Forty Five

"Well there's only a week left now,"

"Which is exactly why we need to have at least two sessions," Aeliana tried to reason with her friends.

"One is enough, man," Bliss said as she crossed her arms over her chest.

"Yeah; self study is also necessary you know," Luke argued.

"Self study? You mean the one where you two study each other's bodies? No thank you," Caleb said in a sassy tone.

"What the hell?" Luke burst out laughing as Bliss looked away blushing, also containing her laughter.

"I've confirmed the availability of the hall for Tuesday and Thursday, in case two sessions do get scheduled," Aeliana muttered as she tapped her phone on her chin, praying she didn't forget anything else that the professor might catch her off guard with.

"Great! I think you're ready to go see him now, then," Caleb smiled as he nodded eagerly.

"Caleb, please," Aeliana scowled. "Curb your enthusiasm, boy,"

"He said 'morning' and you shall see him no later than that,"

"Fine," the girl sighed. "I'll go. Wanna come with?"

"No,"

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+10 Bonus

Two knocks was all it took for a deep voice to answer "Yes?"

Curling her fingers around the doorknob, Aeliana turned it, almost too cautiously. She pushed it open, praying that his mood would be anything but sour.

Seated at his desk, he was sipping on his coffee, that was still letting off steam against the light that poured in through the window. He stared outside through the lowest pane, likely at something downstairs in the garden. Observing his defined side profile, chestnut hair slicked back with only two strands peeking out, Aeliana gathered the courage to bring up the matter.

"Good morning, sir," she muttered slowly stepping towards the other end of the room, where his desk was.

"Indeed it is," he said, not moving an inch before he just let his mug down on the table top. "Still,"

Unsure what to say, Aeliana observed the man, debating inside her head if she was about to ruin it.

"I'm here about the... extra sessions," she said, gingerly.

"Ah yes," Antonio replied, not a hint of sourness in his tone to Aeliana's relief. Was this man actually having a good day?

"I'm assuming all the preparations have been handled and you are here simply to give me a summary on it all," he said as his eyes moved towards her, still holding ample sternness in them.

"Yes," she replied, relieved as she thought of the efforts she had put into this. "I've confirmed availability of the hall for Tuesday and Thursday. Around twenty students are willing to participate so I assumed that lecure

+10 Bonus

hall 3 would be more suitable; the one with the smart board so that there is no need to arrange projectors,"

"And what about the library?" he questioned her as he slid his finger along the rim of mug, eyeing the fumes as they danced above it.

"All the PDFs of the latest versions of the textbooks have been uploaded on our resources drive, which the students have access to. I'm sure they'd be carrying their devices with them,"

"Hmm," he mumbled as he stood up, his black mug in hand. "Do you have written confirmation?"

"The administration emailed a document of the booking to me," Aeliana said, feeling secure now that she had tackled his cross questions successfully.

But of course, this is Antonio DeCarlo; and the cross questioning was far from over.

"Isn't there one other thing that you perhaps forgot to confirm?" he muttered as he walked around his desk, to lean on its side.

"Um," Aeliana looked around the room, visibly nervous. "I have notified the class,"

"Mm hmm?" he said, pushing off the table and making his way towards her, his eyes set on his precious little mug of coffee.

"and the relevant administrative.. authorities," she made a pause as she watched him draw closer steadily every second.

"Think again," he muttered, his stormy eyes moving up from the mug and onto her dainty ones.

+10 Bonus

She pursed her lips, unsure what to say. Her heart thumping in her chest, she looked up at him.

The effect that her glimmering eyes had on him as she looked up at him, was something that she was entirely unaware of. Only someone who'd be observant enough to notice the slight softening of his gaze as he looked upon her, would be capable of appreciating it. Aeliana, of course, in the scrambled state she was in everytime he was in such close proximity, would fail to notice.

"I err-" she mumbled, unaware that she even did.

After gazing down at her, for what felt like an eternity, Antonio brought his hand up, which to Aeliana's utter surprise, pinched her chin gently.

"Will you be conducting the lecture then? Since I'm not available on Thursday," he smirked as he pushed her chin upwards playfully.

What's gotten into this man? she thought as her mind instantly brought back the memories of the evening at Adrian's apartment. His actions no doubt, confused her. She didn't know what to make of them. 'Surely, he's just teasing' she thought as she was reminded of how he poked her cheek and left her there confused and speechless after bombarding her with questions. Was she going to let him do the same thing again? Leave her puzzled? Tease and walk away, leaving her at the edge of a cliff?

"Well, I AM here to- to confirm availability " Aeliana managed to mumble, looking away for a minute to gather few more seconds of courage as the few inches between their faces weren't exactly helping.

"Are you now?" his eyes didn't move off of her.

"Mm hmm,"

+10 Bonus

"Mm hmm? Now you know so what are you gonna do about it?" his devilish smirk only spread wider as his eyes scrunched very slightly; a sign of a genuine smile instead of the usual sarcastic one.

"Reschedule it?" she fixed her eyes on his collar, avoiding his intense gaze.

"To?"

"Wednesday?"

"Extra sessions on two consecutive days is torture for both parties I'm sure,"

He makes a great point.

"Friday then?" she asked, head slightly tilted, eyes looking up at the professor intently, eager for a positive response.

"Hmmm," his lips formed a downward smile, as he turned away to take a sip of his coffee in an attempt to hide it.

Wait a minute. Did Mr. Decarlo really just do that? Smile and look away to hide it? He never does that. The last thing he would do is to express a positive emotion. Fury? Yes. Rage? Absolutely. Dissatisfaction? Impeccably. But delight? Wouldn't he rather eat sand?

"Hmmm?" Aeliana decided to poke him a few more times, ambivalent about this emoticon that she had somehow managed to unlock. Though unfamiliar, it was strangely warm. She felt almost... comfortable.

"Fine," the professor surrendered, an extremely rare occurrence.

"Perfect," Aeliana smiled from ear to ear, pressing her hands together in

+10 Bonus

joy.

"Proud of yourself, aren't you?" lips curling into a sly smirk, Antonio moved an inch closer.

"I think I have reason to be," the girl's gaze did not falter, almost proposing an unspoken challenge.

Grey eyes, having observed every inch of her small face for long enough to memorize it all, finally moved down to the girl's lips, which she hadn't forgotten to gloss just this morning. "Now," he muttered, gaze still fixed "...get out of my office,"

'before I do something we both regret' were the words Antonio decided to keep to himself-

-for now.

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