



Chapter 38

I rush into my room, slamming the door behind me, panting a little with anxiety as I spin and stare at the doorknob. What – what the hell is happening!?

I attune my ears, instinctually, towards the living room, desperate to know what is happening. Even though Christian wants to keep me away from this, my hands itch to go back to the door, to open it, to peek out – just to get a hint.

I mean, am I in danger here?

Should I...should I be doing something? Should I be hiding under the bed? Or –

I groan, panic starting to lace through my veins and making me shake all over. This mafia life with all its twists and turns – I'm not sure I was mad for it.

I close my eyes so I can concentrate on the muffled sounds coming from the living room. Three voices I recognize – Christian, cool and cold, Frankie and Nico, clipped and frantic. And then a fourth – deep, but desperate. The tones I can all hear, but the words – I can't quite make them out.

Who the hell is here? And why have I been hidden away?

My eyes fly open and I look around the room, wondering why I can hear anything at all with the door closed...and then my eyes land on the heating vent, high up on the wall, connected to the living room.

Yes, I think, an absurd sense of glee mixing with my panic as I realize that the noises are coming from there – not from beneath the crack in



the door. These new build high-rise homes, they certainly cut corners on construction, don't they?

Unable to stop myself – and frankly, not really wanting to – I hurry over to the wall below the vent, desperate to hear. The voices are louder, but no clearer. I curse under my breath and then look around the room, trying to find something I can stand on...

But there's not much. My eyes instantly light on the heavy dresser as my only option and I grab it, wedging my fingers into the tiny gap beneath it left by the short legs. I put all my not-very-substantial weight into pulling it, but it doesn't move much. I try again, hauling with all my might, and get a few good inches out of it –

And maybe – maybe it's just enough. Looking up at the grate, I scramble on top of the dresser and lean out over the open air, my fingers digging into the dusty edge of the heating vent as I balance on my toes on the dresser, thanking my years of dance for giving me a pretty good sense of balance.

My eyes go wide at the scene before me, which I can see in slatted lines through the matching heating grate on the other side. Before me, Christian, Frankie, and Nico stand in a semicircle around a man. They've pushed the coffee table hurriedly to the side and the man kneels before them, his hands zip-tied behind his back. The man seems to be crying, hanging his head, his shoulders shaking.

But Christian? His face is all harsh lines, all cruelty. My eyes go wide – I've never seen him like that before, not ever.

And then, to my shock, Christian cocks his arm back and delivers a crushing punch to the man's face. The man's face snaps to the side, blood flying from his mouth. I gasp, but manage to bite it back so that no one can hear me.



I rebalance myself, and then just watch.

"Where the fuck is the money, Lorenzo," Christian growls.

"I don't have it," the man murmurs from his bloody mouth in a thick Italian accent, shaking his head and not looking up at Christian. "I'm sorry – it's gone –"

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