

Chapter 36

“What!?” Frankie gasps, staring at Christian now. “Boss, you can’t be serious –“

“Listen, I get it, she’s a great girl, she can cook – but I said hands off,” Christian says, jerking his head towards the door. “Ten laps around the block. Now.”

Frankie’s mouth drops open as my eyes go wide. Ten laps!? It’s the middle of the night, and cold out there now!

“Boss –“

“Go,” Christian orders, his voice dark and his eyes narrowed.

Frankie groans, tilting his head back on his neck, but he stomps towards the door, where he kneels down to tie on a set of sneakers waiting for him there.

“Seriously, Christian,” Nico says, turning to frown at my oldest friend. “This is going a little –“

“You go to then,” Christian says, turning his glare on Nico.

Nico’s mouth drops too. “W-what!?”

“I’m sorry, am I speaking softly?” Christian says, and my eyes go wider when he takes a menacing step towards his cousin. “Am I mistaken somehow? Are you no longer under my command?”

Nico snaps his mouth shut, glaring at Christian right back but not saying a damn thing.

“Ten. Laps. Nico.” Christian says, every word low and dangerous.

Nico doesn't move for a long moment as anxiety twists in me. But then he slowly turns and walks to the door, slipping on his own running shoes.

"Christian..." I murmur, looking guiltily towards the bodyguards.

"I'll make you go too," he says, raising an eyebrow at me, joking now even though his tone is still laced with threat. I just put up my hands, not wanting to push him, as Nico and Frankie move for the door.

"I'm keeping tabs on you," Christian calls to them, pulling his phone from his pocket and tapping the screen. "Don't cut corners. I'll know."

Nico rolls his eyes but both head out the door, pulling it shut behind them.

"Christian," I say instantly, turning and shaking my head at him. "That was too much –"

"It wasn't," he murmurs, slipping his phone back into his pocket. "Frankie likes to push boundaries, Iris, see where he can get away with things. If I don't hold him to the line, he takes advantage. I actually don't mind it, when it comes to his particular...job..."

He glances at me, and I don't miss the fact that he doesn't tell me what Frankie's job is.

"But," he continues, "it means I have to remind him, a lot, who is in charge. Nico..." Christian sighs, shaking his head at the thought of his cousin, "he's just. Angry."

"Yeah," I say, turning to look at the door. "Why is he so angry?"

But Christian is silent, and when I turn back to him, I see him shaking his head at me like I should know better than to ask.



I just roll my eyes. "Okay, whatever, Christian," I sigh. But then I raise my chin towards his back pocket. "Are you seriously going to like...track them?"

"Nah," he says with a smirk. "But it's good if they think I will."

I laugh, shaking my head at him and stepping close, grabbing another churro off the plate. I take a bite and smile – it really is delicious – and look up into his face. "So," I say, swallowing my bite, unable to keep the smirk off my own face, "have you been reading my emails all along? Or, just the ones from a couple of Christmases ago?"

Christian's self-control is impressive. He just stares at me for a moment before frowning in apparent confusion. "What?" he asks.

"My emails."

"What emails?"

"Don't play cute anymore, mafia boss," I say, dropping my voice as I grin at him. "You already messed up."

He narrows his eyes at me now, shaking his head. "I never mess up."

Still grinning, not taking my eyes off him, I take a few steps back towards the spice cupboard and reach into it, grabbing the bottle that Nico put back on the shelf. Without looking at it, I slide it across the counter towards Christian.

He catches it neatly, turning the bottle in his hands so that he can read the label. He goes still for a minute and then sighs, placing the bottle down on the counter and covering his face with one hand. "God damn it."