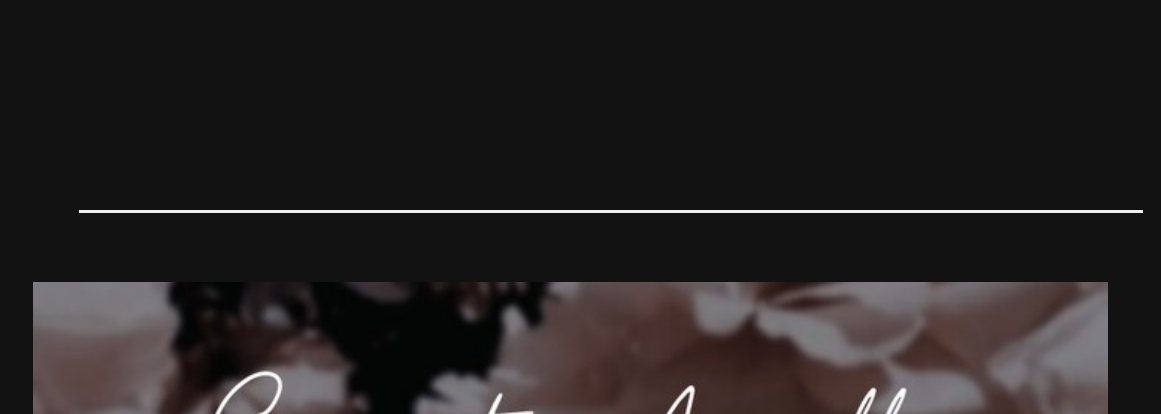
Chapter Twenty Four



♡♡♡

Isn't it incredible how big the world is? You can look up at the sky, observe the partial white clouds floating and passing through the wind, flinching away from the bright ball of fire in the sky—and then, everything else is just... blue

Us humans are like ants. So, so tiny amongst the world around us. And yet, the earth is an ant itself amongst the universe.

Hayden had once said that it scares him. Nothing scares that boy, but when talking about how we were these living beings floating in a wide void of nothing he seemed frightened.

Yes, it was somewhat frightening but it was beautiful.

So, so beautiful.

Today was a beautiful sunny day. A light breeze to keep the warming sun at bay. Clear blue sky with specks of clouds here and there. It was pretty.

And unfortunately, I'd be spending this day indoors at school.

Great.

I was up early this morning, it was one of those mornings where as soon your eyes open your mind was racing. It was thinking and thinking and thinking, it just kept me awake.

The good side of it was that it had me rising to my feet, ready to start another boring day.

My fit was not as appealing, but it was more on the comfy side of things. I was dressed in white leggings, a lacy pink tank top, and a matching pink sweatshirt. My shoes were casual white Air Forces, and I wore my hair in a low ponytail with strands of hair falling on the sides of my face.

I eventually left my room and went downstairs to feed Butterscotch, wishing him a wonderful day, before waiting on Hayden outside.

My parents left for work early this morning; I saw them briefly when Silver dropped me off at home yesterday, but they were gone for the rest of the day and night. They've been preoccupied with the new arrangements with the Ceraso's, particularly with the company chains they carry around New York.

As for me, I'm mostly focused on my studies—particularly with Silver. He consumes the majority of my thoughts, and with this whole 'study buddy' thing, I was certain I wouldn't be able to focus until he taught me how.

I guess only time will tell.

The honking of a car jolts me out of my mini world; Hayden's black jeep was stopped in front of me, his window rolled down and his eyes dubious.

"I know it's early but why are you stuck in your head this early in the morning."

"Hush," I silenced him by flicking his weary gaze away from me as I entered the other side of the car.

He takes off as soon as I shut the door and starts making his way onto the roads.

"How are you this bright and early morning, Pooh Bear?" He pats my thigh in greeting.

"I'm okay," I yawn, leaning my head against the window and closing my eyes.

"Can we stop at Starbucks or something?" I squint my eyes open, catching a glimpse of him, his golden curls bouncing off his brow with each nod.

"Sure." He pulls through a drive-through precisely as I said that, we stop behind a car, and Hayden examines me.

"You're going to drink coffee?"

I scoff at his judgemental tone.

"Yes." I bellowed, sensing the discouragement coming from him. He makes a weird face, driving the car further up the line.

"You do realise how radio-active hyper you get, right?"

I flip him off, glaring at him due to his not-so-nice comment. I didn't get hyper, I just had extra energy.

"Well, I'm tired and I need it. Maybe it'll make me focus more." I reasoned as I folded my arms across my chest. Hayden lowers his window and gives me another look before speaking into the intercom.

He orders a caramel frap for me, as well as two chocolate muffins, one for each of us. Hayden also gets an iced strawberry tea for himself.

While we wait, I briefly close my eyes. The music he played was really laid back, which further added to my tranquillity.

Our order had arrived minutes later, and I was holding the caramel bliss in my hand, sucking on the strong contents. It was sweet and timidly infused with coffee.

I sighed happily, enjoying the thrill that rippled through me. "Good?" Hayden remarked from beside me, sipping his strawberry beverage.

"Very good." I take our muffin from the brown paper bag, breaking off the chocolate chips and eating them separately.

"Why do you do that, Serenity?" Hayden sighs, glaring at the pebbled chocolate layered on my lap. I pop some into my mouth, giving him a cheeky smile. "Because it's yummier this way."

"Weird child..." He mutters, while I slowly start to revive from caffeine.

♡♡♡

"I knew it," Hayden groans from beside me, tilting his head up to the sky.

I do a little twirl, looping my arm through Haydens and skipping beside his slouched, muscly form.

"Knew what, Hades?" I drained the last of my coffee, slurping all of the caramel sweetness into my mouth.

He gives me a look that essentially says I'm supposed to understand what he meant.

I didn't.

He sighs, stumbling up the stairs as I virtually drag him to my side with each bounce in my step. My mind was spinning again.

"What class do you have first?" I excitedly let go of his arm to open the door for us; he side-eyes me as he walks through, and I follow.

"Business." He turns his legs in the opposite direction as he glances at me from over his shoulder. "Are you going to be okay?" I grimace and step backwards on my feet, waving him off with my hand.

"You're acting as if I'm drunk, Hayden."

He rolls his eyes and turns the other way.

"I'll see you later, Shortcake."

Huffing from the nickname he gave me, I turn the other direction and nearly collide with another student. I went to apologise, only to discover it was Switch.

He seems to recognise me, his eyebrows furrowed in surprise as he secures me with his hands on my shoulders.

"You good?" He grumbles, examining my body to make sure I'm not dying. I laugh and pat his hand; he removes it from my shoulder and takes a step back to assess me.

"I'm fine, sorry about that." I apologise, awkwardly rubbing the back of my arm.

He shrugs and glances down the hall behind me. "Did you just get here?"

"Um, yeah," I play with the bracelet on my wrist, looking behind him as I start to feel uncomfortable. I hated talking to people I didn't know well, even if I was pumped with caffeine.

"You just missed Hayden if you were looking for him..." I look behind me and so does Switch, he nods and takes another step forward, visibly passing my body.

"Thanks, Serenity." He nods at me and starts to stride off, and I sigh, placing a hand on my fast, beating heart.

Almost immediately, I turn back around and begin to head to my first class of the day.

♡♡♡

The college library was enormous, with many entrances and lengthy aisles of stacked textbooks or cinematic instruction books. I was torn between an aisle on how to write a long, decent essay with very little information and an aisle on various food recipes.

Really, I was just hungry. So while looking at numerous dishes in a cookery book would satisfy my needs, but I needed to learn how to write a damn good essay for Professor Creepy right now.

Dust clung to the library shelves, and trailing my finger along the shelf just caused a mount of it to catch on my skin.

I took a look through the various textbooks, sensing that they were all the same. I picked one up carelessly, skipping over the pages of books.

When I got to the glossary, I went over the many topics addressed in the textbook, and the majority of the information was what I needed to know. In a simpler way, I could watch a Youtube or TikTok video on this, but I'd rather read the information and absorb it than listen in one ear and let it go out the other.

Adjusting the grip of my bag around my shoulder, I submerge out of the aisle and walk in search of another. I needed extra assistance on the topics I was covering in my essay, unfortunately, due to my lack of commitment to lectures.

But luckily we had resources.

Once again, I was confronted with numerous stacks of business and legal books. Business was merely a credit class; my other classes were geared towards my teacher's degree, as well as the art classes I attended, but business was not my first priority.

Unfortunately, I need it to pass another semester of college.

Searching through the columns of boring books, most of them were thick as the sweater Hayden bought me last Christmas as a joke—but some were decently sized, yet I was unsure of what to even choose at this point.

It seemed the universe gave me a saviour.

"You look distressed." Silver was leant up against a shelf opposite me. The breath almost seemed to be knocked out of me at his sudden appearance, his pale blue eyes stared at me and his plump lips that had not only kissed me but tasted me looked wonderfully kissable right now.

I gulp at the sudden recollection of yesterday morning's events, that caffeine in me was still pumping through and I was about ready for an adrenaline rush.

"I am." I take a step forward in front of him, keeping my face as stoic as he was.

"How's your wound?" The question flies out unquestionably, he glanced down at me as I arrived closer to him, receiving a careless shrug in response.

"It's fine."

"Wow," I scoff, folding my arms around my stomach. I give him a stern look, "You didn't check it, did you?"

A reply wasn't what I got, but rather a movement. He takes his hands to my arms, pulling them away from my middle and wrapping them around his neck.

The stern expression falls from my face uselessly as I feel my heart rate pick up, Silver slides his hands down to my waist, his head tilting down for his lips to brush against mine.

"You're cute when you worry," He comments, breaking the trance my mind was in currently. That certainly hurt my ego.

"And that's what you focus on instead of my words?" I retort back, giving his hair a light tug through my fingertips.

His jaw visibly clenched hard, pushing me up against a wall of books.

"Do it again and you'll be seeing stars, Amore Mio." His warning slips through my brain and I tug on his hair again, smiling against the minty breath on his caressing lips.

Translation: "My Love"

A hoarse grunt escapes him and immediately presses his lips against mine. I delve into his taste, my lips rough on his, our soft lips rapidly moulding.

He lifts my thigh and rests against his waist, running his fingers up the slip of my sweatshirt and shaping it over my curves.

I whimpered into his mouth at the friction, our bodies were so close together it was thrilling.

Our passionate kiss breaks, he pulls away just as someone walked by the aisle but I was far too preoccupied with him to care if they noticed us.

"You're supposed to be studying," He murmurs, dropping my thigh and whisking his hand up to my cheek. Running his thumb under my cheekbone, I raise my brows in unison.

"And you're supposed to be helping," I state.

"Unless you want me to find another study partner..." I trail off, slipping out of his hold while doing. His hand dropped from my cheek and an emotionless look was plastered onto his face.

"No." He grabs my arm, a possessiveness crawled its way into his gaze and his actions spoke louder than his words.

Holding me securely, his hands wrap themselves around my waist and pull my body flush against his.

"I'm helping you. Nobody else." He declares this, making sure it went straight into my mind and stayed that way. Unchangeable.

I bite my lower lip to contain my smile, he immediately looks down at it, cursing in Italian under his breath before letting go of me and standing a distance away—almost to restrain himself.

"Alright study buddy, let's go and learn," I pull my fingers into air quotation marks, earning a subtle glare from him at my sarcasm.

Trailing out of the aisle, I just assume he's following me to the table I'm picking out.

It was a three-seater table in the far back, disclosed from the rest of the students lingering about. Most seemed to be alone, studying with laptops out and papers sprawled everywhere.

Whereas I'd be learning not off papers but off of a man. A deliciously good-looking one at that.

Silver sinks into a seat beside me and relaxes, his blue, intense eyes fixed on me.

I attempt to avoid his probing gaze; anxiousness seeps into my limbs, but I do my best to ignore it while I start up my laptop.

Study papers were covering the desks, and Silver, thankfully, takes notice and begins scanning the work. I had highlighted everything that needed to be covered by the end of the week, therefore making this process easier to complete.

"Your notes are good, flower. You just need to put it all into words."

His comment unsettles me. I wasn't sure how'd be able to concentrate with that deep voice of his.

"You'll help me with that, right?" A ray of hope beams through me, enabling a glimmer of vulnerability to show through.

"Of course," He smiles a little, taking my chin between his fingers and pecking my lips, "That's why I'm here, no?"

I smile back, nodding once to confirm. The tingly sensation of his lips on mine stays and I feel my palms begin to sweat.

Not now, Serenity.

The notes and tasks on my laptop were a help also.

Silver read over them, nodding his head and saying nothing merely due to concentration.

He created a new document on my laptop, tilting it and starting the introduction off for me. Then, he left it alone for me to continue with it.

"See what I've done? "When I hear his voice so near behind me, I feel a creep up my spine and a twitch in my neck as his arm hangs over the back of my chair.

Focus.

Taking my eyes back to the screen, I read over the brief words and nodded to his question—also noting how structurally well it was written.

"You just have to start it off with the first topic. You've written a decent amount of notes for it, you'll be fine. But for the second one," He pauses, flipping through the notes and finding a half-written page of messy dot points.

"You'll need some research."

I nod again, submissively complying with his words.

"Did you at least listen enough to know what you'll be writing about?" He raises a brow. I shake my head and lightly sigh, "Whatever I've written is probably all I know."

"That's fine," He shakes his head and gives me a reassuring look, almost to make sure I wouldn't stress over it. "I'll help you."

This was getting to me. I liked how he reassured me, knowing my head would be out of place and my lack of attention attempting to keep strong for him.

Silver was so calm with me, so patient and willing.

God, he was just almost perfect.

Silver walks me through the first forty minutes of the essay, reviewing what I write and revising it while he explains what I missed or overlooked.

The next several minutes were challenging as we moved on to a topic I was unfamiliar with. Silver's sentences were entering one ear and exiting the other, making me feel more apprehensive.

"Serenity?"

I pull my gaze away from the screen, finding his blue eyes on me.

"Yes?" I gulp.

Intimidatingly, he sits up straight from his sprawled position and looks over my features with a stern gaze.

"Are you listening?"

Biting the inside of my cheek, nervously, I look down at his lap and fold my hands over his.

"I promise I am, my brain is just not functioning."

He scoffs and shakes his head at my pathetic excuse, then smiles amusedly as he takes my hands to his lips and kisses each wrist.

"Break?"

I nod eagerly and slouch into my seat, feeling a little less anxious but pathetic that I couldn't handle anything less than a half-hour of work.

I'm usually not like this, it was just lately...

Maybe I should start taking those pills again. They stopped the migraines and brain function problems in my head before, perhaps they can do it again.

I'll talk to Papà about it later.

"What's on your mind?" He asks softly, directing his body to me.

"A lot." I reply, honestly.

Looking over my face, Silver rests his gaze on mine. "Then what's bothering you most to have you so anxious?"

You, I want to say. But really, it wasn't just him. This person coming after me was bothering me a lot, along with college and again, Silver.

My overwhelming feelings for him took a great toll on me, I was unsure of everything on how to feel and I don't think I want control anymore, just to let it happen.

Whatever happens, happens.

It's something I've always told myself in order to stop stressing over something so silly.

But with my reply to him, I go with the more obvious one.

"Having someone wanting to come after me, take me from my life...it's scaring me a bit," I admit. "I know I should be used to threats like this but it's never this bad. Usually, they back down after a while."

Silver shakes his head, a crippling emotion swirling in his while he takes my hand in his, staring deeply into my eyes.

"You shouldn't have to be used to it, Serenity."

His thumb draws circles on my palms, somehow settling my nerves with his gentle touch.

"I know, but..." I sigh, looking down at the cross hanging from his neck. "I'm part of the Mafia, whether I like it or not. I was born into it. I have to expect this sort of thing, you know?" I stare up at him, hoping he'd understand what I'm trying to say.

Looking off to the side, he narrows his eyes in at the desk beside us, giving me a good view of his extra sharp jaw that was clenched rather tightly.

He'll break it if he keeps using that type of strength.

"Let me take you somewhere." He proposed deeply, his voice low and his blue eyes bright. I watch him stand, and hopelessly, I follow.

"Where?" I frown at his sudden urge, he remains stoic and gathers my papers neatly into his hand, slipping them back into my folder.

"Trust me?" He looks over at me, pausing. Without a trace of hesitation, I nod.

He nods back, closing my laptop and tucking it inside my bag with the rest of my things. He holds out his hand as he slips my bag over his shoulder, and I stare in bewilderment.

I move my gaze from his hand to his face, noticing how his eyes twinkled, outshining the rest of his empty yet pretty features.

Placing my hand in his, his lips twitch up into a little smile for a split second before reverting them to my hand.

"Let's go."

Sparks linger on the spot he kissed. He turns around, guiding us through aisles of students and out of the library.

There goes my study sesh.