

The Saint Chapter 32 - Tips

Two months later

Carmen pulled up in front of the Ashland Correctional Facility. She was still in her scrubs, but there was no way she was going to be late.

Not when she had such amazing news to share with the men she loved most.

She made her way from her car to the building, dodging the falling leaves on the sidewalk. After making a full recovery, Daniel had been moved to a minimum security facility. He'd protested, but in the end, his participation in the case against Miranda and Gannon had shown a clear intention for rehabilitation. She and Liam visited every week, and, with the help of an excellent therapist, the two men were slowly mending their relationship.

"Carmen!" The male voice ringing through the parking lot was familiar, and she turned toward it with a smile.

"Jamie!" She jogged over to Liam's brother, folding him into a huge hug. "You look great."

He gave up a half-smile, the resemblance between him and his brother strong. "Rehab does that for you, remember?"

As soon as Daniel had begun healing, she and Liam had dug in to locate Jamie. He'd agreed to rehab, reluctantly at first, but with Carmen and Liam and Daniel behind him, he'd been making really great strides in his recovery.

"I do remember. We're still on for our NA meeting tomorrow night, right?"

"You know it. Between you and Frankie, I'm not skipping out on meetings."

Maxwell's fiancée, Frankie, had recently become Jamie's sponsor, and she took Jamie's wellbeing very seriously. "Good," Carmen said. She scanned the parking lot, but didn't see Liam's truck anywhere, and ugggghh, her news was burning a hole in her. "Why don't you go ahead in? I'll wait for Liam and we'll meet you inside."

"Sounds good," Jamie said, waving as he headed toward the building. Thankfully, Carmen didn't have to wait long. Liam pulled up a few minutes later, and Carmen felt butterflies in her stomach just watching him approach.

"Hey." He pulled her into an embrace, and, oh, his arms felt so good around her.

"Hey, yourself," she said. "Jamie's already inside. But before we go in, I have some news."

“Yeah?” Liam asked, and she couldn’t hold back anymore.

“We got full funding for the mobile clinic.”

After Miranda had been arrested, Carmen knew the night clinic had to close. She spoke with the doctors there, and brought them all in on the plan for the mobile clinic. Together, they’d worked diligently to come up with a way to safely, legally help as many people as possible. And today, they’d gotten the grant that would make it all happen.

Liam’s eyes widened for only a second before a grin covered his face. “Holy sh!t, babe! That’s amazing. You’re amazing.”

“I had help,” Carmen pointed out, but Liam wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close.

“You’re still amazing. And fierce. And smart. And I love you.”

“I love you, too,” she said.

And as she pressed up to k!ss him, she knew she would never feel anything less than perfect in his arms.

Kai Roman’s morning didn’t svck. This was more than he could say for most mornings—after all, they were mornings, and had an uphill battle by default. But even though he wasn’t exactly a chipper kind of guy (fine. He was stone cold serious. So sue him for being a realist), he had to admit that this particular morning actually had a couple semi-decent things going for it. There hadn’t been a line at the coffeeshop on the corner by his apartment.

The weather was crisp and cool, with none of that humidity bullsh!t he suffered through every summer, but not so cold that he’d needed to drag his coat out of the hall closet where he’d jammed it in March. Best of all, last night he’d been able to slam-dunk the massive medical fraud case he’d worked jointly with Remington PD’s Intelligence Unit, turning over the last of the case notes and paperwork that would send Miranda Astor to prison for the rest of her life. While Kai didn’t believe in anything nearly so cosmically woo-woo as good omens, he had to admit, so far, this morning had been full of promise.

Just like another morning attached to a day that fvcking wrecked you, pointed out a voice from the deep hidey-hole of his subconscious, making him stop short on the busy city sidewalk a few blocks from his office. Kai dodged out of foot traffic just in time to avoid being side-swiped by a man with a jogging stroller, placing his back to a bakery storefront and pretending to check his cell phone even though his heart was jammed in his throat. The deep breath he took did nothing to get his subconscious in line, and the memory of that other morning, six years ago now, yanked him back in time as if only six minutes had passed.

Sunshine spilling down from a cloudless sky, glinting off his freshly minted wedding band as he drove to work. A chest full of idiot happiness, thinking that the life in front of him would be loaded with anniversaries and milestones and maybe even kids. Grandchildren. Forever.

The caller ID flashing over his dashboard with the words Northview Hospital. The simple, straightforward words the doctor had used when Kai had arrived fifteen minutes later, still convinced there had been some sort of mistake.

Your wife, Gabrielle, was hit by a car while she was on her morning run. She sustained multiple serious injuries, and despite our every effort, she died...

So, yeah. Good omens were for suckers. He'd stick with cold, hard reality, thanks.

At least reality would never blindside him, and it sure as hell wouldn't make him think he was cut out for something as happy-happy as forever.

That ship had fucking sailed.

Kai kicked his feet back into motion, his dress shoes clipping out a steady cadence on the concrete as he boxed up his memories and slid his focus back into place. He'd dealt with Gabi's death six years ago, doing all the Agency-required grief counseling and taking off enough time that his boss didn't give him too much shit for coming back to work too soon. But Gabi wasn't going to be any less gone no matter what Kai did. Throwing himself into work had been better than getting all up in a bunch of feelings over something he couldn't change.

So what if he'd spent the last six years there?

Grumbling under his breath, Kai opened the door to the bank a few blocks from his office and stepped over the threshold. Wrapping the Astor case last night had afforded him a little flex time this morning, and he'd put off this errand for far too long. The bank was in one of Remington's historic buildings, with polished marble floors and long, mahogany front desk adorned with brass fixtures. Despite having an old-world aesthetic, like a museum or a library, the bank hadn't skimped on security. As was the case with any financial institution nowadays, there were cameras mounted in several strategic yet subtly placed points along the ceiling and walls. Not that those were a guarantee—Kai knew better than damn near anyone that you couldn't guarantee something like safety—but they sure didn't hurt.

Making his way further inside, Kai lifted his chin at the security guard, who returned the single-nod gesture before returning his attention to the side of the lobby where the bank managers and loan officers sat at their desks, quietly working. The large, airy space was divided by a combination of glass partitions, potted trees, and strategically placed furniture, offering privacy without ruining the open concept.

There were only two other customers on the opposite side of the lobby, an older white man who was chatting with the teller through the bulletproof barrier at the front desk and a dark-haired woman with her back to him, headed for the table bearing deposit and withdrawal slips. Her cream-colored sweater dress hugged a set of knockout fucking curves, and Kai couldn't help but let his eyes linger on the hypnotic sway of her hips keeping time with the clack-clack-clack of her boots as she walked.

Heat hit him in an uncharacteristic punch he hadn't felt in...Christ, had it been over a year since he'd met Camila Garza, aka the younger sister of Detective Matteo Garza, aka the Intelligence Unit detective who hated Kai's guts? Kai had gone out that night with the team to celebrate closing a case—a case on which Detective Stick-Up-His-Ass had thought Kai was a dirty cop, thanks—and Garza's sister had hit him like a sassy, sexy hurricane.

They hadn't done anything more than flirt and play darts before Kai had shut the rest down, but the memory of the way Camila had stirred him up was apparently still as strong as ever, especially if he was eyeballing random women in the bank and wishing they were her.

The woman turned, and oh hell.

"Oh, it's you," Camila said, at the same time Kai took a step back in surprise. Funny, the move didn't seem to endear him to her. "What are you doing here?"

"I bank here," Kai said, because a) it was true, and b) he couldn't get a more cohesive thought past the image of her perfect, peach-shaped ass still lodged in his brain.

Camila pursed her lips, which didn't help the state of affairs in his pants. "So do I."

"I got that part," Kai said. He'd been trying to lighten the mood, but her expression told him in no uncertain terms that he'd missed the mark.

"Hm." She straightened her shoulders, her chin tilting upward in a way that shouldn't be sexy, but really fucking was. "Well, I've got a lot of errands to run this morning, so..."

Some unexplained and very unexpected urge screamed at him to tell her to stop. Okay, so he couldn't entirely blame her for the chilly treatment—the last time he'd seen her, they'd traded an hour and a half's worth of electrically charged banter, only for him to stiff-arm her when she'd suggested they swap numbers. But it wasn't as if he'd ghosted her, or—worse yet—slept with her, then ghosted her. She didn't have to be so frosty.

Kai opened his mouth, fully prepared to tell her so. But he was interrupted by a gruff male voice, raised high enough for everyone in the lobby to hear.

"Nobody move! This is a robbery."

