

Something Between Red And Violet

Prologue

20:05 pm, 31st December 2013, Kashmir, India

He stands in front of the stately mansion surveying it. Jack Frost air of Kashmir palpitating at his hair and features, chilling him to the core. He's been examining it like a hawk for over a week now. Today's finally the day to make a move. The reason behind all the torture he had to endure since childhood has to be retaliated. Their evil deeds would cause their demise, after all. He knows what he has to do very well and how sleekly. Although he decided to make her suffer for at least a while giving her a dose of her own medicine. He smiles devilishly at that.

"The devil's supreme decoy is to coax you in to believing that he doesn't exist and here I am The Devil himself, standing at your threshold to lure you away from your deplorable epoch to the path of repentance and emancipation."

imitating a gravelly tone he mocks, making his way to the back of the house and sneaks in through the rear end door, then silently ascends the stairs to the second floor and finds the room he intended to do his business in first. He couldn't afford any distraction and the kid will definitely be one if he doesn't shut her up beforehand. He finds her sleeping soundly on the bed, and sits slowly at the end. It wasn't really her fault, but the more he looks at her, the more furious he becomes. The kid mumbles something unintelligible while stirring. After a while her eyes flutter open and she sees him staring at her intensely.

"I'm sorry baby sister." He says and before she could make any sound he wrings her neck promptly.

Coming downstairs he moves like a panther in search of his prey. He hears two people having a heated conversation in the living room. He peeks and sees her seated on the couch, frustration clouding her delicate face, then he notices the suited man sitting beside her. He smirks, adrenaline coursing through his veins. Without being noticed by them he turns off the main switch of the house letting darkness envelope them.

"What happened?" Mr. Singh asks, annoyed.

"Go check." Martha frowns.

He stands at the doorway waiting for the dupe to come near. Mr. Singh gets up and makes his way blindly to the doorway without a hint of what's coming next. When he nears the door someone grabs his neck from behind and jabs something sharp in his stomach. He shrieks in agony, but the assailant slits his throat before he makes anymore damage to his ear.

“Guru, what’s wrong? Guru” Martha’s voice shakes, her little body trembling in fright.

He smiles a triumphant smile. He can almost taste the terror attenuating her. He heads toward the couch where she is standing and takes out his lighter from his pocket.

“This would be fun.”

He can make out her silhouette. She’s searching for something to light up the room. He moves effortlessly and lights up his lighter.

“Rifling through for this?” He drawls near her ear. She whirls around to a very familiar pair of byzantium eyes.

“Well hello mother!” He greets her mockingly and begins to slash her throat barbarously lengthening her misery. Blood oozes from the cut and gurgling sounds come from her throat while she hits the floor with a thud.

He goes to turn on the lights with a very satisfied grin on his face. Then he comes back to the living room to admire his performance. He finds her trying to say something to him, leaning against the couch he takes her frail almost lifeless hand in his gloved one and whispers, “Sleep” and closes her eyes. He sits there watching life slipping out of her body.

“As much as I would love to stay with you for a few more moments, I have to get done with one more business.” He whispers caressing her face, “Good bye mother.”

And he absconds in the night, filled with the smell and promises of a life altering upcoming new-year for his next quest.

Chapter One

17:03 pm, 18th May 2015, Bucharest, Romania

Mattia Renzi, Chief of the Intelligence Agency, staged before the glassed fenestra of their ten storey office building, awaits the arrival of the “Bloodhound” of their agency. Worriment patently etched in his expression. The assignment they are going to work in is more viperous than ever, although he has faith in his little bombshell. She’s impossibly good at her work and skills. She’s definitely going to come out unharmed and shining, deep down Mattia knows that. But still he worries out of the nurturing sentiment he has for the girl.

“Vuoi farmi portare il caffè ora, Signore?” His personal assistant’s voice brings him back his equilibrium. He declines shaking his head while opening the door of his balcony which is attached with his cabin. Coming out, he expands his eyes to the direction of the early evening sky and draws in a lungful of air. An approaching form of a Royal Enfield Thunderbird 350 grabs his attention, causing his lips to tug upwards.

Rushing inside he sits on his chair and picks up the already read newspaper in his hand as a means to look wonted. Minutes pass by while he sits on his chair immobile, holding the paper and knuckled down on the supposed comer. Several minutes later he lowers the paper from his line of vision and almost falls down from his seat when he sees her sitting on the couch across the room with mirth on her countenance.

“Didn’t know that you read papers upside down! I should try that too sometimes since you seemed so immersed.” She sarcastically states.

“How long have you been here?” He asks her rolling his eyes.

“Exactly four minutes thirty five seconds.” She answers stopping the timer of her watch. He moves his head sideways in mock amazement, being as of now used to her oddball ways.

“Anyways, you’re going to Bristol.” Mattia declares and looks pointedly at her to gauge her reaction. The mass of fruitcake she is, she whistles at the announcement as if she’s own a jackpot and is about to go on a long term expensive vacation.

“Wow! Homicide or terrorism?” He winces at the throw of her question. Her absurdity towards this kind of serious circumstances knows no boundary.

“Pretty much of the both. I transferred you all the files required for you to operate the case and you will be working with three more people assigned on this case. All the necessary documents have been sent to you to get through the customs. You leave tomorrow morning. Good luck Agent Calme!” He reveals in one breath.

“You do understand that I don’t function well in groups, right?” she asks grimly.

“Well, you have no other choice.” He shrugs nonchalantly.

She remains seated for a while looking narrowly at him for God knows why, then rises from the couch and saunters to his direction. Coming to a halt beside his desk, she outstretches her hand for him to hold. He places his hand in hers and clasps it tightly.

“I’ll come back safe and sound. You don’t worry.” Leaning forward she kisses his cheek and says, “Addio Zio!”

“Abbi cura di te, ragazzino.” He whispers to her retreating back.

Chapter Two

10:03 am, 22nd May 2015, Bristol, United Kingdom

“Hey pretty boy, come here!” Paxton calls out to me from his usual table. He and I have become good friends after I helped him from being mugged outside of our diner. *It could have turned into a romantic love story just like the movies if he were a woman, eh?* Still, it formed a firm friendship between us. He and his little group have been coming in this diner almost regularly ever since. I

sometimes even help them in their studies and according to them I'm a genius and I should get into the school with them. But they all know that's literally visionary for me. *Go figure!* That doesn't keep them from coming up with various suggestions though. They even think I would be great at marketing industry. *Yeah!* That sure sounds like a pretty good idea but that's rather illusory as far as I'm concerned. Nevertheless, I feel blessed to find such friends, I don't even fit in their group yet they made me one of them. They were the only people who were always generous towards me without any selfish motives since I came here. They even helped me mingling with the crowd and become somewhat outgoing.

"Hey big boy, I'll take the usual!" Bethany purrs and I roll my eyes. Bethany Taylor technically is the owner of the diner I work in. This diner is one of her father's many businesses. She's been hitting on me from the day I started working here. She doesn't have anything to do here. Still, she comes here every day to mess with my head. She's immensely pretty with her big brown eyes and long tanned legs. But she's boss's little daughter and I don't want any trouble. *Oh sure I'm a guy; but not the one whose gray cells are always connected to his groin when it comes to girls.*

"Hey Paxy!" I acknowledge him placing their orders on the table.

"Don't Paxy me Dom. You know how I hate the name!" He says fuming.

"Exactly!" I say priggishly. Paxton's mother has always called him Paxy and he always hated it. According to him Paxy sounds very gay; but his mother never listened. He eventually got used to her calling him that. But other than his mother whoever dares calling him the name, he goes all vile and vicious on them.

"Whatever! Anyways, this is Jason, a friend of my sister's." He says motioning to the smug looking blonde guy sitting beside him.

"Hey mate!" he nods in my direction. I acquiesce smiling politely never leaving his dark gaze.

"Actually one of Jason's friends needs a place to stay and since he's staying with my sister and you mentioned that you needed a roommate, I thought it would be best if she stays with you." Paxton spouts. I look at the guy named Jason and try sizing him up.

"Where is she from?" I ask him directly.

"We both are from Yorkshire, came here to do our internships." He answers in his peculiar accent. I think for a while about all the complications of living with a totally unknown person, especially with a girl. But getting to share the costs of the apartment with someone is quite tempting for me at the time. So shrugging all the "what if"-s off, I nod my head; yes. Jason's expression turns into relief.

"Okay! She'll move in tomorrow morning then. Only if that's fine by you?" he asks.

"Cool!" I say turning around to leave their table.

"Do you fancy going out with us tonight, mate?" Jason asks suddenly.

“Nope! I gotta go work after my shift ends here.”

“Come on dude! It’s Friday!” Paxton says exasperated. I do understand his exasperation, but skipping work wouldn’t do any good to my already broken financial condition.

“I know I know! But I seriously can’t make it tonight. There are some works pending at Joey’s. But we could go out after you guys are done with your semesters and I could also save some money by then. What say?”

Mr. Anderson enters the diner and motions for me to join the cash counter; making our conversation hanging. With him it’s always like this; he without exception comes and goes as he pleases and he’s continually annoyed with something or someone, particularly me. I don’t really understand what I ever did to offend him.

“You get paid to serve the customers; not to chit-chat.” He says glaring at me. I fight a scowl.

You’re the manager so why don’t you ever do your own duty instead of lounging around with your stinking butt! I think in my mind but don’t say anything. Nodding I settle at the counter.

The guys come to pay and I ask Paxton the same thing I asked before Mr. Anderson came strolling in. He sighs, “Fine! But you better not forget or I’ll drag you out of your house if need be.” I nod and control my urge to roll eyes.

They leave the diner and I get back to work.

Chapter Three

There is a jingling when I open the door of the café. I get inside the air conditioned room and breathe a sigh of relief. No one looks up; they all are busy either doing their work or chatting. I make my way to the counter and ask for a latte and blueberry muffins. It’s 7.30 pm and I’m on my way from Joey’s to home.

Joey is the owner of the mechanical shop I work into and a scumbag. The only reason I have been working there so far is, I love my work and his shop is one of the best in town and he pays well. But he takes advantage of me because he knows my weaknesses, which are money and machines and makes me work for hours than necessary. The guy from the counter breaks my train of thoughts and hands me my orders. I pay him and skim through the crowd for a vacant seat. I find one at the far corner of the café and see a girl sitting there, typing furiously at her keyboard, oblivious to everything surrounding her.

Without noticing my moves, I slowly take steps to her direction. She doesn’t notice me though. She’s fixated on her laptop screen. Reaching her table I clear my throat. She still doesn’t look up.

“Excuse me!” I croak awkwardly and clear my throat again. She looks up for a second and I feel my breath catching in my throat.

She looks at me through her amber depths with a glint of blankness in them and I feel my knees buckle. Her long auburn curls fall to her waist, her golden pools are surrounded by long dark lashes, her small pointy nose is crunched up in an irritated fashion and her plump lips are held by her pearly white teeth. She surely is a sight to behold. Her bewitching beauty can put even the angels to shame. *Not that I ever personally met any angel or something.* I see her lips part and she says something, but nothing reaches my ear. I then see her waving a twenty dollar bill before my face in a slow mo, every activity around me seems to happen in a snail's pace. *Wait! Am I having a heart attack? Why my heart is pounding so fast? Why everything is so weird around me?* I blink and everything becomes normal. I look at her face and panic is imminent there.

"Are you alright? Can you hear me?" she asks in urgency. *Oh God! Even her voice sounds heavenly.*

"Are you alright?" she asks again.

"Huh?"

"What's wrong with you? Are you not feeling well?" she asks frowning.

"Yeah yeah.. I'm fine! Thanks." I vocalize lastly.

"Okay! Here take your tip."

"Why would I take tip?" I ask looking down at her hand and she's holding those bills to my direction; then it hits. *She thinks I'm a waiter and asking for my tip!* I hear someone growling. *Oh it's me of course!*

"Do I look like a waiter to you?" I ask glaring at her, suddenly angry.

"Then what do you want?" she asks absently. I look at the latte and muffins in my hand and then at her. I open my mouth to say something, but refrain myself.

"Never mind!" I say shaking my head. She shrugs and gets back to whatever she was doing as if the whole ogling and waiter-tipping scene didn't just take place.

I look from the corner of my eyes around the café and no one seems to have noticed anything and even if they did, they don't care. Taking a last glimpse and a snap-shot mentally of her exquisiteness, I practically run out of there.

I'm so not ever coming back to this place again.

Chapter Four

I wake up at the sound of my door bell.

"Oh son of a gun!" I curse under my breath sitting up in my bed.

It's probably my new roommate. She's supposed to move in today. *But why is she so early? What time is it?*

I check my alarm clock placed on my bed side table. *Oh shoot! It's 11 in the morning. I overslept! And there goes running my errands down the drain.*

I jump out of my bed and rush towards the front door. I open it and my jaw drops. *It's her!*

"Hey mate!" I look behind her and find Jason holding two boxes in his hand and beaming brightly. I start to say something but nothing comes out my mouth. *AGAIN!* I look at her and reiteratively find myself drowning in those amber depths.

"Hello?" she says waving her hand.

"Oh! Please come in." I finally choke out. Then noticing my half naked self I race to my room.

Oh Christ! Kill me. I'll probably die every day if she's gonna stay with me. I get dressed in record time and head for the living room. Reaching there I find her sitting on the couch and Jason in the kitchen with a carton of milk in his hand. Slowly I take steps toward her. "Hi" I say, but once more just air comes out instead of words.

"Hey! You're the one I met at the café last night, right?" she asks sounding amused. *Shit! She probably thinks I'm a lunatic.* I nod at that, unable to form any word.

"I apologize for my last day's behavior. I actually was engrossed in something and thought you were the waiter—"

"No no. It's totally fine." I find myself answering, *finally.*

"I'm Serenity, by the way." She holds out her hand for me to shake. *Serenity. Ah! An irenic name for a tranquil beauty.*

"I'm Dominic." I say shaking her hand and feel my body quiver at her touch. "Let me show your room." I offer her. She accepts and I show her to her bedroom and give her a little tour of the loft.

In the midst of the tour my stomach grumbles making me realize that I haven't eaten anything.

"Would you like to eat something?" I ask her in constraint.

"No. You go ahead. I already had breakfast." She informs. Agreeing I make my way to the kitchen. Jason is in the kitchen sitting at the counter and admiring his handiwork which is a pile of bread. *How did he manage to put this giant cardiac arrest on a plate so fast?* He peeks at me from behind the hulking sandwich and wiggles his brows, making the whole scenario seem ridiculous before my eyes.

"Are you seriously gonna eat it?" I ask him incredulously pointing at his sandwich.

"Oh yes! This is nothing." he says chuckling and biting it. I cast a glance at Serenity and find her rolling her eyes. I drink some juice and check the time at the wall clock which is striking twelve. *I'm going to be so late!* I hurriedly fetch the spare key and hand it to her.

"Here is your key. You make yourself at home." I say heading to the door.

"Where are you going?" she asks after me. "I don't mean to pry but since I'm new here I could come along and get to know the place a little."

"I'm going to buy some groceries and stuffs." I state.

"Great! I need to buy some too. Let's go." she says pulling Jason out of the counter just when he was about to take a last bite of his hoagie.

Before I could say anything, they both bolt out the door afore me as if the house is on fire. I confusedly slip out after them.

Chapter Five

Parking my car in front of the grocery store I remain seated for a while and admire my old black, single cab, short bed; Chevy that I put back together myself at Joey's and bought it myself from him. This baby runs smoothly. I instinctively smile and get out of the car. Jason and Serenity both excuse themselves to go to the computer store across the street.

I get inside the supermarket and start rummaging through the shelves for the things I need. Picking up everything I make my way to the counter. The guy behind the counter seems to be going through a phase when you go all Emo with aberrant hairstyles and tons of piercings. I give him my stuffs; he looks up and his eyes light up and a smirk tug up at the corner of his lips. I look at him confused and finally realize that he's looking behind me. I turn around and see what he sees. It's Serenity standing in front of a shelf turning her back towards us and the guy's checking out her butt. I turn to the guy shooting him daggers through my eyes and clear my throat to get him out of his reverie. He gives me a nervous smile and starts calculating the items.

"here." she says placing her stuffs on the counter. I smile at her. *God! She's breathtaking.*

Get a grip Dom! She's only a girl; a very very beautiful girl.

"Got everything you need?"

"Yeah. For now, yes." She replies grinning.

She's probably the most attractive woman I have come athwart in twenty one years of my life. She has a certain aura which works as a magnet. She's intimidating yet alluring. Her skin is pale beyond belief yet it glows almost an unearthly glow.

She snaps her fingers in front of my face making me realize that I'm recurrently staring at her.

"Did you hear what I said?" she asks.

"Um..No. Could you repeat it?" I ask abashedly.

"I asked whether you would like to go to the coffee shop across the street" she bids raising one delicate brow.

"Uh..yeah we could do that." I utter awkwardly

"Fantastic. Let's go!" she says gleefully.

Did she just ask me out? Duh! It's only a cup of coffee; not a date. But did she really?

"Hello..! You coming or not?" she asks walking past me looking bored. *Gee! I again zoned out. What? Am I a thirteen year old or something?*

"Yeah yeah.. right behind you."

I say collecting our stuffs from the counter and walking out the store leaving the counter guy open mouthed.

Chapter Six

"So where are you from?" Serenity asks sipping her latte; eyes shining with mischief. I start feeling uneasy. I'm never comfortable talking about my home country. It's been years that I'm away from the place which was supposed to be the treasure chest of my living. Home, the word is so welcoming and heartwarming, yet it leaves a dull ache in my heart.

"Bristol it is." I answer finally. She gawks at my face for a while making me squirm under her penetrating gaze.

"Oh!" she says finally and I leave the breath I didn't know I was holding. "What do you do for a living?" she asks changing the subject.

"I work in a café and a mechanical shop. I want to do something in mechanical field though. I want to have a real job you know. But I don't know if I'm ever going to get one, since I don't have a degree. I have this thing for machines from childhood. I even reassembled my own car." I ramble smiling fitfully. She stares at me for a while and shakes her head grinning.

"What?" I ask her confused.

"You love machines, don't you? I mean really love them!" A flicker of sadness crosses her face.

"Is it that obvious?" I ask fidgeting with the handle of my coffee mug.

“It’s your eyes. They literally shine when you talk about machines.” She reveals smiling sweetly and then her smile falters when her phone beeps with an incoming message. Her body stiffens and her face becomes unreadable. She stands up, places money on the table and leaves the café without saying goodbye or giving a backward glance.

I sit at our table dumbstruck and wonder what exactly did just happen!

I park the car in the driveway of my apartment building and get myself out. I get inside and head directly to my room. Serenity’s not home yet; I wonder where she might be. I throw myself on bed. It’s only 7 in the evening and I’m bone tired. I can’t afford to lose track and here I am lounging around and sipping lattes with achingly good looking strange roomies. *God bless me!* I start reeling the day’s events in my mind. Firstly she was intimidating, secondly she was sweet and then all of a sudden she was rude and mean; *I mean what exactly is it with her?* She was the first one to ask me out in the first place, then why couldn’t she at least bid a goodbye? She actually seemed to be having fun; then? *Christ! She is Mercurial after all.*

Keeping all these infuriating and confusing thoughts aside, I let sleep consume my consciousness.

Chapter Seven

Delicious aroma of food invade my nostrils. *Mmmm! Is that pancake?*

I stir by my stomach quibbling and an eerie feeling as if someone is watching me. I open my eyes a peek and the very next moment both my eyes grow larger when they land on the spine-tingling frame of Serenity sitting at the bean-bag beside my bed with a delightful facial appearance.

“Buongiorno sleepyhead!” she greets gaily.

“Morning! Err—how long have you been sitting here?” I ask her ineptly trying to cover my unclothed body.

“Eight minutes twelve seconds to be precise.” She says looking at her watch. *Whoa! She’s been counting the time?*

“Why didn’t you wake me then?” I ask her getting out of the bed.

“Why, I liked watching you sleep.” She shrugs, as if it is the most common thing to do.

“Umm—” I try to form words but find myself tongue tied at that.

“Come, I made breakfast.” She states getting up from her seat and leaves the room.

I stand there grinning insanely big for a few moments then dash inside the bathroom.

“So, what do you plan on doing today?” Serenity asks me after spraying maple syrup on my plate of pancakes.

“Nothing. Will stay in probably.”

“How about we take a tour of the city?” she offers with sparkling eyes making me choke in awe. *She wants to spend a whole day with me? Really?* I stare at her radiant face trying to discern if she is being honest and all I see is sincerity there.

“I’d love that.” I say returning the same sincerity.

“Great! It’s 8 o’clock now and we leave in thirty minutes then.”

It’s been five hours we are on our outing and it is in every way the most exciting and entertaining day out I have been on so far. I have been staying in this city from quite a long duration now, but with all my extra baggage I never had the heart to explore the city in so much of a care-free manner. When they say, “God created man and finding him not sufficiently alone, gave him a companion to make him feel his solitude more keenly.”- which is conclusively chauvinistic keeping aside the metaphorical meaning of course, I would say keeping the hunky-dory feeling I’m going through now in my mind by having Serenity next to me that, it was one of the best thing God has ever done, *I mean literally*. Glancing at her joyful face I feel my heart melting. That smile on her face has the power to illuminate a whole city like this; it is that much gracious indeed.

“It’s beautiful.” I hear her commenting.

“Undeniably.” I pronounce looking at her face.

“I know ri—” she locks her gaze with me.

“Umm—Walker?” she clears her throat making me blink and points toward the Cabot Tower.

“I’m talking about that.” She smirks making me flush in embarrassment.

“Err—Yes it is.” I say scratching the back of my neck.

She laughs shaking her head. Then looking behind my shoulder her body tautens and her hand flies to the back of her jeans.

“Move!” she shouts shoving me aside.

And the next thing I know, she’s holding a gun and firing at a backtracking mugger’s leg.

Chapter Eight

I just stall gaping like a fish out of the pond in the direction of her effortless velocity of taking a shot at the man. The man staggers on his track but surprisingly keeps running with his bleeding leg. But Serenity runs like the flash after him and tackles him to the ground. The man manages to hit her across the face, but she does not budge an inch. One hard punch from her and the man becomes unconscious.

Sirens of the police car and an ambulance break my stupor. I without delay run to her with a pounding heart wondering if she's fine. But before I could reach her, I see the guy scrambling to his feet and taking out a knife he readies himself to stab her from behind. My heart stops!

I yell her name trying to alert her. Hearing that she twirls around and the man plunges the knife in her stomach, but she still succeeds to grab his arm and twist it, making the man wail in pain. Police cars reach the place within minutes and they all rush to the direction where now Serenity sits holding her abdomen with a huge crowd surrounding them. Thrusting the crowd aside I try reaching her, but the cops stop me from going any farther.

"She's with me goddamit!" I roar at the younger looking cop. Imaginably, there was something savagery clearly written on my profile, because without a word he lets me through.

"But Miss we need to take you to the hospital. Look at all the blood you're leaking." I see a female officer insisting Serenity sitting beside her.

"Take care of the lady there with the kid who was mugged. I'm perfectly alright. Besides it's just a scratch." She tells while standing up.

"But Miss what about the state—"

"I'll be down to the station in the evening." She informs. The cop argues, but she dismisses her with a wave of her hand. Then all of a sudden her head whips to my direction and her eyes soften. I see her walking to me with that usual smirk on her face. She stops in front me and comes impossibly closer to my face and as if feeling the emotional turmoil racing inside of me, she caresses my cheek with her hand in a soothing motion and whispers, "I'm okay. Let's go home."

"You sure you don't want my help?" I ask her for the upteenth time after reaching the apartment.

"Ugh! Quit nagging me Walker." She snaps and heads for her bedroom with the supplies in hand.

I sit at the couch with my shoulders slumped and let out a sigh. The day has gone from awe-inspiring to awful in a matter of few seconds. I was planning to make our night romantic by making her a special dinner after getting back from our trip and here I am drowning in self-pity for not being able to protect her today. I could have helped her getting that bastard, instead I stood there like a thunderstruck puppy. Anyhow, there were certain things which had me cemented to the spot during that occurrence, which was her possession of a gun and her expert fighting competence. Those are clearly the skills of a warrior. Moreover, what kind of internship lets one tuck a 9mm under their shirt? *What exactly is she?*

CLASH!

I jump from my seat when I hear a glass shattering. I immediately follow the sound and reach her room and there and then ice up looking at Serenity's bare back facing the entrance. My throat becomes parched and hands turn clammy.

The lamp on the bedside table has cast a part luminescent glow to the whole room making her lush surface glimmer ethereally. Her long fiery curls are knotted in a messy bun with untamed tendrils flowing down her back where stands a lonely angel with her head held up high soaking in the rays of the sun and her wings are spread along Serenity's shoulder blades. I feel my fingers itch to trace circles on the breathtaking body art.

"Would you mind helping here?" she asks without turning to look at me bringing me down from my ecstatic state.

Shakily I take steps to where she is sitting and stand facing her. My breath hitches when I take in the sight of the artistry before me. I try to perceive every lines of her delicate face, the arch of her neck, the sinuosity of her breasts, the curve of her torso and the swerve of her long shapely legs which go on for miles. My eyes linger on the slash she got while saving someone else's life. I swill down the bile rising in my windpipe thinking of how much torment she must be going through. Outwardly I place my fingers on the cut which is now gauzed.

"I'm not hurting." She assures me looking up. I don't know from where I get the courage to stoop before her and taking her hands I kiss both her palms.

"You don't know that I almost died the moment I saw the guy holding that knife." I murmur to myself. I feel her one hand tangling my hair and she lifts my face with another hand to meet her eyes and from that moment everything happens in a daze.

I gently lay her on her back and leisurely start kissing every inch of her bewitching entity, remembering her every sensualistic gasps and moans.

And the moment I enter her I get an underlying feeling that even though my desolate soul has been replenished by the passion emitting from our beings, my life is amended for the rest of forever.

Chapter Nine

How can she do this to me? I thought she loved me; then why?

The room's dimly lit. They are on the bed together. I can clearly hear the sound of her singing the blues; hiding under their bed. I'm shaking, tears streaming down my face. This isn't happening! They stop. Now they are talking. They are talking about the sex they just had. They are saying it was fun; they are

complimenting each other. I ball my fist and put it in my mouth to block any sound of my misery to come out.

“Why don’t you just leave him? Then we won’t have to sneak around like this babe.” he asks her. She snorts. “Come on Raj! You know how much he loves me. He caught me making out with others several times before and still didn’t leave me. He probably would do the same if he walked in on us now, you know. Besides, you know as well as I do that we’re only having fun--” blinded by rage I come out and stand at the foot of their bed.

I wake up gasping for air. I look around panicking. Then feel relief wash over me. It was just a nightmare; there’s nothing to worry about. But it was so vivid; I felt everything happening before my eyes.

Fuck! I’m sweating like a pig. But I never had these dreams for few months now. I buried it safely in the back of my head. Then what could trigger it?

Serenity!

But she was sleeping beside me; *where is she now then?* I get off the bed and search for the bathroom. She isn’t there. Panic stricken; I rush towards my room, she’s not there as well.

She’s gone; just like that!

I come to her room. Plopping down on the bed I put my head in my hands and let out an angry growl. *This is the second time she walked out on me without saying anything.*

I think of checking the time. It’s 6 o’clock in the morning. I see a piece of paper tucked under the alarm clock. I take it out and it’s a note; from her.

Walker,

Sorry I had to go without informing you, but I’ll have to attend to some serious business before I come back. Till then, keep your ears perked up and eyes open.

Serenity

I stare at the note for a while with several questions swarming through my mind. *Why did she write a note like a detective flagging her client? And what business she had to attend this early in the morning with her injured-self? Ugh! Now I sound like an insecure clingy boyfriend! Whoa! Now from where did come the boyfriend part?* Shaking my head I try to control my thoughts to stop trespassing that particular jeopardous territory; it is definitely not the time to think of putting myself and her to the

boyfriend-girlfriend zone, even if we slept together. I smile internally when I again scan the note at hand and carefully put it in my pocket. At least she said something before leaving this time.

I roll to her side of the bed and inhale the fragrance she left there. She smells like honey and sunshine; an exhilarating sweet smell.

I close my eyes wrapped around her scent and drift off to a peaceful slumber.

Chapter Ten

“Dude, I mean she’s a caged lioness in bed. The scratches are still fresh from that night on my back.” Derek says with a dreamy expression on his face.

“You sure got lucky man! I was aiming at the bar tender but since Grayson was with me and the way he was falling all over me after getting tipsy; the bartender thought that we were partners.” Paxton says scowling at Grayson. They all burst out laughing.

We all are at Paxton’s place having a guy time. We initially were discussing about the possibilities of their placements in preferred companies but eventually it came down to the club they went to three days ago, the night I had Serenity cuddling me like an ivy tree. I grin goofily thinking about her. But I stop smiling when I realize that I haven’t heard from or seen her since then and I miss her. I feel a sudden ache in my heart and let out a sigh.

“Well hello there Romeo!” Paxton remarks making me shoot my head to his direction.

“I don’t see any Romeo here.” I ask feeling screwy.

“I can clearly envision the romantic scenario playing in that pathetic head of yours.” he asks wiggling his brows at me.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” I shrug. *I know what exactly he’s talking about but I don’t want to talk about it.* So I pretend to be clueless.

“Stop being a pussy Dom!” Paxton whines.

“Is she hot?” Grayson asks looking like a child who’s about to unwrap his Christmas present.

“Did you get lucky?” Paxton throws another question.

I scowl at them. But they all seem oblivious to that. They are scrutinizing my face.

“You’re smitten bro!” Grayson says unexpectedly.

I look at the three of them; they are grinning like the goons and shake my head in disgust.

My phone starts vibrating and taking it out I click the answer button without looking at the caller ID.

“Hello.”

“Walker.” It’s her. *How did she get my number?*

“Serenity? How did--” I ask baffled. *I don’t remember giving her my number.*

“I have my sources.” She says sounding amused.

“Oh! Did you come back?” I ask her feeling the endorphin spreading through my whole body.

“Yes I’m back . Listen about that night--” I interrupt her mid sentence, “I too wanna talk about it.”

“Umm—Okay! But that’s not what I was getting at. I wanted to invite you over dinner at my new place tonight; say at 7?” *Whoa! She’s inviting me over dinner at her place? Wait! Her place? Does that mean she’s not gonna stay with me anymore?*

“Umm.. your place?” I ask her joylessly.

“Yeah! My company has given me my own apartment actually and tonight I kinda called a few colleagues and friends to celebrate housewarming. So, would you come?” She asks again. I feel all the previous good feeling draining from my body, omitting all that I finally agree to come. She reverberates cheerily at that and rings off.

I look at my friends and they are staring curiously at me.

“It’s Serenity. She wants to have dinner with me tonight.” I reveal wistfully.

“Then why your expression is as if someone ate your dog?” Paxton asks grimly. I decide against telling them the truth and fabricate a bright smile raising my empty beer bottle.

“Well, she did invite me to have dinner with her. Aren’t you guys gonna drink to that?” I try changing the subject. They get all slaphappy and raise their empty beer bottles to make a toast.

“To all the smitten jackasses!” Paxton says. I glower at him but for once let it go.

“To all the smitten jackasses!” We all say in unison.

Chapter Eleven

It’s 6.55 pm and I’m standing at her doorway. I have been anxious the whole afternoon, not knowing how to take all these in. But now I feel quite content since life has to go on.

I press the bell of her apartment and moments later the door opens. *But it's not her!* It's a very tall guy; about few inches taller than me, with baby blue eyes and blonde hair. He looks straight into my eyes and smirks.

"Walker, right? Come in; she's in the kitchen." He says almost blocking my entrance leaning at the doorway with his huge built. I nod and squeeze myself in past him; but I can still feel his eyes drilling through the back of my head. A shiver runs down my spine.

I head towards the kitchen and there I find her chopping vegetables. Her hair is messy and she's without makeup and wearing a cute apron. *She looks beautiful.*

Sensing my presence she looks up at me and smiles an all toothed smile.

"Hi!" I greet her.

"Was it troublesome to find the place?" She asks going back to her chopping.

"Not really. I didn't know you were allocated to a place so near to mine though." I say suddenly feeling uneasy.

"Oh! Where are my manners! Walker this is Jeremy my childhood friend. He landed here yesterday from York and Emy, this is Dominic; the friend I was talking about." I look behind and Jeremy is standing there. *Oh! The culprit of my dysphoria.*

"We have met already at the doorway. Haven't we Walker?" he asks smirking again. He comes and sits on the countertop before giving Serenity a small peck on the cheek. I clench my fists feeling a pang of jealousy.

"Here, this is for you." I give her the chocolates and the bottle of wine I brought for her. Her eyes light up and she kisses both my cheeks taking them from me. I start to blush but looking at Jeremy's smirking face again I control myself. The doorbell rings, making us all aware of the other guests' arrival.

The dinner goes well without me embarrassing myself or Jeremy pulling any stunt on me. But he keeps staring at me for God knows what reason. We finish our dinner and Serenity sits up to fetch the desserts after giving an evil eye to Jeremy. We sit there in silence and I notice Jeremy still staring at me from my peripheral vision.

"Why do you keep staring at me?" I ask him frustrated now. He chuckles as if I cracked a joke.

"Because you are pretty to look at" he says surprising me. My eyes widen. *Does he think that I am--*

"Excuse me! But I'm not what you think I am." I state in horror. He seems taken aback, then bursts out in a fit of laughter.

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