

Chapter 8 THE SUNRAYS

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THE SUNRAYS SHONE brightly on Sophia's face as it peeked through the curtains, and her eyes opened slowly because of the heat it was providing. Her head was pounding and she could feel her eyes swollen

She didn't understand or remember how she had slept off while bawling her eyes out to her pillow after having a very long painful shower. With a small whimper when she felt the headache kicking in, she sat up slowly and looked round the room.

She froze when a knock came on the door. When the knocking didn't stop, she placed one of her palms on her racing heart and closed her eyes. "I hope it isn't him," She wasn't ready to meet Chase after whatever happened between them the previous night.

Slowly opening her eyes, Sophia got down from the bed, her small feet touching the cold tiles as she unlocked the door and opened it. She breathed out in relief when she saw Valerie standing there with a wide grin on her face.

"Hey", Valerie passed her an apologetic smile. "I'm sorry if I woke you up,"

"Uhh-", Sophia shook her head. "No. You didn't wake me up. I was already awake before you knocked," Sophia gave her space to walk in. "I'm sorry, come in,"

"Ahh!" Valerie smiled. "It's okay. I just came to call you downstairs for

breakfast."

Sophia retorted immediately. "No! Didn't she say she didn't want to face Chase? She wanted to work on that. "I-I prefer to have my meal here as usual. I feel more comfortable here,"

Valerie gave her a small smile and shook her head. "I'm sorry about that, Soph. Don has ordered that you come for breakfast downstairs,"

Sophia blanched. "Why?"

"I don't know," Valerie replied truthfully.

"I-, "Sophia trailed off. "O-Okay then. I'll be downstairs for breakfast,"

"Great!" Valerie clapped her hands authentically. "Wear something nice. I should get going now, hmm?" She then pinched Sophia's nose and walked away with a big smile on her face.

A small smile graced Sophia's lips, and she leaned on the wall. She didn't know why, but she could see a future with Valerie as friends with her. She was the only one who cared enough about her.

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Only the sounds of cutlery clanking against the glass plates could be heard in the dining room. Chase sat on the chair at the head of the table with his fiancée, Saige-who had visited by his right side and Lucas on his left side. Beside Saige was Valerie and opposite her was Luciano. Sophia was nowhere in sight.

Soon, the light sound of footsteps resounded through the room, and Saige perked up, stealing glances toward where the sound was coming

from until Sophia came into view.

Chase ran his gaze over her. She was simply dressed in a black jumpsuit while she pulled her hair into a ponytail. She didn't need to try to look good because she already did and Chase found himself getting a hard-on. He immediately reverted his gaze to his meal to look like he wasn't bothered at all.

"Ahh Soph!" Valerie called out to Sophia, who stood there, staring at everybody. Anything not to look at Chase and he knew that. "I thought you wouldn't come,"

Lucas only snorted out loud.

"Who is she?" The question flew out of Saige's lips before she could even stop it.

"She's a witness," Lucas replied immediately. "One that should have been killed,"

Saige looked over at Chase to find any reaction on his face, but as usual, his face was blank, and he was concentrated on his meal.

Valerie ignored them and walked towards Sophia. "That's Saige, Don's uhh-," She turned to face Chase, who wasn't even looking at them. She turned back to Sophia. "She's his-,"

"Why the fuck are you walking on eggshells around her?" Lucas scoffed out. "Tell her already that she's his fiancée,"

"Lucas," Chase growled and glared at his cousin. Dammit.

Lucas mumbled a quick egotistical apology-something he should never

do to his boss yet he still did and continued eating.

Valerie gave Sophia a reassuring squeeze on the shoulder. "I'm sorry about that. Come and sit with us,"

Sophia tried so hard not to look towards Chase's direction and so far, she was succeeding in it. "Thanks," She mumbled and followed after Valerie.

"Here," Valerie pulled out the chair next to hers' for Sophia. "You can sit here,"

Sophia muttered a 'thanks' again before making her way to sit. Her butt didn't make it to the chair as Chase didn't allow her to.

"Stop,"

Lucas, Luciano, and Saige dropped their cutleries on their plate as a thick heavy silence settled in the room.

"You'll be sitting on Lucas' seat from now on. Beside me,"

Luciano tried not to choke on the food that was in his mouth but eventually, he did and Sophia was quick to grab a glass of water.

She rushed beside him and handed him the glass of water shyly. "Have it,"

"Thanks," Luciano choked out and collected the glass from her, then took it to his lips and gulped down the water.

However, the light brushing of their fingers didn't go unnoticed by Chase

and he angrily slammed his fist on the table, making Sophia flinch. He stood up and without saying a word, he walked out of the dining room, leaving everyone confused at the sudden change of his mood.

Saige used the napkin beside her plate and dabbed her lips. "Excuse me," She mumbled and stood up before sashaying out of the dining room.

"What happened to him all of a sudden?" Valerie asked no one in particular.

Lucas sneered, staring right back at Sophia. "Why don't you ask daddy's little doll? She has been the reason for a lot of things recently,"

"Lucas, what's your problem with her?" Valerie walked closer to his already standing figure. "Soph hasn't done anything wrong to deserve such treatment from you,"

His next reply was like a blow to all their faces. "She hasn't done anything wrong but has only been unlucky enough to be birthed by that bastard, Agosti!"

Agosti. Sophia stared at Lucas bewildered. That was her father's name. He had no right to talk about her father like that and she wouldn't tolerate it.

She then walked up to him. "look, I understand your problem is with me but I'll appreciate it if you don't bring my papa into this. He has nothing to do with this."

"He has every fucking thing to do with all this," Lucas cut her in. "He's the fucked up reason why you're here standing like a nuisance to all of us. If not for that fucker, we all wouldn't be here. You should have just been killed like your fucking parents so we would live in peace. Move," He growled, shoved her aside harshly, and walked away.

She could feel the tear that had fallen down her cheek and she didn't attempt to wipe it. She just stood there, rooted to the spot, staring into space while Lucas' words drilled their way to the back of her mind.

Valerie put her hand on Sophia's shoulder. "Soph, he-,"

Valerie's voice seemed to pull her out of her thoughts and Sophia sprinted off towards her room, totally ignoring her.

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"Don,"

Chase stopped in his tracks at the sound of Saige's voice. As he heard the sound of her heels clicking against the tiles coming closer, he slid his hand inside his pocket and took out a cigar and lighter. Once he lit the cigar, he took it to his lips and returned the lighter to his pocket. "What?" He turned to Saige who was standing beside him.

"Who is she?"

He turned his face away and blew out smoke from his lips. "You're not dumb. You heard Lucas,"

"Shouldn't she have been killed then?" She asked.

"And if I don't want to kill her?" He asked. "What if I want to keep her here as my property?"

"Are you fucking her?" Disbelief laced her voice.

"Not yet," Chase said and turned to look at Saige who was looking anywhere but at his eyes. "But soon," The balls he had to tell that to his fiancée.

"I'm your fiancée. We're getting married," Saige said. How could he tell her something like that? It was unbelievable! She'd tried so many times to seduce this same man to at least touch her but he never did. He never bulged, had an erection, or even looked her way. Only for him to decide he wanted sexual pleasure from a barely nineteen-year-old girl. But then, Saige knew better than to complain or voice out her thoughts.

"Looks like you're forgetting how our world works," Chase turned to her. "I do not owe you my loyalty. I'm the Don and you'll respect my decisions, sono dannatamente chiaro?",

{'Am I fucking clear?'}

Saige managed a small nod at him and he walked away.

"Dammit," She hit the wall beside her with her palm.

It wasn't fair. She loved him. She had always been in love with him since she knew him. She could see the disinterest for him in Sophia's eyes earlier but had no choice but to shut up. If she fucked up even once, she'd miss the opportunity to be with the man she loved even though he didn't feel like that towards her.

Saige didn't know what he had done to make her love him. It just happened and ever since then, he had been the only one in her mind constantly. Getting him to agree to marry her wasn't as difficult as she thought. She was only lucky he was in a good mood the day he agreed because he needed something important from her dad and her dad had seized the opportunity to make sure she had him. If it was the normal Chase, he would never have agreed to marry her no matter what. He wouldn't have married any woman either, but she thanked her lucky stars for keeping Chase in the mood even though he knew her dad had taken

advantage of him and simply ignored it.

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Sophia slumped on her bed and buried her face into her pillow before she let the tears fall freely as Lucas' words thrust their way into her mind.

"He has every fucking thing to do with all this,"

"He's the fucked up reason why you're here standing like a nuisance to all of us. If not for that fucker, we all wouldn't be here. You should have just been killed like your fucking parents so we would live in peace"

She always knew Lucas hated her but she didn't think it would get to the extent where he would bring her parents into it. Next time he would taunt her, did that mean he'd bring her remaining family members into it too?

Her parents didn't deserve it. They didn't deserve what happened to them. They didn't deserve their death. They didn't deserve such a cruel death. And even after that, they didn't deserve to be badmouthed even after death.

Thinking about all that, the tears doubled and a sob left her lips.

"Soph," Valerie caressed her hair as she sat next to her on the bed. "I'm sorry for what Lucas said out there,"

Sophia's sobs increased. "Why does he hate me so much to the extent of bringing up my dead dad? It doesn't feel like he hates me only for something like that. I think there's more to it,"

Valerie fisted her hands into a ball and dropped them beside her. Sophia was right. There was more to it. Yeah, Lucas didn't support letting her



live but he wouldn't hate her for that. He had another reason for hating her so much but it wasn't a topic to ever be addressed.

Seeing Sophia in that state was making pain string in Valerie's heart and she couldn't comfort Sophia like a sister and a fellow girl would. The truth was on the tip of her tongue but she couldn't bring herself to say it. She couldn't say the truth because letting it out would destroy lives. It would hurt the only positive and happy person remaining among the four Romano's-Luciano-and he might end up hating Sophia too just like his twin did if he finally found out. His hatred was more venomous than Lucas' own. They all knew it.

Valerie didn't hate Sophia. She had tried to hate her even before she met her but the moment she saw her that night in that small coffee shop, she felt the connection between them and that was why she didn't let Lucas kill her.

Fuck. Sophia was innocent. She was unaware of whatever life they all lived and Valerie intended to keep it that way. Even if Sophia found out about their world, Valerie would do anything at all costs to hide that particular heartbreaking secret from her.

The secret Luciano and Sophia were oblivious to. The secret Chase and Lucas knew from the very beginning and had chosen to hide from the world and everyone else. The secret Valerie had mistakenly stumbled across and found out about. The secret Chase and Lucas didn't know Valerie knew of. The secret Chase and Lucas thought only they knew except their dead parents. The secret that would make Luciano hate Sophia too, much more than Lucas already did.

That was the same secret Valerie had vowed to never reveal or even let her brother and cousin know she knew about.

The secret of Sophia's father and their Lucas, Luciano, and Valerie-mum's infidelity.

