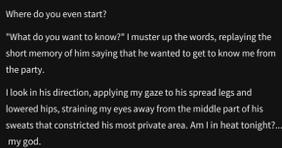


Chapter Eight



The music artist that plays on the radio so ly hums through his speakers, allowing the silence to be fulfilled.

Heat prosecuted from the leather seats, something I was genuinely grateful for. It was pretty cold in the outfit I was wearing, even if it was warmer when I had changed into it... but now with the temperature change, my bare legs were to turn blue anytime soon.

We've been driving for a while now, staying on the one road and swerving numerously into different lanes in between seconds and minutes.

Silver and I haven't spoken since before entering his car. There had been only silence, though I wished to change that even if I hated starting conversations.

Where do you even start?

"What do you want to know?" I muster up the words, replaying the short memory of him saying that he wanted to get to know me from the party.

I look in his direction, applying my gaze to his spread legs and lowered hips, straining my eyes away from the middle part of his seats that constricted his most private area. Am I in heat tonight... my god.

Jumping my gaze back, I adjust my lower half in my seat, rising up again.

"Anything." He replies nonchalantly, gradually slowing to a stop at a red light.

Breathing in deeply, I sigh as I try to think of things to say about myself.

I look down at the Lily in my hand, brushing the petals with my finger delicately.

"I love flowers," I say eventually, "My favourite colour is—"
"Lilac," He cuts me off, looking at me, "I remember."

Frowning, I narrow my eyes in on him, "What if I had changed the colour?"

Rolling his eyes, he speeds back down the road, lightly controlling the wheel with one hand while resting the other on his thigh as it travels along the muscle.

Butterflies corrupt in my belly unexpectedly, my eyes watch his cold gaze concentrate along the road as he speaks again.

"And have you?"

It was my turn to roll my eyes.

"Nope," I pop the P with a little too much... pop. Sarcasm rolls off of me and he finds satisfaction in that—telling by the little tug on his lips.

"And is yours still ivory?" I raise a brow and he gives me that squirming, pantie dropping smile again, "It is." He answers blandly.

A sudden flash of light draws my attention to his wrist, where his expensive watch rests, and the inked name of his presumably favourite colour is written on the back of his wrist.

Strange.

"What else do you do other than college and, you know...your duties?" I didn't really know what to call his 'work'. He was the leader of a mafia, not a counter boy at your local Starbucks.

Although, that would be funny.

"Underground fighting." He says, bringing me into shock once again. He was just full of surprises. Though, I should've expected this one.

"Really?" I curiously looked over at him, not realising yet that we were slowly coming to a halt in our drive.

"Mhm," He hums, "I have a fight tomorrow night."

I purse my lips, curious as to what he'd say if I asked to go...

"Can I come with?"

Expecting him to turn me down, he doesn't.

"You up for it?" He puts the car into park and looks over at me with his almost glowing eyes.

"I am." I reply confidently, giving him a little smile.

He stares emotionlessly and nods twice, "I'll send you an address."

With that, Silver exits the car and I only then realise that we have stopped, parked, and overall arrived at the mystery destination.

Which was the least expected thing. An abandoned building with guards and guns surrounding it, the full moon gleaming down upon it only making it all the sketchier.

As my door opens, I jump in fright and watch Silver's hand come out in front of me.

"Are we even allowed to be here?" I worried, stepping out. He had parked in a spot hidden away from the bodyguards' discretion. Therefore, my question needed no answer.

He closes my door so ly, locking the car whilst holding onto my hand tightly, in a reassuring type of way.

"Come on," He turns his head back over his shoulder, nudging it towards the building and slowly, but cautiously I nodded, starting to follow behind him with his hand in mine.

I've never done anything this thrilling before. Ever.

And willingly, I'd never agree to something like this. It wasn't my scene, never has been and never will be.

But sometimes you have to try something new, even if it's just for the euphoria of it all.

I'm led through an alley placed just behind the building, graffiti-covered the bricked walls with green moss edging through its cracks, and for some reason, we stop in front of the decaying wall.

Silver releases my hand, crouching down to the concrete and he brings his hands to the wall. I linger over him, placing my hands unknowingly on both his shoulders as I try to peek at what he was doing.

My befuddled mind becomes enlightened with shock and excitement as I watch him remove one of the bricks at the bottom which releases a secret door.

I step back, watching the door of bricks open gradually revealing another built-in door. This one was made of steel, a silver latch that could only be unlocked with a certain code.

"What is this place?" I watch his thumb move around the pin-pad, my brain remembering the code— C1672

He says nothing as he unlatches the door, it looked heavy, but as he pushed his body onto it—riling it open with hardly any effort, it surely didn't look as heavy. Or he was just majory strong, which I don't doubt.

Darkness enveloped him as he walked through, I couldn't see an inch of his body and I was close to making a run for it—there wasn't a single thing that could make me go in there by myself.

But then he stepped into the light, half of his face covered but the other half shown visbly enough to see the dare in his gaze.

His hand comes out for me to take. Hesitantly, I place mine in his and he pulls me forward making me yelp.

My body collides with his in the dark, the silence occurs again as the steel door slowly shuts closed—leaving us all alone in the dark.

I step back, away from his body. His hand on mine still remains and with the sound of a switch flicking on, the embrace of light enlights the room.

It takes a moment or two for my eyes to adjust, once it does, I look around and frown upon the realisation that it was just another empty room with blank walls and brown, wooden floors—though with stairs attached in the far corner.

He leads us directly there, with me trailing behind like a lost puppy. Suddenly, he stops and steps to the side, jerking his head toward the stairs—notioning for me to go first.

I raise my brows, giving him the 'are you for real?' look.

"The dark doesn't bite, Serenity," He says slowly as if he were talking to a little kid which pissed me off immensely.

"Then why don't you go then?" I place my hands on his hips, tilting my head to the side, watching him become amused.

He looks at something behind me, alerting me, this makes me turn and look as well.

My frown deepens as I catch the sight of a guard walking up and down the premises we had just come from, not seeming to be knowing we were inside—the outside was obviously hidden from anyone seeing inside.

"I'm making sure you don't get killed." I look down at the gun outlined underneath his shirt—how did I not see that before?

Shaking my head in disbelief, I turn and start walking up the pitch-black staircase.

"Or maybe you just wanted a good view of my ass," I mumbled under my breath, thinking he wouldn't hear me.

But of course, he did, due to my lovely good sense of luck.

"If that was the reason, I'd be getting that view a different way." He mused, there was a hidden meaning behind his words and I couldn't help but blush intensely because of it.

Making it to the top, I wait to the side, refusing to step through without Silver—as much as I didn't want to admit it, his protection lessened the anxiety.

There was once again, another door. He opened it, and we were met with darkness again.

As I enter behind him, he closes the door and soon the dark was overtaken by the light.

Lanterns were planted around the room possessing an orangey dusk colour and the room itself was overly large. Probably the size of a football field.

But what consisted inside the room was what made my head spin.

Sculptures, paintings, poems—framed, caged and hung all over the room.

Some of which I recognised were made by artists from centuries ago, they're projects that were hidden from the world kept in this hidden art museum heavily guarded yet still so thrillingly possible to enter in.

I step forward, forgetting who I was with and where I was, my body just takes the lead as I move from one painting to the next and across the room to a sculpture of a woman.

"This is incredible, Silver." I breathe out, lightly lingering my touch on the sculpture that was lightly dusted in the dust.

"Do you like art too?" I turned my head around, finding him leaning up against a blank space on the wall, next to a painting of a rainbow that looked all too real.

He nods his head slowly, taking me in with his gaze. Slowly, I make my way in front of him.

"Do you paint?" I tilt my head at him, he tilts his back.

"A little," He replied so ly, running a hand through his silky, black hair before adjusting it inside one of his pockets.

For the first time tonight, I smile truly.

"Really? Can I see some of your work?" I tilt my head up to look at him, trapping him between the wall and myself—even if I was the one feeling trapped between his body.

"Maybe," He pierced his gaze into mine, leaning forward of the wall, having me take a step back.

"Do you want to see mine?" I smile slightly, curious as to what his answer would be.

He keeps stepping forward, making me step back. His blue eyes that couldn't show emotion now held only mischief.

"Sure," He says deeply, backing me into a wall, smirking lightly now—it was like he wasn't even paying attention to what I was saying, driving me mad.

I narrow my eyes at him, crossing my arms over my chest in an attempt to shield myself. Though it hardly works with his body heat colliding with mine, warming me.

"What are you doing?" I whisper, looking up into his eyes—feeling his every scent and warmth.

"This," He places a hand on something besides my head, looking in that direction, he signalled to a colourless canvas being held upright by a stand.

"—is mine."

My lips part as I take in the painting. It was gorgeous—near to nothing of what I would think he could create.

A woman, faceless but clothed in a long dress of only white. She was floating in the ocean, half her body covered in the depths of the water, drowning.

Her black hair floated around her, her face quelled and covered by the black hair of the ocean while her feet dangled above the shore.

I became curious as to what the meaning behind it was.

"It's beautiful," I compliment, running my fingers along the dry paint.

He had talent. The pure, hypnotic talent of a true artist.

Placing his hand beside my head against the wall, I darted my attention back to him.

His minty breath fanned my lips, his scorching icy eyes glaring straight into my own.

"Thanks, Fiore" He whispers hypnotically, placing me in a trance once again.

His beauty overwhelmed me, his way of words, his flirtation, and his untring sense of warmth made me just want to jump into his arms and let him hold me.

The moment a noise that could only be identified as footsteps heading up the stairs, he removed himself from his close position to my body, instead, now protecting me with it.

Taking my waist, he pulls me to his side abruptly and switches the lights to the room, suddenly pulling us inside a hidden room with a window constricting light.

He pushes my body up against the door, the powerful voices of men talking were heard right outside of the room—making me gasp, automatically having Silver's ringed finger placed between my lips, restraining me from making another sound.

I could see the demand in his eyes, solely telling me to keep quiet.

Anxiety runs through me, but adrenaline overtakes that sudden force. My chest touches his as it heaves up and down in less patience, our locked gaze constricting me from making an immediate run for it.

Under the brief light, I can see the way his face tightens and his body tenses under my own.

"Are you sure you saw the light on, Harold?" The same male voice spoke from before, sounding to be right outside of the door.

My eyes widen as the next voice that speaks seems to literally be facing the door behind me.

"The light was on, I saw it from the staircase."

Silver shakes his head slowly, rolling his eyes as he mouths the word 'dumbass', unfortunately erupting a loud giggle to me from my throat.

"Harold, did you hear that?"

Oh, good going Serenity.

Yeah, it came from behind you..."

The locked door begins to get rattled by its knob, immediately making my body jerk forward into Silvers.

He catches me by the waist again, throwing a hand over my mouth to keep me from speaking and all at the same time, he unlatches the window and opens it wide enough for us to fall through it.

"Doors locked Harold. Someone is in here."

Panic rises through me, I look at Silver wide-eyed only for him to move forward and open his arms out and jerk his head toward the window—gesturing to let me up and out of the room.

I had no fear of heights as I didn't hesitate to step forward and allow his hands to take control of my body.

In a swift, unhesitant movement, both his hands are placed at my waist, his touch burning my skin instantly and when his cool rings could be felt soothing it.

"Call for backup, I hear movement!"

Instantly, I'm led into the air and my legs are dangling over the other side of the window, it wasn't that far of a jump probably five feet or an inch over.

The next second I've landed feet first into the bushes, my toes curling and head-spinning round and round as I'm being whisked away with the wind.

I hear the door slamming open for above, still, no sign of Silver and I become worried. Stepping back, I try to get a better look at the other side of the window—but with no luck, it was only the light of the room.

"Where is he?" I mumbled to myself, hearing all voices fade into nothing.

Frowning, I narrow my eyes in on the window again seeing a shadow figure appear. The next moment, I'm watching Silver jump right out of the window—a canvas in one hand and a gun in the other.

My face pales for a second as I frown, he didn't kill them, did he?

"All good?" He raises a brow, stepping in front of me. I slowly nod my head, keeping an eye on the gun in his hand. "You killed them?"

Licking his lips, he looks down at the gun and shrugs, he effortlessly lings his shirt—distracting me as the flesh of his very sculpted stomach and tattooed V-line come into view just within a flash before his gun is tucked away and that very gorgeous, concealing body is obscured from sight.

Snapping out of my daze, I catch his eyes and he tucks the canvas under one arm.

"Had to," He answers, making me frown again. "But how come I didn't hear any—"

He holds up the silencer, explaining my stupidity, and I nod slowly.

The wind breezes past once again, having my arms raise in goosebumps and my cold lips shudder for a moment of time.

"Come on, let's get you warm." He doesn't hesitate to take my hand in his, pulling me along with him.

I had no words, usually, I never do, but gods have absolutely nothing—cats got my tongue.

My brain wracked up the caring thought of him wanting me to be warm, and so he takes me back into his car in only silence.

He places the canvas in the back and then drives right out of the building behind us which begins to swarm with the police.

Ghostly police sirens fade in and the review mirror that was filled with lights of blue and red begins to become the gloaming of the night.

"Why did you steal your own painting?" I face him, raising a brow in curiosity. He glances at me, the empty void su opposed in blue.

"They stole it from me. All those art pieces are sacred biddings to be held at auctions for the rich, somehow they got hold of my own."

"That's messed up," I reach in the back, picking up his artwork.

"They shouldn't be stealing from artists, even if it's just the scraps—it's no excuse to sell their projects without granted permission."

My fingers graze the dry paint, skimming the oceanic waters and the deep black hair of the woman who simply drew it.

"Are you sure you don't want to see my paintings?" I beam, glancing up at him with a cheeky glint.

"I never said I didn't want to." He states that as making a left turn at an abnormal speed but succeeding in such a smooth motion.

"You never said you wanted to either," I make a point by wrapping my arms around my legs, the canvas long gone in the back again and I give him a look of mock.

Rolling his gorgeous eyes, I assume he was to get them stuck there at some point—even if he looked so more than mildly attractive doing it.

"I said, Serenity. Which doesn't mean either," I'd love to see your artwork, but just not today." He looks over at me, rubbing his hands down his thighs slowly—with sarcasm written all over his face, "Is that better, Fiore?"

"Much," D'argento? I sassed, proceeding to look away from his dangerous gaze.

We fall into silence again, a particular type.

"Did you have fun?" He deadpans, his wrist flashing under the streetlights we zip by.

"Sure, I nearly pissed myself, but sure..." I grumbled, slowly sinking down into the warming seat. Silver chuckles, the sound so deep and rumbling it made so many flutters attack my belly.

"It was still better than the stupid party though," I look over at him, watching the way his sharp jaw flexed and the way his droopy hair of ink fell over his head, fewer ends brushing his long lashes.

"So, thank you," I clear my throat, swallow, and then burn my gaze into the side of his face as he appears to not make a move to look at me.

I can see the red reflective lights from the cars flashing across his face, highlighting his features that were still obscured by the black of the night.

"You don't need to thank me, we're friends." He glares holes into the car in front of us, concentrating as he swerves to the other lane and overtakes it with only one of his hands.

"Still," I hum, innocently peering away and looking back outside the window.

I realise that we were heading toward my home, which I was most grateful for. I was physically not capable of handling any more physical fitness or interaction with other people. One night for the week was enough.

Moments pass, trees breezing by, cars blinking past, and soon the gates to my home open wide for us to enter.

The regular guards stand aside, looking past our car with their heads up and eyes alert not without showing an ounce of emotion—reminding me of my amiable little friend Silver over here.

He stops the car but doesn't cut the engine, leaving us right outside the doors of my humble abode.

"Still wanna come tomorrow night?"

Looking to my left, I meet his gaze under the light.

"I do," I say, remembering his jovial sport of illegal fighting.

He nods slowly, "I'll need your number," he mumbles, pulling open his phone.

Giggles come from my side and so he snaps his head back up at me, his cold eyes flashing me a look of confusion.

"You do need my number a er all," I say still laughing slightly, the strange change of his gaze alerting me as his emotionless face softens for a moment.

"I like your laugh," He murmurs, lightly tilting his head to the side with just a little smile.

I slowly sober up, feeling my heartbeat increase and pound erratically—stop this now, Serenity.

No boys.

His smile faded as soon as he realised it was there—as does his so ended expression, turning back into nothing. "Number?" He hands me the phone, watching me lazily type in the digits.

A few seconds later, I hand him the phone and he scoos when he gazes down at it.

"Serenity Agnello—AKA My Only Friend" He looks down at me, raising a brow in mockery. I purse my lips, shrugging nonchalantly and struggle to keep down my smile.

Pulling open my door, I grab my purse and hold my heels in my other hand.

"I'll see you tomorrow, D'argento"

He pops his tongue to the side of his cheek, shaking his head, smirking while looking down at his lap— Jesus, he makes everything look so damn attractive.

"See you soon, Serenity."

My name slid off his tongue so well mannered as if my name was taken as precious as his lips made them sound.

Taking a deep breath in, I exit his car and shut the door closed—taking larger and faster steps that were probably quicker than me running.

"Quel ragazzo mi sta facendo impazzire" I mumble under my breath, allowing the guards to open the front doors for me.

Translation: "That boy is making me crazy."

Butterscotch walks straight up to me just as I enter my brightly lit home. I smile down at him, picking his fury self up and cuddling him to my chest once again.

Sighing into his hold, I finally embrace my unfortunate fate.

"I lied to you my Carmelo? I smile down at him sadly, "You're not the only male I think about anymore."