

Emma melted in his embrace.

His arms tightened around her as if he would never let go. Emma breathed him in , marvelling at how safe he made her feel.

The world around them was rejoicing while they fell for each other in silence.

"You smell like safety and . .home." Eyes shut, she whispered in his shirt.

"And you smell like. . . mine" His gentle voice made her want to to something stupid . .like stand on the top of the mountain and yell on top of her lungs!

" Mmmm" she smiled , " I think Diana knows about us."

"Yes. I told her myself."

The words were calmly spoken but it completely spooked her out because she pulled back, her eyes wide.

" What?What did you tell her? What did she say? I can't believe— mmmpl!"

He had covered her mouth with his large hand.

"I told her i. .," He paused, " likethis girl." He said while looking in her eyes , "and. . . yes, that's about it." He shrugged and Emma ripped this hand o her mouth.

"Like her?! You onlylike me? Is that so?" She challenged, not at all happy with the word. Diana seemed to have been forgotten at the moment.

All that mattered was the stupid liké

What did like represent anyway?!

A light smile filtered on his handsome face as he watched her fume at him.

Maximus glanced down at her fistted hands and then slowly, he took her hands in his—her protest mellowing down a little as he slid his fingers through hers . . pulling her up close! Flushed against him, her heart thudded hard.

"You don't want to know what I feel right now. " His eyes darkened making her gulp , " I wish to take you in my room and ravageyou however I please but then that would be giving in too soon. I want to dance with the swan for a little while. .watch her bloom. .watch her unravel. ." He trailed o , closing in the distance . . claiming her mouth.

Her knees felt weak and if it wasn't him holding her, she would have fallen to the floor.

The kiss didn't seem to be so innocent like the the first for he moved in on her , forcing her to back up against the wall—li ing her hands and pinning them on the wall—he kissed her deep and sweet.

Breaths mingled , languish sighs uttered, fiery demand turning into possessiveness—Emma felt the passion to the toes! He kept going deep—tasting her in a mad way!

When she felt like she couldn't breath. .

He broke the kiss but still didn't let her breath or call down as his hot mouth moved towards her neck—giving her open mouthed kisses.

"You belong to me, Emma." He breathed against her delicate skin.

"Do I?" She managed to answer somehow and then gasped!

He bit her neck slightly!

"Wrong answer! You belong to me.His feverish kisses continued along her neck and Emma wanted to never leave this place.

Could he kiss her till eternity?

Till nothing made sense. . .

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Maximus didn't let her out of sight.

He held her hand through the occasion . Emma felt small in his presence but his assuring smile did wonders to her crumbling confidence.

Was it bad she wanted to ditch the function and kiss him?

Blush bloomed on her cheeks. .as she let her hair cover the sides of her face.

Guests had arrived , everyone decked up in the best of clothes. Drinks were being passed around by the waiters. Food was laid nearly on a table. Laughter was exchanged. Catty eyes were cast by women at each other's clothes.

"Can't believe the stock exchange of this country." A fat man moved his head le and right while his thick moustache shook a little.

"There's a key to every lock so does this country's stock exchange." Maximus said in a smooth voice.

"Easy for you to say. " He took a sip of his drink , his gaze suddenly catching Emma as if just realizing she was there. She could just feel what was coming next.

His eyes settled on their joined hands and a curious expression rested on his ruddy face.

"Did you marry?" The man asked , eyeing Emma now and then quite hesitantly.

Maximus chuckled and Emma felt his grip tightening on her hand.

"About to."

Her brown eyes snapped at him in disbelief.

But she couldn't deny . . .

Couldn't deny that her heart rumbled at his response! Dragon's erupted in joy! Birds flew around in her tummy. She needed to sit down!

The old man gave a disappointed " hmp!" As his murky eyes looked at a young girl laughing away and Emma knew she must be his daughter!

He kept casting a wistful glance at their joined hands.

Did he plan to o er his daughter?!Emma thought bitterly, jealousy biting at her.

Someone placed a hand on Maximus's shoulder.

"Where is my bride?"

Emma's blood froze at that voice as Maximus let go of her hand and turned around at the intruder.

No. .

It couldn't be. .him. .

He sounded happy!

Maximus sounded happy, Emma's entire being turned cold like a statue she didn't move.

"—she better wear my ring."

Maximus sighed. "She's more interested in wearing my mother's ring but we shall see. "

"A ring don't matter much. What matters is her happiness."

"And this why you're standing here, my friend." Maximus said and then he glanced at Emma's back.

Gently, he took her by the elbow and turned her around at the man.

"Emma, meet my brother in law. Jake."

Ice cold, Emma li ed her eyes up . . praying desperately to be wrong in her assumptions but not all prayers are answered. .

The grinning face of Jake greeted her.

He stuck out his hand.

"Hey there." He said in the same cheeky deceptive voice he lured in her mother with.

Emma could feel Maximus's eyes on her . With vacant gaze, she raised her hand and slipped it in Jake's beefy one.

He captured her hand in his, his eyes shining bright with polite curiosity but only she could see the predator in him. . taking a good look at her.

Hastily, she snatched back her hand before he could shake it.

"Woah! Is she okay? She seems a bit. .pale?" Jake asked Maximus, sounding worried and immediately Emma felt his arm going around her shoulders.

"Excuse us." He seemed impatient as he turned around , giving Jake their back and walked away. .to a secluded area that didn't have much crowd.

Emma was so so glad with him by her side. He seemed like a blanket of safety and she couldn't help but get close to his warm body.

He shadowed her with his body, obscuring her from the view.

Her hands clutched at his shirt.

Surprised, his arms went around her waist in a loose manner. " What is it? You feel cold." He observed , now rubbing her bare shoulders in an up and down motion.

She shook her head , tongue tied and suddenly getting flashbacks of that day she had run away from Jake's clutches.

"I-i haven't eaten much." She mumbled, not letting go of him in any way.

"Foolish girl." He muttered and then tried to took her hands o his shirt in a gentle motion but again she surprised him.

"No! Don't leave!" Desperate, she tried to melt in his warmth. Trying to make herself believe. .she was safe! She was with him! Maximus wouldn't let anything happen and—

"Alright alright. We aren't budging from here. Happy?"

She nodded and his arms were back again at their old place.

As he tried to soothe her , she couldn't help but feel the dread pooling in her stomach. .

Jake?!

Jake was Diana's fiance?!

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