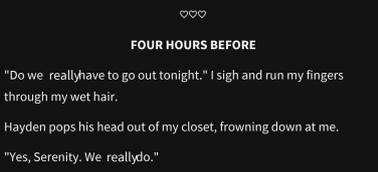


Chapter Thirty Two



FOUR HOURS BEFORE

"Do we really have to go out tonight." I sigh and run my fingers through my wet hair.

Hayden pops his head out of my closet, frowning down at me.

"Yes, Serenity. We really do."

Groaning, I adjust the towel wrapped around me and sit down on my bed, patiently waiting for Hayden to come out with an outfit.

"If you're worried about safety, remember we've got a whole team looking out for you. Plus, your bodyguards won't be taking their eyes off you." He strides back into the room, his voice clearer.

He stands in front of me, holding a short, black leather skirt and a cream, cropped long-sleeved V-neck top.

"Please wear this, you will look even more jaw-dropping than usual," He grins, dropping the clothes into my lap and starting to walk back outside of the room for some privacy.

"And no more complaining! I have everything sorted, enjoy tonight!"

With those final words, he shuts my bedroom door and leaves me alone in my empty room.

Sighing, I stand from the bed and drop the towel to my feet. I start to place on my undergarments, tiredly grumbling out desperate pleas for somebody to save me.

Not long after Silver had left, Hayden had arrived, claiming that I never went out clubbing with him and that every time he went it was never fun because I wasn't there.

Though, I call bullshit because either way, he's always shit-faced happy when drinking.

But here I was, getting ready to go out with my best friend despite the fact that I wasn't supposed to leave the house in the first place. I had enough bodyguards to keep an eye on me, so a night out wouldn't hurt that bad.

It was just the whole process of getting ready and mentally hyping myself up to want to go out.

Though, Hayden never fails to do that himself, successful every time.

"You're sex on legs, Serene." Hayden marches in, eyeing me like one of his very precious diamonds. "Like the brightest star in the sky," I giggle as he takes my hand and spins me around, turning red as ever from all the compliments.

"Let's dry this hair, hm? Do you want me to straighten it?" He sits me down at my dresser, wrapping a towel around my shoulders and letting my hair lay there.

"Yeah, change it up for once," I grin and he grins back, plugging in the hair dryer and beginning to dry my hair.

While he does that, I start to do my makeup, not helping to look at my phone every now and then—just in case a message or two came from a special boy my mind can't seem to forget.

"How is it going with Silver? I know you told me briefly, but is he worth every thought that's consuming that mind of yours," He taps the tip of his finger against the side of my head, earning me to smile.

Was he worth every thought? Definitely.

"He is," I murmured, bringing my gaze to the mirror. "I'm falling in love, Hades," I smile weakly, looking into his warm brown eyes that always gave me comfort, someone who I knew would never let me down or think for a second that what I was feeling was wrong.

"I never meant to, but I am." Hayden puts down the dryer, twirling my chair around so that we faced each other. He takes both my hands and helps me stand, wrapping his big arms around my body and I do the same.

"You're my sister, Serenity. Not by blood but by heart," He kisses the side of my forehead and I try my best not to start tearing up. "I'll always support you, I'll always help you. And I'll always be honest with you," He pulls back so that he looks into my eyes, wiping the stray tear that fell. "Falling in love isn't a crime. Getting your heart broken again shouldn't be fear but a growing pain. You learn from these things, darling, even if it hurts."

I smile through the truth of what he was saying. A realisation dawns over me and I inhale every truth he spoke. Learning from the pain is all we can do, a slow and painful process that will gradually turn into healing.

"You know I love you, right?" I wrap my arms back around his waist, hugging myself into his chest. He chuckles from my comment and rubs my back soothingly. "I know."

Moments later, we were back to getting my hair ready. I told him everything that I was feeling, making sure to leave out fewer details. And then as we were treading our way to the car, I distinctively remember the boy he was currently throbbing over.

"Are you going to tell me about Switch or...?"

His lips pull to the side, a gracious tint of pink coating the apple of his cheeks and he seems to ignore my question and hop into his side of the car—which only made me tread faster.

"Hayden! Are you two dating then? God, you're always asking about my love life and selfishly I forget about yours—"

"And there's a purpose for that!" He grins, starting the car and speeding away like a maniac.

"Yes, we are dating. He actually asked me out."

I start clapping happily for my best friend, overwhelmingly happy for him. Hayden deserved every bit of happiness in this world. With the number of boyfriends he's passed through both college and high school, I was patiently waiting for one that would just make him smile as brightly as he did with me.

"Have you told your mother yet?"

Hayden gives me a subtle side-glance, a small smile appearing on his lips.

"Yes, and just to shock you further, she was decently okay with him."

A gasp flew from my mouth as he continued on with the conversation, explaining how his mother was calm and had a decent conversation with Switch—apart from when she threatened him to not hurt her son—other than that, the woman known to hate men oddly turned around for her son's boyfriend.

Tonight we were trailing out into the big city. Which meant we'd be seeing fewer faces around.

A lot of our old high school mutuals lived in the city, always clubbing here and there. Especially the ones in relation to the Mafia, such as a girl we both know and dislike a lot known as Sasha Tremblay.

So, when we entered the heavily packed club, filled to the brim with people—it was hard not to miss the blonde girl at the bar.

"I was praying to god that she might've skipped the club this weekend," Hayden groans from beside me, my bodyguards were separating to every corner of the club, and the two standing closest to me were a distance away which was good—my father always made sure to tell them to give me my space, at least.

The blonde woman, as if sensing our presence, turns her obnoxious head away from the boy she was sticking her tongue into and instantly scowls upon seeing me, then flickers her gaze to Hayden, narrowing her eyes on him even more than on me.

"Looks like you've upset her, Hayden." I mock, taking a seat at the bar a few stools away from Sasha. Hayden takes the one beside me, one seat closer to Sasha.

"This is surprising." Her slim body comes into view, standing in front of us with her little boy-toy rising behind her.

"What is?" I raise a brow, watching her red-coloured lips churn into a knowing smirk.

"You're out of your little anti-social shell," She looks over my appearance, judgement coating her stare. I started to become uncomfortable under her stare, and before I could tell her to go get stuffed, Hayden beat me to it.

"At least she's not the one catching STDs every weekend." Her face morphed into something close to intimidation and shock as Hayden towers over her, daring her to say another word. Unfortunately, the boy behind her had to go and open his mouth.

"You should tell your boyfriend to keep his mouth shut." The boy was talking to me but looking directly into Hayden's gaze, making us both look at each other in humour.

When neither of us said a word, Sasha began to look confused too.

Hayden casually wraps his arm around my waist, pulling me against his body. He leans his mouth down to my ear, whispering words only we could hear.

"Yeah, tell me to keep my mouth shut, babe"

And that was when I burst out in laughter, leaving Hayden to cackle beside me too. The two stared at us, dumbfounded. As Hayden was nearly in tears, I mock the two in front of me with the same judgement Sasha placed on me before.

"Go and take yourself and your little boyfriend to a different area!" I shout over the loud music. Hayden and I start cackling again, turning away from the two. Slowly, they linger away a bit muttering out a few scoops and incoherent mumbles.

Hayden orders us two Vodka tonics, and casually we start to talk.

"I'll need a few of these before dancing." He jots his head to the dance floor behind us. People crammed up altogether, sweaty and touchy—it made me visibly cringe.

"Me too," I agree, drowning down whatever was left in my glass and sliding it over to the bartender.

He refills the glass, replacing the lime with another, and I begin sipping again.



I wasn't too sure how much time had passed, an hour, perhaps? All that I know was that I felt like I was out of my body, dancing in a crowd that hadn't looked pleasing until I drank more.

Tipsy was the level I was at, enough to dance with Hayden like we were two of the happiest souls on the planet.

Everyone around us was either feeling each other up or dancing sensually to the music. Whereas Hayden and I danced recklessly. We danced to each beat, holding onto each other and screaming out the words to The Weeknd's music thumping below our feet.

The greatest part about alcohol was that it could make you forget for a moment. It could make you live in the moment and remind you what there is to live for. What life is about, no matter the age, no matter the problem you're struggling with—you could just feel the core of the earth beneath your fingertips and breathe.

And then all of that ends once you have far too many drinks. I wasn't at that point, yet

"Do you want another one!" Hayden shouts across the dance floor, pointing to the bar that was bodies behind us. I grin and nod my head, while Hayden nods back beginning to shimmy his way out of the dance floor.

I spin around recklessly, closing my eyes and smiling like never before. The coloured lights consume me, flickering back and forth to green and then to red, and again to purple, orange, and green again. Multiple bodies graze mine, but I pay no mind.

Not until sleazy male hands begin to roam my hips.

Straight away I was taken on guard, knowing that I hadn't been Hayden. Behind me was a tall boy, 6'0 I estimate. His blonde hair was greasy with sweat, blue eyes were coated with the colours of the lights around us. A smirk layered on his thin lips as he begins to scan my body and move his with mine.

Instantly I slap his hands away, which did nothing I try to move away but it seems there were too many people around me. My very last option—which I hadn't wanted to use—was to dig a hand into my opened purse, take out my pink taser and aim straight at his ribs.

Although, it didn't happen. Because then and there, I was being pulled away into the crowd. Somebody else's arms were wrapped around me, and screams fall through my lips but my mouth gets covered, even though nobody could hear me.

How could I go from being delightfully happy to dreadfully terrified within seconds?

My taser was dropped somewhere amongst the crowd, a cloth was pressed over my face and I was being moved throughout the club. I couldn't see the person who was guiding me, nor could I see my surroundings. Though the music faded the more we walked—or paced. I figured we were either exiting the club or going into a private room.

Either, I was scared shitless.

More screams evaporate through the cloth, making it harder and harder to breathe. Warm tears fall from my eyes, my heart becomes heavy and I suddenly ache for Silver—just for someone to come and save me.

The next thing I hear is the sound of a door closing, my wrists are trapped between someone's hands and then a bright light was found over the cloth—not before it finally is removed from my sight.

It takes a moment for the light to adjust to my eyes. I blink a few times before I take a look at the empty room.

My breathing becomes heavier as I feel someone's front press against my back. The person was tall, smelt like a men's cologne, and had their mouth right against my ear.

"My lovely girl," He breathes against my skin, inhaling my scent like a drug addict. "I've missed you."

As I realise who it is, all my senses suddenly fade out as I whisper his very name.

"Alias."

And then I feel him smile.