



## Chapter 37

I laugh a little, and I'm pleased to see the little smirk on his face, that he's not actually that mad to have been caught.

"Figure it out yet?" I say, slowly stepping closer until there's just a hand's breadth between us.

He sighs deeply and then drops his hand from his face, looking down into my eyes with his dark blue-grey gaze. "You found out you were allergic to nutmeg at Christmas...a couple of years ago," he murmurs. "Eggnog. Which is gross, by the way, you shouldn't have been drinking it to begin with."

"It is not!" I protest, grinning up at him, my arms crossed across my chest.

"How would you know?" he growls, glaring down at me. "You had like, one sip."

"One good sip," I insist, and he shakes his head at me.

We stare at each other for a long moment and I'm almost vibrating with the pleasure of having one up on him. "So?" I ask quietly. "How long?"

He considers me for a long, long moment before the corner of his lip curls. "I read every one of your damn emails, Iris," he says, his voice low and rich. A streak of pleasure runs all the way down my spine as he leans even closer to me, looking down into my face like he's admitting some great and terrible secret. "I check that stupid account, which only gets spam and letters from you, every damn night."

My smile stretches so far across my face that my cheeks ache. "I knew it," I whisper, clasping my hands behind my back. "I knew you



remembered us. I knew we were important to you."

Christian smirks. "Well, you never should have doubted that."

"Well, I didn't," I sigh, turning to face him again. "But it would have been nice for you to write back sometimes."

"I couldn't do that," he murmurs, reaching out and tucking a strand of my hair back behind my ear. "I didn't want you, or Damon, anywhere near any of this, Iris. If you hadn't gotten caught up in that crap at the club last night..."

"What?" I breathe, staring up at him as his fingers linger around the curve of my ear. "You just...never would have written back?"

Slowly, he shakes his head no.

"Well then," I say, the words hardly more than breath, "maybe it was... fate, then. Trying to push us back together."

"I don't believe in fate," he murmurs.

"I do," I say, leaning a little closer to him, though I don't know why. So close that I can feel the warmth of his body. "I can believe enough for both of us."

Christian's fingers slip, then, from the curve of my ear to drift down my neck. A shiver runs absolutely through me, but I do my best to suppress it, not wanting him to see.

I'm his little sister, after all. Right?

"Nobody can believe enough for both of us," he sighs. "This world only gives you what you wrench from it, Iris. It doesn't give gifts, not without a price."



"It brought me you," I say, believing it.

"And think of the price you had to pay for it," he murmurs, his hand on my shoulder now, drifting back over my shoulder blade. "Your entire life for...what? Captivity in a penthouse?"

"For you, Christian," I sigh, shaking my head, wanting him to see it like I do. "You? Back in my life? Me back in yours? Because if you read all of my emails every night..." I shake my head, wondering if it's going to far but... well, I say it anyway. "At least part of you wanted me back, too."

I see him clench his jaw, a muscle flickering in his cheek, before he opens his mouth to –

"Boss!"

The door flies open and I gasp, spinning towards it. Nico's there, panting, looking over his shoulder towards the elevator. "Boss, we have company. Now."

Nico turns, desperate, and looks significantly at me.

Christian grabs me by the arm, shaking me. "Your room. Now. Go!"

"But –"

"NOW, Iris!" he shoves me away from him.

I glance over my shoulder as I go, but I do as he says, hurrying for my room.