

Ruined By My Brother's Best Friend

Risk

Arabella's POV

“Are you lost, girl?” the intimidating security guard in front of me asked coldly.

“N-No. I’m... not. This is the right address.” I winced at how uncertain I sounded, my heart racing unnecessarily.

He looked me over slowly, suspicion written plainly across his face, before pushing himself off the wall and typing something into his phone. “Give me a minute. Do not move.”

I shouldn’t be here. I was supposed to be at my brother’s graduation party, not sneaking into a luxury apartment building in the middle of the night for a man who barely acknowledged my existence. Getting this far had already been harder than I expected, and just when I thought I’d finally made it upstairs, another guard had stopped me at the elevator like the universe itself was trying to drag me back outside. It should have worked.

Every brain cell in my head had been screaming at me to leave before I humiliated myself beyond repair. But he was leaving tomorrow. And I had spent three years obsessing over his presence.

“Go on in,” the guard finally muttered before dismissing me like I was no longer worth the trouble. My fingers tightened around my purse strap as I stepped into the elevator and pressed the button for his floor. The higher it climbed, the harder my heart pounded against my ribs. Every second felt like a huge mistake. Still, I anxiously stepped out of the elevator and walked calmly down the hallway until I stopped in front of the third door. His door.

I lifted my hand and knocked softly, but I immediately regretted it. Silence answered me. I waited a few seconds before knocking again, weaker this time, already half convinced I should turn around and run away. When I got no answer, I reached for the doorknob and took in a deep breath when the door swung open. It was unlocked. I stumbled inside before it could close again, irrational panic gripping me at the thought of being shut out now that I’d actually made it this far.

The apartment was dark. Not dimly lit, completely dark. Moonlight spilled through the windows in pale silver streaks, brushing across a nightstand nearby and outlining the shape of expensive furniture in the shadows. The silence felt heavy enough to unrattle me further, but a voice cut cleanly through the darkness. “What are you doing here?”

I went still. The deep voice carried that same smooth accent I'd spent years listening for in crowded rooms. British tangled carelessly with Russian, cold enough to send a sharp shiver down my spine despite how soft the words themselves were.

"You cannot speak?" he asked after a moment, impatience slipping into his tone like I was already testing the limits of whatever tolerance he had left tonight. I probably was, but my mouth had never worked properly around Alvis.

From the first day I met him, I'd learned silence was safer and easier. I didn't know how to exist around him without becoming painfully aware of myself. So instead, I stayed quiet and watched from a distance like that somehow made things better. It never did. If anything, the distance only made the obsession worse.

Suddenly, I heard movement somewhere deeper in the apartment, then the lights flicked on. I flinched against the sudden brightness before slowly lifting my eyes to him.

And there he was. Tall enough to make the room feel smaller with dark clothes hanging loosely over his broad shoulders. His slightly messy black hair looked like he'd been dragging his hands through it all night. Exhaustion sharpened every angle of his face, but somehow it only made him look perfect and colder. More unattainable.

His blue eyes settled on me and the force of his stare made me instinctively step back. "Why did you come here?" he asked again.

My stomach clenched at his tone, fully aware that he was trying to dismiss me. It hurt, but he'd always been unattainable to me. It wasn't only his intimidating looks or the obvious difference in our social circles that made him unattainable, it was the fact that he was also my brother's best friend.

"C-Congratulations," I mumbled, breaking eye contact as I looked down at the floor, trying to hide the pain in my eyes. "I'm happy for you."

He tilted his head slightly. "You came all the way here just to tell me that?"

Of course I didn't. He'd graduated today alongside my brother, and only hours ago, I'd learned he was leaving for Russia tomorrow. Possibly for good.

"Y-Yes," I said quietly, meeting his eyes again. "You're going back to Russia?"

Something unreadable flickered across his face, then he dismissed me with a single word. "Leave."

The coldness in his voice made something twist painfully in my chest. For a second, I almost introduced myself as Archie's sister, just to remind him who I was, but I knew he was already aware. I'd always been around. This was just simply the first time he'd spoken directly to me

without someone else present or without treating it like basic politeness. Usually, he acted like I was invisible. Maybe I was.

“I can’t leave. I—”

“Look, I don’t have the time for this.” His jaw tightened. “If you have something to say, say it.”

“Why did you leave the party?”

He blinked once, and a muscle ticked in his jaw. “Go back home, Arabella.”

A shiver ran through me at the sound of my name on his lips. He had never said it before. I took a cautious step closer. When he didn’t stop me, I closed the remaining distance until only a few feet separated us.

“I didn’t come all the way here just to go back home,” I said, trying to sound braver than I felt.

“Then what the fuck did you come here for?” he asked flatly.

His patience was wearing thin, and my anxiety was clawing its way up my throat. He'd never spoken to me like this before, even though we barely spoke at all. Just when I almost gave in and turned around, my best friend's words echoed in my head, pushing me forward before fear could stop me.

Without giving myself time to think, I closed the distance and pressed my lips against his hesitantly. The second I did, panic hit me and I pulled away immediately like I’d touched fire, my nerves overwhelming me all at once.

He stared at me for a long moment before dragging a hand over his face. “Arabella...” His voice came out low and tired. “Go home.”

The rejection landed hard enough to make my chest ache, and I almost turned around. Almost. But instead, I kissed him again, confused and desperate.

Part of me wanted him to reject me properly this time. To throw me out and humiliate me enough to finally destroy this obsession I’d carr

ied for years. But instead of pushing me away, he kissed me back.