

Educate you by xsparxflyx Chapter 21

Twenty One

"Um... thank you," I said, trying my level best to sound sincere. "... Mr. Decarlo,"

"Yeah okay, now get out,"

A**hole...

Opening the door of the car with full force, I stepped outside. He will never change! I slammed the door shut and didn't regret it one bit until he started hollering at me.

"Oi! You think this is some horse carriage!? Haven't you been in a car before!? Do you need to be taught how to shut a door!?" 2

Weirdly, his rage seemed to excite me. I felt a sudden urge to tease him. My conscience said 'no', but that was bullshit. This man should learn how to cool down once in a while!

"Chill, Mr. Decarlo, the door's fine," I smiled sweetly. "Aren't you, darling?" I caressed the sleek black door.

"The f***!?" He looked really offended. 1

Realizing that sticking around for too long was not going to be the best idea, I chorused, "Thanks for the ride, Mr. Decarlo," in a thick Spanish accent and turned around, ready to make the run for my life.

"Oi!" I heard him yell, but didn't dare to turn back.

I'm sure he's really mad right now...

As I walked into the building I hoped that he wasn't too mad at me. Pleased with myself, I entered my apartment with a wide smile plastered on my face. As I threw my bag onto the couch, I plopped on a beanbag nearby and took a sip of my coffee.

Coffee? Coffee! Holy shit! I left the can of coffee I bought for Madelyn, in Decarlo's car!

Great! Just great! Now I'm gonna be lectured on how much of a scatter-brain I am!

But wait... he's kinda cool with me now... I think... I mean, he did push me onto a goddamned shelf, so now, he can't be too rough on me! 1

I felt triumphant as thousands of evil thoughts rushed through my mind.
Awesome...

I will be okay as long as I don't look straight at his devilish eyes. Yes! That's the trick!

I checked the time and decided to text *Madelyn*, just to know where she was. It was 6.25 on that gloomy evening. The storm hadn't died down one bit. I hope she gets home without getting drenched.

I also have some explaining to do in about two hours' time.

After resting for a while, I plopped on my couch to watch the next episode of *Game of Thrones*.

No studies today... my head's about to explode...

As I stared out the window randomly, I noticed that the storm had died down a little.

Wait a minute... What time is it!?

It was thirty four minutes past seven.

If the rain didn't stop before 8 that night, I swore to myself that I would convert to Decarlo-ism.

Its 7.59.

I was sitting on my windowsill, desperately hoping for the rain to come to a stop as I watched the little droplets form patterns on the glass window. There was still a fairly heavy drizzle; enough to catch a cold if you walked uncovered for too long.

I'm failing... and he's winning.

No no no! Please! Stop!! That's enough rain for one day!

"Aeliana?"

"Oh! Madelyn! You're home!" I exclaimed as I set my eyes upon the tall figure at the door. Folding her umbrella, she ruffled her hair, shaking off the droplets of water.

"The rain's pretty heavy, yeah?" I asked.

"Pretty heavy!? It was like a storm the moment I stepped out of the subway!" Madelyn complained.

"Oh," I said, and turned back around to look out the window. "But it's dying down, don't you think?"

"Well yeah," she replied, and set her bag down on the coffee table. "But it hasn't stopped,"

Damn it!

It's 8.02.

I've lost...

"What was it?"

"What?"

"The brand, idiot!" Madelyn, who was lying on the floor, sat up and crossed her legs to sit comfortably.

"Oh... I don't know! Why would I check the brand of his car!?" I rolled my eyes.

"Is he like an ivy league professor?" Madelyn leaned forward.

"I guess?" I said. "Our university is pretty good right!?"

"What was it again?" Madelyn furrowed her eyebrows.

"Stonewall," I sighed and made a poker face.

"Ah! Right!" Madelyn said. "So if this 'Mr. Decarlo' is like an Ivy League Professor, he must be stinking rich, man,"

"Does it matter?" I raised an eyebrow.

"Just tell me already!" She yelled.

"Maybe!" I screamed. "I don't know! He's the best in the whole state! I bet he's got some s*** people don't know about!"

"Wow..." Madelyn rested her chin on her palm. "All of a sudden this whole thing turned into a melodrama!"

"You're crazy, Maddie," I said, shaking my head.

"I know," she said, smiling as if she was fantasizing about someone.

"I'm sure Mr. Burke complained. If not against Mr. Decarlo, against me,"

"What!? Against you!?" She started laughing. "Saying what!? That you sexually harassed your physics lecturer who's about twice your height and age?"

"He's neither!" I screamed. "He's about 6'2" and only 29!"

"Hmm, melodrama for sure," Maddie said, dreamily.

"Dude!" I yelled at her. "Be serious for once!"

"Fine," she gave in. "What's gonna happen tomorrow then?"

"I'll be called to the discipline council... probably,"

"Oh... are you going to rat him out?" Madelyn looked at me, eagerly waiting for my answer.

"What!? Of course not!" I said, immediately.

"Why not!?" Madelyn was taken aback.

"What do you mean 'why not!?'"

Madelyn and I were basically screaming at each other. "I don't wanna do that!"

"Why not!?"

"I just don't, okay?" I muttered as I stared at the floor.

"That's not it," Madelyn said as she raised my chin up using her index finger. "There's definitely more as to why you're trying to protect him,"

"It's nothing, Maddie. I'm not trying to protect him. I just..." I took a deep breath. "I just... don't think he's the Satan he appears, or more accurately, pretends to be,"

"Damn! I really need to see this guy, Aeliana!" Madelyn whined.

"Aw man! I could've showed you! At the restaurant that day!" I remembered. "We missed a perfect chance. Maddie!"

She looked disappointed. Whenever I told her about someone in detail, she wouldn't let me rest until I show the relevant person to her. And she was very impatient at that too.

Tapping a finger on my chin, I tried to come up with a not-so-obvious staged coincidence, and then it struck me. "When is the next big movie coming out?"

"Next big movie?" Madelyn pulled her phone out. "In two weeks,"

"Oh, what is it?"

"Lion King," Madelyn made a poker face.

"Oh god! How could I forget!?" I said, as I buried my face in my hands. "Hey, you think a big, arrogant, rude man with a huge attitude and a massive ego and also a girlfriend, would go watch The Lion King? What are the chances?"

Chuckling, Madelyn said, "You really don't fancy him much, do you?"

"Mm hmm," I pursed my lips. "Not my favorite,"

"It's not like we can go to there every single day they show it! That's impossible," Madelyn pointed out, putting her phone away.

"You'll have to be patient,"

"For how long exactly?" She raised an eyebrow.

"Until a perfect coincidence happens," I said, shrugging.

"Damn it! I don't wanna wait for that long!" Madelyn whined as she pulled my sleeve. "Don't you have a photo!?"

"Why the absolute f*** would I have a photo of him, Madelyn!?" I rubbed my temples. "Just WHY!?"

"Morning," I greeted my girls as I threw my backpack on the desk. "What's happening?"

"Aeliana," Bliss looked worried. "How's your head?"

"Thankfully still in one piece, why?"

"Good," Leah muttered. "The discipline council has finally summoned Decarlo,"

"Finally?" I furrowed my eyebrows.

"Aeliana," Bliss interrupted. "You have to get there right now,"

"Yeah, c'mon! Let's go," Leah said as she stood up from her seat.

"Guys, woah!" I said as I tried to calm them down. "I just got here,"

"Dude, hurry up! There's no time for that!" Leah said and pulled my hand.

"Fine!" I gave in, and followed them upstairs.

I gulped as we reached the door of the assembly room.

"Don't ruin your chance of getting back at him," Leah looked straight at me.

Goodness, she's evil as hell!

"Alright! I won't!" I nodded.

"Be careful," Vanille whined.

"Guys, I'm not going out to war, okay!?" I gave her a brief hug. "I can handle this,"

"Alright," Vanille nodded, smiling.

Pushing the big wooden door open, I stepped inside.

Almost instantly, I felt the cold air inside the hall brush against my skin. The room was dimly lit.

The first thing I set my eyes on, was the tall, lean figure at the center of the hall; the sight that allowed me to let go of the breath that I had been holding unknowingly.

As I drew closer to the silhouette, my heart began to feel lighter. 1

I felt slightly comfortable, although I was surrounded by a menacing atmosphere.

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Twenty Two

Despite the day light pouring in through the translucent curtains of the high windows, the lighting in the hall was noticeably dim. The temperature of the air was perceptibly lower than that of the outside.

Chilly air... dim lighting... these are tips used in interrogations...

Why are they making such a big deal out of all this!?

"Ah! There she is," I heard Mr. Burke say. "Come in, Miss Winslow,"

"Good morning," Professor Watson, the Dean at our University, greeted me.

"Good morning, sir," I said, trying my best to hide my nerves.

"Did you have your breakfast this morning?" He smiled.

How is that in any way, relevant?

"Umm... yes... sir," I said, furrowing my eyebrows.

"Good," he said and sat back as he let out a deep breath. "Shall we begin then?"

I turned my head briefly, to steal a glance at the ignorant soul that stood beside me.

He just stood there, arms crossed and blankly staring into thin air as if he was wondering what the absolute hell he had gotten himself into.

"You may take your seats," Professor Watson invited us to the seats that were placed directly before the long table he was seated at.

Dang it! I have to sit there, facing him!? Is this some sort of interrogation!? Have I committed a crime!?

No! I'm bloody damn sure I haven't... neither has Antonio! This is utterly ridiculous!!

"Alright," Professor Watson sat up. "Let's begin then," he said, adjusting his spectacles. "According to the complaint, the witness has stated that Miss Winslow was 'forcefully pushed' by Dr. Decarlo here; identifying Ms. Winslow as the victim and Dr. Decarlo as the offender,"

Offender!?

Ouch...

"Excuse me, Professor Watson, But how could the witness call himself a 'witness', when he has not witnessed anything at all?" Mr. Decarlo said, eyeing Mr. Burke menacingly.

"It'd be best if you could be a bit more careful with what you say, Mr. Decarlo," Mr. Burke wasn't backing down. "I witnessed everything. More than enough to file a complaint,"

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"That's bulls***," Mr. Decarlo growled. "You only saw Winslow losing her balance and then falling, which wasn't exactly the most important part,"

"Ms. Winslow, do you agree with Dr. Decarlo?" The Dean leaned forward.

I nodded right away. "Absolutely," sitting straight up, I decided to raise my voice. "Allow me to say a word about this, Professor Watson,"

He nodded in agreement.

"To be honest, I cannot fully grasp the current situation yet. And I really... really don't think that this is a matter for which Mr. Decarlo or I should be interrogated,"

"You're telling me, Ms. Winslow, that you do not understand the depth of what happened yesterday?" Professor Watson leaned forward.

"Depth?" I raised my eyebrows. "Are you sure you're fully aware of what happened, Professor Watson? I don't think this is something I should be interrogated for. Mr. Decarlo hasn't offended me in any way, and therefore I cannot understand why he has been brought here, and falsely accused of physical abuse,"

"Is that so?" Professor Watson adjusted his spectacles once more.

I nodded, pursing my lips.

Decarlo, you owe me BIG TIME!

"The thing is," Professor Watson eyed me carefully. "You don't seem surprised at all, Ms. Winslow," he narrowed his eyes. "It's almost as if you were... expecting this,"

Shoot....

"Of course I was," I said right away, hoping not to raise any suspicion. "My friends briefed me on the matter before I entered the hall. One of them actually met with Mr. Burke yesterday. She told me that he would file a complaint," I said, looking over to my secretly evil chemistry professor. "Isn't that right, Mr. Burke?"

Professor Watson seemed to be really confused at this point. I was definitely doing an amazing job fooling him, while Mr. Decarlo just sat beside me, being useless for once.

"Ms. Winslow," Professor Watson said, as he squeezed the bridge of his nose. "I would like to hear your side of the story first,"

"Thank you very much, Professor Watson," I said sincerely. "I think there has been a huge misunderstanding and I do not blame Mr. Burke,"

"Thank you," Mr. Burke said.

"I would like to tell you what happened,"

"You may proceed," Professor Watson said as he clicked his pen.

"Our assignment on Elasticity and Surface Tension was due yesterday and we were supposed to submit it during physics class, before lunch break," I explained.

"An assignment on Elasticity and Surface Tension?" Professor Watson was slightly surprised. "That is... So boring,"

Woah... my ears are deceiving me... did our Dean who holds a special PhD on physics, just call elasticity and Surface Tension 'boring!!?

I turned over to look at Mr. Decarlo. He was clearly ticked off. I'm not surprised at all...

"You said it, Professor Watson," I said, nodding while suppressing the urge to laugh out loud. "I hadn't completed the assignment and Mr. Decarlo caught me red handed. So as a punishment, I had to carry all 39 assignments of my classmates to his office,"

"Uh huh?" The dean nodded.

"So I did. I told my friends to wait for me at the cafeteria. I was hoping to join them after I delivered all the assignments. I carried all 39 files to his office and then he asked me to place them on the topmost shelf since he was busy with something. I was already feeling quite dizzy while I was on my way to his office. but I decided to ignore it. And when he asked me to put the assignments on the shelf, I was completely drained and also, I was too short to reach it,"

I could feel Mr. Decarlo's gaze upon me. He was probably baffled at how good I was at lying.

"When I refused, Mr. Decarlo came towards me to do it instead. And after he did, my vision started to get blurry, and I was losing my balance. It was probably because I was on an empty stomach. I tried to grab onto something, and the only thing I could get a hold of was... I'm very sorry, Mr. Decarlo, but it was your shirt," I stared at the floor embarrassed.

Mr. Decarlo cleared his throat and turned away.

"Why are you flushing, Ms. Winslow?" Mr. Griffin, our Vice Chancellor questioned me out of the blue.

Shit shit!

"Because I am embarrassed, Mr. Griffin," I whined. "I should not grab onto my physics lecturer's shirt, no matter what the circumstances are,"

Now that I think about it... I've done that a lot... I even got blood on it once...

"True," he agreed.

"So Miss Winslow, you're telling me that you fell unconscious after being on an empty stomach?" Professor Watson questioned me.

"Yes, sir,"

"Ms. Winslow," Mr. Rodriguez, seated on next to Professor Watson said.

Stop it with the questions, dammit!

"Exactly how hard did you grab onto Dr. Decarlo's shirt, that it came undone?" He raised an eyebrow.

Holy hell... just let me go already!

"Ahem," I let out a faint chuckle. "I might look petite, but I am actually pretty heavy," I looked away as I felt pretty embarrassed.

"Mm hmm," Mr. Rodriguez narrowed his eyes.

"Dr. Decarlo," Professor Watson turned to him. "I would like to hear you out now,"

"Professor, I'm sure you wouldn't want to waste your precious time listening to the same story all over again," Mr. Decarlo said, looking out the window.

"That means," Professor Watson cleared his throat. "Your explanation is the same as Ms. Winslow's?"

"Not a word more..." Mr. Decarlo said, slowly turned to face the dean. "... not a word less,"

Professor Watson nodded and asked, "So, both of you do agree that none of the incidents that took place, have anything to do with Student Rights Violation?"

"That's correct, sir," I lied, confidently.

"Dr. Decarlo?"

"Agreed," Mr. Decarlo replied curtly.

"Any objections, Mr. Burke?" Professor Watson turned to the wide eyed man, now seated at the other end of the table.

"Professor, I could swear that there definitely is something more to this, but if Ms. Aeliana Winslow shows absolutely no interest in protecting her own dignity, who am I to object?"

Okay, what the F*** was that!?

I'm sitting right here! Right f***ing here!!

I felt my cheeks heating up as my heart started to race.

As I heard Mr. Decarlo gritting his teeth, I turned to look up at him, beside me. He stared at the floor, arms crossed as he clenched his jaw. "Mr. Burke," he growled. "That's a bit too much, don't you think?"

"You're one to talk!" Mr. Burke snapped. "As soon as word gets out, neither you nor this child will be able to walk down a hallway in peace! You know very well how university students react to things like this,"

"Well then, you should've have kept quiet about it, yeah? Why'd you go ahead and complain about this trivial matter!?" Mr. Decarlo gritted his teeth once more.

"Dr. Decarlo," Professor Watson interrupted. "I have to agree with Mr. Burke on this,"

"Forgive me, Professor, but what Mr. Burke said just now, was baseless bullshit," Mr. Decarlo muttered, chuckling under his breath. "All the students are clearly aware of the fact that I carried Winslow to the infirmary because she fell unconscious. Considering that Mr. Burke is over 55 years of age, it was pretty obvious that he couldn't carry a 19 year old, lifeless body all the way to the infirmary, from my office. All the boys were at the cafeteria or outside in the garden, which left myself as the only person capable of doing it. It's that simple. There is no need to complicate it further,"

Wow... now I'm baffled. I thought he was just going to continue to sit there like a pudding... but I guess that's something he NEVER does.

"I should say," Professor Watson said, after taking a deep breath. "That is a fair explanation," he looked over at Mr. Griffin and Mr. Rodriguez. "I don't think there needs to be any further discussion on this matter, since it's my understanding that there has been no apparent misconduct,"

Oh god! Finally!!!

"I am deeply sorry for doubting you, Dr. Decarlo. And also, thank you very much for your cooperation. I hope there will be no misunderstandings like this in the future," Professor Watson said, as he stood up, followed by the other two. "Mr. Burke, thank you for reporting something that appeared illegal to you. I hope your righteousness prevails,"

"Tch..." Mr. Decarlo smirked sarcastically.

"And finally, Ms. Winslow. Thank you for your cooperation and I am truly sorry if you felt uncomfortable or threatened at any moment, during this session,"

"Oh! Um... thank you, Professor," I smiled nervously.

I'm the one who should be thanking him for letting us loose.

I probably shouldn't throw temper tantrums at Mr. Decarlo in his office again.

Well, he'd better do something nice for me, now that I saved his offensive ass.

AG

I was the first to reach the door. I pulled it open, revealing Bliss, Vanille and Leah, waiting for me outside. Vanille jumped onto me, giving me a bone-crushing hug. "So glad that you're back in one piece!"

I laughed at her reaction. "You guys underestimate me!" I grinned.

"Did you manage to get him fired?" Leah asked, eagerly.

"Dude! Why would I do that!? I don't want to!" I cried.

The door swung open once more. Mr. Decarlo stepped outside and stormed off without a single glance,

"Crap," Leah muttered. "You think he heard?"

"Nah..." Bliss said.

"Why is he mad?" I muttered. "Everything's sorted out,"

"He's mad? For real?" Bliss raised an eyebrow. "I thought that was totally normal,"

Turning to look at Bliss, I shook my head. "I don't think so,"

"Why not!?" Leah shrugged. "It's not like he's even gonna stop by and greet us,"

"I know," I mumbled. "But something's just... not right,"

I entered the lecture room with my girls following close behind, only to notice that the entire room was

empty.

'practical experiments held at Lab B2 today,' Leah read out of the board.

"Oh great!" I whined. "My books are in the locker,"

"Why'd you leave them there?" Vanille whined, clearly pissed at the idea of walking all the way to the lockers.

"Hey, you guys go ahead," I said. "I'll get my books and come to the lab as soon as possible,"

"I don't think letting you go alone would be a wise idea," Bliss said.

"Oh come on, Bliss!" I whined. "I'm fueled up, don't worry!"

"Alright then. See you there," Bliss shrugged and walked off with Vanille and Leah.
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Yes, I did leave my books in the locker, but that isn't the only reason I'm walking down the hallway right now. The devil's lair was located along the path that led to the lockers. Weirdly, I was hoping that I'd run into him, even though I knew very well that he was in his worst mood.

I reached the intersection and turned to the corridor that led to the lockers. Few minutes later, I started to hear footsteps behind me in the dead silent hallway.

Stopping in my tracks, I inhaled deeply and turned around.

There he stood, his grey eyes piercing into mine.

Surprisingly, I was able to read countless expressions on his face at the moment, unlike other times. All of them summed up to pure frustration. Letting out a deep breath, he started towards me. But after his first few steps, it was clear that he was going to walk past me. Stepping in front of him before he could do so, I

blurted out, "Mr. Decarlo!"

Stopping immediately before me, he let out a heavy breath and clenched his jaw, looking anywhere but at me. "What do you want?" He growled in his deep voice as he towered over me.

"To... talk to you," I said, and regretted it immediately.

He looked up at the ceiling behind me, and scanned it up to the end of the hallway. Security cameras... thank god they don't have any installed in these hallways.

"What?" He said, totally uninterested.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Decarlo,"

Yes, I just surrendered... because at this point it's pretty clear that all of this is my fault.

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"Tch!" A corner of his lip curled into a menacing smirk. "Save that crap for when you fail,"

"Huh?"

"Stop..." he clenched his jaw."...getting under my skin,"

Gritting his teeth, he looked up at the ceiling. "Get out of my way... useless midget,"

And that was enough to remove me from his path in a split second.

This feeling... is so... so familiar...

At that point, I could literally feel my heart being pierced million times in million different places.

Educate you by xsparxflyx Chapter 23

Twenty Three

"Earth to Aeliana!"

"W-what!?" I almost stumbled off my chair.

"Woah, girl! Calm yo shit!" Leah said, holding me by my arm.

Regaining my balance, I chuckled nervously.

"Dude, we're supposed to complete this boring titration before Burke gets here! Why are you constantly spacing out!?"

"Spacing out!? Who!?" I raised an eyebrow.

"You, idiot!" She facepalmed.

"Err, what!? I didn't... space out..." my breath started to get heavier. "I was thinking about... um... prom! Yeah! The Dinner Dance!!"

"Uh huh..." Leah narrowed her eyes. "Did you get a date?"

"What!? What date?" My eyes widened, unable to process her statement.

I'm getting caught for sure now! I really should stop thinking about other stuff during class...

His words really did cut deep though. I couldn't get them out of my head no matter how hard I tried! Useless midget?! All I did was lie to the dean of the university about his innocence. I do clearly remember that I was pushed. I could've confessed. But I didn't

Unusually, I wasn't regretting it either. He obviously did it to lessen the consequences that he and I would have to deal with after Mr. Burke saw us.

"There's definitely something else going on in your head,"

"What!? No!" I yelled. "Date!? No! I don't have one yet! I mean, I... ugh... don't want one,"

"It's gonna be real boring!" she whined, rolling her eyes.

"Obviously! Half of the kids in our department are nerds!" I rolled my eyes.

"Agreed! All the life-of-the-party people are in other departments," Leah nodded. "It's a good thing we hold it together on the same day. Otherwise you'd have to set up a study corner in the hall as well."

"Oh god," I chuckled. "So true!"

"Okay, there's definitely something going on," Leah narrowed her eyes as she pursed her lips.

"Damn!" I yelled, as I laughed. "How can you tell!?"

"I'm too good for your sucky lies... remember?" Leah smirked, pinching my arm.

"Ouch!" I laughed, slapping her hand, "Cut that out!"

"Dude! How did you even manage to lie so much to Professor Watson!?" Leah leaned forward. "I heard that he stares deep into people's souls,"

"Pfft!" I chuckled. "You think I'd be incapable of dealing with Professor Watson, after dealing with Decarlo for months on end!?" I raised an eyebrow. "Please, I'm an expert at this now,"

"No you're not," Leah said, emotionlessly. "You're a horrible liar. Don't deny it. It ain't gonna work,"

"Well yeah, I am," I surrendered. "I was prepared, okay? I saw it coming,"

"Right," Leah muttered, making it obvious that she wasn't buying it at all.

"Guys!" Bliss appeared out of nowhere, and patted my shoulder.

"Hey dudes," Leah said.

Bliss, Vanille, Ryland and Damon stood in front of us. Bliss held a clipboard and was scribbling something down on a paper.

"Aeliana, the gym is perfect," Vanille grinned.

"Eil... what? What do you mean?"

"We had a little chit chat with the gym coach and the guy in charge, they said that it's possible to remove all the equipment, and empty the area and also to remove the partitions so that we'd have more space," Damon explained. "Besides, that's how the previous batches have held it, I guess,"

"Oh, that's great!" I cheered, realizing that they were here to discuss about the dinner dance.... again.

"Yes! It really helps that the gymnasium is a separate building! We can even have people hanging around the garden," Bliss grinned. "...and have lights around the fountain!"

"Yes!" I smiled. "Amazing! Now all that's left, are the invitations, decorations, food and the DJ!"

"DJ?" Leah pitched in. "I know a guy,"

"Leah, you're a treasure," Bliss was satisfied.

"No themes, please," Leah rolled her eyes.

"Yeah, I agree," I nodded. "We don't need any cringy themes,"

"Fine!" Bliss scoffed. "You guys are NO fun!"

"Hey, what about the invitations?" Vanille asked.

"Yeah, we'll have to hand them out to all the others, except the students," Bliss said, tapping her pen on her clipboard.

"Hand them out!? It's the 21st century!" Leah rolled her eyes. "Who the hell hands out invitations today!?"

"That's how Professor Watson wants it to be done," Vanille shrugged. "I wish we could object,"

"Yeah, well, that's not an option. We all know that," Bliss pointed out.

"True," I nodded. "But aren't they like supposed to attend?" I questioned. "I mean, it's an annual thing, and they do attend the event each year. It's not like they need to be told to,"

"Yeah, you do have a point," Damon spoke up. "The reason as to why Professor Watson wants it to be done

this way, is because this is an event hosted by the students, not the academic staff. And therefore, he believes that it's common courtesy and also our duty, that we distribute official invitations to each of them... individually,"

"Alright then," I sighed. I just don't want to be the one to hand over the invitation to Mr. Decarlo...

"Right!" Vanille pressed her palms together "So, Leah's in charge of the DJ. Bliss will get the invitations

printed. The venue is set. Aeliana and I will do the decorations. Ryland and Damon, you're in charge of the food,"

"Roger that!" Damon agreed right away.

"Guys, let's make this the best dinner dance ever!" Bliss grinned.

They sure are excited! I wish I could be! I'd be happier cuddled up on a couch at home with some good movies... but obviously, this event would be much more exciting if Brittany wasn't invited. But, unfortunately, it is an open night for all students...

After lunch break, we were back in our good old lecture room, waiting for our dearly beloved physics professor to make his grand entrance.

"Leah," I looked over at her book. "Did you manage to get the fourth sum done?"

"This one?" She asked, as she turned the pages of the book. "Oh dude, by the way, did you get the homework done?"

"What homework?" I felt a chill travel down my spine.

"Never mind, I'm pretty sure you weren't in a condition to get any sums done," she shrugged.

"Well, yeah," I nodded, relieved that I have an excuse. "But I was in class,"

"Yeah, but," Leah faltered. "You know... you probably got some rest last night, considering your condition,"

All the thoughts that ran through my mind, took me back to yesterday.

He's furious with me... the last words I heard from him, implied that I'm totally worthless... I don't want to prove him right...

"Leah," I grabbed her sleeve. "Teach me how to do them."

"What!?! Now!?" Leah looked helpless. "Dude! We're talking about twenty different long questions!"

"That's alright! Make me do as many as possible! Doing something is better than doing nothing at all, right!?"

"Yeah," she said. "Yeah, let's start!"

"Awesome!"

"Okay. So we have 45 minutes, and you can get about 6 or 7 questions done if you do it properly after I teach you, but if you copy them, I'm pretty sure you'd get about 18 or 19 done," Leah explained. "Which method do you choose!?"

What Mr. Decarlo usually cares about, isn't how complete the work is; it's about how much of what you've completed, has been done with proper understanding. So, doing six or seven with the proper knowledge, is better than doing all of it with no understanding at all!

"First option,"

"Great!" Leah said. "There's no point in trying to impress him, anyways,"

Oh, Leah... how right you are...

"Okay, so here, these two are connected in parallel. So then, it's $C1 + C2$. And then, this one-,"

In less than a second, the entire lecture room fell silent and everyone standing, rushed to their seats. The deafening silence forced Leah to bring her explanation to a halt.

A familiar tall figure entered the room and stopped at the front desk. After he placed his phone and a large bundle of papers on the desk carefully, he turned towards us and crossed his arms. "Put your books away," he said, casually. "Surprise test,"

"Whaaat!" More than half of the students in the lecture room started whining and complaining.

"Shut up," Mr. Decarlo said, casually. "You will be allowed bleat and grumble, only if at least thirty percent of the whole class manages to answer this test

successfully," he explained as he paced down the lecture room. "And by 'successfully', I mean an A+; which is above 90 marks,"

The class was as silent as a graveyard. No one dared to make a noise.

"If no one is going to accept the challenge, that proves that none of you are confident in what you have learnt by now. If this is how you're planning on sitting for your final exam, you might as well just give up. There is no point in trying," he stood at the front of the class, eyeing every single student. "If you're going to do it, then do it right. Don't even think of bleating and complaining,"

I could swear that at that moment, majority of the class was regretting even breathing after he walked in. The annoyance in his features was evident. It was obvious in his tone of speech.

"You have 60 minutes," he said, handing the bundle of papers to Bethany, who was sitting at the very front and would shortly stand up and start distributing them.

"Leah!" I whispered.

Leah, who was sitting on my right, jotting down numbers hastily, halted and turned to look at me.

"Dude! How am I supposed to do the seventeenth sum!? We learnt the theory just yesterday," I exclaimed.

"You just need to know the equation!" Leah whispered back.

"What equation!?"

"This one!" She said, pushing her paper towards me.

I looked at the demon seated at the front of room, to make sure that his attention was fixated on anything other than the class. After confirming that he was concentrating on something else, I decided that it was the perfect chance to get a glimpse at my genius friend's answer sheet.

Yes, cheating is wrong! But right now, I have no other choice! Besides, it's just an equation! It's not like I'm trying to copy the whole thing off her!

Bending over, I scanned her sheet for the equation. Dammit I can't see!

I pulled the paper slightly towards me, using my right hand.

"Eyes and hands to yourself, Winslow,"

Dammit! I jerked my hand back.

How the hell did he see!? His face was buried in that book! Looking up at him, I realized that he was still immensely concentrating on whatever was in that thick book.

Cheating on Antonio Decarlo's test!? Pfft! The hell am I even thinking!? I must be bonkers!

Thanks to my photographic memory, I managed to get it into my head.

mem

Now all I've got to do is substitute the values and simplify! Great!

8 marks is totally worth cheating for!

Woah woah woah!!

Decarlo just caught me cheating!

I looked up at him, only to see his eyes peacefully resting on the pages of the book he held in his left hand.

And he's just sitting there? Staring into that book without even blinking!?

Why isn't he standing next to me right now, questioning me like it's my judgement day!?

"Dude!"

"Huh? What?" I snapped back into reality.

"I know you think he's Spanish and hot and all that, but we've got only 15 minutes!" Leah whispered, cautiously. "Quit gazing at the dude and hurry the hell up!"

"I don't think he's hot!" I protested. "Besides, I'm not into Spaniards! And I was absolutely not gazing!!"

"Just hurry the hell up!" Leah gritted her teeth.

"Chambers," the silent atmosphere was interrupted by a growl. His eyes were fixed on the terrified boy. Nothing else. Just him.

No one dared to look at Mr, Decarlo, except for Dylan, who just got called out. I could feel the tension, and of course, the beads of sweat forming on the bridge of my nose.

"Yes, sir?" Dylan said after an evident gulp.

"Do you happen to have a red pen?" Mr. Decarlo asked, very casually, setting his book down on the table.

"Yes, sir," Dylan immediately started digging into his purse.

"Good," he said, sitting back on his chair, comfortably. "Now, listen to me carefully... Big. Round. Minus 10. Top right comer,"

"Huh?" Dylan was confused.

"Go on, write it," Mr. Decarlo said, his face void of any kind of emotion. "Before I deduct anymore marks, for you holding a red pen during a test," he raised his eyebrows.

"But sir.,"

"Do you still not know that using your phone during a test is prohibited?" Decarlo raised his eyebrows.

"10 marks!?" Leah whispered to me. "He's such a douche!"

"Dude! Shh!" I whispered back. "He'd hear you even from a mile away!" Leah's getting minus 20 if he heard

that.

All the students in the room, were staring at Dylan.

"What are you punks gawking at!?" Mr. Decarlo hollered. "Write the goddamned test!"

Immediately, every single student in the room turned back to do exactly what he said.

I have to say, he has amazing control over the class... yes, he couldn't be more diabolical, but his word is respected like no other!

Bottomless grey pits.... that's all his eyes were... no emotion... no warmth... no expression at all.... just void... and- and cold...

Holy crap, look away!

Dammit! I got caught again! I need to stop spacing out!!

I still felt the dangerous, threatening glare on me. And I couldn't have been more accurate.

However this time, something about his glare was different though... it actually gave me a message... that was, sadly, rather disappointing. His face clearly read nothing but, 'What am I going to do with you, Winslow?'

He let out a heavy but inaudible sigh and shook his head in a 'tsk tsk' manner.

All these expressions were kind of like an overdose for me. This is totally out of the ordinary! All I could do at that moment was pout. And I shouldn't have done that; because immediately after, he mouthed the words: 'minus twenty'

Okay okay! I get it! Jeez!

In exactly 15 minutes, we were asked to stop answering. And when Mr. Decarlo tells you to stop, you most definitely have to stop!

"You at the front," he called out.

"Me?" Bethany stood up.

"Pfft! He doesn't even know her name!" Leah started cracking up.

"Shh! Poor thing, Leah!" I joined her.

"Yeah, you," Decarlo stood up. "Collect the answer sheets. Bring them to my office,"

"Yes, sir," Bethany stood up and sprang into action, extremely enthusiastically.

"Aww honey," Leah patted my cheek. "That used to be you,"

"Ugh!" I rolled my eyes. "You have no idea how glad I am about that 'used to be part,'"

"Really?" Leah flashed a playful smirk. "I'm not so sure about that,"

"Ohoho! Shut up, Leah!" I fake-laughed.

When Leah starts assuming that I'm into someone, she does not let me live it down. And right now, that 'someone' unfortunately happens to be none other than that demon.

Great...

Just great!!!

"I'll meet you there at 3.30, then,"

"Alright, great!" I replied. "By the way, I don't have Eric's number, so I don't have a way of contacting him. He's going there at about 12.30, so hurry up, okay? I'm not sure if he might leave before we get there. We don't wanna miss him,"

"Definitely not,"

I could feel Madelyn grinning on the other side of the line.

"Quit smiling, you creep," I chuckled.

"Gah! How'd you know!?" Madelyn screamed, already knowing my answer to that question, a little too well.

"I know you like the back of my hand, idiot," I said. "Ok, now I'm gonna hang up and run to Starbucks,"

"Great! See you there!"

After shoving my phone in my pocket, I grabbed my bag, ready to make a move out of there. "Leah, make sure you contact the DJ guy,"

"Yeah!" She nodded. "Will do,"

"Great! Let's go, then,"

Leah and I parted ways at the gate. "See you tomorrow then!"

"See ya!" Leah waved.

I reached the entrance of the coffeehouse to see Eric at the counter, chatting with Grace, his coworker.

As I pushed the door open, I was invigorated by the sweet aroma of brewed coffee. Most of the seats were occupied mostly by university students. I just hope I'll never run into Brittany or Nate while I'm at work.

"Hi, Eric!" I said as I approached him.

"Hi!" He grinned. "So! Ready to sign up?"

"Yup!" I nodded. "Hold on, let me call Madelyn. I need to let her know that I'm here."

"Looks like she's already here," Eric smiled, looking at the door, over my shoulder. "Hi Madelyn!"

"Hello," Madelyn batted her lashes, as she let go of the door that she had been holding open.

"Guys, chill," I chuckled at how obvious they were being.

After signing up and going through all the paperwork, Eric asked us to watch how 'things were done' there. So, Madelyn and I, just stood at the counter behind Eric, watching him push buttons and write names on cups.

"So, we get off work at 9, huh Eric?" Madelyn leaned towards him.

"Yup," Eric replied

"Great!" I cheered. "Where do we get our outfits?"

"They're in the-,"

"Oh my god, guys! Don't talk to me!" I screamed as I turned around, facing away from the door.

What is he doing here!? Doesn't he have his own espresso machine in his office!? And probably like thousands more at his house!? Why Starbucks!?

"Aeliana, what's going on?" Madelyn held me by the shoulder

"Shh! Madelyn! Don't say my name!" I whispered,

"Dude! Why are you being so dramatic?" She crossed her arms over her chest

"That's him, dude!" My heart was beating like some kind of wild animal was trying to escape my chest.

"Who!?"

"It's the crocodile.." 1

"Decarlo?"

"Shush!" I spat in her face.

"He's at the counter,"

"Holy cow..." I broke out in a cold sweat.

"Now he's looking at the menu,"

“Okay, shush! I need to listen,”

As usual, Eric greeted him as soon as he had approached the counter.

“Hola señor,” he said, in a pleasant tone

What is this, some kind of instinct that Spanish-speaking people have? How’d he know that Decarlo speaks Spanish? I swear upon my life, he greeted all the previous customers in English!

“Hola,” Mr. Decarlo muttered. Of course, a proper greeting to anyone was never in his agenda

“te gustaría hacer un pedido?” Eric asked. or said... I don’t know Spanish

But he probably asked ‘Would you like to place an order?’

“Sí,” he muttered once again. “Pumpkin Cream Cold Brew. Grande. Sin hielo,”

“Puedo ayudarle en algo más?” I could hear Eric’s smile in his words.

“Dos galletas de chocolate,”

Woah... Spanish is sexy... dang... his voice is... deep.... it’s almost... wait no! Ew! No! 1

“¡Bueno! Eso será 8.35 dólares,” Eric said. “Gracias Señor Que tenga un buen día!”
1

“También,” I heard Mr. Decarlo say, before he took the bag of cookies and the cup in his hands. Soon after, he left through the door.

Damn Tonly understood ‘chocolate’.

“Dude! Good lord! Aeliana!” Madelyn screamed, turning heads in the process.

“Someone get me some water!”

“Aeliana, what’s wrong,?” Eric rushed towards me.

“Eric!” I looked at him intently. “Do you know that guy?”

“The last customer?” Eric questioned. “Yeah,”

“What!?! You do!?! How!?!”

“Well, he doesnt really talk much, but he’s a regular customer,”

And at that moment, my heart was definitely in my throat.

Educate you by xsparxflyx Chapter 24

Twenty Four

"Come with me!" Madelyn dragged me into the staff room at the back.

Massaging my poor chest, I followed her.

"Dude!" She let out a heavy breath. She was panting as if she'd just finished running a marathon!

"That!" She pointed towards the cashier, where Mr. Decarlo had been standing just few minutes before.

"What. The. Hell!?" She gulped. "Was that!?"

"What!?" I raised an eyebrow. "Why are you being so dramatic?"

"That thing!... is your 'physics professor!?"

"Yeah, yeah!" I rolled my eyes. "You finally got to see him,"

"Uh huh..." Madelyn breathed heavily. "Aeliana,"

"Mm hmm?"

"I'm thirsty," She panted.

"Water?"

"Obviously not!" Madelyn screamed.

"Geez! Stop talking to me!" I whined.

"Oh good lord, he speaks Spanish!"

"Of course he does! He's from Spain!"

"What the absolute f***, is a Spanish hunk doing in a university, when he's supposed to be modeling for Bvlgari, Giorgio Armani and shooting for magazine cover photos and basically walking up and down a runway!?"

I sighed. "Honestly, I agree,"

"Really?" Madelyn's face lit up.

"No," I rolled my eyes. "In all seriousness, you're overreacting,"

"Am not!" She placed her hands on her hips. "You just need to get your estrogen running,"

"My estrogen secretion is completely normal!" I protested. "You, on the other hand, need to get your brain checked!"

"Oh, shut up! He is swoon-worthy!"

"Fine! You win!" I surrendered, realizing that this argument was pointless.

"Dude! How do you even pay attention in class!?" She raised another stupid question. "I'm pretty sure he just goes on with the lesson, while y'all are lost in your own sexual fantasies,"

"What the-,"

"Including the boys," she added.

"Hell no! Everyone pays attention in Mr. Decarlo's class!" I said. "Well... most of the time,"

"Now I understand why that b**** Abigail went out of her way to get into his pants,"

"Ew..." I muttered. "Do you have to be so gross and detailed about this?"

Deciding that answering my question was optional, Madelyn continued to stare into thin air, clearly lost in some other dimension. She sighed heavily and gulped in an obnoxiously loud manner.

Narrowing my eyes, I muttered, "Don't gulp like that, Maddie. It's disturbing," 1

"Prom is in two weeks, and I haven't even decided what to wear!"

"Errr what?" Madelyn raised an eyebrow. "College has prom?"

"Well, we just like to call it that, but it's more like a dinner dance," I explained. "...for the entire university,"

"Oh..." Madelyn tapped her chin. "Well, the hell are you doing without picking out a dress?"

"Ugh!" I groaned. "I don't have anything appropriate!" I complained as I opened my 'pathetic excuse of a wardrobe',"

"Girl, anything looks gorgeous on you! Out of my way!" Madelyn pushed me aside and dove into my closet.

She rummaged through the clothes that were hung up neatly.

"How 'bout this one?" She grabbed out a sparkly amber dress.

I gagged. "No way."

"It needs to be long, yeah?"

"Yup... I would prefer long..." I agreed. "By the way, all my long dresses are back at my parents',"

"Oh..." Madelyn turned to face me.

"We could go get them tomorrow," I suggested.

"No!"

"Then what!?" I furrowed my eyebrows.

"We're going shopping," she grinned.

"No we're not! I'm broke!" I complained.

"Do lecturers attend the dance as well?"

"Well yeah," I shrugged.

"We're definitely going shopping," Maddie smiled wide.

"Do you think we'll get the results of Decarlo's 'surprise test' today itself?"

"No way... so soon?" Leah looked up from her book.

"Judging by the number of days he took for the previous marking sessions, he works like a machine," I explained my opinion. "I won't be surprised if we get the results today,"

"I'm pretty sure I got like 3 marks or something," Vanille rolled her eyes.

"Same, bro," Bliss muttered. "Same..."

"He wants thirty percent of the students to get A+ grades," I mumbled. "We have 40 students, so at least 120 fus have to score above 90,"

"Leah's one, so we need eleven more," Bliss shrugged.

"Oh shut up! How can you be sure?" Leah protested. "I screwed up yesterday,"

"If your version of 'screwed up' is finishing the paper 15 minutes early, then I f****d up," I shook my head.

"Guys, he's coming," Dylan screamed as he rushed into the class.

In about two solid seconds, the entire class maintained pin drop silence. At that point, all I could hear was my heartbeat, increasing its rate.

"Dylan!" Vanille bent over to him. "Did you just prank us?"

"Dude, I'm dead serious!" He whispered. "He's right there near the-,"

And, with that, he arrived. He walked towards the desk blankly and shoved a bundle of papers onto Bethany's desk.

Bethany stood up immediately, taking the bundle of sheets in her hands. "Yes, sir,"

He didn't even say anything! Why is Bethany such a kiss-ass!?

Soon, she started running around the classroom, handing over the papers.

That's weird... normally Mr. Decarlo would just instruct us to pass the bundle around after taking whatever belonged to each of us.

Bethany raced towards us and stopped near Leah. Her eyes widened as she pulled out the paper in front and handed it to Leah.

Leah's face was blank. She just stared at her answer sheet, looked at me and shrugged.

"What is it?" I asked as I leaned over to take a glimpse. "91!?" I whispered. "Dude! That's amazing!!"

"Ehehe! Thanks?"

"I'm pretty sure I got like 40 or something," I muttered.

"You weren't in a condition to study yesterday s you might be excused," Leah whispered back. "Decarlo's the one to blame for that!"

I nodded in agreement.

"Way to go, Aeliana," I heard Bethany say. As my head made a sharp turn to look at her, I noticed the extremely sarcastic expression in her features. "Leah got 91. What happened to you?"

"It's not my fault that you don't have friends to keep you updated on daily gossip," I snapped at her.

"What are you even mumbling about?" She chuckled, as she handed over my answer sheet. "Bethany," Leah interrupted. "Shut the hell up and do your job!"

"Aye aye!" Mr. Decarlo stood up straight. "What's going on there!?"

"Crap!" Bethany mumbled as she stormed away.

"Dude! 53!? He's gonna skin me alive!" I whispered to Leah.

"You'll be fine! I'm pretty sure he still feels guilty,"

"No." I muttered. "No way... This is Antonio Decarlo," I pointed out. "A rare type of organism that absolutely does not 'feel' anything,"

"Fair enough," Leah nodded in agreement.

As Bethany got back to her seat, we realized that it was Mr. Decarlo's turn to talk.

"Seattle! Carter!" He called out.

"Yes!?" Leah turned to look at him right away.

"Take your books out," he said blankly, as he picked up the book on the teacher's desk.

What is he even doing?

"We have completed elasticity, surface tension and viscosity," he muttered as if he was speaking to Leah and only her. "Next up, is radioactivity," he flipped through the pages of the book.

"So, Seattle," Mr. Decarlo said as he placed the book, back on the table. "What do you know about radioactivity?"

"Um... it's a... ugh... property of atoms that possess unstable nuclei, that will give out stored energy... err... to gain stability," Leah managed to put it together.

"Nature of the process?" He asked as he crossed his arms, leaning on the table

"Spontaneous,"

“Controlled by?”

“... err...?” Leah started to wonder.

“Nothing,” I blurted out.

Slowly, the familiar pair of cold, grey eyes moved from Leah, and onto me, sending chills down my spine. Immediately, I regretted finding the guts to answer.

“Did you just answer my question?”

“I think so, sir,” I barely looked at the guy.

His void orbs were fixed on me, observing my every move and gesture.

“Oh,” he smirked. “You don’t have to bother,”

Chuckling inaudibly, he continued. “You are not eligible to sit for this exam,”

At that point, my eyes made their way to his. How dare he!? Douchebag!

Lauren, seated in the block to my right, gawked at me, eyes wide. Soon enough, I realized that the entire class was paying me heaps of attention.

“The hell are you punks gawking at?” Instead of sounding cold and menacing, this time, he was chuckling as if we were some kind of bad joke. “Same goes for you idiots! None of you are up to the standard,”

How could he demotivate us like this!? This is the exact opposite of what a teacher is supposed to do! What pisses me off even more is that we never stand up for ourselves, against him!

“Seattle and Carter are the only eligible ones at the moment,” he said, crossing his arms over his chest. “but I am uncertain as to how long that eligibility will prevail,”

The entire room was as silent as a grave. No one dared to make a noise.

“Winslow,”

Dang, here we go again.

“Yes, sir?” I sat up straight.

“Since you’re so eager to share your information on radioactivity, why don’t you come here and enlighten us with your knowledge on this matter?”

"I politely refuse, sir,"

"I insist," he snapped, immediately, his stormy orbs impaling me for the one hundredth time.

"Yes..." I stood up. I could feel the tension as I walked towards him, standing there in his ever-so authoritative position.

I stood beside him, turned towards the class and started staring at my feet. At that moment, looking forward at the entire class was the very last thing I wanted to do. Like I'd rather look at the demon beside

1.

As I turned halfway to look at him, I remembered that the guy's height was no joke. He was without a doubt about 6'2"; lean and all that.

Lucky douche bag... and I won't even mention the hair! Or the jawline!!

"What are you waiting for?" he turned. "If you're waiting for me to change my mind and tell you to go back, forget it and think about what you're going to say now,"

Geez.... so damn difficult, this guy....

"Radioactivity... is the emission of various particles from nuclei of atoms... due to nuclear instability," I explained, silently praying that I will not screw it up. "These particles maybe neutrons, beta particles, alpha particles, positrons etc etc... It's a spontaneous process, and therefore, it cannot be controlled by changing physical conditions like temperature, pressure or area,"

Let me go now...

"Uranium, Radium, Polonium, Plutonium, Curium, Rutherfordium, Einsteinium, Mendeleevium, Neptunium, Nobelium and Thorium are some examples,"

That's bloody it! I have nothing more to say!!

"What is the matter, Winslow?" He decided to ask, probably since I had been looking up at him for a bit too long.

"Yeah, Mr. Decarlo, I think I'm done," I said under my breath.

"Oh? Then why don't you thank the class for listening to you?" He whispered back.

"It wasn't that bad!" I muttered.

"Yes, it was," he said. "Now go,"

Looking up at the class I took a deep breath, "Thank you,"

Having said that, I made my way towards my seat.

"You should've made Professor Watson fire him, when you had the chance!" Leah whispered to me. "Instead you chose to be a nice little girl. You shouldn't be this tolerant!"

"It's fine, Leah!" I sighed. "One year to go! I'll survive,"

"Good luck," she said, rolling her eyes.

The following 45 minutes were spent taking notes and listening to Mr. Decarlo's crystal clear, but extremely boring lecture.

"If you are not willing to work harder, stop wasting your time here and just go find a job," Mr. Decarlo said. "At least you'll earn something,"

And with that, he walked out through the door, leaving the entire class in complete silence.

"That was... motivating," Leah muttered, nodding.

"Sure was," I replied, and let out a sigh.

As people started to fill up the corridors, Bliss and Vanille rushed up to us and suggested that we go to the cafeteria right away, before all the good stuff are gone. Agreeing with them, Leah and I followed the two, into the cafeteria.

We rushed to our usual spot and took our seats before anyone could invade.

"Leah," Bliss said. "Is that all you're gonna have? Cheetos and sprite?"

"Yeah," Leah shrugged.

"Aeliana, is she serious right now?" Bliss looked at me.

"I'm not surprised at all," I muttered, shoving a piece of cantaloupe in my mouth.

"Leah, you gotta eat healthy!" Vanille leaned forward. "You are what you eat!"

"So Leah's junk?" I raised an eyebrow, holding my laugh in.

"If your food's junk, you're junk, bro," Bliss told Leah.

"Better than cantaloupe and salmon sandwiches," Leah muttered and took a sip from her can of sprite.

"Hey, Vanille,"

"Hi, Taylor!" Vanille squealed as she stood up from her seat. "Dude, I haven't seen you in like forever!"

"I know right!" Taylor screamed back, hugging Vanille. "We've got a lot of catching up to do,"

"Guys, I'll be right back," Vanille said as she wandered off with Taylor.

"Have you guys decided on what to wear for the dinner dance?" Bliss broke the silence.

"I'm going shopping with Madelyn next week," I explained. "You?" I nudged Leah.

"Dude! Are you guys joking?" She laughed. "I'm gonna bunk,"

"No, you're not," I said, sternly.

"Why not?"

"You're coming, and you're going to wear a dress!" I demanded.

Why FOU!

"Ugh! Fine!" She surrendered, since she already knew that there was no point in protesting.

"Great!" I cheered. "Bliss, I'm thinking of black,"

"Same here,"

"Awesome!" I grinned.

"Pink for Leah, please!" Bliss chuckled mischievously.

"Shut uppp!" Leah whined, rolling her eyes.

Fifteen minutes after leaving, Vanille returned.

"Big news!" She announced as she took her seat.

"Ooo gossip!" Bliss leaned forward.

Vanille grinned and beamed at us.

"Spill it!" I smirked. "The suspense is killing me!"

"Nate and Brittany broke up,"

"WHAT!?" Bliss and I chorused.

"Ooo!" Leah sat back and crossed her arms over her chest.

"Apparently, we're the last to know," Vanille muttered.

"No way! They're through?"

"I don't know, Bliss," Vanille shrugged. "You know Nate... he dates whoever he wants to, whenever he wants to,"

"But dude, this went on for longer than expected," I pointed out.

"That's true," Vanille agreed.

"Do you know why they broke up?" Bliss was enthusiastic to find out more.

"Nope," Vanille shook her head. "That is all Taylor told me,"

"Don't worry," I rolled my eyes. "They'll get back together before the dinner dance,"

"Or," Bliss started. "Nate will hook up with someone else before that,"

"Possible," Vanille nodded.

"I don't get why you guys are interested in that douche bag's love life," Leah muttered out of the blue. "What's it to you guys anyway?"

"Things about Nate's love life, are like general knowledge," Bliss shrugged.

"You calling me dumb!?" Leah made a poker face.

"No! That would be so wrong!" Bliss laughed. "You just don't care... right?"

"Right..." Leah agreed. "And I don't think you guys should either,"

"Leah's right, guys," I spoke up. "Nate breaking up with Brittany isn't gonna change anything in our lives,"

"True," Vanille and Bliss nodded in agreement.

"Guys!" I started panting as I reached the cashier. "Am I late?"

"Nope..." Eric smiled. "Right on time,"

"Awesome!" I grinned. "I'll go do a change of clothes and come back,"

After returning to the cashier in five minutes, it was time for Erick to leave, since his shift was over." Thanks to you guys, I can go home early,"

"Aww! That's sad," I said. "Isn't it, Maddie?"

Madelyn didn't say anything. Instead, she just giggled.

Eric smiled as he looked away.

"Guys, is there something going on here, that I'm not aware of?" I crossed my arms before my chest.

"I'll call you," Eric winked at Madelyn, as he turned and rushed out the door.

"Dude! What!?" I turned to Madelyn who was blushing like crazy.

"I know, I know," she said and placed her hands on my shoulders. "I'll tell you everything once we get home,"

"Hmm..." I muttered. "Everything?"

"Everything!" She assured me.

Seconds after, I heard the bell at the door ringing.

"We got a customer," Maddie said. "You handle this one," she said, and moved away from the cashier.

"Good evening, ma'am! Would you like to place an order?" I smiled. "Yes! I would like one Mocha Frappuccino, regular"

"Coming right up!" I smiled as I turned to Madelyn who had already started preparing it.

"Anything else, ma'am?"

"Banana bread, please,"

"Here you go," I said, as I handed them over to her. "That would be \$10.25,"

As I was busily looking for change money, I failed to notice the next customer arriving at the cashier.

"Your change, ma'am," I said, as I handed it over to her. "Have a nice day,"

"Are we getting a hang of this?" I asked as I turned to face Madelyn.

"I guess so," she shrugged. "Um... Aeliana,"

"Yeah?"

"Customer..." Madelyn muttered as if she just saw a ghost.

Actually, what I saw as I turned, was a lot worse than a ghost.

I gulped. "Good evening, sir,"

"Where's the Cuban boy?"

"His shift just finished, sir," I managed to mutter.

"Why haven't I seen you around before?" He looked down at me, making me regret the whole idea of getting a part time job.

"I... err... started today.... sir,"

I gulped once again, as he cleared his throat and took a deep, calming breath.

"Green tea Frappuccino,"

"Ah! Yes," I started pressing the screen, despite my stiffened fingers.

"Anything else... I could help you with?"

After a long menacing stare, he decided to ask, "What do you have?"

"We have... eri... New York Cheesecake, Caramel Slice, Banana bread, Raisin Toast-,"

"Egg Benedict Panini,"

"I'm sorry, that's not available today, sir,"

He raised an eyebrow, probably blaming the unavailability on me.

"Chicken, Tomato, Avacado Panini?"

"Fine,"

Wait a minute. He didn't mention the size.

Before I could say anything, my stomach started to rumble.

Dammit! Stop! Why the hell did I have to start my diet yesterday! Damn that useless cantaloupe and watermelon! It's all just water! Nothing else!

As I snapped out of it, all I saw was Mr. Decarlo looking at me, an eyebrow raised, probably thinking 'What the hell is wrong with this kid?'

I took a deep breath, "Um... small, regular or large, sir?"

"Large,"

As I grabbed a cup and a sharpie, I decided to make use of Eric's lessons.

I'm going to regret this for my life.

"Your name, sir?"

As his grey eyes met mine, I regretted saying anything to him. I should have passed this order on to Madelyn. Why does he have to show up here and ruin my day!? There's a Starbucks outlet in the subway! There's one in Herendale! And literally every mall you go to! He could just go there! This is not the only coffeehouse on earth, dammit!

After a prolonged stare, sighing, he looked away. "Just give me the goddamned coffee," –

"Yes, sir" I set the cup down. "One Green tea Frappuccino, one Chicken, Tomato, Avacodo Panini?"

"No! No!!" He grumbled. "One of the Panini whatever, two Frappuccino; one Green tea, the other White

Chocolate Mocha. Both large. Now get it done before I lose my patience,"

"Coming right up, sir," I managed to say. "\$23.20,"

Shoving the money onto the counter, he walked away and towards the seating area. Placing his stuff on a isolated desk near the window, he took a seat, facing the wall. All I could see were his broad shoulders and shiny hair. 1

"Madelyn," I turned around. "Chop chop! Like your life depends on it,"

"I think I just melted," Madelyn batted her lashes as he stared at devil seated at the far end.

"Dude, shut up! You're dating Eric!" I slapped her shoulder. "Now start brewing,"

"Isn't he supposed to stay and take his coffee, and then settle down at a table?"

"Tch! This is Mr. Decarlo," I said. "Right!" Madelyn said, as if that explained everything. "What's the order again?"

"One green tea Frappuccino, one White Chocolate Mocha Frappuccino," I said and sighed. "I'll do that; you get the Panini thing done,"

"On it,"

In less than two minutes, everything was prepared.

"Dude, get a tissue!" I started to panic.

"Why!? What's wrong!?" Madelyn rushed up to me.

"This breadcrumb is out of place! Can't you see!?"

"Are you serious!?" Madelyn placed her hands on her hips. "He'll never notice that!"

"Yes, he will," I insisted. "His five senses work so damn well, he can hear you from ten miles away!"

"Oh god!" She rolled her eyes. "Here," She said, handing me a tissue.

"Thanks," I said as I wiped the crumb off carefully.

"I see no difference,"

"Shh shh! He does," I smiled. "Now take this to him,"

"No can do, sister," she said, sassily. "I have a boyfriend, remember?"

"So what!?" I yelled. "How's that stopping you from serving a customer?"

—

"I just don't wanna fall for your flame,"

"He's not my 'flame'!" I protested.

"Let me hear you say that in few months, hon," 1

"Ugh!" I scoffed as I took the tray in my hands. "I thought I could count on you,"

"You'll thank me for this, baby," Madelyn smiled as she wiggled her eyebrows.

"Pfft!" I smiled sarcastically. "Thanks a lot, Madelyn... for making my day worse!"

"Darling, you're so dramatic!" She smiled sweetly. "Now go, my dear! Use your charms!"

Groaning, I made my way to the seating area. Before entering his territory, I decided to stop behind him, and do some breathing exercises. Staring at the back of his head, I started to contemplate how unfortunate I was.

Why!? Just why!?

Why do you have to be so difficult, Mr. Decarlo? It doesn't hurt to be nice! A kind gesture never hurt

anyone!

Why do you always have to be a douche!? Being nice is way easier! It takes less effort!

"Winslow, are you waiting for my coffee to cool down?"

"Huh!? What!?" I snapped out of it.

"God dammit just bring that here!" He yelled.

Thankfully there weren't many people around.

I walked up to his table, and placed the two cups of coffee with the plate. Tucking the tray under my arm, I said what I was supposed to, "Enjoy your coffee,"

"Hold that tray up," he demanded.

"Um?" I was confused by his sudden command.

as

"You heard me," he said, never looking me in the eye.

I held the tray horizontally, curious about what was going to happen next.

As soon as I held the tray in a stable manner, Mr. Decarlo placed the White Chocolate Mocha Frappuccino on the tray.

"Sir, we don't refund,"

"Who said I wanted a refund?" He looked up at me. "Take that and go," 4

"But sir," I said. "You paid for this,"

"Of course, I did," he muttered. "Last time I checked, Starbucks doesn't give out free stuff,"

"Um," I pursed my lips, unsure of what to do.

"That coffee will help you survive for at least two hours without fainting," he mumbled. "I don't want you falling onto the ground unconscious in my vicinity, and blaming me for it once again,"

My eyes widened as I let his words sink in.

"Blame you!?" I cried. "I never blamed you, Mr. Decarlo!"

"Let me have my coffee in peace, Winslow,"

"No!" I snapped. Letting the tray down on the table, I sat on the chair opposite to his, facing him. "Tell me, when did I ever blame you for that!?"

"We've been through this," Mr. Decarlo took a sip of his Frappuccino. "How dare you talk back to me, useless little midget," he snapped.

"Midget!? Aren't you supposed to be at least a bit thankful!?"

"Thankful?" He scoffed and chuckled. "For what?"

"Speaking for you, and not against you," I stated, confidently.

"Tch! All you ever did for me, was tarnish my clear record by gifting me with a visit to the Discipline Council!"

"That wasn't my fault!" I was practically screaming.

"You can't wipe your hands off this just like that!" He narrowed his eyes and gritted his teeth, sounding even more intimidating this time. "Had you not thrown a temper tantrum in my office that day, none of this would have happened! Don't speak like you are not at fault!"

His jaw was clenched and his eyes shone with rage.

Feeling the lump forming in my throat, I let out the breath that I had been holding unconsciously. As my vision started to get blurry, I stood up.

No, I'm not crying again... I'm not... not in front of him...

"You're so damn cruel," I muttered. Dragging the tray of the table, I rushed back to the counter.

I set the tray down on the counter, and all I could do was grit my teeth and bury my face in my hands.

“Aeliana?” Madelyn placed a hand on my shoulder.

“Thanks a lot, Maddie,” I said, and dragged myself into the room behind the cashier.

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