

Educate you by xsparxflyx Chapter 33

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Thirty Three

He said 'no'.... Why did he say 'no'?

Normally, he would want me to forget everything unusual that happened between us... but right now, few minutes before, he was... different...

The glint in his eyes... his gaze... the way his head turned slightly to the left as he spoke... it was all so... so different... the deviousness in his eyes was somehow... fainter... although present, it was undoubtedly lesser than ever before...

No... no, it's a trap.

Last time I set my mind on this assumption, he called me rude, mannerless, ignorant and a 'nuisance'. He made me break down in front of him. I'm not falling for that again... I'll only end up hurt and disappointed.

He agreed that he wasn't one to be compassionate towards anyone... he doesn't know emotion, let alone compassion!

But... he actually did seem to care for a moment... I mean... he was concerned about my sprained ankle... and

Aeliana's thoughts were interrupted by a familiar tone. Pulling her phone out of her bag, she stared at the shattered screen.

"Hello,"

"Aeliana, we're out of toothpaste, in case you didn't notice. I forgot to bring money... can you buy one on your way home?" Madelyn sounded bored.

"Um... I'm already at home," She muttered, furrowing her eyebrows.

"What!?" She screamed. "But it's still 3.35,"

"Yeah... well," Aeliana shrugged.

"Did you fly home!?"

"No, I got a lift," she replied, smiling to herself.

"A lift?"

"Mm hmm!" She smiled wider, imagining what Madelyn's reaction would be when she would arrive later that day.

"Don't tell me..." she faltered. "Oh, My. God,"

Oh no...

Madelyn watched Aeliana as she packed her bag, whilst she sat on the couch. Zipping her bag shut, she looked up at Madelyn. Noticing the sly smirk playing at her lips, Aeliana shot her a questioning look.

Madelyn raised her eyebrows and exhaled, her smile consistent.

"What!?" Aeliana snapped.

Grinning, Madelyn stood up and walked towards her. "Say 'Hi' to-,"

"Daddy for you! I know! I know!!" she rolled her eyes letting out a heavy sigh. Ugh! This woman!

"Don't forget to take this," she said, handing me a black bag. "Oh, yeah! I almost forgot," Aeliana said, taking it in her hands. "Is he gonna give you a ride today?" She grinned.

"Ugh! No! We have work today, remember?"

"Aw... bummer," she replied, pouting. "But he's gonna show up at the coffeehouse anyway, so, meh," Madelyn shrugged happily.

Sighing once more, Aeliana swung her bag over her shoulder. "Have a good day at work," "Sure," Madelyn smiled. "You have fun too."

"Pfft! If by 'Fun', you mean threatened and- and embarrassed, sure! I'll have fun!" she rolled her eyes.

"Do you have physics class today?" Maddie asked, taking a sip of coffee.

"We have physics class everyday," Aeliana pointed out.

"Oh..." Maddie said, staring at her. After few seconds, she looked down at the floor, smiling.

Aeliana could tell that there were so many things running in her mind at that moment. "What is it?" she asked, chuckling.

Her head jerked up to look at the brown haired girl. "No, nothing," Madelyn shook her head and looked away.

"Maddie?" she looked at her, as a smile forced it's way to her lips.

"Hmm?" She looked up at Aeliana, pursing her lips. "What are you holding back?" Aeliana leaned on the wall beside her. "Nothing, I'm just... happy," she shrugged.

"Mm hmm" She narrowed her eyes, at the girl. Why is she being so weird....

She wouldn't have let me loose this easily if I had told her about what happened after Adrian

showed up... thank god, I didn't.

"So obviously, since the horizontal vectors get cancelled off, the vertical vectors are the only ones that influence the movement of the charge,"

Ugh... I can't concentrate...

"You should definitely understand that a maximum velocity is obtained at the point P and nowhere else," he said in his heavily Spanish accent.

'It was one of the best things to listen to, without a doubt, but I would've preferred to not be straining my brain to understand some physics concept, while I listened,' Aeliana thought.

Mi. Decarlo hadn't taken a single glance at Aeliana since he had entered the lecture room. And Aeliana was not happy.

All he had been doing was lecturing them, and scribbling on the board, of course, along with the occasional "you should be more than capable of doing this" statement at every problem that they failed to solve.

"This isn't something I need to dwell on. You are competent enough to do this, so do it by yourselves," he snapped and shut his book after the bell rang. "Your end of semester exam will be in two weeks, and I like to think that all of you are prepping,"

The class was silent. No one dared to answer his aimless questions.

Setting the thick book on the desk, he walked in front of it and leaned on it. He looked out at the class as he crossed his arms over his chest.

"I have news for you amazingly dedicated, enthusiastic students," he smirked.

At that point every single student in that class, could feel the agonizing tension in the atmosphere. They knew all too well that something very very bad was about to happen.

"If you screw up this test," he said, calmly. "I will be scheduling summer classes for you, for two weeks, every other day,"

The entire class was still hushed, although Mr. Decarlo could vividly make out their silent cries for help.

"Well, you have no choice but to accept the challenge," he said, and stood up. Taking the book in his hands and as he slid his phone into his pocket, he turned around to leave. "Make sure that your assignments are on my desk before noon today," with that being said, he left the lecture room.

"Okay, everyone!" Bliss stood up. "Hand over your assignments," "Wow... she's pretty enthusiastic..." Leah muttered, leaning towards Aeliana.

"Uh Huh... why would absolutely anyone volunteer to deliver the assignments to that

hellhole?" Aeliana rolled her eyes, unable to comprehend Bliss' actions.

"Where the devil resides..." Leah added.

"Mm hmm,"

Bliss had gone around the entire class collecting assignments. Finally, she approached Leah and Aeliana and dumped the heap of files on their desks. "Your ones, please,"

Placing her assignment on the pile, Aeliana said, "I honestly don't understand why you would -;" only to be cut off by her.

"Oh my god! I forgot!" Bliss stared at Aeliana, her mouth agape. "Oh shit! I was supposed to meet Mr. Burke at 11.30," she cried. Breathing heavily, she paced up and down.

"Bliss, calm down," Leah said, trying to get her in one place.

"Why don't you just go now, apologize and tell him that you couldn't make it because Mr. Decarlo was here?" Aeliana suggested, shrugging.

"Yeah..." she nodded, hastily. "Yeah, I should do that," Bliss said, nodding as she grabbed the files. "Could you come with me, Aeliana?"

"C'mon, Bliss! It's not that bad!" Aeliana said. "What can I do!? I'm sure Mr. Burke has his doubts about me as well,"

"That's fine, just come with me," Bliss cried.

"For what?" Aeliana asked, as she stood up from her seat.

"For moral support," she smiled and paced towards the door, Aeliana following her close behind.

"Moral support, my ass," she rolled her eyes as she followed her friend into the corridor.

Few steps down the corridor, Bliss halted. "Hey," she said as she turned to face Aeliana. "Why don't you go hand these over, while I go meet Mr. Burke and we'll meet up at the cafeteria?"

"We could just go and meet Mr. Burke first,"

"Mr. Decarlo specifically said 'before noon'," Bliss pointed out. "It's 11.56 now,"

"Ugh..." Aeliana sighed.

Oh no... I should've seen this coming...

"Let's both be quick, alright?" Bliss said, shoving the heap of files into Aeliana's hands.

"But,"

"Thanks a bunch!" Bliss grinned. "Thank you so much!" She said, running off to the opposite direction. 2

Sighing, Aeliana made her way towards the most painfully memorable office, in that very

building. She dragged herself forward, wondering why her reluctance to be there, in his office, was lesser than ever before.

She was obviously nervous. Just the thought of all that physical contact from the previous day, made the hairs on the back of her neck, stand on their ends. She recalled his faint heartbeat that she had heard through the thick layers of fabric that smelled of minty freshness. It was just his waist that she could reach to wrap her arms, not his neck. She would, without a doubt, have to look 90 degrees above her eye level, to take a glimpse of him, just as he mentioned earlier. Her eye level was only comfortably at the level of his chest. He was never wrong.

Oh my god... I can't do this... how the hell am I going to even look at him!?

Turning her arm, she glanced at the silver watch that hugged her wrist.

11.59...

Here goes nothing.

Gently, she knocked on the door, waiting for an answer.

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There was nothing. She tried again, only to be left with silence once more. Sighing, Aeliana pulled out her phone. Scoffing at the sight of the broken screen, she tried to text Bliss. Typing with one finger wasn't something that she was very fast at.

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'Bliss... the devil's not-,'

"Move,"

"Gah!" She nearly jumped out of her skin.

Raising an eyebrow, *Mr. Decarlo* eyed the girl as if he was trying to process whatever was wrong with her.

Aeliana looked up at him. "Um... I errr... I thought you were inside," she said, noticing the wrapped sandwich on top of the book that he held. In his other, he held a tall thick paper cup which clearly was filled with coffee. Having stared at her for a moment, his lips parted before he took a breath.

"Winslow," he muttered, his eyes never moving from hers.

"Yeah?" She asked, gulping.

"Hold this," he said, and shoved his book and the sandwich onto the pile of files that she had been holding using just one arm. In hopes of securing its balance, she hastily moved her other hand under the heap.

Why the hell can he not be more gentle!? He can't just dump anything he wants on this huge pile of files!

Reaching into his pocket, *Mr. Decarlo* pulled out a bunch of keys. Pushing one of the keys into the hole, he unlocked the door and pushed it open. Shoving the key back into his pocket, he turned to face Aeliana. He took the book and the sandwich in his hands and entered the office.

Ugh... is he just going to leave me here, standing?

This is not the first time he's done this! And it won't be the last, I'm sure of it!

"Mmm can I come in?"

Placing the book and the cup of coffee on the desk, *Mr. Decarlo* turned around. "Why do you think I left the door open?"

Again... now it's my fault...

Cautiously, Aeliana stepped into the office, as if there were land mines buried under the wooden floor. She proceeded towards the tall man, standing by the desk.

She watched him pull off the lid of the paper cup. He crushed it and threw it into the dustbin at the other end of the room. Of course, it fell in perfectly.

"Tell me, Winslow," he said and turned around to face Aeliana, who then stood beside him, placing the files neatly on the desk.

"Out of the forty students in your class, were you the most enthusiastic to show up here in my office?" He asked as he took a sip of his coffee, as one corner of his lips curled into a barely visible, mischievous smirk.

Oh my god

"Um... well... actually," she stammered. "I had... no choice..."

"Oh! Really?" He said in a very unusual tone. "Then why don't you run off to the library, and bring these books for me?"

"Umm... what books, sir?"

After taking another sip of his coffee, he mentioned three different books that had titles that Aeliana could definitely not remember.

"Um..." she gulped. "Could you repeat it, sir?"

Holding the cup to his lips, he eyed the girl once again, without a word.

Why isn't he saying anything?

She started to get quite uncomfortable as she stared into his eyes, which were the only part of his face that she could see at that moment.

Sipping on his coffee, he continued to gaze at her.

Aeliana looked away as she felt the heat rising to her face. Don't blush! Do NOT. BLUSH!

"Write the damn names down," he said, shoving her a pen, as he moved the cup away from his lips.

Should've just said that before without trying to penetrate my soul with your ice cold orbs, dammit!

Aeliana pulled her sleeve up and prepared to take down the names on her palm.

"What are you doing?" Mr. Decarlo asked, furrowing his eyebrows as he glared at her palm. "Don't do that," he said, handed her a piece of paper and read out the three titles.

Why not? It's my hand!

Having jotted them down, Aeliana placed the pen on his desk.

Mr. Decarlo walked around the desk, and dropped into his chair. Leaning back, he took another sip of coffee.

"Enjoy your little 'quest', Winslow," he smirked. "Try not to break any shelves on your way. No one will be there to catch you," he muttered, staring into his cup of coffee as he smirked wider.

Aeliana was certain that her face was as red as a ripe tomato by then. Hastily, she turned around and then paced towards the door.

Internally screaming, she shut the door behind her, and rushed towards the library.

Ughhh! Why does he make me feel so uncomfortable!!?

I wish I had the courage that I did when I was in his car on the first day... I'm a total klutz right now! I would bang my head on his shelf again for it!

Aeliana rushed towards the library, determined to do this task properly. Staring at the paper in her hands, she memorized the names of the books.

He isn't the type to be lazy enough to send a student on an 'errand' like this... wait... but he did ask me to help the last time I met him in the library... So maybe

Aeliana's train of thoughts were cut off by the sound of her ringtone.

"Hello?"

"Aeliana," Leah spoke on the other end of the line. "Where are you!? It's been fifteen minutes! Bliss is already here!"

"Hey, Leah," Aeliana said. "I'm headed to the library. I need to find some books,"

"Books?"

"Yeah,"

"Alright, fine!" Leah snapped. "You're gonna miss lunch, though,"

Breathing heavily, Aeliana spoke halfheartedly. "That's fine,"

"Leah, gimme that," she heard Bliss yell. "Hello? Aeliana?"

"Yeah, Bliss?"

"There's someone who wants to meet you," Bliss said. "Huh?" She replied, in utter confusion. "Who might that be?"

"You'll see," Bliss said, sneakily.

"Just tell me already, Bliss," Aeliana said, climbing up the stairs. "I've had too many surprises in one month,"

"Shh! Patience, child!" She said and hung up abruptly.

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Ugh... whatever... I'm just gonna go complete my 'quest' for now. Wouldn't wanna have Decarlo troll me for not being competent enough to find a book from a damned shelf!

She stepped into the library and walked towards Mrs. Green's desk. "Good afternoon, ma'am,"

"Good afternoon, dear," she greeted her, adjusting her spectacles. "What brings you here at this time?"

"I'm here on an errand, Mrs. Green," Aeliana replied. "Mr. Decarlo sent me out here to get few books for him,"

"Oh," she said, adjusting her spectacles. "That's quite unusual. Mr. Decarlo almost never sends any of his students to find things for him,"

"Oh..." Aeliana muttered, feeling the beads of sweat forming on her temples.

"Mm hmm... he's one to sort of... do his own thing," Mrs. Green said. "Except of course, delivering assignments to his office, I presume,"

Oh no... Shiz balls...

"Actually," Aeliana said hastily, determined to cover it all up. "He went out for lunch. That's why I'm here. I think he needs them urgently,"

"Oh..." Mrs. Green said. "Well, okay then. I'm sure you know which shelf,"

"Yes, of course I do," Aeliana smiled, recalling the catastrophic act from last week.

She headed over to the shelf at the corner of the vast hall.

She didn't spot the crack on the lower shelf that she was expecting to. The shelf was a brand new one made out of rich dark wood with an elegant glossy finish. It looked a lot more expensive than any of the other shelves that stood in that hall.

He wasn't kidding when he promised to replace it...

I should really be more careful...

She went through the titles written down on the paper one more time, and began to rummage through the books.

Here it is... Aeliana got her hands on one of the books after about five minutes of searching.

One down... two to go...

"Ahem,"

Leaning away from the shelf, she turned to her right. "Brittany?"

"Err... hi..." the Blond smiled shyly. "Can I talk with you... for a second?"

Aeliana was puzzled, but then realized that she was expecting this sometime soon. Recalling all the other situations that arose as a result of her agreeing to 'do things' with people, Aeliana felt uncertain.

It's fine... she owes me anyway... she wouldn't dare to hurt me...

Although she was in doubt, she was sure that whatever happened, it'd be fine since Mr. Decarlo and Bliss knew where to find her. Besides, the librarian was just few desks away; although she wasn't able to witness whatever happened there, directly.

"Sure," she replied, cautiously.

Brittany walked over to the nearest table, Aeliana following her. They took their seats, facing each other.

Aeliana looked directly at the girl before her, although Brittany couldn't return the gesture.

"What is it, Brittany?"

Smiling, Brittany placed the bag that she had been carrying, on the desk. From it, she pulled out a white box, wrapped in cellophane.

"This is for you," she said, gently pushing the box towards her.

Aeliana's eyes widened as she realized that it was one of the most expensive phones in the market at the moment.

"Oh my goodness, Brittany," She said. "You didn't have to go all out on it. I've never used such an expensive phone!" Aeliana chuckled.

"I wasn't sure which one you use," she said. "But I know you'll love this," she shrugged. "I have the same thing and I do," "Oh,"

Oh my god... this is so creepy... what has gotten into this girl!? I swear I never imagined a day like this... she's being so... nice... I might be slightly more comfortable if she was trying to

"Umm.. thank you so much, Brittany," Aeliana smiled. "I don't know what to say,"

*I don't normally say things like this," she said, twiddling her thumbs. "But... I realized that I have to,"

"Mm hmm?"

Brittany pursed her lips and took a deep breath. "I'm sorry," she gulped, looking at her hands on the desk

Oh My GOD.

'Again, I don't usually say things like this, but I regret being so rash on you without any pre confirmation about what you were being accused of,"

Wow... is she for real?

Aeliana just stared at the girl seated before her, mouth agape, unsure of what to say. "I mean," Brittany continued. "I believed every single thing she told me. It was so... convincing,

as SO

"She?" Aeliana raised an eyebrow, now even more interested in what Brittany has to say, "She who?"

"I told you that it was a reliable source of information, remember?"

"Mm hmm," Aeliana replied, impatiently. "So that means it's someone who knows you and me both,"

"Uh Huh," she said. "But mostly you,"

"You are gonna tell me who it is, right?" Aeliana asked, as her nails sank into the skin on her thighs, through her jet black jeans.

Aeliana felt a burning sensation in the pit of her stomach. She knew what to expect. She knew exactly who it was. She just needed to hear it from Brittany, so that she could confirm it.

Brittany scoffed, "She's pro at forging lies. They're pretty convincing," she looked up to meet Aeliana's eyes. "Abigail does not like you,"

"I already knew this side of her," she replied, sighing.

"You did?"

"Yeah, I had a hunch from the beginning," Aeliana said, furrowing her eyebrows. "What exactly did she tell you, Brittany?"

"Ugh," Brittany rolled her eyes. "Shit about Nate," she gritted her teeth. "That photo... what was that about?"

"Why are you asking me? You're the only one who knows, I just got it from someone,"

"Who?" Aeliana leaned forward. "Who gave it to you, Brittany?"

"Serena did," Brittany replied confidently.

"Serena Waters? Abigail's friend?"

"Mm hmm," she agreed. "They were in it together,"

"So they brought you evidence like that, and convinced you that they were on your side?"

"Pretty much," Brittany sighed. "Whatever! I just don't care anymore! I'm done with Nate!"

"Brittany,"

"It's agonizing to say this, but I believed every lie Abigail and Serena told me, because I wanted to convince myself that Nate wasn't the one starting to get uninterested,"

"Hey, look," Aeliana said. "I understand, okay?"

A slight smile spread across Brittany's features.

"I mean, all of us should have at least a shred of pride left in us. If there's one thing that I learned from this conversation, it's that Nate doesn't deserve you,"

Looking up at Aeliana, Brittany smiled faintly.

Telling herself that she shouldn't say more, Aeliana kept quiet.

After few moments of awkward silence, Aeliana muttered, "So... I guess we're on good terms,

then?"

Shrugging, Brittany replied, "I guess so," she smiled. "Thank you for... forgiving me," she mumbled with evident difficulty.

"Don't mention it," Aeliana said, as they both stood up from their seats.

"I should get going," Brittany said, flipping her hair back.

Aeliana chuckled, noticing the sassy gestures and comments made by the girl could never be erased.

"See you around then," Aeliana's lips tugged into a smile.

"Mm hmm!" Brittany sang as she returned the gesture. Having done a full one-eighty, she headed towards the door.

Aeliana was relieved. She felt as if that burden that had been weighing her down all this time, was suddenly expelled; as if one of her biggest issues had been solved.

Nevertheless, the biggest issue that bothered her at that moment, was scavenging for the three names stated by the devil, on only three of the hundreds of books that sat in that library.

Why am I supposed to be here, rummaging through these dust-coated books, while he sits in his office, staring out the window, buried in his comfortable black leather chair, that he so violently rotates whenever he needed to turn around and pierce into my soul!?

It's not fair!

If he wants me to find them for him, he should at least have the decency to stay here with me and keep me company, while I do so! 2 Just like last time!

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Thirty Four

"I believe I said, 'The Feynman Lectures; Volume 2'," Mr. Decarlo growled as he looked down at the grey cover of the book that said 'Vol. 1'.

"Isn't that it?" Aeliana asked, not bothering the slightest bit to make a single movement.

"You had one job, Winslow," He sighed, waving the thick book in the air.

"Three, actually," she sighed, as she looked out the window. "Mr. Decarlo, I'm hungry!"

After taking a prolonged look at the girl, he pinched the bridge of his nose. "Fine. Out,"

"Huh?"

"Out of my office,"

Hearing his absurd and absolutely rude statement, Aeliana scoffed. "But I just did you a favor,"

Setting the three books down on the table, Mr. Decarlo smirked as he leaned on it. "And now you want me to thank you?"

"Wouldn't it be only right that you do?"

"Shouldn't you ask yourself the same question, cariña?" he chuckled as he walked past her and towards the shelf that Aeliana had fallen onto the other day. 2

What? Curry-what!? What is he talking about?

Pulling a blue file out of the second shelf, Mr. Decarlo approached her. "You don't thank me; I don't thank you. Seems fair. But that's child's play, no?" .

"I don't understand," Aeliana blurted out.

"Of course, you don't," he looked away and let out a cynical laugh.

Shrugging it off, Aeliana said, "Brittany got me this," as she waved the white box for him to

see.

"I see she kept her promise," he said, nonchalantly.

"Mm hmm," Aeliana smiled.

"Now go. Lunch time is almost over,"

Yeah, thanks for that, Decarlo! Great help! Five minutes more standing here, I would actually pass out.

But wait, I have questions. I need them answered. Lunch can wait.

"Mr. Decarlo?"

"Hmm?" he looked up at her; for the first time, without questioning her as to 'what she wanted

'or saying 'what is it again, Winslow?' His eyebrows formed arches, arranging his features into a concerned look.

Aeliana gazed at this new countenance, observing every inch of it.

"Aeliana?" he muttered, in his strong accent, clearly trying to figure out the reason behind her unusually long silence. 2

Upon hearing her name through his lips for the second time in her life, Aeliana felt her heart skip a beat. Snapping back into her senses, she took a sudden deep breath. She gulped and balled her fists, trying to ignore the effect he had on her. "The medical record," she muttered. "I thought you didn't take me to a hospital,"

"I didn't," he replied. "It was my friend. I asked him to come over that night. He's a doctor,"

"Oh," Aeliana mumbled, letting his words sink in. He has friends? Who would've thought the extremely stuck up, macho tough guy like him would have anything close to a friend!? His friend' must not have taken the fact that he had a student passed out on his couch, very well.

"Did that answer your question?"

"Yes, it did," she simply smiled. "Thank you,"

"Ah, there we go," Mr. Decarlo's lips tugged into a smile, as he turned around to face his desk. "Next time, don't get the volume number mixed up,"

Aeliana let out a nervous chuckle. There won't be a next time.

Disturbing the somewhat comfortable atmosphere, the bell rang, indicating the end of lunch time.

"Oh s***,"

"What did I tell you, Winslow?" Mr. Decarlo raised an eyebrow.

Sighing, she muttered to herself, "I missed lunch. Great..."

With that Aeliana turned around to exit the dreaded room.

"Winslow,"

Now what!? Did I walk wrong!? Did I step on his favorite spot on this blank, boring wooden floor!?

"Come here," Aeliana's feet dragged her body towards him, without her consent. "Take this and leave," he said, tossing something brown in the air, towards her. Lunging forward, Aeliana barely managed to catch it. The hell is this? she looked down at the

paper bag in her hands.

"But sir, this is your lunch!"

"You're late for your next class. Get going," he muttered as he dropped into his black leather

chair. 1

"I'll leave as soon as I return this!"

"Take that and go, Winslow," he muttered, rotating his chair gently from side to side. "I don't want you collapsing anywhere within a 100m radius from my office. Two sessions in the discipline council were enough,"

"But sir-,"

"Aurate! Before Mr. Burke pays a surprise visit,"

Oh f***, that's an experience I would never want once more.

On her way towards the lecture hall, Aeliana munched on the sandwich she least expected herself to be eating.

Chicken... does he like meat? I wonder if he misses the authentic Spanish cuisine. You do get all sorts of restaurants here in Herandale, but it's very easy to miss home-cooked food that you basically grew up with. Which is also why I'm planning on starting prepare our own food for *Madelyn* and myself. I'm not the best at cooking, but I do try my best.

Finishing up the sandwich, Aeliana rolled the paper bag and shoved it into her pocket. Swallowing down the last bit, she patted her lips in order to get rid of any crumbs.

She approached the lecture room, praying that Mr. Burke hadn't arrived yet. She stood there for a bit to muster up some courage as she ballled her fists. Gritting her teeth, she stepped inside.

The class was a total mess, just like they always were after lunch time. No matter how concentrated and focused they were at the beginning of the day, after lunch time, everyone's officially tired of straining their brains. The self-resolved respite was essential.

"Hey," Aeliana muttered as she approached Leah who was chatting with the others.

"Where were you!?" Bliss asked, slightly confused about Aeliana's late return.

"I had to meet Brittany, remember?" she rolled her eyes.

"Oh," Bliss muttered.

"How'd it go?" Vanille asked.

"She actually did the unthinkable; she apologized!"

"Wow! That's an achievement on your side," Leah chuckled. "What's that?" she asked, looking at the white box Aeliana had been holding.

"She even replaced my phone,"

"Woah," Bliss' eyes widened. "She went all out on it, didn't she?"

"Mm hm," Aeliana muttered in response.

"C'mon! Let's set it up before Mr. Burke gets here," Bliss grinned.

"You're one to keep promises, aren't you?"

"Of course," Aeliana replied. "Why would I want to break them? Promises are meant to be kept,"

"Wow," Caleb exclaimed, as he seemed to be quite impressed. "You'd be an amazing partner to someone, someday," he said.

"Pfft," Aeliana burst out laughing. "I'm not sure what kind of promises you're talking about, but getting Starbucks for you, certainly isn't a promise that takes a truckload of effort to keep, Caleb," Aeliana chuckled

"It's the little things that matter, girly," Caleb shrugged.

"I've never been in a serious relationship," Aeliana confessed, staring up at the bright blue sky.

"For real?" Caleb stopped in his tracks and looked at her.

"Mm hmm," she nodded in response. "Last time I was involved with someone, was back in ninth grade,"

"Ninth grade!?" the grey eyed boy raised his eyebrows in bewilderment. "Hold up; look at me," he turned Aeliana to face him and took few steps back. He observed her from head-to-toe and carefully appraised the girl's elegant features. "What the hell, woman!?"

"What, Caleb!?" Aeliana laughed, throwing her hands in the air.

"If you're not girlfriend material, I don't know who the f*** is," he rolled his eyes and continued to walk. "I mean, you're snatched! How come no one swept you off your feet yet!?"

Aeliana burst out laughing, once more. She couldn't believe her ears. "Pfft! I went to the dance with you, isn't that kinda like a date?"

"If you call me getting wasted and you getting kidnapped, a 'date', then sure, honey, it was a date," Caleb chuckled.

"What a thrilling date, huh?"

"Tell me about it," Caleb said as he stared off into the distance. "Honestly, I would date you, but

A prickling sensation travelled down Aeliana's spine. She wasn't sure of what he was about to say, would he actually ask her out, or would he confirm the opinion that Aeliana silently had regarding his preference in a partner?

"...but?" she raised an eyebrow, looking intently, at the boy walking beside her.

"But... you're a girl,"

"Oh," Aeliana smiled.

Caleb looked at her intently, expectant.

He needs another response, doesn't he?

"Hope you don't judge me for it,"

was W

"Are you out of your mind!? Who in this day and age would!?" Aeliana retorted. "To be honest, I was waiting for you to tell me, yourself,"

"You already knew?"

"I had a hunch," she smiled. "I'm actually... really glad that you decided to... you know, tell me," "I just thought you should know," Caleb shrugged, staring at his feet as he proceeded in the direction of the coffeehouse.

"That's great, really,"

"Why'd you reject Nate?" Caleb asked, out of the blue.

He must've felt uncomfortable. They weren't friends for long, so he probably didn't want to make things awkward.

"What do you mean 'why?'" Aeliana scoffed at his ridiculous question.

"I mean, he's a total hottie and all the girls wanna get in his pants, y'know,"

"What?" Aeliana looked over at him, disgusted. "Ew,"

OI SO

"Pfft! Ew!?" Caleb laughed. "Are you into girls or something?" "Nate is just not my type, okay?" Aeliana rolled her eyes. "He's so-"

"Oh oh!" Caleb cut her off. "If you don't belong to that group of girls, or the lesbians, you're one of the others, aren't you?"

"Others?" she raised an eyebrow, confused by Caleb's vague statement.

"The girls with daddy issues," "Caleb, no,"

"I'm right," he said. "You just won't admit,"

"You're not!" Aeliana snapped. "I wouldn't date Nate Harold even if he was the last guy left on the face of earth, okay? He's gross, disrespectful and everything I'm trying to avoid," "Okay, fine, but... c'mon! Aren't you attracted to guys like David Beckham, Patrick Dempsey and Hugh Jackman?"

"Are you!?" Aeliana let out a chuckle. "They're... so hot,"

"Yeah, they are!" she replied, shrugging. "However, Caleb, that does not mean I wanna get in their pants," Aeliana flashed him a smile that clearly said 'Say another word and I'll kill you.'

"Fine!" he gave in as they reached the door of the coffeehouse.

Aeliana stepped inside and noticed the familiar delicious aroma.

Madelyn was already at the counter, getting things in order. She looked up as the bell by the door rang, indicating her best friend's arrival.

"Hey," Aeliana greeted her. "Did Eric leave already?"

"Yup," Madelyn smiled at her. "Who's this?"

"This is Caleb," Aeliana said, gesturing towards the boy. "Caleb, this is Madelyn, my friend,"

"Best friend," Madelyn corrected her.

"Of course," Aeliana smiled sweetly. "I'm treating Caleb today,"

"Oh," Madelyn muttered. "You're the fake date?"

"That's me," Caleb shrugged as he flashed a smile.

"I'll be honest with you," Madelyn started.

Oh no.... I've got a bad feeling about whatever is about to happen...

"You're a very attractive guy," she said. "Aeliana just has a really hard time admitting her feelings towards someone. So, even if she is interested in you, or really, really wants to date you, she still wouldn't do anything about it,"

"Oh, right," Caleb muttered not knowing what to make of all of that.

"So, what I'm saying is, making the first move will get you somewhere, because waiting for Aeliana to confess or show a sign, is like waiting for the weeds to respect your property line," Madelyn finished.

"I'm sorry, what?" Caleb asked as he leaned forward.

"It's never going to happen, Caleb!"

"Madelyn," Aeliana interrupted her friend's irritating venting session. "He doesn't like me like

that. Can you stop creeping him out?"

"Ugh!" Madelyn scoffed and rolled her eyes. "You should've told me about that at the beginning!"

"You never gave me a chance, stupid," Aeliana said. "Caleb, you can order anything you want. I'll come back and pay for it after I do a quick change,"

"That's pretty expensive, you know," Madelyn said, as they passed by the convenience store that was few blocks away from their apartment complex.

"Yeah," Aeliana replied, staring at her phone.

"But, of course, you deserve it," she smiled.

"For going through all that s***, yes, I do," Aeliana rolled her eyes as she smiled. "I don't necessarily want to be friends with Brittany, but I really hope she stops coming at my throat,"

"Yeah," Madelyn muttered as she stared up at the starry sky "Either way, even if that does happen, you have your knight in shining armor, to come save the day and make everything okay,"

"Madelyn, that's bullshit, okay?" she replied.

"I'm serious, everytime he...."

Aeliana couldn't hear the rest of Madelyn's words. She was too busy, concentrating on the lady walking towards them after exiting the apartment complex that Antonio lived in.

That face... it's so familiar... I can't be mistaken.. it's definitely her. Those sharp features... her narrow eyes that didn't show much emotion... the dark red lipstick...

She wore a tight blue dress as a coat dangled over her shoulders.

The woman walked past them. She halted beside a car that was parked few blocks away. Although Aeliana could recognize her, she knew very well that this woman had no idea that they bumped into each other at The Sizzling Griddle.

"What are you looking at?" Madelyn said, trying to look along Aeliana's line of vision.

"That's her," "Her?" Madelyn raised an eyebrow. "Who?"

"Proof,"

"What the hell are you talking about?" Madelyn said as she rested a hand on the girl's shoulder. "Proof for what?"

"Proof to make it clear to you that whatever you have planned in your head, for me with Antonio, is just a fairy-tale," she snapped, and continued towards the familiar grey building.

"So, um..." Madelyn broke the awkward silence as Aeliana quietly enjoyed her dinner. "That was his girlfriend?"

"Mm hmm," Aeliana mumbled, her eyes fixed on her chicken salad.

"Oh,"

After few seconds of silence, Aeliana spoke up. "You don't have to comfort me or anything. I couldn't care less about that,"

"You only ever say that when you could," Gulping down a black olive, Aeliana rolled her eyes. "Whatever," with that, she stood up with her empty plate and walked away.

Everything is just so confusing... he was unusually nice today... I mean it's not everyday an overly egotistical professor gives up his lunch for a student. Of course, he sent me on a painful errand and made me scavenge shelves on an empty stomach and all that, but that only gave me more time with him. I don't want to like his company, but subconsciously, I do.

And I guess Madelyn was right. You can't choose who you... but no. I'm not falling for him. It's nothing like that. It's just all about developing a healthy student-teacher relationship. I can't take the risk of fa- 1

"So, how was college?" Madelyn interrupted Aeliana's train of thoughts.

"Same old, boring day," she lied through her teeth.

"Oh," Madelyn muttered, attacking her olives with the stainless steel fork she held. "You probably completed all your due assignments then,"

"I did,"

"Mm hmm," Madelyn muttered, clearly dissappointed.

"Hey, I'm going to start studying for the end of semester exam properly, starting tomorrow," Aeliana said. "I have to score well on this one,"

"Oh, good. So what's the plan?"

"I'm going to stay back at uni and study at the library," Aeliana explained. "If I come home, I'd be too distracted by Netflix. I'd be able to concentrate more if I study at the library,"

That is, if certain people don't decide to randomly show up and make me climb shelves.

"I certainly do not have to tell you the direction of the electric field, since you are competent enough to derive it," Mr. Decarlo paced from left to right. "If in case

any of the students here do not agree with me on that, go back and take last year's class again. I will not tolerate any

halfwits within these four walls,"

How comforting...

"Pens down," he commanded as he observed the entire class. After few glances, his eyes landed on one specific student seated at the opposite side of the class.

Aeliana looked over, and was not surprised by what she saw.

"Now," Mr. Decarlo growled.

Abigail instantly let go of the pen she held in her hand.

"Hutchinson," he said in an intimidating tone. "Your answer?"

"3/4ths of the original force," she said, quivering. It barely sounded like an answer. It was phrased more like a question.

"Bulls***," Mr. Decarlo snapped.

Oh god...

"Winslow," he said, slowly approaching her, but never close enough to hear her heavy breaths.

Okay, I did NOT see that coming.

Aeliana gulped as she mustered up some courage. "3/8ths of the original force,"

Mr. Decarlo looked at the brunette intently and soon after, muttered, "Next question," he turned around, letting his black trench coat do a swirl.

Damn... Madelyn was right again... he'd make an amazing runway model. His stance and the way he carried himself, it all just screamed 'confidence'.

Aeliana let out a heavy sigh, relieved by the fact that she hadn't screwed up.

Whatever the atmosphere was among the two of them, she liked it; definitely much more than that before. It was definitely improving. There was no doubt about that. Two rides in his car and plenty of physical contact definitely meant something.

On Aeliana's side, it did. However, she wasn't certain if Decarlo could feel anything at all.

Thermodynamics, fluid dynamics, magnetism, electricity... there's so much to do!
I have to complete everything in two weeks!

Aeliana sat at the table by the window, pondering the question of how many unanswered questions she had in her text book. She needed help with them. Of course, Leah was her first option, but whenever the two met, they gossiped about movies, Hollywood and current affairs of the country instead of going through the subject matter. Well, of course, who would discuss geophysics and astronomy when they could talk about the latest episode of The Game of

Thrones!?

Aeliana's tilted head shot up as she heard the creak of a floorboard few meters away.

The familiar tall figure drew nearer. He looked like a merciless Grim reaper, approaching to escort her to the afterlife. The pitch black trench coat worn over his black turtle neck said it all.

In his right hand, he held a book; of course, it had a grey hard cover.

His smoky grey eyes landed on her for a brief moment as he passed by. Noticing the books spread out in front of her, Mr. Decarlo raised his eyebrows, slightly astonished.

No... He's not impressed. He's teasing me.

Wait... Why is he... heading towards me?

Oh...no... What's he trying to pull off this time?

Oh.... Right... The shelf... It's right next to the table I'm seated at.

He approached the shelf and shoved the Grey book back in; yes, the very book that Aeliana spent hours (not exactly), looking for!

Ugh! It's so hard to concentrate when he's just right here! His presence alone, creates such a tense ambience. And I won't even mention that intoxicating odor! It's always the fresh mint and bergamot that gets me. It's just crazy good!

"Are you really going to sit there and stare at thin air when your exam is two weeks away?"

This is not what I wanted.

"I'm studying, sir,"

Mr. Decarlo scoffed. "Of course you are," he mocked the girl.

Go away! "Come here and make yourself useful without sitting there like a bottle of diet water,"

Educate you by xsparxflyx Chapter 35

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Thirty Five

Taking small, cautious steps towards the tall man, Aeliana wondered why he had demanded her to come over to him.

"Look for Relativity by Einstein," he said, his eyes fixed on the book that he had been flipping through. "It's a better way to utilize your time than to sit and stare at thin air,"

"Well, for your information," Aeliana said. "I was studying,"

"Were you, now?" he smirked as he raised a thick, brown brow. "Studying what, exactly?"

Shit! I was going through the chapters! I hadn't started studying a specific section by the time he decided to make an entrance!

Aeliana gulped and fidgeted uncomfortably, trying to figure out the safest answer to give.

"Magnetism," she blurted out.

Mr. Decarlo eyed the girl for two seconds and moved his gaze over to the book that lay on the table. It was at a safe distance from him. Aeliana was certain that he could not make out the text on the turned page of the textbook.

"Hm," he scoffed, fixing his eyes on hers.

"What?"

Mr. Decarlo narrowed his eyes. Instead of a spiteful glare, his expression suggested a more relaxed attitude.

"Winslow," he muttered under his breath, as he continued to flip through the pages. "You might think you're exceptional at this little game of deception,"

Oh, crap. Pfft! What was I thinking!?! Fooling this sadist?

"I wasn't born yesterday, midget,"

Damn it! If I had been studying magnetism, I wouldn't have had to turn the pages all the way to the back! I should've said Thermodynamics or something around that area.

"If you really choose to lie, say something potentially believable," he said, continuing to scan the pages of the book.

That's it? Isn't he going to terrorize me? About how I tried to deceive him and utterly failed at it? How I pretended to do exactly what he wants me to, but actually didn't?

"Aren't you mad?" she questioned, warily. Of course, it was her first time raising such an audacious question. She hadn't given it much thought to begin with, but her curiosity got the best of her.

Pausing for a moment, Mr. Decarlo didn't budge. Instead, he merely fixed his gaze on her. He

looked at her intently, and then out the window beside the shelf. He narrowed his eyes as he visibly bit the inside of his cheek. He looked as if he was truly pondering about the question

Satisfied with the conclusion he had arrived at, he looked back at her. "It's your lucky day."

Wait, what? My lucky day? Is this actually happening right now? Is the Mr. Decarlo actually willing to disregard the fact that I tried to fool him?

"Explain to me why I'm seeing you here instead of the coffeehouse," he muttered, his eyes consistently fixed on the pages of the book he held.

Is he... making conversation? No... No! He's just curious! There's nothing more to it! Absolutely nothing more.

"I decided to take some time off work, to study," she explained. "I don't want to attend summer classes,"

To Aeliana's absolute surprise, Mr. Decarlo started chuckling. "It isn't as bad as you think it is,

Oh hell no! Don't you try to convince me! I will not be tricked into thinking that summer lectures are an 'okay! They're not! They're annoying and agonizing; even more than usual lectures.

Last year's summer classes with Mr. Roberts was bad enough! It was hell! Imagine what kind of hell hole uni might turn into, with this demon in charge!? Doesn't he have better things to do during summer!? Like to go back to Spain? Or go somewhere with his 'girlfriend'?

"I'm sure it sucks," Aeliana said, as she went through the books that rested on the third rack." I'm also sure everyone's studying their asses off just to pass this,"

Mr. Decarlo shifted his gaze from the text on the book, to the girl's face. He was slightly stumped by her choice of words.

Realizing this, Aeliana's hand that went through the thick covered books, felt weak. She felt a familiar burning sensation in her chest. She had just casually spoken extremely informally to this devil of a professor, and was acting normal about it. Retracting her hand from the books, she slowly looked up at him, to meet his stormy grey eyes.

His eyebrows were raised. He was evidently waiting, for another response.

"What... I meant.., was that..." she gulped and fixed her gaze on his collar. "I'm sure everyone's... studying really... hard for this..." Aeliana slowly and cautiously looked back up at him to meet his eyes.

Having stared at her for a while, Mr. Decarlo lips formed a mischievous smile. "I liked 'asses off' better," With that said, he shoved the book in his hands, back into the shelf.

What!?! Did he actually say that right now? Am I hearing things?

Gradually, Aeliana's lips curled into a smile. She wasn't certain about the reason behind his

approval of more vulgar words, but she did like it. It meant something like Mr. Decarlo was being more open with her; and also allowing her to be at least a bit less wary of what she says around him.

"Winslow,"

Aeliana snapped back into her senses. S***! I did it again! I gawked at him for too long! I promised myself I wouldn't!

"I am well aware of the fact that I am tremendously appealing to the eyes, but you can't keep doing this in the middle of a library," he said, his smile faded. Pulling out another book from the shelf, he started flipping through it.

Wow! The nerve of this guy! I mean he's not wrong... at all! But come on! Where the hell is the modesty!? It's non-existent!

I gotta say something! I can't leave him thinking that I was smitten by his chiseled face! More like... knowing... but whatever! I just can't!

Cautiously, she moved her eyes around to check if anyone was watching. There was a boy by the chemistry section, and another girl on the floor above them. No one else. They were isolated.

"Well, excuse me, Mr. Decarlo, for pondering for a moment, about the fact that you just granted me permission for the use of vulgar language in front of you," Aeliana smirked, knowing that she made a perfect point.

Mr. Decarlo looked up and ahead from the book. Smirking, he bit the inside of his lip. "Catching on, aren't we?" he muttered, swiftly shifting his gaze onto her.

While rummaging through the books, and appearing to be busy, Aeliana turned and flashed a quick, mischievous smile.

"Use it at your own risk," he gave a smug smile. "I cannot guarantee you, the absence of serious consequences,"

Pfft! That's bulls***! That's not how it should work!

Ah! Here it is! Finally!! Relativity by Einstein!

Handing the book to him, Aeliana said, "Why would you grant me permission for something I cannot do limitlessly without consequences?"

"Enough with the questions. Good job. Go and study," he said, immediately after he grabbed the book from her hands. He placed the book he had been holding previously, on the shelf, and turned around to leave.

"Mr. Decarlo," Aeliana blurted out without having given it much thought. Of course, she didn't want him to leave yet.

He turned around, only enough to see her.

"If I ever have a doubt... with what I'm studying," she gulped. "What am I supposed to do?"

"Ask Seattle," he muttered. "She might be more or less capable,"

"What if she isn't?"

Taking a prolonged look at the girl, Mr. Decarlo stepped towards her and halted, inches away. He towered over her and gave her a murderous look. "Then, you go and ask Mr. Burke,"

"But... Mr. Burke lectures us on chemistry," Aeliana said, narrowing her eyes.

"Ah! Isn't that right?" he rubbed his chin as he narrowed his eyes. Taking a step closer and leaning down, he looked deep into her eyes.

Damn it! Why is he doing this!?

"And that, little midget, is why it is common sense that your next option is right in front of you,

Aeliana stared, into his grey eyes that now had a tinge of green. She swore his eyes changed

colour.

"Yes, Mr. Decarlo," she mumbled.

Antonio stood up straight and looked down at the girl, 'Relativity by Einstein' in one hand, and the other shoved into his pocket.

"But-" Aeliana uttered as he almost turned around to leave. "How do I contact you?" she asked, unable to meet his eyes, upon asking the daring question. "During weekends and after lectures.... that's when I will be studying,"

"Are you casually asking for my number?"

"NO!"

F***ing hell! I just screamed in the middle of a perfectly silent and massive library! Oh, for f*** 's sake, he's gotta stop making me scream like this!

Mr. Decarlo raised his eyebrows, perplexed. Soon, he started chuckling upon seeing the look on the girl's face. She was petrified. She could feel the heat rise up to her cheeks as she felt extremely embarrassed.

Shit!

"Is everything alright!?" Aeliana heard Mrs. Green's sharp voice.

"Yes, Mrs. Green! Everything's fine," she replied, as she watched Antonio who was chuckling and enjoying the scene. Soon, his laugh faded and he cleared his throat.

"You were saying, Winslow!?" He said, a smile still lingering on his lips.

"I said," she sighed. "No, e-mail would do,"

"Hm," he muttered and extended his hand, palm up, as if he was expecting her to give something to him.

SO

What? What does he want? I already handed him the book! Now what?

Gently, she did the dumbest thing she thought of that day; she extended her hand, and placed her slender fingers on top of his coarse palm.

Antonio looked at the delicate hand placed on top of his rough palm. Gingerly, he looked up t

o meet her eyes. 3

Instantly, Aeliana looked away, realizing the vacuous thing she had done. Swiftly, she decided to pull back her hand, only to be stopped by sturdy fingers that wrapped around it.

Immediately, her head shot up, to meet the man's smoky eyes. She felt the little jolts of excitement at her fingertips. It traveled up her body, through her chest and to her throat, making her breaths erratic.

He looked down at her, in a questioning manner, unable to fully grasp the reasons behind her behaviour and obviously bewildered by them all. He held her hand, steadily in his, as he searched for something in her terror-struck eyes.

Aeliana could feel her heart pounding in her chest. Her throat went dry, causing her to gulp

unconsciously.

Antonio gently jerked her hand towards him. "Is this something I can write or type on?" he asked her rhetorically, as he looked deep into her eyes.

Aeliana's lips parted. "Umm..." she stuttered.

Antonio raised his eyebrows, impatiently waiting for her to say what she was going to.

"I have a... pen," she said weakly, as she reached into her pocket.

"What have I told you about writing on your palm?" his voice was stern. 1

"Sorry," Aeliana muttered under her breath and reached out for her phone.

Letting go of her petite hand almost reluctantly, Antonio took her phone in his hand. "This is where we should've started," he said, raising his thick brown brows once more.

Aeliana gazed up at him as he focused on the screen of her phone. She watched him as his smoky green eyes ran around it. Strands of his chestnut coloured hair fell over his face, making his visage even more enticing. His height was only helping. Something about the

distance between them; more specifically lack thereof, made her feel shielded.

Having typed the required information, Mr. Decarlo handed the phone over to Aeliana. 1

Taking it, "Thank you," she muttered, unable to meet his eyes.

Antonio simply cleared his throat and turned around before walking off. He approached the

door and exited the library, without a second glance.

Aeliana let out a breath that she had been holding unconsciously.

No... why am I so perplexed? He just held my hand. It's not a big deal. I've literally been on him! I shouldn't be this baffled.

But... But this was... different.. he did it ... willingly?

UGH!! This is wrecking my brain! Stop thinking! It's nothing, Aeliana. you're just exaggerating. This is no big deal at all. Shut up and focus on your studies.

You want to pass the end of semester exam with flying colours! It's better than being incapable of reaching the goal and having to attend summer classes. Seeing his face was the last thing you want to do during this summer vacation!

Or is it?

OH GOD, NO!

Educate you by xsparxflyx Chapter 36

[/ Educate you by xsparxflyx](#)

Thirty Six

"Evening," Madelyn walked in through the door to their shared apartment. 2

"Hi," Aeliana muttered as she looked up from her textbook. "How was work without me?"

"Boring, to be honest," she replied. "Especially because a familiar hot-ass daddy showed up and didn't even look around for his little princess,"

"Of course he didn't," Aeliana rolled her eyes, very well aware as to why he didn't.

"Did you meet him today?" Madelyn questioned eagerly, as she dumped her bag and coat on the sofa.

"I thought I already told you, Maddie," Aeliana rolled her eyes as she clicked her pen. "We have physics lectures daily,"

"Ugh! Boring!" she exclaimed. "That isn't what I meant,"

Huh? What's she getting at?

Without a word, Aeliana shot her best friend a questioning look.

"Did you meet him?" she asked, grinning. "Like, alone?"

"What if I did?"

"Then, b****, I need to know what happened!" Madelyn said, as if Aeliana was obligated to feed her with all the juicy information. "Now that I know you met him., spill it," she took a seat next to Aeliana.

"We met in the library,"

"And?"

"And I asked him what I'm supposed to do if I've any doubts regarding the subject while I'm studying,"

"Did he ask you to go over to his place?"

"No,"

"Okay, then I'm not interested,"

"He gave me his e-mail," Aeliana blurted out, before Madelyn could stand up to leave.

"Well, that's something," she shrugged, clearly disappointed.

Seeing the disheartened expression on Maddie's face, Aeliana smiled. "Well, what did you expect?" she chuckled. "His number? The password to his penthouse?"

"Those would've been much more useful," Madelyn rolled her eyes. "How's an e-mail gonna

help you sneak in there?"

"Cut it out, Maddie," Aeliana mumbled. "This man has a girlfriend,"

"Bah! Bulls***!!" Maddie threw her hands in the air. "I'm sure that's nothing more than just a fling,"

"No, I seriously doubt that," Aeliana shook her head in disagreement. "I've seen her with him too many times; at the restaurant, at the theatre and near our apartment!"

"That doesn't mean anything!"

"Are you suggesting that Mr. Decarlo's a player?"

"Well, that's not impossible," Madelyn said, rubbing her chin. "Given his ethereal appearance and wealth and all the other factors that complete womanizers in movies,"

"Pfft!" Aeliana chuckled. "Him!? A womanizer? Please!"

"What!?" Madelyn threw her hands in the air. "I think you're underestimating him here. You just haven't seen this possibly existent side of him. If he didn't choose to deal with your helpless asses, he'd be walking down a runway this minute!"

"Whatever!" Aeliana yelled. "I don't care!"

"Don't email him today," Madelyn said, as she stood up.

"Huh!? Why not?"

"So you were planning to!?" she smiled cheekily.

"I wasn't! I'm just curious as to why you told me not to," Aeliana shrugged.

"Well, don't," Madelyn walked towards the pantry. "You don't want him thinking that you're desperate,"

"I'm not! I have his e-mail for educational purposes!"

"Pfft! Do you hear yourself right now, sweetie!?" Madelyn chuckled as she poured herself a glass of water. "You sound ridiculous,"

"It's the truth. Maddie," Aeliana said as she turned around, trying to concentrate on her

studies once more.

"Sure, hon. Whatever you wanna call it," she sang in response as she sipped on the water.

"Nah man, I swear he's always like that. Just don't take it personal," Aeliana heard Lucas say as he patted Caleb on the shoulder.

"Yeah, he just throws those at you randomly," Jace shook his head. "Total Schrodinger's Douchebag."

"Well, in a way it's fair I guess," Caleb shrugged. "Everyone finds something in whatever you say as offensive these days,"

"No no," Lucas shook his head. "Not in this case. Don't try to justify people who are obvious a** wipes,"

"Hey guys," Aeliana smiled as she interrupted the boys, half heartedly.

"Oo! Look who's here!" Jace smiled.

"Morning," Lucas gave a small wave.

"Morning," Aeliana grinned. "Have you seen the girls?"

"Vanille texted me," Lucas said. "She's in the library,"

asS

"Oh," Aeliana raised an eyebrow. "That's weird," she said as she looked over at Caleb. Noticing his dull countenance, she asked, "Hey, you okay?"

"Yeah!" he said, perplexed.

"Good," Aeliana flashed a sweet smile at the boy as she observed him purse his lips.. "Coffee today?"

"Definitely," Caleb gave a thumbs-up.

Aeliana entered the library, hoping to see her girlfriends seated at a table peacefully, just as she entered. There were few students wandering around, but the faces she looked for, weren't among them.

Wondering where they might be, Aeliana approached Mrs. Green.

"Hello dear," the lady smiled at her. "May I help you on this wonderful morning?"
"Good morning, Mrs. Green," Aeliana greeted her. "Have you seen Bliss and Vanille?"

"I'm sorry?"

1 SG

Of course, they don't visit the library as much as I do. It's quite obvious that she isn't familiar with the two mentioned names.

"I mean... was Leah Seattle here this morning?"

"Ah yes," Mrs. Green nodded as she adjusted her spectacles. "She arrived about fifteen minutes ago," "Right," Aeliana flashed a smile at her. "Thank you, Mrs. Green,"

They're probably on the second floor. It's not like they'd jump out a window or hide inside a shelf.

Aeliana ascended the flight of stairs to the second floor. Soon, she lay her eyes upon the three girls seated at a table, whispering to one another, well, each other to be more specific. Leah was drowning in the pages of a comic book.

"I didn't know you dedicated students were here to chit chat and read manga," Aeliana smirked as she crossed her arms before her chest.

"Babe!" Bliss stood up immediately and rushed towards Aeliana to embrace her.

"What the hell are you doing on the second floor when all the physics books are conveniently placed on the ground floor!?"

"The view is nice from up here," Vanille replied. "This is our usual spot,"

"We thought the library would be a good place to revise some notes," Bliss said as she smiled.

"Mm hmm. I can see that you've definitely been revising the entire syllabus," Aeliana muttered sarcastically, as she smiled and raised her eyebrows.

"Well," Bliss grinned. "We were having just a very brief chat,"

"Brief?"

"Yup,"

"Brief, my foot," Leah retorted. "Neither of them had enough self-control to shut up until you got here,"

"Thanks, Leah," Vanille rolled her eyes.

Bliss turned around to look at Leah and Vanille. "But in our defense, Leah,"

Aeliana blocked out their voices as she started to focus on where she was standing.

..

Slowly, she approached the railing at the end of the second floor that opened into the empty center of the massive library and curled her slender fingers around the cool steel. The location gave her a good view of the entire library. She looked around and stopped at the area opposite to them on the ground floor.

'Chemistry

Opposite to that, it should be.... the Physics section!

That's where I studied. Where I spent most of my time in the library.

That's where... all that... happened...

By then, Aeliana was glad that even if Bliss and Vanille were in the library when all those little incidents took place, they would have been seated directly above them. They obviously wouldn't have witnessed anything unless they decided to go to the directly opposite side of the second floor to indulge themselves in some philosophy.

I'm sure they wouldn't do that. If I was extremely unlucky, and they had really bad timing, they would've plopped on a chair on that side to read some philosophy and would've witnessed how I extremely clumsily fell into our satanic physics professor's arms from a broken shelf and how my dumbass stupidly slid my hand into his, when all he wanted was a damn pen!

"Aeliana!"

"What!?" she snapped back into her senses. "Stop yelling in the library, stupid!"

"What were you doing staring at thin air?" Bliss threw her hands in the air.

"I was thinking," Aeliana muttered as she checked her watch. "It's almost 9. We should get going,"

"Magnetism is getting under my skin," Bliss muttered as the girls walked down the hallway.

"You said it," Vanille raised her eyebrows. "The questions are just too tricky,"

Aeliana listened to the girls complaining as they headed towards their lecture room.

IO

Leah rolled her eyes. "Guys, if you stop complaining for once and-,"

Once a

"Holy shit!" Bliss cut Leah off as she stared down the hallway ahead of her.

"What!?" Aeliana said, looking at Bliss and then in the same direction that she was.

"Am I seeing things?" Bliss rubbed her eyes.

"I don't think so," Vanille said as she stopped in her tracks along with the other girls. "I'm seeing it too," Beside the wooden door on the right side of the hallway, there stood a tall figure. A figure that Aeliana had been searching for all morning;

unconsciously of course. It's not that she was desperately searching for him, but in the back of her mind, she knew that seeing him would put her mind at ease. But right now, that wasn't the case. This isn't the setting she was hoping for. She was certainly not hoping to see Mr. Decarlo having a genial conversation with the three boys who these girls were closest to.

Luke was explaining something with a slight smile fixed on his features. The chatter of the students that filled the hallway, blocked out their conversation from reaching the girls' ears.

Having listened to Luke, Mr. Decarlo let out a small laugh and then focused on Jace who continued the conversation. Jace was speaking as if he'd known this man for ages.

"Bro," Leah leaned over. "What's going on?"

"Like I'd know," Aeliana replied.

Caleb, who stood facing the girls, looked up and fixed his eyes on Aeliana as he gave her a

reassuring smile. None of the others noticed them standing there.

Crap! No! Caleb! Stop that! He's gonna notice!

To Aeliana's relief, and weirdly, disappointment, the professor did not notice Caleb's distraction; or he may have chosen not to. It was always unpredictable with this man.

"Guys," Aeliana whispered, "What the hell!? Let's move!" she proceeded.

Leah nodded in agreement and followed her.

As they approached Mr. Decarlo's office, Aeliana eyes shifted from the end of the hallway and onto him from time to time. She was taking notice of how he was paying attention to them.

What are they talking about? How did they even get him to pay attention? His attention is given at a cost! Were they demanded to make him coffee or fetch a book from the topmost level of his shelf!? Or to run to the library and bring him volume 2 of a book that has a 'volume 1' copy with an identical cover?

Aeliana gulped as they drew closer to the boys. She promised herself that she would not look into his stormy eyes. She promised herself that she would fix her gaze on the road ahead until they passed. But promises made to herself, she was bad at keeping.

Little jolts of electricity travelled down the girl's spine, making the hair on the back of her neck stand on their ends, as she met his dark smoky eyes. No matter

how many times this happened, the feeling would never get old. The fact that Aeliana and Mr. Decarlo instinctively

met each other's gaze simultaneously, took the professor by surprise. It wasn't apparent in his countenance, of course. Veiling emotions was yet another thing he excelled in.

Once Aeliana approached them, Mr. Decarlo averted his gaze.

Caleb watched her as the girls passed by. He watched as Leah expressionlessly followed Aeliana, Vanille gently tugged on Luke's shirt and Bliss pursed her lips, impatient to walk past the crowd and get to class.

"That was weird," Bliss raised an eyebrow as she brushed her black curls out of her face. "When was the last time ya'll saw Mr. Decarlo speak like that to a student, let alone a group of them?"

"Maybe we've misunderstood him," Vanille said as she rubbed her chin.

"Or maybe," Aeliana spoke up. "...they were just talking about how to prepare for the end of semester exam, which is a topic that Mr. Decarlo would gladly go on forever about,"

"Oh yeah," Leah agreed, oddly impressed by Aeliana's meaningful guess.

"Oh wow," Bliss smirked. "You know him so well,"

"I said 'maybe!'" Aeliana rolled her eyes.

"But it's not a laughing matter," Vanille pointed out. "They were laughing about something."

"This might be the first time I saw that man laugh," Bliss said. "It's not something he does on a daily basis, is it?"

"He should," Vanille said, as she stared into thin air. "His smile is so... So..."

"Ravishing?" Bliss asked. "Dashing? Alluring?"

"All of the above," Vanille said, dreamily.

Bliss chuckled as she heard the girl's response.

Well, you're damn right about that, Vanille.

"You've got one week until your end of semester paper, and not even twenty of you can remember this concept?"

Here we go again...

"I'm interested in what you are hoping to write on those few papers," a thick brow was raised. "Enlighten me,"

The class was dead silent. No one dared to utter a word.

Aeliana was relieved that she could remember most of the things Mr. Decarlo was testing, thanks to her recent rushed study sessions. She was lucky enough to have him skip the sections that she wasn't thorough with.

Mr. Decarlo slammed the book in his hand shut. Placing it on the table behind him, he stood up straight. "I see no point in conducting this lesson today. Come back when you're competent enough," he snapped and simply left the classroom. "Well, shit," Leah mumbled as she threw her hands in the air.

SIO

"Chill," Aeliana rolled her eyes. "This isn't the first time he's walked out on us,"

"Crap," Bliss muttered as she leaned forward towards Aeliana. "Now what?"

"Relax. He'll be here tomorrow anyway,"

"Tomorrow's a Saturday,"

"Better," Aeliana smiled. "Monday then! He'd have forgotten about it by then,"

"How can you be so sure about that?" Vanille questioned. "Last time he did this Luke and Jace had to go to his office and practically drag him back here,"

"Let's leave it to Luke and Jace then," Aeliana shrugged.

"So you think he's hot?"

"I mean, he's pretty cute," Caleb shrugged. "Bit of a douche though,"

"Is he?"

"Mm hmm," he nodded as gazed up at the blue sky. "Don't tell Luke and... and Jace,"

"Oh! They... don't know?"

"No..." Caleb looked away. "I'm a bit too chicken to tell them,"

"Don't worry, Caleb," Aeliana rolled her eyes. "Your secret's safe,"

"Thanks," he smiled sweetly. "He's probably straight,"

"You can't just say that! You don't know for sure," Aeliana pointed out.

"Well yeah," Caleb muttered as he looked away.

It seemed to Aeliana, that Caleb didn't want to talk about it. Noticing the awkward atmosphere that started to build up, she thought of a way to ease the tension.

"Which flavor are you gonna-,"

"Hey, can I ask you something?" Caleb blurted out.

His sudden query took her by surprise. "Uh... yeah... sure,"

"Is there something... going on?" He asked.

Hearing this, Aeliana arched an eyebrow. *What?*

"... between you and... Professor Decarlo?"

Aeliana refused to believe her ears. Her heart skipped a beat as she did her best not to stop in her tracks or turn back and run away.

Beads of sweat formed on the bridge of her nose, as countless thoughts ran through her mind like swift jolts of electricity.

Why would Caleb suspect such a thing!? Him out of all people?

"What're you talking about!?" She managed to say.

"It's a 'yes or no' question,"

"NO!" Aeliana snapped.

"Are you absolutely sure?" Caleb raised his eyebrows, looking at her intently.

"Of course,"

"Why the long pause, then?" Caleb asked. "Caleb," Aeliana said as she stopped and stood there. Deadpanning at him, she said, "There is nothing of the sort. I don't know why you would even say that,"

Caleb caught her trembling gaze. He let out a deep sigh and shook his head. "Just know that you can tell me anything," he said. "I've got nothing to hide from you," and with that, he turned and continued to walk towards the coffeehouse. 1

"Wait," Aeliana exclaimed as she lunged forward to grab Caleb's arm.

"Yeah?" Caleb turned to her.

"Why did you... ask me that?" She furrowed her eyebrows, dying to know the reason behind the boy's curiosity.

"Let's just say that..." he pursed his lips. "... I've noticed the... occasional glances,"

"He would 'glance' at any student," Aeliana said as she rolled her eyes.

"I also happened to visit the library for a few days after lectures," he said, a smile making its way into his winsome features. "...specifically to borrow some books on philosophy. Spent a

few minutes there wandering around the shelves,"

Crap.

"Another hobby?" Aeliana asked, casually.

"My dad's interested," Caleb shrugged.

Why philosophy!? There are so many other subjects and Caleb's dad HAD to choose this!?

"How... much..." Aeliana narrowed her eyes, her heart thumping in her chest."... did you see?"

"Enough," Caleb nodded.

**

"It's always either Pumpkin Latte or Green Tea Mocha," Madelyn rolled her eyes. "I really. hope he isn't a health freak,"

"Why?" Aeliana questioned, not bothering to raise her head to look at her best friend who stood in front of her, ranting.

"What do you mean 'why'?" Madelyn asked in disbelief. "You love junk food! If he's a health freak, it's not gonna be easy for the two of you,"

"There's no 'two of us', Madelyn," Aeliana snapped as she tapped her pen on the desk, still focusing on the sum that she had been contemplating for the past fifteen minutes. "Just my incompetent a** and an extremely furious professor,"

"The message you're attempting to deliver, got interrupted by the mention of your a** in that sentence," Madelyn raised an eyebrow.

"Maddie, please," Aeliana said. "I'm trying to figure out this sum,"

"If it's twisting your brain," Maddie muttered. "You should probably ask daddy for help,"

"He stormed out of the lecture room today,"

Madelyn stared at Aeliana, her lips slightly apart. "Oops,"

"Mm hmm,"

"But he'll come back on Monday, right?"

"We hope so," Aeliana replied as she leaned back in her chair. "There's still some tips that he's supposed to teach us,"

"He doesn't just teach you everything?" Madelyn raised an eyebrow as she shoved a grape into her mouth.

"This is Mr. Decarlo we're talking about!" Aeliana rolled her eyes at how obvious it was, given the man's attitude towards the students. "If he has the slightest chance to leave us curious and wondering, he'll take it without fail,"

"Um,' Madelyn made a bitter face. "That's not a very good quality, is it?"

"Well," Aeliana nodded. "That's what anyone would think at first glance,"

"What do you mean?"

"He doesn't just hand us things on a platter. He wants questions, debates, curiosity. Something challenging. Those are... to him... like serotonin..." Aeliana's eyes glistened as she explained. "He has something in mind which he will not tell us right away. He wants us to figure it out by ourselves. If someone does raise the question, it satisfies him. I've... I've seen it. Whenever we fail to realize the missing piece or to question it, he would never fail to mention it the next day," 1

Madelyn stared at the girl, watching her closely, as her face lit up with every additional

sentence.

"That's why all the incoming students kill one another over a spot in his class. He clearly hates disappointments,"

"Hey," Madelyn interrupted. "You said you're having trouble with something, right?"

"What?" Aeliana's smile faded.

"Just ask him," she suggested. "You have a way of reaching him. Plus, you just told me that he likes questions and curiosity. So, I mean, why not?"

"You're telling me to email the guy and ask him this?"

"Yeah,"

"Are you kidding me?" Aeliana looked up at Maddie. "Instead of an explanation, I'm probably gonna be lectured about how I should've started preparing for the end of semester's sooner and how I shouldn't have been running around restaurants and movie theatres with my

boyfriend,"

"BOYFRIEND!?"

"He thought Adrian was my boyfriend,"

"What!?"

"Ugh! Forget it! That was a long time ago and he very well knows now that he's my brother,"

"Mm hmm," Madelyn shrugged. "Okay, whatever. Just send the damn e-mail, Aeliana,"

"Are you sure about this?" Aeliana narrowed her eyes.

"You didn't do anything wrong today, did you?" Madelyn looked at the girl intently. "Did he yell at you? Or so much as glare at you?"

Recalling how those mesmerizing pair of grey eyes lingered all over her as she passed by him in the corridor, Aeliana shook her head "Nope,"

"Then just do it," Maddie replied confidently. "Just go for it,"

"Fine, but help me out here,"

"I will,"

Aeliana grabbed her phone and proceeded to take a photo of the question on the text book.

"What are you doing?" Madelyn shot a judgemental look. "What!?" Aeliana shrugged. "I'm taking a photo of it,"

"Why?" Madelyn placed her hands on her hips. "I'm sure he has the textbook with him,"

"Pfft," Aeliana let out a sarcastic chuckle. "Your ability to read people, is entirely ineffective on this guy, isn't it?"

"What?"

"You really think he would go over to his text book, turn the pages and find the location of the sum, just to describe it to me?" 1

"Let's see if he does," Maddie said as she wiggled her eyebrows.

"Pfft," Aeliana chuckled.

"I'm serious," Maddie said, as the smile that sat on her lips faded away.

"You're mad," Rolling her eyes at the girl, Madelyn did a 180 on her left and headed towards the bath.

"You're gonna leave just like that!?" Aeliana yelled, knowing very well that she needed her best friend to guide her through this.

Madelyn shut the door behind her after stepping inside the bath.

Ugh! What the heck am I worried about!?! It's just a simple text to get a confusing physics concept clarified! Nothing more than that!

This shouldn't be that hard!

Aeliana focused on the screen of her phone. She typed in 'antonioedecarlo0o@xxxx.com' in the box that read 'To:'

Mr. Decarlo,

Would you please be kind enough to provide an explanation for the 7th problem on page 466?

That should do it... right? I mean, that's plenty of courtesy and respect. I shouldn't have to get down on my knees and beg for an explanation! It's only right that he helps me out if he wants a high pass rate.

Okay.... breathe in... breathe out...

