

Educate you by xsparxflyx Chapter 37

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Thirty Seven

"Maybe he was getting his beauty sleep," the blond haired girl rubbed her eyes. 2

"Ew," Aeliana scrunched her nose at how disgustingly cliché her best friend sounded.

"You probably checked your phone 438771 times last night, to check if he had replied," Maddie wiggled her eyebrows at her and took a sip of her coffee.

"Did not," she snapped in response, embarrassed by how well Maddie knew her.

"I wonder what the 'E' stands for," Maddie muttered as she brought the white mug she held, to her lips. "Eric? Ethan?"

"Hmm,"

"Elliot?"

"It's quite possibly a Spanish name," Aeliana rubbed her chin, as she went over the names on her mind that started with an 'E'.

"Then something like... Emilio? Emiliano?"

"Umm..."

"Eduardo? Enrique?"

"I don't know!" Aeliana said as she shrugged. "It could be any of those,"

"What about the zero-zero part?"

"Definitely not his birth year," Aeliana rubbed her chin as she wondered what the numbers might mean. "Maybe it's just a random number," she decided to shrug it off.

"Maybe," Maddie shrugged and turned towards the refrigerator.

"You won't believe what Caleb asked me yesterday," Aeliana muttered as she stared out the clear glass.

"You, out?"

"NO!!" she replied immediately, "I'm not his type,"

"You don't know that," Maddie said, pulling out a carton of fresh milk.

"I do, but that's not my point," she snapped. "He asked me if there's anything going on between Mr. Decarlo and me,"

"So?" Widening her eyes, Maddie took few steps towards the girl after having placed the carton and her mug of coffee, sloppily on the kitchen counter. "Did you shamelessly lie through your perfect teeth?"

"No," Aeliana rolled her eyes. "I told him that there's nothing of the sort,"

"So you DID lie!?" Maddie said as she placed her hands on her hips.

"What do you mean?" Aeliana crossed her arms before her chest and looked away bitterly. "I was being perfectly honest,"

Madelyn sighed as her shoulders slumped.

"Although, it did seem to me that he didn't buy what I said, at all," she added. "He just sighed and reassured me by telling me that I could tell him anything,"

"Is he a good guy?"

"Yeah, he's okay," Aeliana shrugged, reminding herself that it wouldn't be nice to let Maddie in on Caleb's secret, without his prior permission.

"I have to say," Madelyn said as she turned around and made her way towards the counter. "He has a gorgeous face,"

"Maddie," Aeliana glared at her best friend. "I'm serious! Just look at those lashes! He has stunning eyes!" "... suppose so," Aeliana shrugged, not giving it much thought. "Are we out of cereal again?" Maddie asked, slamming a pantry door shut.

"I'm not sure, maybe it's-,"

BIII~

Instantly, Aeliana's eyes moved to the lit up screen of her phone.

"IS IT HIM!?" Maddie screamed.

"It's Adrian," Aeliana growled as her eye twitched in irritation.

"What's he saying?" Maddie rolled her eyes as she turned around.

"He wants to throw a party,"

"What!? When?" Maddie asked. "You should probably tell him that you've got an exam coming up,"

"Yeah, I just texted him," Aeliana said.

Brrra

"What did he say?" Madelyn asked as she shoved a spoonful of oats in her mouth.

VY

"It's... not him," Aeliana stuttered as she stared at the screen nonchalantly.

"What?" Maddie raised an eyebrow. "Oh my god. Don't tell me," she let down the bowl and

rushed towards Aeliana.

New e-mail from Antonio Decarlo: Tap to open

"OPEN IT!" Maddie yelled in Aeliana's ear.

"Right now!?"

"DUH! E-mails don't have read receipts, dumb-ass!"

"Fine," Aeliana muttered, as she clicked cautiously on the notification. Her heart thumped in her chest as the contents loaded.

From Antonio Decarlo

@antonioedecarlo00@xxx.com

Who the fuck is this?

"Wha..." Madelyn was as confused as Aeliana was. "Can't he see your name on the e-mail address?"

"I'm not sure," Aeliana shrugged, extremely confused.

"Wait a minute," Madelyn said as she gulped. "Which e-mail did you use?" she asked her as she narrowed her chocolate brown eyes. "Please please please don't tell me it's the 'sentimentalbeansprout' one,"

"F***..."

"Oh, you did NOT!"

"I might have,"

Madelyn screamed as she grabbed Aeliana by the shoulders, shaking her violently.

"Who the f*** does that!? Didn't you even type your name at the bottom?"

"No! I thought it would be sent through my new e-mail!" Aeliana screamed back.

"Really?" Madelyn made a poker face. "I'm pretty sure you didn't even set it to default; even if there is such an option,"

"I didn't,"

"I swear, Aeliana," Madelyn rubbed her temples. "Well, now just tell him that it's you,"

"He's going to call me that for the rest of my life," Aeliana pouted.

"That's what you're worried about?" Madelyn placed her hands on her hips. "I'm pretty sure he'll be calling you his little princess. Nevermind that. Now reply, damn it!"

"You never fail to seize every chance you get, do you?" Aeliana narrowed her eyes at the witty

girl.

"Learn it from me, sweetheart. Now, reply," Maddie said, sternly.

Aeliana Winslow

Aeliana sighed as she stared at the screen. Why the hell did I have to mess this up?

Send.

"What are your plans for today?"

"I'm going to HQ today to get some work done, and then to Starbucks because someone is extremely busy studying," she made a poker face. "And you?"

"I guess I'm just gonna-,"

"Don't you slack off, young lady!" Madelyn demanded as she poked Aeliana's forehead. "I'm doing twice the amount of work at that coffeehouse just because you have your end of semesters coming up, so you'd better make it worthwhile,"

"I will, I will! Jeesh!"

"Good,"

BITI~

"OH MY GOD IS IT HIM!?"

"Madelyn, calm the hell down," Aeliana said. "It's only 7.15 in the morning! AND it's a Saturday!"

"Open it! I wanna see!" Madelyn whined as she pleaded Aeliana.

IN

"Honestly, sometimes you're just like an extremely immature, stubborn 3-year old!" Aeliana snapped as she clicked on the notification.

"What is it?"

"It's just the explanation, what do you expect?" she rolled her eyes.

"No 'Come over, babygirl' kinda thing?" Madelyn asked as she pouted.

"No," Aeliana as she raised her eyebrows in disbelief. "Why are you like this? Sometimes I *worry*,"

"Sometimes I worry about you two being headed somewhere besides the bedroom," 1

"Maddie," Aeliana deadpanned at her. "Shut up, I'm begging you,"

"Kitchen counter would do too, right?"

Caleb Garcia:

Hey girl! Wanna hang out?

Me:

Hang out?

Caleb Garcia:

To study obviously

I'm not getting shit done here. Help me out will ya.

Me:

Okay okay! But where?

Caleb Garcia:

Where you at?

Me:

Home. You?

Caleb Garcia :

Me too.

I can come over if that's cool with you.

Me:

Sure.

Herendale

Eastern Wing

707

Bring snacks.

Caleb Garcia :

I'LL be there

Me :

Besides your ravishing self, I mean

tttt

Few minutes after Madelyn's departure, there was a knock on the door.

WE

Shoving the pencil in her messily tied up hair, Aeliana rushed towards the door.

"Hey!" she was greeted with a bright smile.

"The snacks?"

"Here," Caleb rolled his eyes as he held up a big bag of chips and fizzy drinks.
"Welcome," Aeliana smiled sweetly, as she let Caleb enter.

Tag

"So this is your cave?" Caleb asked as he looked around. "Sweet!"

"It's alright, I guess," she shrugged. "Just put your stuff on the couch," Caleb placed his bag on the black leather couch and peeled off his jacket before he swung it over the hand rest.

"I haven't really had anyone over before so, excuse my inhospitable ass," Aeliana chuckled.

"What? Of course not!" Caleb laughed. "You're good!"

"I am?" Aeliana rubbed the back of her neck, nervously.

"Mm hmm," Caleb nodded as he stared at the picture frame on the kitchen counter. "Madelyn?"

"Yup," Aeliana pursed her lips, "She's at work,"

"We should get down to work too," Caleb said as he shoved his hands in his jean pockets.

"You know," Aeliana muttered as she tapped her pen on the thick text book. "I'm actually surprised by the fact that you're here when you can study with Luke and Jace,"

"Is it a bad surprise? Or a good one?" Caleb asked her as he tapped his pencil on his chin.

"I mean," she let out a small laugh. "It's a good one, I guess,"

"Mmm you don't seem too sure about that," the green-eyed boy narrowed his eyes.

"What?"

"Are you afraid I'd ask about Mr. Decarlo and you again?"

"What!?" Aeliana raised an eyebrow. "Of course not! You're crazy,"

"If that's the reason," he smiled. "You don't have to be,"

"Caleb, I think you're delusional,"

"Am I?" Caleb looked her dead in the eyes as he flashed a playful smirk. After a brief moment, he looked away and started concentrating on his work.

This confused Aeliana. She wasn't sure why he had let go of the matter so easily; why he

didn't ponder on it until he got a proper answer.

Unable to stay silent for any longer, Aeliana let the words slip. "You really think there's... something going on?" She stared at the boy intently, her eyebrows raised.

"Darling," Caleb smiled. "There is something going on,"

"There isn't,"

"Oh please, save it, honey," Caleb chuckled under his breath. "You don't have to waste your energy on denying it,"

"Why do you even think so?"

Caleb smiled as he looked at the girl intently. "That day...."

Crap crap crap...

"When you passed by his office," Caleb pursed his lips. "It was pretty obvious,"

"See? I told you!" Aeliana rolled her eyes. "You're delusional,"

Caleb sighed as he looked at the girl, consistently in denial

on

"What was pretty obvious!?"

"There's some kind of... chemistry... between the two of you," Caleb said, in a very assuring tone. "You know there is! Don't even try to deny it. You made eye contact then. It was as if... as if there's a whole other side to the two of you that... none of us know about,"

"Why are you so overwhelmed by this?" Aeliana asked him. "You told me you saw... at the library,"

"Saw what?" he smirked.

"Whatever that you did see," Aeliana raised an eyebrow, slightly ticked off by his cross questioning

"Was there anything more interesting that happened, besides you helping him to find books off the shelves?" Caleb's lips curled into a more mischievous smile.

"No," Aeliana said as she maintained a straight face. "That's it,"

"That's not it, is it?" Caleb nodded. "That's all that you're telling me,"

Cautiously, Aeliana moved her eyes onto his dull green ones. She stared at him, her guard constantly put up.

"Okay, I'm not forcing you to tell me anything," Caleb put his hands up in the air, as if he was surrendering. "But I can tell that you're quite overwhelmed by all of this, possibly because you have no one to talk about it with," he said as he itched his brow.

au se

Aeliana averted her gaze as her breath started to quicken.

"I know you think I'm clumsy and I don't blame you," Caleb said. "I swear I left you that day,

only because I had a microscopic crush on Brian,"

Hearing this, Aeliana giggled. "Idiot!"

"What!?" Caleb shrugged as he laughed. "I was properly 'carried away' that day,"

"Yeah yeah, whatever," Aeliana rolled her eyes as her laughed slowly died down.

"I just want you to know that... you can trust me," he said reassuringly, as he slid his hand into hers.

Pursing her lips, Aeliana nodded. "Okay," she said under her breath as her eyes locked with the boy seated facing her.

They were interrupted by a knock on the door.

"Madelyn?" Caleb asked as Aeliana's head turned in the direction of the sound.

"I doubt that," Aeliana said as she stood up. "She wouldn't be back this soon," Through the peeping hole, Aeliana watched as her brother stood in front of her door, tapping on the screen of his phone.

"Why didn't you just come in?" Aeliana asked as she pulled the door open.

"I didn't wanna take a chance. You could've been running around naked." Adrian said with a straight face.

He stepped inside and entered ahead of Aeliana. Having laid eyes in the boy seated at the dining table, Adrian narrowed his eyes. "Or f***ing," he added.

Caleb noticed the tall boy standing few feet away, gawking at him. Laying down his pencil, he gulped.

"Hey man," he managed to mutter, after seeing Adrian's menacing glare.

Aeliana approached Adrian and soon, noticed the tense atmosphere. "Umm," she mumbled. "Adrian, this is Caleb," she said, as she walked up to the boy seated at the table.

Caleb stood up, his hands awkwardly shoved in his pockets.

"Caleb, this is my brother, Adrian,"

"Mm hmm," Caleb nodded uncomfortably. "Pleased to meet you," he forced a smile.

"Likewise," Adrian muttered as he gave a crooked smile.

Aeliana scrunched her nose as she began to notice her brother's hostile behavior. "Caleb, please excuse us for a second?" Aeliana smiled at him and rested a hand on his back.

"Sure," Caleb nodded and dropped back into the chair.

Aeliana dragged her brother by the arm and led him towards the pantry.

"What's wrong with you?" Aeliana asked, furrowing her eyebrows.

"Tell me you're not f***ing,"

"Hey," Aeliana glared at the man who stood before her. "He's just my friend and he's here to study,"

"Good,"

"Why are you so pissed off?"

"I'm not,"

"Pfft!" She chuckled. "I lived with you for nineteen years, Adrian, I can tell when you're mad,"

"We're throwing a party this Friday,"

"No, we're not," Aeliana said as she walked out of the pantry. "We talked about this,"

"But why not?" Her brother questioned as he followed her outside.

"I've my end of semesters coming up," she said. "Let's do it after that's over with,"

.

"And that is when?"

"It'll be over on the second Friday from today,"

"Two weeks!?" Adrian widened his eyes in disbelief. "You're telling me to wait for two weeks!?"

"Yes," she replied nonchalantly. "You're not gonna throw a party without me, are you!?"

"I sure as hell am," Adrian snapped. "Two weeks is a long time,"

"Come on, Adrian!" Aeliana whined. "I'll bring my friends," she said, in hopes of persuading her brother.

"Hot chicks?"

"And the boys,"

"This guy?"

"And his friends," Aeliana added quickly. Before he could say anything, Aeliana rushed towards the the desk. "Now shoo. Caleb and I have work to do,"

Adrian dragged himself towards the refrigerator and helped himself with some of the chocolate bars Aeliana had brought the other day.

"Is that why you came here?" Aeliana asked as she raised an eyebrow. "Just to ask me if we can throw a party and then casually proceed to eat my chocolate?"

ca

"So I've made my motives clear," Adrian said, as he put the wrapper on the counter.

"Put that in the dustbin," Aeliana snapped.

"No," the brother smirked.

"Adrian," Aeliana glared. "Dustbin, now!"

"You're no fun, sis," Adrian whined as he grabbed the wrapper and shoved it into a cookie jar on the same counter.

Aeliana sighed in defeat. "I can't deal with you right now. I have an exam to prep for," she muttered. "I don't want to spend my summer stuck in a lecture hall with that devil,"

"Huh?" Adrian tilted his head to the right, having shoved another piece of chocolate in his mouth.

"Aight! Fine! I'm leaving," he mumbled, grumpily as he made his way towards the door.

Having shut the door after watching her brother make his way out of her apartment, Aeliana returned to Caleb who sat exactly where she had left him.

"Party?"

"Yes, and you're invited,"

2

"I'm not even sure which sections of Quantum he's gonna test us on," Vanille mumbled, tapping her pencil on the book that lay on the table.

"Quantum isn't the issue," Jace muttered, as his eyes wandered aimlessly through the library

"Then what is?" Bliss raised an eyebrow.

"What about electromagnetism?" Luke pitched in.

"What about it?" Leah asked.

"That has some complicated stuff," Luke shrugged.

BUL

"Which Leah, of course, wouldn't know because she aces every test," Aeliana pointed out.

"Ah ha!" Jace agreed while all the others nodded.

"Guys, I think I found the reference book Mr. Decarlo told us about during electromagnetism lectures," Caleb approached us with a thick book in hand.

"Well," Jace sighed. "Serves us right for not giving a sh** about what he said when we should've,"

Letting the book down on the desk, Caleb shifted his eyes onto Aeliana's.

Instinctively, she looked away, pouting.

"We should really start taking the man's advice," Bliss muttered as her shoulders slumped.

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Thirty Eight

The seconds passing by, felt like hours. When will Mr. Burke stop scribbling on that board? I've had enough organic chemistry for one day. A little bit of physics would be the cherry on top right now.

Aeliana stared at the wall clock, impatiently waiting for the long arm to approach '12'.

"Why'd they have to switch slots? It's so annoying," Leah muttered to her.

"Tell me about it," Aeliana rolled her eyes and let out a heavy sigh. "My brain is only conditioned for dreadful physics early in the morning,"

"Uh huh," Leah agreed. "I'm a lil' drowsy too,"

"10 minutes to go," Aeliana mumbled to her friend. "You got this!"

"Is anyone interested in getting anything from the vending machine?" Leah muttered lazily.

"You are, clearly," Bliss said as she rolled her eyes.

"Yeah, I meant besides me," Leah replied.

"Too lazy to walk?" Caleb asked.

Leah nodded as she blinked drowsily.

"Leah," Vanille looked at the girl seated opposite to her. "I'm actually surprised that you're not four times the size you are now,"

"Honestly," Aeliana agreed. "All you ever eat is processed food!"

"Hey, I had milk and Eggs for breakfast!" Leah protested. "I'm not as bad as you think I am,"

"Ah, but you are aware of the fact that Eggs are highly processed, right?" Jace questioned.

"They are?" Leah sat up straight.

"Luke?" Vanille looked over at the brown haired boy.

"Mm hmm?" Taking a sip of his juice box, he glanced at his girlfriend.

"You and Jace are going to talk to Decarlo today, right?"

"Huh?" Luke arched an eyebrow. "Why would I do that?" he questioned.

"He left the hall last friday, remember?"

"Ah, right," Luke muttered as he bit the straw. "I'll just ask him to be there while I pass by or something,"

"Why us though?" Jace questioned as he rubbed his chin.

"Why not you guys?" Bliss shrugged. "Ya'll looked like best buddies that day, remember? Talking, giggling and whispering to one another?"

"You don't have to make it sound so weird," Luke retorted.

"Okay, but, here me out," Jace raised his hands. "Why not Aeliana?"

Aeliana's heart skipped few beats and she felt a chill travel across her chest. "Huh? Please don't drag me into this,"

"Yeah," Caleb agreed. "I think the amount of trouble that Aeliana got into involving that guy, i

s more than enough now,"

"Ha! Agreed!" Aeliana snapped hastily. "Luke, Jace, thank you so much for agreeing to do this. We really appreciate it," she flashed a quick smile and bit into her sandwich, looking away.

"Yeah, we'd love to not fail this semester exam," Vanille muttered.

"Chill guys, what's the worse that could happen?" Leah said as she sat up straight..

"Summer classes," Bliss snapped, agony pouring from her words. "I know that anyone would rather spend their summer days sprawled on a beach mat on the golden sand, under the scorching sun, than sit at two hours of boring physics lectures,"

"I'm here on the strong belief that you slackers have worked towards making your brains more competent over the past weekend," Mr. Decarlo mumbled as he leaned against the large wooden desk. "Anyone who has the slightest ability to disagree with this, can leave the class before I commence the lesson. If anyone bleats nonsense like last friday they're very welcome to stay out of the lecture hall during my class,"

"Ya'll owe us one, y'know," Luke whispered as he leaned over.

"Fine," Aeliana smiled as her eyes were fixed on the professor standing before them.

The hour passed by fast. Most of the students succeeded in answering Mr. Decarlo's questions without receiving a death glare and an insult that felt like a knife driven through one's gut

Caleb made the most of the minutes by being cautiously observant of Mr. Decarlo's countenance whenever he made Aeliana answer a question. He was always one to pay attention to little details, and therefore noticing slight changes in someone's eyes or smile wasn't an extremely difficult task for him.

However, Mr. Decarlo, being exceptionally clever at hiding his emotions, was the perfect challenge for Caleb. He noticed that the professor's guise was consistent; there was little to no change in his expression. He was determined to know more about whatever was going on

between the professor and his friend; but Aeliana wouldn't talk and Mr. Decarlo's eyes wouldn't reveal anything; at least, not during lectures.

"If you haven't already, this would be a good time to get it together," Mr. Decarlo muttered as he shut his book. "By this time next week, you slackers will be whining and complaining about how you couldn't even read the latter half of the question sheet; and I know, that none of you will be too thrilled to attend summer lectures," with that his eyes rested on Aeliana's.

The girl's ocean blue orbs were already fixed on the man. Her pupils dilated as she took in a deep breath, receiving his strong gaze.

Something about the faint smile that lingered on his lips as he gazed at her, told her that she would see him once again that evening. 1

Breaking the eye contact, Mr. Decarlo left the hall without another word.

Aeliana bit the inside of her cheek, a million thoughts rushing around in her head like a hurricane.

That was extremely unusual. He never did that. He never smiled like that.

Well, it wasn't exactly a proper smile, but it wasn't a look that shot daggers at her, and for that reason it was a good enough 'smile'.

Aeliana turned her head sharply to look at Caleb, who was, to her relief, busy shoving books into his backpack. She sighed in relief as she noticed how most of the students were busy organizing their stuff, preparing to leave.

"Hey," Caleb muttered as he approached Aeliana. "Starbucks?" 1

"Yeah," the girl replied, half-heartedly.

"Awesome, let's go?"

"Err.. actually, Caleb," Aeliana stuttered. "I need to make a visit to the library before I leave the

university,"

"Oh," Caleb said as he nodded. "Maybe tomorrow, then?"

"For sure," Aeliana agreed as she smiled. "See you tomorrow," she said, relieved by the fact that Caleb didn't offer to go with her.

"Alright then," Caleb grinned as he stepped back to leave. "Have fun," he said as he gave a small wave and turned around towards the doors.

"Sure," Aeliana giggled as she waved back.

Have fun? At the library??

Once Leah, Bliss and Vanille left with the boys, Aeliana slowly made her way towards the

library. She didn't know why. All she knew was that she was bound to run into the professor at least once more that evening.

She pushed open the large wooden doors to the library and stepped inside as the cold air hit her cheeks. Letting the doors shut behind her she proceeded into the massive space. Her eyes ran around the entire area, searching for a tall figure in a beige trench coat.

Aeliana proceeded towards the desk by the shelves that held the physics books. There wasn't a soul around besides the fine arts students on the upper floor whose conversation could be vaguely made out due to the dead silence.

She walked over to her usual spot by the shelf and took a seat. She wondered if Mr. Decarlo was going to walk through the entrance any time soon. Pulling out a thick text book from her bag, she fixed her eyes on the large wooden doors.

Ten minutes passed...

Then fifteen...

What am I doing here? Who am I kidding? I'm not here to study...

Twenty minutes since she arrived.

I should just go home. This is useless and wrong.

And stupid.

Packing her books up, Aeliana stood up. She made her way towards the door as she swung her backpack across her shoulder.

She hopped on to the road that led her away from the gate of the university. She took each step, recalling the mysteriously calm but slightly expectant look that was on the professor's face as he left the lecture hall earlier that day.

Maybe it was all in her head. Maybe she was just overthinking. It probably wasn't as significant as she made it out to be. Mr. Decarlo must be casually carrying on with his day, unlike Aeliana who chose to believe some made up fantasy.

I should stop trying to make up things that aren't even there.

Down the road, she took a left turn, hoping to stop by at the coffeehouse; with a motive that was vaguely wavering between paying her best friend a surprise visit and finding a certain tall man there, purchasing his coffee.

Approaching the door of the coffeehouse, Aeliana pushed it open. Soon her eyes met with a familiar pair of caramel brown eyes. "Hey, chica," Madelyn chorused. "Thought you were at home, studying for Daddy's test," she narrowed her eyebrows, pondering on the reason behind her best friend's arrival at their workplace.

"Hey," Aeliana replied, "Just thought I'd stop by,"

"Uh uh," Madelyn placed a hand on her hip. "You're here for a reason,"

"Huh?"

"He already came," Maddie said as she shrugged. "Got his coffee and left," "Erm.. who?" Aeliana questioned as she tried her best to look confused. "The disturbingly ravishing man you're looking for," Maddie teased Aeliana as a smirk played on her lips.

"What 'man'!? I have no idea what you're talking about, okay?"

"Oh," Madelyn's eyebrows shot up. "So you choose to play dumb?"

"You know what; I'm leaving," Aeliana muttered.

"Hey, wait!" Madelyn chuckled. "Did I piss you off that bad?"

Aeliana scoffed as she smiled in disbelief. Why does she do this all the damn time!? Why does she try to get me to admit things that I don't wanna admit to?

"Aren't you gonna order some coffee?" Madelyn smiled.

"I was going to, but you ruined my mood,"

"Yeah?"

"Yeah," the blue-eyed girl replied as she pursed her lips.

"Come on, it's on me," Madelyn said as she grabbed a cup.

"No, no. Here," Aeliana grabbed her card and placed it on the counter. "White Chocolate Mocha,"

ISS

SOM

"He looked like he was searching for someone, you know?" Madelyn muttered as she prepared the order.

Aeliana, who leaned on the counter, facing away from Madelyn, muttered, "Probably his girlfriend,"

Having stared at her for few seconds, Madelyn started laughing. "I'm sorry, who? Whose girlfriend?"

Crap

"Give me the coffee, Madelyn," Aeliana muttered defensively, as she looked over her shoulder.

"Fine," Madelyn surrendered as she placed the cup on her counter. "Just so you know, he wasn't looking around the seating area,"

"Are you really going to keep this up?"

We

"And you know what," Madelyn said, completely ignoring my question. "You were right? That man is not easy to read. His face is so.. so... unexpressive,"

Aeliana sighed as she took a sip of the sweet liquid as she stared at her bestfriend.

"I mean, I can tell that he was looking around. Also, only because I was observing him," she shrugged. "Other than that, he is unreadable," she mumbled as she shook her head, taken aback by how impassive the man was.

"Goodbye, Madelyn," Aeliana gave a small smile. "See you later," she said and turned around to make her way towards the door.

"We'll continue this later," she yelled from behind as the girl left through the glass doors.

Aeliana walked down the street, hoping to make it to the subway station in time for the next train. As she walked she debated if she should have an honest conversation with Madelyn or

not.

Madelyn would just joke about how I have daddy issues. She wouldn't take anything seriously. 1

Or... am I the one who misunderstood her intentions? I mean, of course she means no harm, but... I know I would feel extremely uneasy talking about something that's not even real.

What if all this is just in my head? I'm just making this all up... but that's not true... I'm not delusional. Whatever happened between us really did happen. The issue is that it's definitely not upto me to decide if those actions and interactions meant something more than they seemed to.

Aeliana stepped into the train that approached the station just as she entered the subway. It was pretty crowded. She had to squeeze herself inside to grab a pole.

What if Madelyn's right? What if... I am in denial?

I'm also starting to think that Caleb's onto me now.

Ugh!! What even is this!? I have done nothing wrong, what the hell am I guilty for!? What am I scared of? What exactly am I hiding from the others?

My phone beeped interrupting my chain of bemusing thoughts.

Adrian: Bring your phone charger. Broke mine

Great! Aren't people supposed to have spare chargers? Especially Adrian. I've seen his charger; bent in all angles with wires sticking out.

Thank goodness, I have a spare one. I can give him what I have right now. It would save the trip to my apartment and then to his and then back to mine.

As Aeliana stepped out of the train that stopped in Herendale, she texted Adrian back.

Aeliana : Aren't adults supposed to be responsible enough to have spares tho?

Having finished chugging her coffee, she tossed the cup into the trash can near the exit and shoved her phone back into her jean pocket.

In five minutes' time she approached Hyde Park Residencies. Remembering that home wasn't where she was supposed to be headed, Aeliana turned towards the West wing. She entered the car park right behind a deep blue sedan.

Looking around the area, she looked ahead for Adrian's car.

Ha! There it is. Lazily parked in it's spot.

So opposite to it, must be Mr. Decarlo's expensive-looking black sedan. Of course, there it sits.

Which means that he must be home by now.

As Aeliana stepped closer she observed the deep blue sedan being parked right next to Mr. Decarlo's slick black one. As soon as it came to a stop, the driver's door flung open. A tall man stepped out of the car; dressed in the same beige trench coat that Aeliana had been so frantically searching for during the past few hours.

She stopped in her tracks, instantly realizing the identity of the man.

Tall cup of coffee in hand, he pulled off his shades and rested his eyes on the girl, puzzled ever so lightly.

What? Why did I stop? I don't need to! Keep walking... stop embarrassing yourself damn it..

She stepped forward gingerly, trying to do her best to show that she was unfazed by the man's coincidental arrival. However, contrary to the countenance she was willing to maintain, her breath quickened as her heart rate definitely accelerated. Unable to help herself, she turned to make eye contact with him.

Their eyes met, causing the hairs on the back of Aeliana's neck to stand. She slowed down, stopping in front of the blue sedan, which also turned out to be Mr. Decarlo's vehicle.

How come I haven't seen this one before? How many cars does this guy have?

Mr. Decarlo broke eye contact for the first time. He took a brief moment to glance at the floor and then back at the girl's beryl blue eyes, as his own stormy grey ones glistened whilst the smallest of smiles played on his lips.

"Hmm..." he mumbled. "Well well, if it isn't the sentimental beansprout,"

Aeliana inhaled sharply as her eyes widened upon realizing what he meant. She felt the heat rise up to her cheeks as she looked away. Gulping, she thought of something to say.

Looking up once more to meet his eyes, she smiled shyly. "What does the 'E' stand for?"

Mr. Decarlo knew right away what she was talking about. "I believe that's none of your business" he said, the slight smile not leaving for a second.

Aeliana's eyebrows shot up as if she said, 'Is that so?'

"Why am I seeing you here, Winslow?" he muttered as he shoved his shades into the pocket of his trench coat.

Looking at the man intently, Aeliana smiled. "I believe that's none of your business,"

In a split second, the small smile on his lips turned into a smirk. "You shouldn't be lurking around your boyfriend's house while you have an exam around the corner," 2

BOYFRIEND!? Ha!

"Why not?" Aeliana questioned, playing along.

"All the dopamine and serotonin might just knock you off your tracks,"

Aeliana smiled as she nodded. "I'll keep that in mind, Mr. Decarlo,"

"Hmm.." he groaned as he walked towards her, out of the parking slots and turned left, making his way towards the elevator. 1

Aeliana followed him, as she too, needed to use the elevator to get to where she was headed.

They both stood at the unopened doors of the elevator, staring at them while hoping that they would open soon.

Damn it! Boyfriend!? I don't even have one! Does he not remember that Adrian lives here?

Ugh! I absolutely cannot leave him thinking that I am here for a makeout session to blow off steam or something.

"Do you really think I'm here to see... a boyfriend?" she broke the silence.

"I couldn't care less, Winslow," 1

Mentally. Aeliana scoffed. He's the one who brought it up! I didn't even say a single word about some 'boyfriend'!

The doors of the elevator opened. They stepped inside awkwardly.

"I'm here to visit my brother," she mumbled as the doors closed. "He broke his phone charger and asked for mine," Aeliana explained, pressing the button that had "13" engraved on it.

"Give me one good reason as to why I should believe you,"

"Why would you not believe me?" she questioned, shrugging.

"Because you seem like an exceptionally good liar," Mr. Decarlo said, not even bothering to look at her.

Aeliana chuckled, humored by the professor's awful misconception. "You've got it all wrong. I'm an awful liar. It's just that each and every instance that you have witnessed me lying, were situations that I was perfectly geared for,"

Mr. Decarlo looked at the girl from the corner of his eyes.

"I can lie only when I'm ready for it," she said. "Just like anyone would be,"

"Hmm.."

"It's your turn now," Aeliana smiled, eyes fixed on the man with great eagerness

"Huh?" he turned to look at her.

"What does 'E' stand for?" she beamed at him, as her blue eyes shone.

Gazing at her for an unsuspecting amount of time, he looked away, mumbling, "That's still none of your business,"

"That's not very nice, *Mr. Decarlo*," Aeliana narrowed her eyes at him, as the elevator bell dinged, indicating their arrival at the 13th floor. The doors lazily pulled apart, revealing the passageway that led to several apartments; of which one belonged to Adrian.

Upon hearing her sentence Mr. Decarlo smiled once again, roguishly. Having stepped out of the elevator, Aeliana turned around, slightly irritated by the fact that M 1. Decarlo wouldn't simply reveal his name. She met his eyes. His lips already formed a mischievous grin as his high cheekbones glistened.

"Goodbye, Mr. Decarlo," "Let's see how long it will take you to find it," he said, slowly and slyly as he leaned forward and placed a black card on the scanner and pressed a button with a number that Aeliana couldn't see, as she had already stepped out of the elevator.

"Goodbye, *Winslow*," he uttered, his vexatious smile consistent, as the doors to the elevator closed, veiling him

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Thirty Nine

"Didn't it occur to you that you were supposed to buy a new one, when the cable in use was hanging by a single wire?" Aeliana looked at her brother in disbelief as she handed him the cable that was safely tucked in her bag until few seconds ago.
1

"Thanks," he said simply, as he gladly wrapped his fingers around the white cable.

"I'm leaving," Aeliana said. "I have work to do,"

"Work?" Adrian questioned as he plugged his phone into a power bank. "Oh, right. Exam," "Yeah,"

"We're throwing that party as soon as it's over," Adrian announced as he raised his eyebrows. "Don't tell me you forgot about it,"

"I couldn't care less about that right now," Aeliana rolled her eyes. "Professor challenged us. Half of the class should score an A grade. If not, he's going to schedule summer classes,"

"Summer classes?"

"Mm hmm,"

"That's s***,"

"It sure is," Aeliana sighed. "And let me tell you; he's not joking,"

"Well then," he smiled. "Better get your butt on that chair,"

"Yup, I'm off," she turned to leave.

VA

"Hold up," Adrian said. "I'm leaving too. Gonna hit the gym,"

Aeliana stepped out of the apartment followed by her brother. "You forgot your car keys," she muttered as she observed his hands that only held his phone, power bank, a towel and a blue sipper bottle.

"I don't need them," he shrugged. "I quit the old place. Started here. Saves the drive,"

"Oh, that's nice," Aeliana smiled.

"And convenient," Adrian added. "Got to meet others who live here,"

"Oh," Aeliana mumbled as her mind explored all the possibilities of Adrian meeting Antonio Decarlo. 1

Is he the type of person who would go to a gym? Would he consider it as a waste of time.

Well, he certainly LOOKS like he works out consistently. Maybe he does; just maybe not at this gym.

I mean Mr. Decarlo surely seems like someone who would dread other people's company. Maybe he has his own gym at his penthouse. He could then workout in his personal space, as he rejuvenates his social energy for the lectures next morning.

Yeah... he definitely seems like someone who needs time to recharge his people energy storage.

"Find anything interesting yesterday?"

"Huh?" Aeliana arched a eyebrow as she eyed her friend.

"At the library," Caleb rolled his eyes. "Oh," Aeliana gulped. "No... not really. Same old... boring stuff,"

"You know, I heard through the grapevine that Serena Waters is planning to throw a pool party after end of semesters,"

"And?" Aeliana looked at Caleb as she dropped her pen on the book. "What makes you think she'll invite us?"

"We're literally her batchmates," Caleb shrugged. "Everyone's going,"

"Whatever, Caleb. This is not highschool," she sighed. "We don't have to go to someone's party, seeking validation,"

"Yeah but, you guys can't stay mad forever," he muttered, looking away. "Right?"

"Hey, she almost got me killed, remember?" Aeliana said. "It's not like I give a shit about that, but I just don't want anything to do with her,"

"But you made up with Brittany," Caleb argued as his eyebrows furrowed and his caramel brown orbs filled with concern and also, confusion. 1

Looking at her friend, Aeliana mumbled, "Brittany's not the problem, Caleb,"

The boy looked at her as he shot her a questioning look. "Abigail?"

"Mm hmm," she nodded. "I bet Abigail's still out to get my ass,"

Caleb sighed, unsettled with the fact that Aeliana would be willing to miss parties because of just another regular girl like Abigail.

"Hey, why are you even trying to talk me into going? You guys will go if you want to, anyway"

"I'd be too bored," the boy shrugged.

"Well then, I guess it's good news for you that Adrian is throwing a party at his place after our end of sems," Aeliana grinned, expectantly. "And you guys are invited,"

"Did... Adrian say that?" Caleb questioned the girl as he narrowed his eyes.

"Um well, he doesn't have to," she replied confidently. "I can invite whoever I want to,"

"You're sure we'll be welcome there?" he asked once again, considering the possibility of

Adrian's apartment being an unsafe place for him; of course, after their last interaction at Aeliana's place.

"Of course, why not?" Aeliana shrugged.

DUIS

"I don't know; maybe because last time I saw him, your brother eyed me as if he thought I was gonna get you pregnant,"

"Caleb!" Aeliana chuckled upon hearing his words. "Adrian's just a bit overprotective, okay? He's a nice guy when you get to know him. I think you guys will get along with him just fine,"

"Yeah, I sure hope so,"

"Hey, guys," Jace greeted as he approached; Luke and the girls following close behind.

"Hey!" Aeliana and Caleb chorused.

"Aeliana's throwing a party after end of sems," Caleb announced to the gang.

"Yeah well, it's not exactly me," she shrugged as her cheeks flushed. "My brother and I will,"

"Cool!" Jace grinned as he high-fived Luke who seemed thrilled as well.

"Is the whole class invited?" Vanille questioned, trying to sound as if she hoped Aeliana would agree, while in reality she was waiting for her to deny.

"Is Abigail invited?" Bliss questioned, as she appeared to be a bit frustrated.

"No, no, guys," Aeliana waved her hands up in the air. "It's just us and Adrian's friends, don't worry,"

"Will there be alcohol?" Caleb asked as he raised his hand.

"Well," Aeliana pursed her lips. "We are going to be partying in the same apartment as a bunch of twenty-five year olds, so chances are, there will be,"

"Awesome," Jace grinned as he fist bumped Caleb.

"Pfft, as if you guys weren't gonna sneak in bottles," Leah rolled her eyes.

"Yeah, you're bound to get drunk one way or another. Either it's Adrian's or it's just BYOB," Bliss said. "Right, Caleb?"

Caleb sneered at Bliss as he remembered how drunk he got at the dinner dance.

"You sound like you love parties," Bliss eyed Jace.

"Hey, who doesn't like parties, huh?" Jace threw his arms up in the air. "They're fun,"

"Yeah," Luke nodded in agreement. "I also prefer apartment parties over huge-ass highschool

parties,"

"Ugh, yeah," Vanille agreed with her boyfriend. "Those were messy. Booze and teen sex everywhere,"

"That used to be the definition of a party," Caleb muttered.

"As if things are gonna be any different now," Aeliana laughed. "It's just the 'teen' part of that, that has been dropped,"

"We are still in our last teen year, you know?" Leah sighed.

"He's right around the corner," Dylan announced as usual.

"That's our cue," Luke sighed as he leaned in and planted a kiss on Vanille's lips. "See you at lunch," he smiled.

aITOV

"You guys literally sit in the same lecture hall," Leah narrowed her eyes at them. "Come on, Leah," I chuckled as I pulled her by the sleeve.

After everyone safely returned to their seats, Mr. Decarlo entered the lecture hall like a gust of cold air. He was dressed differently. Observing him, Aeliana guessed that he probably decided to leave his favorite trenchcoats behind, as he was dressed in a plain sky blue shirt and trousers. Of course, with summer just around the corner, they had to reduce the clothing to a minimum.

"Good morning," he muttered as he dropped the book he carried, onto the teacher's desk. He handed a bundle of papers to Olivia Grey and said, "Pass this around," barely audible.

Olivia did just as he said. A faint murmur started to spread across the students who were wondering what it was.

"Relax, buckos," Mr. Decarlo muttered as he crossed his arms in front of his chest. "It's just a

worksheet,"

Aeliana could hear sighs of relief coming from her batchmates. Smiles spread across few faces as they realized that the next hour will not be as stressful as they imagined it to be, few seconds ago.

"A timed worksheet," Mr. Decarlo added. "Take a pen and a paper,"

The silent atmosphere was disturbed by the shuffling of the students in their seats as they tried to obtain said items as soon as possible.

"Haven't we done enough surprise tests for one semester?" Leah whispered.

"Ugh! Tell me about it," Aeliana mumbled as she clicked her pen.

"Thirty four. One minute,"

Okay, let's see... potential difference... A and B... there's a switch and 3 Ohm internal

resistance...

"Silencio! It's every man for himself," Mr. Decarlo yelled as he stared daggers at Ryan Keys who started to whisper to the boy seated next to him.

Alright... this is simple... the answer is

"Time's up,"

Phew...

"Answers," the professor stood up straight from the desk he was leaning on. "Grey." "Third,"

Mr. Decarlo blinked and shifted his gaze onto Jace. "Carter?" he said, his facial expressions consistent

"Fourth,"

"Hernandez?"

"Fourth,"

"Seattle?"

"Fourth,"

"Grey, if you are interested, I'm sure you are more than welcome by Seattle for an explanation," he mumbled as he fixed his eyes on the sheet

“Forty Six, fifty seconds,” And so, the next hour was spent worrying about when Mr. Decarlo would call them out for choosing the wrong answer. It was pretty obvious that he was enjoying it. By the end of the hour, not a single student was left unquestioned. He wasn’t extremely brutal in the punishment department this time. The students who made errors were simply left to realize their mistakes and adjust them. For some unusual reason, he was being awfully lenient.

Adrian : Hey bit busy today. Bring dinner?

While Aeliana would’ve absolutely loved to inform her brother that he wasn’t the only busy body around here, she also thought she could use the opportunity to get some air.

She was comfortable in her oversized T-shirt and shorts, so she decided to throw on a jacket and a pair of flip flops. The main thing Aeliana loved about oversized clothes, was the fact that she didn’t have to give a care in the world as to how she looked in them. She was sure that more than half of the world would agree with her on that.

Locking the apartment door behind her, Aeliana quietly made her way towards the elevator.

Soon, she found herself standing at the cashier of the chinese restaurant nearby, buying takeout. She gathered the bags that held the boxes, after making the payment.

It was 6 p.m. She figured it would be a little too early to bring dinner, but whatever. Adrian can have it if he wants to; if not, more for her.

Aeliana headed towards the west wing of Hyde Park residencies and entered through the car park. She made her way towards the elevator that brought back several memories, clear and vague. She recalled the confused state she was in, when Mr. Decarlo led her there in the same elevator, only to reveal that he was her neighbor. Also, how he challenged her to somehow find out his middle name.

How the hell am I gonna do that?

As she pressed the button that read ‘13’, she remembered how she figured out that Mr. Decarlo’s penthouse was probably on the 14th floor of the buliding. She knew that because she had stopped and watched where it stopped on the previous day. She was too dazed to remember from the day of the dinner dance, but this time, she was certain.

The elevator stopped at the 13th floor. Aeliana made her way towards the 8th apartment; her brother’s. She rang the bell as she stood there.

W

After a lot of patience and several rings of the doorbell, she realized that her idiot of a brother was either sleeping or wasn't at home. Why the hell does he have to put me through this? Pulling her phone out of her pocket, she dialed Adrian's number.

"Yeah?" he answered.

"I brought dinner. Open the door,"

"Oh crap," he muttered. "Look I had to step out for a minute,"

"What!? They why didn't you buy it!?" she almost yelled. "You could've bought it on your way home,"

"It was urgent and I forgot to text you,"

"Wow," Aeliana rolled her eyes. "So this was all pointless,"

"I'll come by yours and pick it up, okay? I've gotta go," he said hurriedly.

"Fine," Aeliana muttered as she hung up. She headed towards the elevator, slightly pissed off.

Having stepped inside, she turned to look at the buttons. Out of curiosity, she pressed '14'.

Oh no... S***!

Panicking, Aeliana pressed 13 once more. Coming back to her senses she realized that there was no use of doing that since elevators don't work in that a manner.

She took a deep breath, preparing for whatever was to come. Straightening her back, she

composed herself, thinking thoroughly to come up with what she would do when she faces the owner of the penthouse on the 14th floor. He would give her, his usual death glare. His eyebrows would shoot up, and he would question her presence and why she isn't at her own place, studying for the upcoming exam.

Aeliana's train of thoughts was interrupted by the computerized voice; "Please scan your card to enter; if you wish to enter as a guest, please press the blue button to request permission from the resident,"

"Phew! That was close!" she muttered, enjoying the relief that took over her. She was already on the 14th floor. The elevator had moved; but the doors remained unopened.

Of course! She vaguely remembered from last time, how she entered the elevator with Mr. Decarlo and they were taken straight down to the car park in the basement. Which means the elevator opened directly into his penthouse.

Only the owner has possession of the card that permits entrance.

She glanced at the blue button and soon noticed the fingerprint scanner beside it.

Wow... penthouse owner's really do have good security. Adrian's apartment just needs a passcode. This is a whole other level.

Sighing in relief upon realizing the fact that she wouldn't have to face Mr. Decarlo, Aeliana raised a hand to press 'B'. However, she was distracted by the the button that read '20; Outdoor Swimming Pool'.

No matter how much Adrian adored her, it wasn't enough for him to give up his luxury apartment

Giving in to the unusually strong urge to check it out, Aeliana pressed it whilst hoping it wouldn't require a card ID.

The elevator started to move and a wave of excitement went through her.

I bet the sunset looks gorgeous from up there.

'20th floor. Doors are opening,'

The metal doors pulled apart to reveal the most beautiful view of the sky that Aeliana had ever seen from Herendale. The dark clouds that enshrouded the bright red sun were gradually moving away; revealing the blazing sphere.

She took few steps forward, and into the sunlight. She was so mesmerized by the sunset, that she almost forgot to admire the infinity pool; the perfectly still water was like a mirror that reflected the breathtaking view of the sunset. The gentle breeze created soft waves on the surface of the water. Everything was pink, blue and of course, there was a tinge of purple.

Aeliana decided to go over to the edge, closer to the sun chairs. She noticed a man lying in one, alone. She didn't pay much attention to it as she was too busy admiring the wonders of

nature.

The man lowered his sunglasses and observed her.

No doubt, she was a familiar face.

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Forty

"Hello," an unfamiliar voice spoke.

"Oh! Um hello," Aeliana replied as she glanced at him, smiling nervously.

The man was laying down on a sunchair, dressed in a beige short and printed shirt. He held a book in his hand and had a pair of sunglasses over his eyes until a while ago.

"Do you live here?" he asked, with a small smile secured on his face as his caramel brown orbs glistened through his narrowed eyes.

"Oh, no actually. I'm here to visit my brother, he isn't in right now though," Aeliana explained as she noticed how the man was clearly wondering what she was doing there. "I actually came up here out of curiosity. I live in the East Wing and there's no pool there, so..."

"Right," he said as he let out a small chuckle. "I'm sorry if I took you by surprise, it's just that I feel like I've seen you before,"

"Oh, is that so?" she was taken aback by the man's sudden confession. She was unsure of what she was supposed to say next.

as

"Yeah, you seem... familiar..." he furrowed his eyebrows as he rubbed his temples. He was evidently trying exceptionally hard to remember where he had seen this face before.

em

"Well, I do come to the west wing often," hoping that he would stop torturing himself, trying to recall.

"Right, of course," he nodded as if her fully agreed with her.

"I don't recall meeting you though," she said, watching as the man before her rubbed his chin, still scavenging his memories for her face.

Taking small and steady steps down memory lane, he managed to grasp the memory. The day he saw her, dressed in a silk black dress, and she lay on the leather couch.

"Of course..." a corner of his lips tugged into a small smile that Aeliana couldn't quite make out. "You were unconscious..."

"I'm sorry?" she pardoned as her eyebrows furrowed.

"Erm.. nothing.. don't mind me..." he chuckled nervously. "I'm just babbling,"

"Could you maybe... excuse me for a moment?" he asked her gently, while reaching out for the phone placed on the little table beside the sun chair.

"Of course, no problem," she smiled, giving a small nod.

After a considerable amount of taps on the screen of his phone, "So, I guess since you do live in part of Hyde Park residencies, you're permitted here?" he questioned.

"Yeah, actually, I have a pass," Aeliana replied as she didn't even bother to show it to him.

"I see," he said, beginning to type on his phone, after receiving a notification. "You're welcome to stay here for as long as you like. It's just deserted today because it's a weekday,"

"Oh," she realized that most people who lived in the West Wing must be busy often.

"That, and well, maybe they're too used to this," the man smiled as his eyes glistened in the sunlight. "People tend to lose value of what comes easy," Aeliana pursed her lips as she nodded, "Very possible,"

"Oh shoot! I'm gonna be late for my shift," he shot up, eyes glued to the screen of his phone. "It was nice meeting you...??"

was

"Aeliana," she smiled, realizing that she hadn't introduced herself yet. "I'm Aeliana,"

"Aeliana, That's a... beautiful name,"

"Why thank you," she giggled, flattered by the unexpected compliment.

"Oliver," he offered a cheerful smile, his eyes crinkling at the edges.

"It was a pleasure meeting you, Oliver,"

"You too, Aeliana," he stood up and gathered his belongings. "Well, enjoy until your heart's content. Who knows? You just might be lucky enough to catch the sky change colors," 1

"That's definitely a possibility," she started to get excited.

"I'll see you around then,"

"Goodbye," she turned her body towards him, her smile, bright and clear like white glass.

For the next few seconds, Aeliana watched Oliver make his way towards the elevators, endlessly tapping the screen of his phone.

He works shifts and lives in a luxury apartment... is he a nurse? A doctor??

In a matter of seconds, the clusters of clouds that stretched for miles and miles, shifted; and

the sky changed colors.

Aeliana watched in awe, as a colony of bats flew into the distant sky; their silhouette's perfectly contrasted by the tangerine colored sky. It was beginning to get darker, as the sun descended.

Having stood there for few more minutes, with the breeze in her brown locks, she was

grateful for the temporary escape that was given to her during this visit, which she otherwise would have deemed useless.

Carrying the bags that contained food that was probably already cold, Aeliana proceeded towards the elevator, after another prolonged glance at the breathtaking sky.

The elevator that had been idle on the 18th floor had arrived for her, since the other was already on its way down. She stepped inside and turned, stealing few final peeks at the cotton-like clouds, before the doors shut.

Soon, the elevator reached the parking garage at the ground floor. The ding was heard twice as Aeliana stepped out of it.

From the corner of her eye, she noticed the presence of a brawny man and stopped dead in her tracks. Cautiously, she turned over to look at him, only to see that he did the same. He had stepped out of the adjacent elevator, just as she did.

"Mr. Decarlo?"

Phone in hand, the professor glanced at her, puzzled.

Aeliana shot him a questioning look. She had never seen him so confused before.

Slightly raising a thick eyebrow, his lips parted as he prepared to say something. Having changed his mind, his lips were pursed.

Instead of verbal clarification, he had decided to resort to a different approach.

He approached her cautiously, and in a matter of seconds, his right index finger had poked her cheek. 4

Feeling the little jolts of electricity down her spine, Aeliana gulped. She felt her face heat up as she took a small step backwards, losing the contact between her skin and his. "Um-" she muttered, trying to comprehend what was going on.

Retracting his hand, Antonio's face was taken over by a barely visible wave of relief.

"Mr. Decarlo?" Aeliana mumbled, puzzled by his extremely unusual behaviour. "What... was that for?"

He sighed as he shoved his phone in the pocket of his pants. "Were you by any chance... thinking about jumping off the building?" 3

Upon hearing that, Aeliana's thoughts were in a knot. She was attempting to understand what the hell this man was going on about.

"What?" was all she could manage to say.

"What were you doing up there?" he asked her, sternly.

"Up where?"

"On the rooftop," he said, nonchalantly.

"How do you know I was there?" she raised an eyebrow at him.

"I know," he snapped, dismissing her question. "Por qué? Why were you there?"

Still recovering from the shock that he had given her, Aeliana decided that she need not give him what he wants so easily. "No reason in particular,"

"Winslow," he eyed her, waiting for a proper answer.

"I'm serious," she responded, managing to hold her ground.

"Aeliana," he looked deep into her eyes, with his piercing grey ones. He was expecting an answer; something besides what he had given her.

Her heart definitely skipped a beat, upon hearing her name roll off his tongue so smoothly. "I was watching the sunset," she said, giving in.

He sighed; unclear if it was done due to relief or disappointment.

Aeliana was at that moment, unable to analyze his countenance. Was he worried? Was he just simply curious?? Concerned?? She couldn't say exactly.

"Did you meet anyone there?"

"Mm hmm," she nodded, remembering her short-term acquaintance's kind smile.
"Oliver,"

The professor's expression relaxed and portrayed more of a poker face. As he let out a sharp sigh, Aeliana could only hear him mumble, "Qué idiota,"