

Twin Tormentors By RARE Chapter 41

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Chapter 41

LEIGH-ARI

The party was well in full swing, and funny because nothing serious was actually done. We just arrived here and started drinking from expensive, bling wine glasses with gold linings, then the classic music came along and we all began dancing. I guess the event was more of a social event than anything else. So Laura and I went with the flow.

I was sipping on my champagne when Valerie stormed to our table looking so flushed. Her mask was slightly tipped to the side and she was shoving something in her purse. 1

"Are you okay?" I asked leaning towards her. She looked up at me and smiled,

"Yah sure. Why are you asking?" She breathed out and pulled a glass of wine from the collection in front of us, and chugged the whole thing down.

"Ahhhhh... You don't look fine." She fixed her mask and began glancing around as if she was afraid to be seen.

"No. No shit. I am good. really." She insisted and I decided to let it slide. I knew she would eventually spill the beans when she felt comfortable so I wasn't going to force her.

The twins walked from the small group they were mingling with and stood protectively behind my chair, silently announcing to the world that I was off-limits.

"Tesoro?" Enzo called me, I looked up to find them staring down at me through their masks,

"Yes?"

"Want to dance?" He asked with a small smile and I looked at the large dancefloor. It was in full swing and people were swaying gently to the classic piano touches, It really looked fun.

"Yeah sure," I exclaimed and they pulled my chair back, then each took my arm and let me to the dance floor.

"So... How do we do this?" I asked when they both let go of my arms,

"Easy!" Verzi called out from my back as he laid his hands on my waist ever so gently like he was holding something that would break at any moment. Enzo

drew closer, took hold of my arms and looped them around his neck, and then laid his just above his twins. Then we began swaying to the music.

I found myself smiling to nothing in particular, but the unhurried swaying was just so calm I felt like I was about to die. Not that I knew how dying felt like, but I am sure it was something close to this, calm, peaceful, and pure bliss. It felt calm and serene, the quick drumming of their hearts, against my back and front, the heat resonating from their bodies, that was all so peaceful. In some weird way.

Minutes ticked by and eventually, the whole world disappeared, only me, the twins and the music mattered

Enzo pulled back and turned me gently with his hand, passing me to Verzi. Upon looking at him, his furrows deepened as he pulled me to his body, his twin taking his place at my back. I had thought it was going to be hard trying to dance with them, but it was natural, so natural that it felt like I have done it before.

"You look amazing." He complimented and nipped the skin behind my ear. Enzo brushed his hips against my butt, his bulged crotch making me very aware of how hard he was.

"Thank you. You look great too." I replied with a smile, very aware of his crotch that was brushing slightly against my front. Can someone tell me why they were horny?

"About yesterday, sorry." He said and everything seemed to have stopped for a second. I looked up at him to find him staring down at me, through his black mask,

"You're apologizing." I pointed out and he took a big gulp of air.

"Yes. At least I am trying." He said and his twins kissed the back of my head lovingly.

"We're terribly sorry, Tesoro. We truly are." Enzo added up and I really had no idea what was happening.

"Okay."

"No really. We are sorry for everything, for stealing your life and forcing you to live this, for being with us. We love you, Ari, so much. You are our everything and I know it's crazy because you don't feel it, but we do. We just don't know how to love you. We are toxic, ruined, unworthy of you, and this isn't the first time we try to force ourselves on you. But that's because you mean the world to us. All of this, the empire we've built, is all because we want to give you the whole world. So please, don't give up on us. Show us how to love you, because we want to be better for you."

Wow!

It was then I realized that the music had slowed down to a painfully slow song, that our swaying had decreased also, we were barely moving, but the rapid drumming of their hearts and their quick breathing against my neck was all that showed that time was ticking, and the earth was still spinning in its orbit.

"Please say something," Verzi begged in his deep voice, I was really out of words. I didn't know what to say to them right. Because even Vernerio the angry guy was down to earth at the moment.

"You're right. You guys took everything from me, then forced me into your world which I am not familiar with. I don't know what it is you guys do, and when I get something wrong, I get locked up in the steam room or I get spanked till I can't sit. But at the same time, I have realized how much you guys care for me. It's fucked up because you're denying me my

freedom, but at the same time, you guys can burn the whole world for me. I am also trying, to be what you guys want. To be accustomed to your world, I am really trying." I poured my heart on the platter for them, they decided to open up, and if this is where we were going to do it, so be it.

"Our world is dark Tesoro." Verzi was the one who replied.

"Very dark," Enzo added up.

"I kill people like swatting a fly. To me, life is nothing. And no one is worthy of living except you. Only you deserve to have the world." Verzi said and I was actually surprised that he himself, went out and spilled his heart.

"It's okay. I can't say it makes sense, but I will try to be out of trouble. Be a bigger person in all of this..."

"You guys should get a room." A very unfamiliar voice boomed not far from us and I felt Verzi tensing. They slowly untangled themselves from me and stood protectively by my side, inching closer and closer to me. I glanced up at the intruder who busted out the bubble to find a guy in a three-piece grey suit with a red mask on. His eyes were a very deep shade of blue and I am sure he had contacts, there are no such blue eyes in this world. He was lean, a bit shorter than the twins who were bulky, and had an eagle tattoo protruding on his neck, its wings spreading right from his Adam's apple. That must have hurt.

"My lady, nice to meet you. I am Xander." He made a small curtsy and extended his hand. I tried to pull mine from Verzi to shake his, but one glare at him had me refraining my hand. The silent warning was so loud I could literally hear the sirens going off in their heads.

"Xander." He said in a gravelly voice.

"Oh! I didn't see you there. The Cattanio twins." He mocked sarcastically and I made up my mind right there, this guy was bad news. Explains the alpha mode and sudden shift in the twins' behavior.

"Yeah, I am very sure you didn't. Because we are that invisible." Enzo spat stepping forward while pushing me towards his back protectively. The tension quickly shifted and I swear someone was going to die in a second.

"I know right. But it's not my fault that no one can see you. I just want to talk to the pretty lady behind you." He informed taking a step forward. Verzi stepped forward and the two literally covered my small frame from Xander. I didn't want to question them, they mentioned that everyone here was their enemy so I wasn't going to be smarty pants and try to be a big girl. Nope! Not this time.

"You sure are protecting her well. This makes her more intriguing. I mean, one would think she is not just one of the many lays you guys have. So I have heard." Xander continued pressing the wrong buttons. I felt a violent tremor coursing through Vernerio, and knew that if we spent any other second here, well, things were going to head south.

With that, I pulled on their capes to gain their attention. Enzo half turned to me with his eyes still glued on the Xander guy like he would do something very vile if he took his eyes off him even for a split second.

"I want to go home," I whispered so that my voice can reach only him and Verzi.

"Okay, Tesoro." He said smoothly before turning back to Xander.

"Give it up to Xander, you lost the East, and now you answer to us." Enzo taunted before turning without much further ado, then took my hand in his and began pulling me out of the hall. Verzi stayed behind in the heated stare-down with Xander before he left without a word and followed us.

By the time we stepped outside, our black Limo was right insight and we quickly hopped in. As soon as the doors closed us in, Verzi shifted in his seat until he laid down, with his head in my lap. Enzo on the other side placed his head on my shoulder.

I tangled my fingers in Verzi's silky hair while I laid my own head on Enzo's. For the first time ever since I met them, they looked vulnerable, they were human. Not some insanely Greek gods that had everything in the world.

For the first time since the beginning of forever, they were weak, and they bared their weakness in front of me to see.

I don't know what tugged at my heart the most, but just holding them, while the limo stretched through the city at the ghostly hour, made me swear to be with them. They were fucked up, so fucked up that there was no redemption for them, but if I was that piece that held their sanity together, then so be it.

Twin Tormentors By RARE Chapter 42

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Chapter 42

LEIGH-ARI

The merry times in Dubai eventually came to an end, and we all had to fly back home. After the incident at the masquerade party, the twins doubled my "security" and restricted my movements in all ways possible. I was against it at first, but I had to deal with it because they weren't going to change their mind. They never did. They were hell-bent on protecting me and after a glance at what they actually did, I wasn't going to ask questions. It wouldn't do me any good.

And Laura, she flew back home. She had a life, and it sure as hell didn't involve underground lords with guns and tattoos and mercenaries. Although it was hard to let her go, knowing that I was going to be alone again, I had to. I had to let her go.

And I missed her already, so much. She made living this life a hundred times better in all ways than one. But here I was, back in Dark Woods where it all started.

Behind the closed stone walls of Dark Woods castle, life was well boring. A lot of maids roaming around, the harem in the other wing, and nothing else. Just that. The twins were busy with whatever they were busy with, and all I did was to be a perfect housewife and stay at home doing nothing.

It was late in the night when I left the tower lounge and padded bare-foot back to my room. There was a gazillion of cameras in the castle so I told my "maids" to rest when we were at home, a girl needed time to herself.

I arrived at my room and found it empty, like always. A sudden thought of getting a pet crossed my mind. Maybe it wouldn't be this boring if I had a little furball keeping me on my toes. But that thought was well dismissed when a tattooed guy crossed my mind. He would probably roast it or deep fry it because I spent a lot of time with it. So to save a life of a poor animal, I was well off by myself.

I walked straight to the bed, plopped myself down, and looked up at the ceiling in the dark, unlit room. A shadow flickered at the terrace got my attention and I tore from the bed. It was so swift that I nearly missed it, but I swear I saw something move. The twins weren't around, so it sure wasn't them. And my maids were all in their quarters. I wanted to dismiss the thought but something about the whole thing felt really unsettling. With that, I took silent steps towards the lace curtains, careful not to make any sound. I didn't know what it was and I wasn't going to anger it by making noise. Although I lived a sad life, I still wanted to see the sunrise and sunset, at least for the other 20 years.

The whir of the air outside added to the pent-up anticipation, I found my heart beating louder and harder than usual. I could even hear myself breathing. The more I got closer to the glass double doors, the more unsettled and unnerved I became.

My eyes were as wide as saucers and I knew if there was really something out here, I had to show it a thing or two. Because it would take a million years for my guards to get here. A bullet would reach in a heartbeat, yes, but for that to happen, I had to hit the panic bed

somewhere on my headboard.

Standing an inch from the curtains, I pulled on my big girl panties and abruptly yanked them

apart, to find...

Nothing!

The outside stood unmoving, with four flower pots that Enzo insisted I keep on the terrace sitting there and breathing the chill air of the night. The blue light bulbs on the balcony railings were all lit, illuminating the night sky with their glorious blue hue. The loungers and cushion were all in place, everything was in place. And there was not even a soul present at that place.

I huffed out and stormed back to the bed.

I just laid there and thought of my life. But the more I sat there, the more I got the sense of being watched. It was as if there was a phantom spirit around like I wasn't alone in the room.

And it was really strange. I knew I had people watching every move I made, every ticking second of the day but that has never unnerved me. This, this one here felt different.

Deciding to stop with the thoughts, I pulled in the blankets and tugged myself in.

Minutes ticked by and I grew antsy and antsy. For an umpteenth time, I got up and switched on the bedside lamps. A scream tore out of me when I spotted a man seating in one of the couches, facing my bed and just looking. I

"Shh shh! Keep it down will ya?" He shushed with his hands and got up. He was dressed in a black denim jacket, a pair of black jeans, and a black dress shirt that was buttoned all the way down. His hair was well cut down and trimmed neatly, to an extent I could see the skin of his scalp.

"Who are you?" I asked in a panicked voice, slowly pulling myself into a sitting position and searching for the panic button.

"Oh come on mama, that hurts." He tilted his head and watched at me intently. I studied him for a good minute, and then my eyes fell on the eagle wings that spread around his front neck.

"Xander," I whispered and my movements froze.

"I knew you wouldn't forget me that easily." He smiled, revealing pearl white teeth, and stalked towards the bed predatorily. I just sat there, frozen with all thoughts running up in my mind. First of all, how did he make it past the guards? Because there were like a million of them here, and they were all armed. The security cameras, just how?

“What are you doing here?” I asked trying to pull up a straight face. But if I were, to be honest,

I was scared shitless.

“Me? Just paying you a visit.” He said walked around with his hands clasped at his back, with no care in the world. He was light on his feet, very swift, and utterly relaxed. “I don’t get it. How did you get here?” “Me neither.” He replied shortly and then abruptly turned his head to the side, and whatever that caught his attention wiped the playfulness off his face. Leaving him with a stoic, straight, and bone-chilling expression. He turned and stared at me, the playful look on his face gone without a trace. I pulled all the strength that was left in me and tried to hit the panic button, but he lifted a finger, silencing me.

“Don’t do that.” He warned softly, and I slowly sunk back into the bed.

“Looks like your twins are back.” He informed and walked to the terrace, and that’s when I heard the soft murmurs just right outside the door. How the hell did he even hear that?

“Don’t lock the door next time. I hate scaring you out of your wits.” And with that, he opened the door and disappeared into the cold night.

The bedroom door suddenly opened and in came Verzi with Enzo on his heels. Their eyes landed on me and they both looked at me with a puzzled look.

“You aren’t asleep.” I just sat there with a mouth dry, unable to speak. How was I going to tell them that Xander was around? And that he came here, in here?

“Yeah, I am just sleepless,” I said instead. I didn’t know what to say. They both shrugged out of their clothes and then climbed to bed, on both of my sides, and in a blink of an eye, they were

out!

Leaving me to my thoughts.

One, I was very sure that Xander was going to pull this stunt again. But I didn’t know how to tell the twins. And if I did, what would Xander do to me? Because if he made it past the security, he surely wasn’t that simple.

For the millionth time ever since I stepped foot in Dark Woods, I found myself asking whom did I offend in my previous life to be caught up in this mess?

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Chapter 43 UNKNOWN POV

The street was buzzing with the afternoon traffic, cars honking their horns and chatters could be heard from every corner of the street. People were milling on the sidewalks under the blazing sun of mid-autumn. I spotted the 'said' restaurant a few meters from where I was parked with the engine running, then turned the key and killed the ignition. I looked around to see if anyone was looking and then slipped out of the car, keeping it secret, yet normal to avoid attracting some unnecessary attention. Although I didn't understand why he chose this place, where Venero's men were literally everywhere, I was at his mercy and needed his help, so I had to run with whatever he said.

I pushed the door of the restaurant open and stepped into a very shabby interior. The seats were round leather couches which were well off finished from how worn out they were, the table with bumps of moisture. This place may have been quite a diner back in the days. But now, not so much!

There were a lot of people around and it was really stuffy in here.

'Watch it.' A waiter called out as he dashed past me at the speed of light almost knocking me off, then walked by without much of a glance leaving me utterly disgusted that I got knocked over by such a pig with no manners.

OV

While I was still trying to figure out why, of all places, did Xander choose this one, I spotted his head from the far end of the restaurant and made my way there. He was sitting with his back on me and I hurriedly walked by him and plopped myself right in front of him.

He raised his head for a second, then refocused his attention on his plate, and ignored my very possible existence.

I scoffed and reclined into my seat, looking so calm but inside, I was seething. I have never worked with such a maddening person.

"You had a chance to get rid of her last night. What is it that you were doing in that room?" I half-whispered, half yelled at him. He took a fork and rolled a good amount of pasta and placed it in his mouth, then chewed slowly, taking his precious time while he stared at me like he was thinking of all the possible things he could do to me. But I wasn't afraid of him. I have dealt with the worst!

"I had a little conversation with her." He replied and looked back at his plate. What the hell?

"What? I turned everything off so that you could get to that room without drawing attention. Do you think it was easy? If I was caught snooping in the security room, the twins would kill me. You had a chance yesterday... and you..."

"Will you shut up for a second? I am really trying to eat here." He barked instead, with his

American accent dripping heavily on his tongue.

I took a second and really stared at him. He was arrogant, insanely arrogant as if he was the most untouchable. I don't know why I even thought working with him on "this" would be a good idea.

"I hate people who stare at me." He informed licking the white sauce off his fork. I just remained silent, he wanted to finish his lunch in peace and peace was what I was going to give him.

"You want some?" He offered, pointing to his plate with his fork,

"No. I am good." I replied,

"Are you sure? Because they kinda like added some cheesy thingy here and then its sooo..."

"I just don't get it."

"Me neither. I mean it tastes so good. It's gooey and very good, like the best pasta I have ever eaten." Was he being serious right now?

"What is so good about that bitch that everyone wants to have her? To protect her?" I asked finally, exasperated about what I have been keeping inside.

'She's quite a charmer if you asked me. Got those perky tits and a very round ass. I'd hit on that every second if I got a chance.' He said while pushing the plate aside and then grabbed a serviette, then wiped his mouth, and leaned back on his seat.

"Sorry about that one. I don't work on an empty stomach." He said with a very straight face and I so wanted to murder him right now or not. If only I was still in the game.

"Do you want the east or not?" I asked furrowing my brows.

"M.m! It's not "do I want it." It's when are you taking back what's yours." He contradicted staring right into my eyes.

"The twins have the east, it's theirs, and..."

"You mean my east? Mine?" He said smugly and cocked a brow. Anger brewed very intensely from deep inside me.

"Yes fine. Your east. You want it or not?"

"Let me tell you something, you and I, we are different. You wear silky expensive suits and pretend to be the good guy around them, but I don't. But instead, you are just a good dog that barks to its owners. I give zero shits about your grudge with Leigh-Ari. And I can sure as hell tell you that I don't take orders from no man. And I definitely won't be taking them from you. The east is mine, and I will get it with or without your help. And maybe Leigh-Ari will be a little bonus. Now, you

better watch your back, else the twins will know you've been snooping around. And I bet things won't be too pretty for your old grey hair." He said with a very straight face

"You are threatening me." I pointed out and he laughed,

"Me? I don't do that." He said and got up, then stuffed his hands in his pockets,

"You'll pay the bill, won't ya?" And with that, he stormed out of the restaurant.

VERNERO POV

Sitting at the large dinner table with almost everyone around, I glanced around and silently assessed. I didn't want to believe that among all of these people here, there was actually someone who tampered with the security system. For what? Because nothing was stolen. And everything seemed to be in place. I had questions, and they all needed answers. But if I was working on an insider, then I had to be careful with how I dealt with the case. Because it sure wasn't simple.

"Are you full?" Leigh's angelic voice pulled me from my daydream. I turned to find her staring at me with a look of concern. I reclined back to my seat and continued my stare. Leigh just shrugged and stared down at her plate.

"There's been a security breach. Someone tampered with the system." I announced and everyone halted with their eating. Forks and knives clung against the plates as people stopped with what they were doing to pay attention.

"What happened?" Enzo voiced out with furrowed brows.

"The mines in the woods were all turned off, the cameras on the outside of the west wing were also off. And what's worse, there were no guards on patrol that side." I said all these, staring intently at anyone who may act weirdly.

"Is there anything stolen from your wing?" Lorik broke the silence,

"M.m. Nothing is out of place," I answered and turned to find Leigh-Ari looking ashen. Enzo spotted this and then looked at me with questioning eyes.

"Did you do it?" The words left my mouth before I could stop them. And before I could mutter a quick apology, her head turned and she stared at me with the most heartbreaking look.

"Why would I even tamper with your security system? I don't even know where to start to do that. All I did was tell my maids to take a night off because there is no point hawk-eyeing me while I am in the castle." She fired back with an angry stare.

"Okay."

"No, it's not okay. Whatever goes wrong in this house is always pinned on me. Why would you even think that I was the one that did something to your damn security? Am I that bored with life?" She seethed throwing her hands in the air.

"Calm down Miss Montreal. Boss didn't mean that." Lorik intercepted and she just continued

glaring daggers at me.

"Or do you have something to tell us?" He said surprising us all. Leigh focused her attention on him, then opened her mouth to say something, then closed it again. She fidgeted in her seat and then abruptly tore from the table. "I am going to bed." And just like that, my evening was well ruined.

Twin Tormentors By RARE Chapter 44

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Chapter 44

LEIGH-ARI

The following days passed in a blur. The twins decided to have a new security system installed and doubled up on the guards on patrol. The motion sensors were upgraded by a hundred, the CCTVs in the west wing were also installed. I had fought with them tooth and nail for installing the cameras in my room. They claimed it was for my safety and I understood that, but I wasn't going to be under surveillance even when I was sleeping. The bedroom was my safe fortress, where I escaped to when everything got too much. It was the only thing that was keeping me sane even though it didn't belong to me alone (since the ; twins had taken the liberty to sleep with me against my will.). Having the cameras installed was going to deprive me of the little sense of privacy that was left and I wasn't going to let them take that little piece of me away. They had taken too much already and I didn't have anything left of myself. 1

Venero wanted to be pig-headed about it, and then I told him if they go ahead with that and don't respect my decision and my feelings, then I'd leave. I remember their reaction vividly. They had frozen for a full minute. Just stood there and stared at me, unmoving as if someone had hit pause on them.

Then they had shaken themselves out of the daze and gave in. And just like that, I had successfully saved the little strand of sanity I was hanging on.

And Xander on the side, he was still as mysterious as before. Very unseen. His movements were swift and very undetected. Despite the gazillion cameras, top-notch sensors, and guards, he managed to slip a few things into my room and remained undetected. Within days, I had gotten used to his unannounced appearance and the little "gifts" he left behind when he didn't show himself, just to let me know he was still there watching me. It didn't freak me out like it had the first time he just popped up in my bedroom.

I didn't know how to feel about him, about his stalking ways. Because he was an expert at it. At the same time, he didn't seem to be fostering any malevolent intentions towards me. But that didn't mean I was going to recline on my throne and just relax. I was so alert and cautious about everything, one thing I have learned since stepping foot in this castle. 1

As of now, I was caught up between telling the twins about him. But the only thing that made me bite my tongue was the thought of what they'd do to him. They wouldn't just butcher him, they would destroy his possible existence as well as one of his ancestors and descendants. He would be a history in a matter of hours, minutes and it wouldn't be pretty. I hated it when people died, especially because I was involved.

I couldn't have his death or anyone's pinned on me or have someone's blood on my hands, even if my safety was at stake. It's not like I hadn't experienced the worst things ever in my life. Trust me, I have seen the devil all by himself. And one of his evil spirits is not knowing

anything about me before the accident.

Additionally, Xander didn't seem to harbor any ill intentions towards me, or at least that's what I thought. The second night, he left a note. And it read;

Beware of those you keep near,

Xander

I didn't know what it meant or what he was implying, but he was definitely warning me about something or someone. And that made me soften a little when I thought of him. Although I still didn't understand how he made it past the security into my bedroom without getting caught every time or why he was stalking me. Maybe he wanted to use me as a bargaining chip in their shady shenanigans, I honestly didn't know.

The note, I burned it to ashes, I couldn't keep it and risk it being found the twins. I honestly didn't want to think what they would do if they knew Xander has been here on multiple occasions and I stayed quiet about it.

OCC

Everything was a mess and in all honesty, I was tired of this life, I was drained, mentally, physically, and emotionally. Everything was just so crazy. The twins who didn't allow me to step outside the 'walls of the castle, Xander the ninja stalker, and whoever that was working in shadows against me that Xander warned me about, not being allowed to connect to the outside world, it was all too much for me. I missed my old life like crazy. I missed the morning rush, I missed driving through the morning traffic, the little beeps of my pager when there were emergencies at the hospital. The OR, my doctor, I missed cotton candy outside the kids' hospital. I wasn't happy here. At all. In fact, I was miserable.

I was a prisoner. Yes, one would think I am crazy, I mean no prisoner wears designer clothes and lives in a castle full of maids.

But like a caged butterfly, flapping its wings inside the bars of the cage, seeing the goodness and luxury of the outside world and craving freedom. While the freedom it hungered for was just here, just right outside the golden bars of the lavish cage. Simultaneously, it was out of its reach, because it couldn't flap its wings in the cramped space of the golden cage. The cage which it was forced to live in.

I was that butterfly. Lonely, sad, missing my old life, and craving freedom.

The sudden gunshots jolted me out of my seat, spilling the popcorns out of their little bowl. And that's when I realized I had spaced out.

I was currently hiding in the theatre between the two wings, with a bunch of snacks to kill time. The movie had rolled by while I was lost in thought. Instead of rewinding it, I huffed out and leaned for the remote control, then switched off the screen and got up from the seat.

A little pang of headache had me wincing just a bit.

The meds! I hadn't taken any. That made me recall the good times in Dubai, with Laura. The

twins sent her to collect my pills from my apartment and then flew her to Dubai. Their little acts of kindness always managed to cocoon my heart with warmth. Just how could they be so warm yet so cold? That question was always nagging me, and sadly, I didn't have an answer to it.

Twin Tormentors By RARE Chapter 45

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Chapter 45

LEIGH-ARI

Days flew by and the secret grew heavy in my chest. With each passing second, I weighed my options and the pros and cons of telling the twins about Xander. It was just way too much. But I had decided against it when Xander took four full nights without visiting.

Maybe he had found whatever he was looking for. Because he just disappeared without much of a word. But still, I felt guilty for carrying all this by myself. Xander was the twins' enemy, and he wouldn't waste a chance to destroy them and vice versa. The twins had to know.

At the same time, I feared for what they would do to each other. It was their world, it was what they did, what they knew. I get that very well. But I wasn't going to allow any bloodshed. Not under my watch.

So instead of telling the twins, I decided to put on my smallest bikini and sunbathe by the poolside just right outside the west wing.

Raquel was also with me and the other maids were dismissed. *We* were sitting in a very comfortable silence, with me staring at the blue sky with milky white clouds.

The protective glass house shielded us against the harsh autumn wind.

I shifted into a more comfortable position and my eyes landed at the thick heavy forest just ahead. Without further ado, I called out

“Raquel?”

“Yes, M’lady.” She was by my side in a split second.

“What is in that forest?” I asked the question with my eyes glued to the heavy trees that had their leaves already falling. The brownish-yellow hue marring the ground, birthing a false classic view of a very flat plateau on a nice spring day, full of bright colors.

When there was no answer, I glanced up to find her chewing on her bottom lip.

“It’s nothing, M’lady. Beyond the forest is the border of the castle. Then nothing.” She said refusing to look me in the eye.

“Hmmm. Have you been there? Beyond the forest?” I asked staring right into her eyes.

“No M’lady. Dark Woods is a restricted area.” Huh?

“Dark Woods? Isn’t that the name of the castle?”

“No M’lady. Dark Woods is the name of the forest. And the castle was named after it.” She clarified. And God help me! That just made my curiosity go through the roof. I gave her a small nod and stared right into the thick trees. Minutes ticked by with me having a very intense internal war.

I was trying to get myself into not going there and exploring, but the other side was winning.

Without any other thought, I sprinted out of the chair and pulled on my black kimono. There was a pair of slip-ons I had brought earlier and I pulled them on, then ran towards the glass door.

“M’lady you can’t go in there,” Raquel warned, erupting from nowhere, and then stood by the door blocking my way.

"Why? I just want to see what's beyond the forest. I won't die right?" I said casually, but she seemed to be horror-stricken and I really didn't understand why she was making it a big deal.

"M'lady, my job is to keep you safe and protect you with my life. And I tell you that it is not a good idea to go to that area. The bosses don't allow anyone in there. Please don't make it hard for me." Her words penetrated deeply, and whatever they were keeping in there, it was huge.

I smiled and patted her cheek.

"I know my safety is all you care about. I am just going to take a stroll, won't even go inside. Just stay here if you aren't allowed, I'll be back before you know it." And for that reason and many others, I bee-lined past her and waltzed towards the outside stairs that led to the ground.

"M'lady you aren't supposed to go there, please." Raquel called out yet again and I decided to wave at her. No one was going to change my decision now.

Whatever it was they didn't want me to see, then I was going to see it.

My heart pumped harder with every step I took towards the forest. It was as if there was something that was calling me in, and I just couldn't say no to it. It was as if I had been consumed by this bewitching spell that called for my name, and so I delved into the forest.

The rustling sound of the drying leaves under my feet lulled all my troubles, kissed away all my pain. The wind that brushed through the branches, pulling the leaves off their stalks made a soft whir that sounded like a soft melody that made everything seem normal, just for a split second. I closed my eyes, then took one step forward, then another.

I was so consumed by the sound of the drying leaves and my thoughts when all of a sudden, a loud explosive went off just right in front of me, sending me flying backward where I hit a tree log with my back and then planted my face-first into the dirt.

I let out an ear-shattering scream that was drowned by the sound of explosives and bombs that tornadoed on and on without stopping.

The last thing I remembered was a bomb that went off just a foot from me, then darkness.

LORENZO POV

Sitting in a meeting, I was so tired and wired up. It felt insanely quiet and way too peaceful, like the calm before the storm. Nothing in my life was this peaceful, well except Ari. But yeah.

We were currently in a meeting with the planning department, going through all the schemes of expanding to the east.

Acquiring the east added our workload by a hundred, there was just so much to be taken care of. While Verzi took care of the underworld deals, I stayed on top in a clean three-piece suit and did the good work. That's just how our world worked.

The team leader went on explaining the plan, while I just sat there staring blankly at the large screen, the sudden vibration in my pocket called for my attention.

I whisked my phone and then switched it on to find a little text, it was Verzi.

My blood ran cold when I read what it said, Ari triggered the mines.

One minute I was sitting in my chair at the head of the table, the next second I was outside already heading for my car. I don't know, but everything seemed to have happened in just a blink of an eye.

If Ari had triggered the mines, where was she?

VERNERO POV

The hacking system of the new base in the east was taking forever. I had just finished creating the first firewall when a loud BOOM! Rang around and then followed by a series of more explosions and sirens.

I reclined in my chair before slowly getting up and began arming up with my favorite toys. A very satisfied smile on my face. It's been a long time.

Whoever it was that was trying to enter my humble abode, he was going to die a horrible death. And I was ready to take him down. The rush of adrenalin pumped through my system and I flexed my arms as I pulled my small blades and tugged them neatly in their compartment on the belt I was wearing. I had just strapped it securely when the door flew open and in came Valerie with wide eyes.

"Boss."

"I know, we are under attack. I have never felt this good." I flexed and gave her a big grin. She shook her head rapidly and ran towards my desk,

"It's Madam. She went into Dark Woods." She announced causing my stomach to drop in a pit within a second.

I stayed glued to the ground, staring blankly at her moving lips. I could see she was saying something, but my senses refused to cooperate with me. All I could hear was the sound of the

sirens and the mines that continued going off, wreaking havoc in the forest.

“Boss!” Valerie’s scream jolted me out of my daze and I sprinted out the door.

I have never been so scared in my life. I had passed through the worst, been through a lot of shit that no one can possibly think, but none of that has ever soured my heart like what was happening right about now.

I gathered the little strength in me and ran to the forest, I don’t know what I was going to find in there. But whatever that had happened, it was going to kill me completely. Just the thought of it knocked the air out of my lungs, making it so hard to breathe.

Through that haze, I ran into the woods, staring everywhere like a mad man trying to spot her, or anything of her. God no! Please don’t let it get to that.

My men were also on the search, armed and ready for whatever was there. I felt lifeless, with each ticking second, I felt like life was slipping through my fingers.

“Found her.” Someone called from my far right. I ran on my wobbly legs and found her covered in leaves and dirt, with the guys already turning her on her back. Her beautiful face was covered in dirt, showing that he had fallen right on her face,

“She’s breathing.” They announced and that’s when a whole load left my shoulders. My knees gave out and I dropped to the floor next to her torso, then crawled towards her and pulled her in a big hug. And then, I cried!

The walk back to the castle was filled with me crying and sobbing the life out of myself. Lorik and the others left with her on a stretcher and left to the medicine room where they cleaned her back that had a few scratches. It was as if something scraped her back, but that was nothing, compared to what I had thought. She could have died. God, she could have died a horrible death

I sat on the floor right outside the medicine room and sent a quick text to Enzo. He was going to kill me