

The Saint Chapter 22 - Tips

Liam looked at his cell phone for the seven hundredth time in an hour. It sat on his coffee table, exactly where he'd left it, just as quiet and dark as it had been all day. It was, he supposed, a good thing. When his cell made noise on a Sunday night, it usually meant there was a serious crime or a dead body that needed tending to. But Carmen's shift had ended forty-five minutes ago, and as much as Liam didn't want to admit it, he also couldn't deny the truth.

He missed her. Not a little bit.

How the hell he'd been brainless enough to think that he could get a woman like Carmen out of his system after spending just a day and a half with her in bed, he really didn't know. Aside from the fact that he'd wanted her for literal years, every minute they'd spent together had made him want the next one all the more. Screw getting her out of his system. All the laughter, the great conversation—and fine, yes, the preternaturally good s3x—had combined to form some potent c0cktail of desire in his chest.

Would it really be so bad if you just let yourself like her?

Under normal circumstances (which was to say, any circumstances before right this moment), Liam would have told the voice in the back of his mind to fvck squarely off. Feelings of any kind were bad enough. Feelings like these, where he not only wanted to be with someone, but had felt comfortable baring his innermost secrets? Ones he hadn't told a single soul, including his detective partner of the better part of a decade?

They had the potential to be ruinous, and yet here he was. Feeling them all over the goddamn place.

"Oh, for fvck's sake," Liam muttered, sneaking one last glance at his darkened cell phone before heading into the kitchen to figure out some dinner. So he liked Carmen, and not just because she'd made him come so many times in the last two days that he'd walked around with sore muscles and a goofy-as*s smile on his face for hours after she'd left. It wasn't the end of days. Really, he needed to get over himself. He could like her—yes, like that—and not expire. He'd just have to play it cool.

His phone buzzed with an incoming text, and he practically vaulted the couch to pick it up.

So much for playing it cool.

Hi.

One word—Christ, one syllable—and there went his grin again. Hi, yourself.

Three tiny bubbles popped up, his pulse dancing along with them as Carmen typed. The bubbles disappeared a second later, then did two more back-and-forths before finally, Liam couldn't stand it.

She answered on the second ring. "You're calling me."

"You texted," he said, wanting to live inside the pretty little laugh that came over the line. Jesus, he was screwed. "I mean, sort of. You texted, but then you didn't say anything other than hi, so, yeah. I got a little worried and called. Are you okay?"

"Yes, I'm fine," she said. "I'm actually better than fine. I'm great. But I'm also totally graceless, and now you're going to hear all of my gracelessness out loud."

Liam shook his head, wanting to add adorable and s3xy and about fifty-two other things to the list of words that described her. "You're not graceless."

Her scoff bordered on a snort, but God, even that turned him on. "Really? Then why am I trying so hard to act all cool and give you space that you probably totally want after spending most of your weekend with me, when what I really want is to tell you I miss you, come over with takeout, then wreck your bed?"

"How fast can you get here?"

She laughed again, then realized he was serious. "You don't have to, Liam. We said it would just be a distraction. I know you like to keep things casual."

"What I like is you," he said. "So, if you really want to come over, then you should. Because the truth is, I don't care what we said. I haven't been able to stop thinking about you all day, and I'd really love to spend the night with you again."

"Oh." Carmen half-whispered. "You don't think it's going to get complicated?"

Whether she meant with the impending case or something more personal, Liam wasn't sure, but his answer was the same, regardless. "Oh, I'm sure it'll get plenty complicated. But I don't care. There isn't anyone I'd rather get complicated with than you."

Carmen's soft huff of laughter carried an audible grin. "Okay, then. I guess that just leaves one question."

"Which is?"

"Pizza or Thai?"

Forty minutes later, each of which felt like an ice age to both Liam and his d!ck, Carmen knocked on his door.

"Hi," she said, her eyes bright and her smile so beautiful that he didn't think, just took the pizza box she was holding to set it aside and tugged her into his arms.

"Hi." He kissed her deeply, and she laughed against his mouth.

"Wow. You really did miss me."

She was pressed against him closely enough to realize the accuracy of her statement, but Liam didn't even bother hiding it. Seeing Carmen again, sharing another meal and being with her at the end of the day like this? It didn't feel dangerous.

It felt good. Right.

So he said, "I really did."

She leaned her head on his shoulder, filling his nose with the coconut scent of her damp curls, piled high on the crown of her head. "I missed you, too. I had an amazing day, and all I could think about for my whole shift was telling you about it."

Liam kissed her forehead before loosening his grasp on her. "Yeah? I'm all ears."

He led her to the kitchen to divide the pizza onto plates, then parked himself beside her on his couch as she led off with how Connor and Harlow were waiting for her at the clinic this morning. They were halfway through their breadsticks when she got to the part where she'd confessed the truth about the night clinic to her bosses, and by the time they'd both put away two slices of sausage-and-pepper thick crust, Carmen's face was lit up with gorgeous excitement.

"I can't believe they want me to coordinate the project. It's a huge deal. I mean, I'm sure I'll screw it up. Ugh, what if I screw it up?" She threw herself back against the couch cushions with a groan, but nope. No way. It was time to knock down that voice in her head that kept telling her she wasn't good enough, once and for all.

Liam put his empty plate aside. "Carmen, they chose you because they believe in you. Don't you think maybe it's time you believed in you, too?"

"It's not that easy," she said, letting him set her plate aside, too. "I mean, I did all the therapy with rehab. My brain knows where these feelings of unworthiness come from, and why I'm lugging them around like a fifty-pound suitcase. But my brain isn't really in charge when it comes to this." She dropped her gaze to her lap. "It's hard to let go of, even a little bit. For so long, I've been Carmen the fuckup."

Something primal wedged up from a spot deep in Liam's chest, making him growl, "You are not a fuckup."

She tapped her temple with a sad smile. "My brain is starting to get that. My heart..." Her hand moved over the front of her gauzy white top, stopping in the center of her chest. "Just a little more stubborn."

Liam pressed his fingers over hers. "As much as I like your stubborn heart"—he lifted his hand to her face, tracing the curve of her cheekbone—"I wish you could see how beautiful you are."

"Will you show me?" she whispered.

He closed the space between them, answering with a slide of his mouth. The heat that had been brewing in his belly all day urged him to deepen the kiss, to rip off Carmen's clothes and sink his cock inside her pussy until she screamed his name. But what she needed to see was a different kind of beautiful, the kind he saw every time he looked at her.

And there was no power, not in heaven or hell or anywhere in between, that was going to keep him from showing it to her.

Wordlessly, Liam took her hand and led her down the hallway to his bedroom. The space was dark, and maybe if things were different, he'd have left it that way. Instead, he moved over to the nightstand, turning on the lamp at his bedside. It cast a soft glow over the room—definitely enough to see by, but not so much as to over-brighten things. Carmen stood at the foot of his bed, her dark eyes glittering and her golden bronze skin flushed, and Christ, she was so pretty, his chest ached.

"You want to know what I see when I look at you?" he asked, desire turning his voice husky and low.

She nodded, a curl drifting out of the loose twist holding them away from her face, and Liam smiled as he snapped it up, holding it between his forefinger and thumb.

Her breath coasted out on a sigh, and fuck, this was going to be an exercise in restraint that he might or might not possess.

"I see your sharp mind." He tucked the curl behind her ear, skimming his fingers lightly over her hair to rest at her temple. "I see how smart you are, and how you notice everything. Even things most people don't."

Carmen angled into his touch. "Survival instinct," she whispered.

"Smart," Liam countered, because he knew it was both. He lowered his fingers, but not far, letting them rest on the bow of her mouth. "I see this brash mouth that always, always keeps me in line."

"I'm too b.rash," she whispered, but he slid his thumb over the part in her l!ps, rubbing the sensitive skin there until she let out a tiny whimper.

"You're fvcking perfect. Honest. Real. Compassionate. You never hesitate to speak when things need to be said. When people need help."

As much as he wanted to spend a month on her mouth, he slid his hands down her arms, over the sleeves of her shirt, then the bare skin of her forearms, before tangling his fingers around hers. "These hands are capable. Steady."

He lifted one to his l!ps, pressing gentle k!sses to her knuckles, her wrist, her hammering pulse point. Carmen watched as if mesmerized, and Liam didn't slow.

"But this," he said, lowering her hand to her side as he opened his palm carefully—fvck, so carefully—over her heart. "This is what I see most of all. Your heart is so fierce. So open and real. It leads you through everything you do. I'm envious of that."

Her eyes widened. "You're envious of me?"

He couldn't take back the admission, but after seeing the look it had put on her face, he wouldn't have. Not for anything. "You're honest. You don't stuff your feelings away. You wear them proudly, even when it makes you vulnerable. That makes you beautiful."

"It makes me messy," Carmen whispered, but Liam shook his head.

"Beautiful." He lifted her shirt over her head, returning his hand to her sternum. His rough, callused hand was at odds with her lush curves and the pearly pink satin of her br*a, but it was just one more thing he loved about her.

She reached down, her fingers curling over the hem of his T-shirt as she lifted it over his head. "You're beautiful, too."

He laughed. "I'll take your word for it."

"You should," she said, the sassy quirk of her mouth setting him on fire. The way Carmen's hands moved, feather soft, over his bare skin? That did things to him he couldn't even name.

"There are more than a thousand nerve endings in every inch of the human body. Did you know that?"

"I'm starting to realize that, yeah." Liam cut out a rough-hewn breath as she slid her fingers up his neck.

"Some places are more sensitive than others," she murmured. "It all depends on the body, of course. The exact path of the nerve endings. That sort of thing."

Her fingers mapped his face, rasping through his stubble, gliding over his lips in gentle exploration. The edge of her index finger moved over the spot where his upper lip met his face, sending a sharp tingle of sensation all the way down his spine.

"Ah," Liam grunted, more sound than actual word. Carmen's fingers stilled in place, and fuck, how did he feel that even more?

"Philtrum. More commonly called the Cupid's bow," she said with a smile. "I've always thought yours is sexy."

"Seriously?" he asked, tempted to laugh.

But the look she gave him, so loaded with heat, turned his laugh into a moan. "Very. That first night you came to my apartment, asking about Axel, I wanted a taste. Like this."

Slipping her fingers to his shoulders, she pressed up to place the barest hint of a kiss on the spot, then followed with a sweep of the tip of her tongue. The light touch sent a wave of sensation through him as intensely as if she'd crushed her mouth to his. His cock jerked against his fly, already standing at full attention and straining to find the snug spot between her thighs.

But he didn't give in to the demand screaming through him to strip her bare and bend her over the side of his bed. The empowerment on Carmen's face, her clear arousal at touching him as he'd touched her, kept him rooted to the spot. She ran her hands over his shoulders, trailing a path of kisses over his cheek, down to his jaw, testing different places and pressures until she struck gold.

"Fuck," Liam breathed, his pulse shooting through him even faster at the feel of her smile on the hyper-sensitive spot she'd discovered.

"The way you want me is beautiful," she said, kissing the hinge of his jaw, the soft skin that led to his chin, his throat. "It makes me feel beautiful."

Another wave of need hit him as her hands roamed his chest, fingers skimming one nipple with just enough suggestion to make him wonder if he could die from it.

"I want you so fucking much," Liam murmured, and her smile hit him right in the sternum.

"Then let me have you, Liam. Let's be beautiful together."

Carmen returned to his mouth, kissing him so deeply, he was instantly lost. Everything fell away except for the two of them. Every parting of lips, every taste and touch of tongues gliding together, all of it felt amplified. His cock ached with need, badly enough that he couldn't help the rough thrust of his hips against her belly, nor the grunt that flew

from his mouth when she undid his jeans with only a few fast movements. She lowered the waistband of his boxers, her fingertips brushing over the head of his cock, and fuck. Fuck, the look on her face knocked the breath right out of him.

Carmen closed her fingers around his dick and started to stroke, and that did things to him he couldn't even describe. Liam's chin dropped to his chest. He watched intently as she reached the base of his cock, her opposite hand reaching down to cup his balls on the upstroke, and his breath crashed to a halt in his lungs.

"Carmen." He meant it as a warning—he was so on edge right now that coming in her hand was a very high probability if she kept touching him like that.

But she didn't heed it. She worked him with both hands, catching her bottom lip between her teeth in a barely suppressed smile as he grated out a moan. "Tell me, Liam. Tell me what you want. Let me give it to you."

Her face was flushed with arousal, her eyes glittering with so much tenacity that Liam couldn't deny her. He thrust into her hand, giving himself over to the friction that was so much and yet not enough, and he couldn't hold back.

"I want you to suck my cock."

Carmen's smile was the most beautiful sort of wicked he'd ever seen in his life. She spared only a minute to undress down to her panties, then help him lose his jeans and boxers entirely. She guided him to the edge of the bed, placing just enough pressure on his shoulders with her palms to get him to sit before she knelt between his legs. Liam widened his thighs enough to accommodate her, a bolt of need shooting through him as she swiped her tongue over the top of his cock.

"I want this, too." Another pass of her tongue, this time over the tiny ridge where his crown met his shaft, and Christ, how could she find every sweet spot on his body with such true aim?

Carmen took him deeper into her mouth, rendering him useless for any wondering other than whether or not he was going to last more than ten seconds. Liam's pulse slammed through him while time slowed way down, intensifying every sensation. She took a moment to test out different touches and rhythms, each one driving him wild with both pleasure and need.

She circled her fingers around the base of his cock, pumping below in time with the sweet, hot suction of her mouth higher up. His hands locked into fists at his sides, one falling wide to Carmen's shoulder, gliding up into her hair.

He drank in the sight of her, with her eyes fluttering shut and her cheeks hollowing delicately on every upward stroke of her lips and tongue, his exhales growing tighter in his lungs before tuning into moans. Each one seemed to dare her movements faster,

then deeper, and Liam was powerless against the rocking motion of his hips as he pressed up to meet her.

This time, it was Carmen who moaned, dropping her free hand to slide it beneath the top edge of her panties, her fingers disappearing beneath the bright-blue silk. The muscles in her forearm flexed with exertion, her breath immediately growing shallow and fast, and in one swift motion, he tugged her from his lap, pulling her over the bed and yanking her panties to her ankles.

“Sorry, angel. As hot as it is to watch you suck me off”—he reached for a condom and rolled it onto his aching cock, still glistening from her attention—“nobody’s going to make you come but me.”

Carmen sent a look through her lashes that was all seduction. “But you were making me come. Sucking you off turns me on. A lot.” She opened her legs, crooking a finger at him while reaching down to touch herself with her opposite hand. “See?”

She stroked again, her pussy plump and slick and so, so ready for him, and Liam was between her legs in less time than it took to blink. “Jesus, baby. You’re so fucking wet.” He thrust a finger between her legs, a dark thrill moving up his spine as her slick inner muscles gripped him tight.

She moaned, but didn’t stop circling her clit. “I told you.” Her nipples turned to hard, tawny-colored peaks, her back arching to take his finger as deep as it would go. “The way you want me makes me...oh.”

Another tremble from deep inside, and he would never, ever get enough of pleasing this woman. “You want my cock, angel? Right here?”

He withdrew his finger partway before adding another, pumping both all the way inside.

“Yes,” she breathed, her hips rocking greedily. “Liam, yes. Please. Let me have you. Let me have all of you.”

He pressed a palm over her thigh, sliding his fingers out of her only long enough to guide his cock to the spot where they’d been. Sensations—so many, he couldn’t even name them, let alone track them—hurled themselves at him from every direction.

The clench of Carmen’s pussy, gripping him with slick, hot pressure. The way she’d cried out his name when he’d thrust all the way home. The way her fingers were moving faster now, wetness rushing over his cock as she bucked upward to fuck him from beneath, and oh, God, he’d never seen anything more erotic or beautiful or perfect.

“You feel that?” Liam asked, thrusting hard and deep. “You have me, Carmen. Right here.” Another thrust, and her thighs began to tremble as her fingers became a blur. “Right now. As much as you want me, I’m yours.”

She arched all the way up, riding his c0ck in a frenzy of movement. By some fvcking miracle, he held still, letting her take what she needed. He gripped the flare of her h!ps, angling forward, pushing deep. Their bodies molded together from shoulder to belly to h!ps, and Liam anchored her in place as she rose up to meet him, again and again. Carmen wrapped her arms around his wa!st, pressing toward him even though there was no space to close.

The friction of her n!pples on his c.hest and her pvssy snug around his c0ck made his balls start to tingle, drawing him closer to the edge. But rather than hold back, he let himself feel everything—every sigh and shudder and slap of their bodies, coming together full speed.

Carmen's nails curved into his a*ss, leaving a sting of pleasure-pain as she started to gasp, and the wicked satisfaction sent his org*asm slamming up from the base of his spine. Keeping their bodies locked together in rhythm, he teased out every mind-blowing sensation before dropping his damp forehead to hers, finally slowing to a rest in the cradle of her body.

"I mean it, angel. I'm yours," he whispered.

Carmen k!ssed him, her l!ps a soft promise. "I'm yours back, Liam."

"I guess this is going to get complicated, huh?" he asked, but rather than dodge the question or try to sugarcoat the reality in front of them, she simply shrugged.

"Maybe. But we didn't even do easy on the first day we met. And anyway"—she k!ssed him again, filling his c.hest with something that felt a lot like hope—"there's no one I'd rather get complicated with than you, Detective."