

### Chapter 41

For a long moment I just stare at his hand, so long that Christian takes another step forward, holding it closer, insistent. And then I reach for him, slipping my fingers against his palm, letting me pull me to my feet.

"Are you all right?" he murmurs as I find my balance, realizing that my legs are numb in some places.

I just look up at him, staring a little. To my surprise, this makes him narrow his eyes.

"I told you to go into your room, Iris, and not to look."

"You didn't tell me not to look," I say, the words falling from my lips before I think about them, accompanied by a frown.

He narrows his eyes further. "Did I need to? Did you think I'd want you to be spying through the air vent?"

I scowl now, knowing he's right, but not wanting to admit that I defied him. He smirks at me, I think maybe a little pleased, or entertained, and he slips an arm around my shoulders, pulling me out into the much warmer room.

"Is he...is he gone?" I ask, my voice quiet.

"Don't worry about that," he says, his voice sharper.

"Can I -"

"Iris," Christian sighs, his arm dropping from my shoulder as he turns to glare at me again. "Just stay in your room. Don't ask any questions. The more you get involved in this, the more danger you're in."



I frown at him, angrier now. "Looks like I'm in danger either way, Christian! Should I be ignorant of it as well? What if – what if it was someone with a gun, or something? I could have hid under the bed –"

"If you'd needed to hide under the bed I'd have told you to hide under the bed –"

"Christian," I sigh, stepping away from him and crossing my arms across my chest. "I am not just your little puppet, here for you to boss around who just does whatever you say. I'm a real person, and this is my life. I need...I need some knowledge about what is happening, I need to make some choices."

Christian slips his hands into his pockets, looking me up and down with a frown on his face. "I disagree," he says simply, giving a shrug.

"Great!" I say, throwing my hands up into the air with a sigh and storming over to the bureau, where I've made some space for some clothing for myself, intending to get changed into some pajamas. 1

"Iris, I've explained this –" Christian snaps, getting angrier with me now. And I should probably be afraid of that, considering what I just saw, but I'm starting to get pissed now too.

"Yes, and you expect me to just accept your explanation and bow and say thank you, Mafia King!" I pull a soft set of pajamas out of the drawer and turn to glare at him. His eyes are narrowed at me again, almost to slits. "I may be your prisoner, Christian, but I'm also your friend. You owe me more than this!"

"I've given you your life, Iris," he growls, storming closer to me, glaring down into my face. "What the hell else do you want?"

"Respect," I seethe, my teeth clenched now. "I want to know what's



going on.”

“No,” he replies, stubborn. “There are rules –”

“Your rules,” I sigh, turning away from him and starting to pull off my top, knowing it will make him uncomfortable, make him leave. “Goodnight, Christian.”

“Iris –”

“If you’re going to be so stubborn, then I am done having his conversation,” I say, pulling my top all the way off and turning to glare at him, wearing only my bra.

Christian glares right back and, to his credit, his eyes don’t drop at all to my half-naked form. Instead, he just snaps his head away and strides for the door, pulling it open and slamming it behind him when he goes.

I turn the light off and finish getting changed. Then I lay back in my bed, wondering how we went from laughing over churros to this tonight.

And if we’ll ever, ever get back to where we were.

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