

Chapter 14 WALKED IN

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SOPHIA WALKED DOWN the stairs, a light frown on her face as she walked towards the kitchen. She was still a bit upset about her short conversation with Chase from the previous night regarding her going to college. After she had told him she wanted to go to college, he had simply told her he didn't have time for any of her shenanigans and when she kept on insisting, he just scooped her into his arms, stole a kiss as usual and told her to go to sleep. That had been the end of the conversation.

It was still very early, and she was happy Chase wasn't in the room when she had woken up. otherwise, he would have been a hindrance to her going to see Alvaro.

Sophia peeked round to be sure no one was looking at her and made her way towards the servant's quarters as she left through the backdoor. She needed to see Álvaro. At least, his well-being would be able to sooth a tiny part of her heart and she would stop worrying about him.

When she got to the servant's quarters, she stopped in front of the guards standing there. "Uhh hey," She waved at them. They both didn't move. "I-can you both, please let me see Uncle Giuseppe? It's really urgent"

The two men looked at each other, communicating through their eyes. One nodded at the other, and he spoke into the device he was holding in his hands. "Cosa facciamo? La ragazza è qui per vedere Guiseppe, e il Don la vuole lontana da loro. Dovremmo lasciarla entrare?"

{What do we do? The girl is here to see Giuseppe, and the Don wants her nowhere near them. Should we let her in?}

The person at the other end spoke up. "HmMMM. Lasciala entrare. Il Don sa già che lei sarebbe andata lì. Quello sarebbe comunque il loro ultimo incontro perché ha chiarito le sue istruzioni ad Alvaro,"

{“Hmmm. Let her in. The Don already knows she would be going there. That would be their last meeting anyway because he has made his instructions clear to Alvaro.”}

“Sicuro,” He then turned to Sophia. “You may go in now. Sorry for the delay.”

{“Sure”}.

At first, Sophia was surprised they let her in, but she brushed it off to bask in her happiness. She smiled at the both of them. “Thanks” She walked into the building.

She made her way towards Giuseppe’s part of the building and stopped in front of the door, then knocked.

Immediately, the door was opened, revealing Giuseppe, who had a horrified expression on his face. “Bella ragazza, what are you doing here?”

{“Pretty girl”}

Sophia passed the slightly old man a small smile. “Can I see him?” When the old man didn’t say a word, tears welled up in her eyes, and her head dropped. “I’m so sorry for whatever he must’ve done to him because of media didn’t mean for it to happen, I swear,” She then looked up at him. “Please just let me see him”

The old man wasn’t scared for what would happen to him even though he was well aware of the fact that the Don had threatened his grandson with his life. He was even much more scared for Alvaro. “Bella ragazza-”

{“Pretty girl”}

Sophia clasped her hands together. “Please, Uncle Giuseppe”

Giuseppe swallowed, then nodded his head before moving from the door so she’d be able to enter.

“Thanks,” She blinked back her tears and walked into the house.

Sophia blanched when she stared at Alvaro’s unconscious figure on the bed. He was all battered up with bandages literally all over his bare body. He looked like he would have died if he wasn’t taken care of earlier.

"He's okay now," Giuseppe said from behind her. "The Don made sure he got the best treatment, and I'm very grateful for that. I don't know how it would feel to lose my only family"

Sophia turned to him. She didn't understand Chase. He was the one that made him all battered up and ended up paying for his treatment? What kind of a person was he?

"I-,"Her words stuck in her throat. "I-I'm very sorry for this. I didn't know Chase would do something like this. He-he promised to spare his life. He told me he would!" She almost shrieked, hot tears cascading down her cheeks. "I'm a bad person. Bad bad person. I should have just told Alvaro. Now, look what I caused. He-he was treated badly because of me,"

Giuseppe moved closer and placed his wrinkled hands on her shoulders, then gave her a small smile. "The Don told you he would spare Alvaro's life, didn't he? Look, he did it. He spared his life. He didn't let him die. He even paid for his treatment"

Sophia shook her head and wiped her tears with the back of her palms. "It doesn't matter, Uncle Giuseppe. He still hurt him,"

"Wait up," Giuseppe smiled and walked towards his kitchen. He walked back with a glass of water and handed it to her. "Have it"

"Thanks," Sophia whispered out and took the glass from him. She drowned half of it in her throat, then passed it to him. "I-I'm sorry I behaved like that. I was just so upset"

Giuseppe dropped the cup and turned to her. "Why don't you go back to the main mansion and have some rest? You can come in later, so we'll talk. By then, Álvaro might be awake, and you'll discuss it through. You can also apologise for what happened since you think you have a fault in this. It might help you feel much more better,"

"Thanks, Uncle Giuseppe," She said. "I'll leave now, but I'll be back later,"

"Sure, Bella ragazza,"

{'Pretty girl'}

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"Owww!", Sophia winced as she hit her forehead on a wall. No. She thought as she saw that the walls had shoes on. It was someone's chest. "I-I'm sorry I didn't see you earlier. I wasn't looking -" Her eyes fell on his face. "Luciano?"

"Yeah, Sweet cheeks," He smiled at her. "What were you thinking?"

"I thought it was Lucas, and uh-the last time I bumped into him, he snapped at me," She said.

"Ahh! forget about him. How have you been?" He then looked towards the backdoor where she'd gotten in from. "Where did you go? The servant's quarters? To see your friend?"

She fidgeted with her hands. "Uhh-"

"You know I don't bite. You can tell me the truth. You went to see Alvaro?"

Sophia nodded. "He was in a bad shape"

Luciano pinched the bridge of his nose and muttered out. "That's how our world works"

Sophia's head snapped up. "What world?"

Valerie's cheerful voice helped Luciano very much at that moment because he didn't know what to say to Sophia. "Look who we have here! Aren't you excited to go to college?"

Luciano let out a silent breath of relief.

Sophia turned and faced Valerie. "Hey Valerie,"

"Uh uh," Valerie shook her head. "It's meant to be Val. You'll call me Val from now on, hmmm?"

Sophia smiled and nodded her head. "How have you been? How was the program?" Valerie and Luciano had left the country for a week to attend a program and were probably just back.

"Let's talk about that when you return from college. I was about to come in when I saw Lucas and a few men arranging some books for you. Said it was for college,"

"College?"

Luciano's voice came from behind Sophia. "Valerie, I think that was supposed to be a surprise, and you just ruined it for Don,"

Valerie's eyes widened, and she palmed her mouth. She then dropped her hand to her sides. "But Don never surprises people. I didn't know"

"Ma'am," one of Chase's men walked up to them. He then faced Sophia. "Don has made special arrangements for you to be taken back to college. Everything you'll need is in the car right now. All we need is you to come with us,"

"Uhh-" Sophia was speechless. She didn't know what to say. The thrill and excitement in her was just too much, and she couldn't believe Chase allowed her to go to college. It was euphoric. "I-I'll go and change these clothes I'm wearing right away"

Sophia was dressed in a simple white tee shirt with a denim jumpsuit above it paired with a wedge while her hair was parked into a ponytail. She just had a simple chain round her neck and a stud earring.

"No, no," Valerie caught Sophia's shoulders. "You're perfectly dressed for college like this. No problems"

Sophia looked over her dressing. "Really?"

"Do you want Don to change his mind?" Luciano asked. He then replied when he saw her panicked eyes. "If you don't want him to change his mind, you better leave now. Tomorrow, you can dress better if you're not okay with the one you have on"

Sophia nodded.

Luciano turned to the man. "Alessandro, Don ti ha nominato suo nuovo autista e guardia. Ho ragione?"

{Alessandro, Don made you her new driver and guard. Am I right?}

"Sì,"

{Yes}

Luciano nodded at him with a chuckle. "Faresti meglio a prenderti cura di lei, altrimenti Don ti farà impazzire,"

{ "You better take care of her, or else Don is having your head." }

Alessandro managed a small smile and motioned to Sophia. "Let's leave now if you're ready"

"I-I'm ready" She turned to Valerie, who had a huge grin on her face. "Bye" and then Luciano. "Bye"

"Bye, sweet cheeks,"

"Bye, Soph,"

She left with Alessandro.

Once they both got to the car, Alessandro opened the back passenger door for her, and she slid in. "Thanks," She tried closing the door herself, but he didn't let her.

Alessandro brought out an envelope from his back pocket and handed it to her. "Don ordered that you read it before we leave"

Sophia stared at the black envelope in confusion. Even his envelopes were black. Wow. "T-thanks," She collected it and opened it as Alessandro shut the door.

Sophia stared at the handwriting in the short note. It was beautiful, elegant even neat, crisp and stylish. Sophia wasn't sure if it was just her, but his handwriting had its own sense of dominance and confidence in it. Another thing added to the list of things she loved about Chase. She giggled silently at the thought.

Gattina,

I know you went to see that scrawny boy this morning. I'll let it slide because he took my warnings seriously after getting tortured.

I let you go to college doesn't mean you have all the freedom in the world. You are not allowed to go anywhere apart from college and its canteen. If you need something, talk to Alessandro about it and make it snappy. You won't go back to your Nana or that small coffee shop you

Study well, I want you to have a good future. And lastly, the main thing, don't talk to or let any boy touch you. I'll skin anyone who touches you alive. We both know that. And I don't need to tell you why.

Once she was done reading the note, Sophia tucked it inside the bag beside her-one she knew was the new one she had gotten.

Her fingertips grazed the textbooks on the seat with her as Alessandro drove while her mind stayed glued to the words in the note.

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"We are here" Alessandro opened the back door for her, and Sophia got down, clutching her bag and books.

"Thanks," She offered a small smile.

"I'll help you carry them," He collected the books and her bag from her before she could even protest.

"Hand them over here," The deep voice that belonged to the man who only bullied Sophia throughout her stay in the Romano mansion came from behind Alessandro.

"I-Lucas," She stuttered, afraid to meet his gaze. "I'll collect them instead. Thanks," she said. She passed her hand to collect it from Alessandro before Lucas, but he beat her to it.

Lucas adjusted the bag over his shoulder and the textbooks on his arm, his voice cold, just like Chase's and giving her no space for argument. "I've finished your whole registration process. Allow me to do this"

So that was why he was there even before her? Her registration. She thought. "I-," Sophia turned to look at the familiar building of her college and then back at him. "I didn't need registration. I already started college before. I would have just continued from where I left off before that night,"

"Don ordered so, Sophia" That was the first time he had ever called her name, and it had a strange softness to it even though he had never treated her like that. "Not to worry about though, you'll still be together

with your friends. Just a few formalities changed"

Sophia opened her mouth to speak. "What do you –"

Lucas ignored her and turned to Alessandro. "Vai. Mi prenderò cura di lei e tornerò con la mia macchina,"

{("Go. I'll take care of her and return in my own car.")}

"Okay, sotto capo," Alessandro nodded and did as he was told.

{("Okay, understand boss)}

Once Alessandro left, Sophia turned to Lucas. "You know, you don't have to help if you really don't want to,"

Instead, he ignored her again, grabbed her small wrists, and then pulled her into the school building.

She tried talking to him but he just kept his normal stoic face on. For a few seconds, she'd think she caught a glimpse of a few emotions crossing his face but since he was good at masking his face with indifference, she'd just shake it off.

"Thanks," She passed him a small smile when they both stopped in front of her classroom.

Lucas helped her strap her bag over her shoulder and quietly passed her the textbooks, all the while ignoring the look of confusion on her face.

When Sophia turned to leave, Lucas held her shoulder. "Sophia"

Sophia turned to him, confusion apparent all over her face. "Is there any other-" Her remaining words died on her lips when he pulled her in for a bare hug.

Lucas whispered out. "Buona fortuna sorellina,"