipped around to stare at me. "Why is it empty? Did you do something?"

I patted her hand. "I do. I booked the entire restaurant for this evening. I wanted it just to be for the two of us tonight, no distractions. Just us and some of the restaurant staff of course. We can't serve ourselves now, can we?"

She laughed. I noticed her eyes beginning to glisten a little. She sniffed.

"Sorry," she said, dabbing at the corners of her eyes. "I'm just feeling so emotional. Pregnancy hormones should also have a hand in this too."

"Yeah. Or maybe it's because I'm incredibly romantic."

"You wish," she joked.

"Now let the evening begin." I dashed forward to pull out the chair for her when she was going to sit.

She thanked me with a smile. "Are you going to pamper me like this all evening?"

"Not all evening."

She raised a brow. "Oh?"

"All your life, I plan on doing this."

In my eyes were all the promises I wanted to make to her, all the promises that I meant to keep. I was sure she saw it too. The attraction crackled between us like electricity in the air and then the moment passed when a shadow fell on us.

"Sir. Madam," said the waiter who was dressed in an immaculate white shirt and bow tie.

"Welcome. Are you ready to order now?"

"Oh yes," Amelia said, stirring a little. "What do you recommend?"

Several minutes later, our food was served. She made a face as she sipped the mineral water she was having.

"No wine for you, sweetheart," I teased. "At least not until our baby is born."

"Our baby." She sighed happily. "I like the sound of that."

Talking with Amelia was as easy as always. The time spent over dinner passed enjoyably.

While she was in the middle of telling me about what she had been working on lately, I turned a little to give a prearranged signal one of the waiters who had been standing at a spot where he wouldn't be easily noticed but could be called on. He nodded, turned on his heel and left.

"What do you want him to do?" Amelia asked. "To bring more food? Call him back. I can't manage to eat another bite."

"Who says it's about food?" I held out a hand to her as the first strains of soft, romantic music came wafting out of hidden speakers. "I just gave him a cue. It's time to dance."

"Dance?" She slowly stood up but still looked around self consciously. "We're in a restaurant, Damian, not on a dance floor."

I waved my arm to encompass the room. All the chairs and tables had been arranged to one side, leaving a big space in the centre of the room.

"You forget... I booked this place for just us. So we can dance."

Amelia murmured something that sounded like 'romantic' as she rested her head on my shoulder. My arms went around her. I swayed to the music, her body moving in time with mine. A few minutes and the song changed.

"My favourite," Amelia cried, her head snapping up to look at me with delight.

"I know. I gave them a list of songs to play. I wanted to make this night really special for you."

"It is special. I don't think I've ever been this happy. Well except for the time you said you wanted me to keep the baby," she added after some thought.

I gave her a twirl across the dance floor, held her to me again. "Well, that now we are talking about how we feel, I'll come clean. My therapist says it's best if I keep baring myself to you."

"Please do. I'll like that very much. It's what I've always wanted you to do."

I took in a deep, audible breath. "Okay then. Here it goes. The truth is that I am a bit scared of the next step of our relationship. It's like I'm about to walk through uncharted waters. I feel that way mostly because I want to be perfect for you."

"Perfect? I don't want perfection. Damian, I'm not perfect either. All I need is you and true love. That's all. I want you with all your shortcomings, all your flaws. Together, we'll make ourselves better."

I chuckled. "You stole my line."

She blinked in some confusion. "What?"

"I was about to say something similar," I explained. "But you just said it so I'll say this instead."

"Say what?"

But I had already gotten down on one knee. There was a pretty awkward moment when the ring box for some reason got stuck in the lining of my pocket, but then I got it out.

Her reaction to the sight of the ring was everything I had expected. It was lovely to see the way her face lighted up. I knew I had made the perfect choice.

"Marry me, Amelia," I said. "I love you so much that I can't imagine life with someone else. Would do me the honour of properly becoming my wife? Not a contract wife this time, but a real one."

"Yes. Yes," she said, holding out her finger so I could slip the ring on it. "I'll marry you."

Again when she hugged me, I felt like my heart would burst with happiness.

And there I was, my life complete, everything I had wanted and never thought I could have right there in my arms.