

The Trap Of Ace

The Trap Of Ace

Chapter 51

That freaking back stabber!

How could he betray his own nephew like that? He joined hands with Antonio for what? To defame his own family?

What would he gain if Valencian Corp's reputation ruins in the market? Wouldn't it harm his bank balance too?

I knew he was not what he showed to the world. But today, after talking to Liza I got to know what a snake he was. Winning Ace's trust he was now trying to stab him on the back while remaining in the shadow.

And Ace had no idea about this. I had to tell him. But I had no idea exactly how to start this conversation. I knew what was the truth, but I didn't have any physical proof to show him. Will he believe my words?

Suddenly I halted at my way seeing a certain person I hated with everything in me. Red freaking witch!

Before the conference room, she was talking and giggling with Matt batting her fake eyelashes. And she wore another red dress today.

I almost forgot that the Arabs had a meeting at the office. Arthur's matter occupied my brain too much to remember anything else.

"Ms. Hutton?"

I turned to Carter who had a surprised look etched on his face.

"I thought you weren't coming today. Boss said you were on a leave?"

Ignoring his question, I turned to the witch again. "How many meetings will be happening with the Arabs?"

"Umm, I'm not sure, Ms. Hutton. But until the project finishes, it'll occur several times."

I glanced at him, pressing my lips together. Several times? No way in the hell I'd let that witch roam

around this office that many times. And definitely not around my man.

Straightening up, I held his gaze. "I don't care how many times the Arabs come here for the meetings.

But make sure she," I pointed to that witch, "doesn't step into this building from now on."

His forehead creased, confusion was clear in his eyes. "But, Ms. Hutton, she's Mr. Hakimi's secretary.

She'll be needed here during the meetings. I don't think Mr. Hakimi would like this ban on his secretary."

"I'll talk to him myself. Don't worry about him. Just do as I say."

"But..."

"No buts. I don't want that girl in this office from now on. Is that clear?"

my voice full of command as I

spoke. I didn't want to take advantage of the position Ace had given me by making me an equal

owner of everything he owned, but I didn't have any other way to get rid of that witch.

With eyes as saucers, he nodded his head. "O-of course, Ms. Hutton. You won't see her here again."

I smiled. "Good. Now please carry on with your job. Is Ace in his cabin now?"

"Yes, Ms. Hutton. He is in there."

Nodding, I turned around and sauntered away.

Not needing the necessity of knocking before entering his office, I

pushed the door open and walked

inside with a bright smile plastered onto my face. I hadn't seen him since the morning. And I was

already missing him.

"Ace..."

I was halted at the presence of two other persons who were in the room along Ace. Three pairs of

eyes fell on me, leaving me dumbfounded.

Shit! Carter didn't inform me that Ace was in a meeting in his cabin. The dense ambience around the

room told me about the seriousness of the meeting.

Arthur was standing close to the door, as if he was just about to walk out.

My expression immediately turned stoic as soon as my gaze met his already hard ones. Something unreadable also swirled around his dark orbs.

Freaking traitor!

Averting my eyes, my eyes fell on the man around Ace's age sitting at the opposite of Ace. He was the same man Casie was staring at on Tess's reception.

And then I gazed at my man.

Those grey eyes were narrowed, watching me silently.

Did I disturb? Of course, I did!

"Uh, I'm sorry. I didn't know you had a meeting going on," I said, sheepishly.

"It's a general courtesy to knock before you enter someone's cabin, Emerald. You don't just barge in like that." Arthur's voice held displeasure.

"She doesn't need to knock to enter her own cabin, Arthur." Ace's response was quick. Though his tone was full of authority, he was polite. The respect he used during talking to his uncle always.

Arthur's brows raised. "Her cabin?"

"Everything that's mine is my Rosebud's. I thought you were aware of the fact already." He tilted his head.

While Arthur's face tightened as he flashed a smile of understanding at Ace, mine turned all red.

Even though for how many times he had shown his affection towards me before the world, I still managed to blush at that.

"I'll see you later." With that, Arthur threw me another glance and got out of the door.

Turning back, I found the stranger's eyes on me, watching me with raised brows. Then standing up, he strolled towards me and gave me his hand for a shake.

"Hello. I'm Duncan. It's very nice to meet you," his deep Italian accent spoke. Striking blue eyes held curiosity in them as they watched me.

With six feet something height, strong built structure, sharp jaw, dark brown locks and an extremely

handsome face, he looked every girl's dark fantasy.
If I wasn't already absolutely lost into my Greek god, I'd have a crush on him too. Just like my best friend. I could understand why she couldn't take her eyes off of him that night. But for me, he was just a handsome face now. My eyes were only for my Greek caveman. I could already feel his flaming glare on this Italian. Smiling, I shook his hand. "Hi! I'm Emerald, Emerald Hutton. Nice to meet you too!"

"I know. I saw you in the reception. Though we couldn't meet personally, well, my friend here was too busy dragging his beautiful lady love away from the party to introduce her to anyone," he said, casting a glance at Ace whose jaw was tight at our still joined hands. "Enough of shaking hands, back off now, De Sylvano!" Greek accent deep.

Smirking, he retracted his hand and shoved his hands into his pockets. "Easy there, fratello! Taken women isn't my thing. No matter how stunning they're." Heat crept up my cheeks while my caveman's nostrils flared. "Duncan De Sylvano, I'd like you to leave right now if you want our partnership to keep going," he warned, leaning towards his desk. Duncan's smirk stayed intact. Both powerful men held each other's gaze. "So what I heard is true then. Ruthless cold Achilles Valencian finally got his salvation. That's why I was wondering why less people were getting fired around your companies. Because now the beast has someone to tame him down." Ace cocked his head. "Beast? Look who's talking. Doesn't the ruthless word suit you more than me?" Duncan let out a small chuckle. "Anyways, we're meeting tomorrow night with the Russians, right?" "Yes. Hope things go as we planned." The Italian nodded. "Amen to that. I'll see you tomorrow then." Turning to me, he flashed a polite smile and walked out of the cabin. "You!" My head snapped to the devil behind the huge desk. Stormy grey eyes hard as he beckoned me to him. "Come here."

A shiver ran down my spine. But as if my legs had their own mind, they slowly trudged near him.

Placing the purse on his desk when I was within his reach, his hand shot out and pulled me into his lap.

A gasp slipped through my lips.

One hand around the back of my neck and the other one around my waist, he scorching gaze held me

prisoner. "What were you doing just some moments ago, Rosebud?"

"W-what did I do?"

His grip tightened as he brought his face closer to mine. My eyes fell onto his plump firm lips.

"What did you do? You were checking out some other man in front of me and you're asking what did

you do?" His jaw ticked. "Did you forget last night, my rose? Did you forget what I did to you? Did you

forget the marks I left on your body while claiming you as mine?"

Goosebumps crawled up my skin at the memories of last night.

Clenching my thighs, I licked my lips.

Grey orbs followed the act.

Feeling his rough stubble, I pressed myself against him. "Mind reminding me again, your highness?"

A groan left his mouth, but the tightness of his jaw didn't soften.

Leaning in, I kissed the corner of his lips. "I wasn't checking him out. I was just seeing what Casie saw

in him that she just couldn't tear her eyes off of him. My eyes are only for you, don't worry."

Watching me for a moment, his form slowly relaxed. I inwardly shook my head at him. Stubborn

possessive caveman!

Pulling me closer, he snuggled his face into my neck while I slumped into him. The heady cologne of

his filled my lungs with a feel of home.

My eyes fluttered close as he littered some butterfly kisses across my neck. His hand massaged the

back of my head softly. At the moment, I let go of everything that ran in my head and just listened to

the rhythm of his heartbeats.

"I told you to rest. What are you doing here then?" he mumbled, tightening his grip around me as if

I'd disappear somewhere. "I was just coming home back to you."

Home? Did he- did he mean our home?

A warmth surged through my chest.

"I was missing you." It wasn't a whole lie. I was missing him the moment he left the penthouse.

I wanted to tell him about Liza and Sierra. But I wanted to talk to Warner first. Maybe his cousin

managed to get some proof against Arthur by now?

He stayed silent for a moment and then lifted my face up, making me look at him. "I've a surprise for you."

My whole mood brightened at once. "What surprise?"

He chuckled, capturing my lips in a soft kiss. But his kiss lingered for too long for my impatient self.

Pulling away, much to his dismay, I snaked my arms around his neck.

"What surprise?"

"Too many things have been going on recently. So I thought you'd like to get away from this place for some time."

"We're going somewhere? As in a vacation?" I squealed like a small kid getting their Christmas gift.

A breathtaking smile tugged on his lips, grey eyes roaming across my features with full of love and adoration. "Yes. A vacation just for two of us."

"Where? When are we going?"

"Relax, Rosebud. It's a surprise. Have some patience, will you?" He ran his nose over my jaw. "And

we're leaving tomorrow night, after the meeting with the Russians."

I pouted. I hated it not knowing where he was taking me. "Is it out of the US?"

Amusement danced in his eyes. "We'll see once we reach there."

Huffing, I put my head back on his chest.

Chuckling, he trailed his hand under my dress. A shiver shot through my body as his fingers glided up my thigh.

"Are you still sore, baby?" his hot breath fanned my neck.

Hiding my face more into his chest, I nodded my head. The slight pinch of discomfort was still there.

"A little."

He let out a groan. "Take another painkiller. I'll go mad if I don't have you tonight."

I bit my lip at the painful tug at my lower region. I could already feel the burning desire running hot through my veins. My hand sneaked up to his hair, tugging them softly. He breathed into my neck. "I love you so much, my rose." My lips parted at his hot lips against my skin and scorching touch on my thighs. Those pervert hands of his slowly crept up to my butt. Pulling away, I brought his head down and captured his lips in a hungry kiss. And he responded immediately with his punishing one. "I love you too!"

Walking down the hallway, I called Warner for the second time but he didn't receive his phone. I even left him a message after meeting Liza, but he didn't even answer to that. I wanted to ask him if he found out more about Arthur. But he wasn't even responding to any of my calls or messages.

Where was he?

I was getting impatient now. I needed to talk to Ace. But I was too afraid to ruin the beautiful phase we were going through.

I wish I had taken his cousin's number from him.

Sighing, when I punched the green button again, a gasp slipped from my lips as I felt a tug on my arm and was harshly pulled into a dark room I hadn't entered before. How was the chapter, my sweet pumpkins? Who do you think is the person who pulled Em in that room?

Let me know in the comments!

With love,

Eva Zahan.

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Author's note!

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Hi, everyone! Thank you so much for deciding to give this book a chance, and thank you so much to all who already read Ace and his Rosebud's story. I'm really grateful for all the love you guys gave them.

But I'm really sorry to tell you that I had to unpublish most of the chapters as I had already told you before.

Due to my contract with other other paying platforms, I can't keep this book free on anywhere. So I had to take this step. As an author, this is a new step to build my career. I hope you all will understand and support me in this decision.

I've kept some last chapters published here except the first six chapters for those of my regular readers who still didn't finish reading some of the last chapters. But they'll get unpublished soon, so read them soon if you haven't yet.

And if anyone interested in reading the book, you can always go to Goodnovel or Anystories or Moboreader to read it. Just search the name of this book, and you'll get it.

Warning: You'll have to buy the book on those apps. So if you can go ahead and give it a chance, go for it. I'd be grateful!

And the next chapter will be up soon, guys! Stay tuned!

With love,

Eva Zahan.

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My eyes squinted against the bright light as soon as the room lit up. And then I found the person who dragged me in this room.

Dark orbs watched me silently.

My fists clenched. "What the hell is this, Arthur?"

His head cocked to the side. "You don't even know what hell is. Trust me, I haven't done anything yet to compare it with hell."

I frowned. "What do you mean?"

A muscle of his jaw ticked, his aged left eye twitched. "I'll just say five words, Emerald." Disgust

dripped from his voice as he took my name. "Stay out of my path."

My forehead creased more in confusion. What was he talking about?

And then realization hit me. A shiver ran down my spine at the malice that his dark soulless eyes held.

"What are you trying to say, Arthur?" I kept my voice as strong as I could.

He found out. He found out of my quest. But I didn't know how much he knew.

He let out a humourless chuckle. "You exactly know what I'm talking about. You really thought that you'd try to dig out my past and my secrets, and I wouldn't find out?" When I didn't say anything, his lips curled into a sneer.

"Surprised that how did I know?" he mocked. "Well, from the day you saw me with Sierra at that hotel, I knew you wouldn't keep quiet. You'd go after her asking about me. And you did, just as I assumed! And then I found out that the worthless ex-boyfriend of yours had his cousin after me. Do you think I'm that unaware and foolish?"

I took a step back as he took a threatening step towards me. With my eyes wide, my heart pounded down my heart. Not because I was scared of him, but because he now knew about Warner and his cousin's involvement with this matter.

Shit! I didn't plan this! I didn't want him to hurt them in any way because of me.

Be strong, Em! Don't show him your weakness. Don't let him threaten you just like he did to Liza and Sierra.

Holding my chin high, I held his gaze. "I don't need to think you're a fool. You are a fool."

His nostrils flared at my comment.

"Anyone who would dare to go against Ace will be considered as a fool.

Do you really think you can go and backstab him on his back and he would just let you leave like that? Just because you're his

uncle?" I snorted. "It's just some matter of time until I tell him what you do under your respected businessman facade and he'll throw you out of this company like a fly from the milk."

A smirk tugged on his lips. "You think you'll tell him and he'll believe you? What proof do you have

against me?"

Nothing. That's why I was stalling time to reveal your betraying ass before him.

I kept a straight face. "Do you think he'll need any proof when his Rosebud will say something to him?"

His smirk slipped from his face. Even I knew Ace wouldn't just wave my words off, but I just wanted to have some solid proof. And now that he was standing here before me warning me off, I didn't need any other proof.

"I can't believe your guts, Arthur. You run illegal businesses across the UK, you used to run brothels over there, you were threatening Sierra for some reason, and here you're warning me that I should stay away from your path?" I raised my brow. "If I were you, I'd be running away with my tail between my legs if my dark secrets would get exposed before someone. Because the time isn't far away when you'll be behind the bars," I hissed.

I wanted to confront him about Liza and working with Antonio. But I held myself back. That could bring Liza and her family into more risk.

With his fists clenched, eyes flashing, he took another step forward. But this time I held my ground.

"You want to go and tell everything about me?" he cocked his head.

"Then go ahead."

I frowned.

"Go ahead and tell him. What's the most he can do, send me to the prison?" He let out a laugh, before an ominous look claimed over his face. "But know one thing before you do anything, Emerald. I don't play my cards without keeping an Ace in my hands."

"What do you mean?"

A smirk tugged at the side of his lips. "You tell him, and I'll destroy him. Now Achilles's Rosebud won't do anything to break him to pieces, will she?"

A shiver ran down my spine. Destroy him?

"You can't. You don't have that power. Ace isn't an ordinary man you can just..."

"Do you really think I'll go, do these things without having anything against him in my hands?" He raised a brow. "I'm warning you for the last time, Emerald. We don't have any personal issues, so I'd suggest you to stay away. Otherwise, your dear Ace will have to bear the consequences. Because the secret I've of your boyfriend, can destroy him to the ashes. Remember that."

I shook my head. "You're lying. You're just trying to threaten me to make me back off. You have nothing against him. He doesn't do any illegal businesses like you!" Shoving his hands into his pockets, his features turned void of any emotions. "How much do you know about his past? How much did he tell you?"

I opened my mouth, but nothing came out. Other than his drug addiction and his father's suicide, I knew nothing. But could his being a drug addict in his childhood be strong enough to destroy him? No.

He shook his head. "You know nothing! Go and ask him. Then you might know what I'm talking about.

What's the secret that can ruin Achilles Valencian."

With that, he fixed his collar and walked out of the room, leaving me standing there, immobile.

His words rang across my head like warning bells.

The secret that can ruin him to pieces? What secret he was talking about?

What more did Ace hide from me?

With my hands turned cold and trembling, my heart racing, I slowly trudged out of the door and walked away.

After pacing around my cabin for almost half an hour thinking of Arthur's threat and waiting for Ace to

finish his another meeting, I decided to call Warner again.

But again, he didn't receive his phone. Where the hell he was?

I needed to talk to Ace. I knew there was more to his past that I wasn't aware of. Like where was his

mother or what happened to his father. But I had no idea he had some secret buried in his past that

was that dangerous. Lethal enough to destroy him.

But what if Arthur was just casting arrows in the dark? Maybe he was just messing with my head?
There was nothing that he could use against Ace?
But he wouldn't just throw it on my face if he really didn't know anything.
He even told me to ask Ace myself.

I need to talk to him now. I need to know what happened in his past to stop Arthur.

With a determination formed inside me, I headed to his office. And thankfully he was alone in his cabin when I entered.

Standing before the floor to ceiling window, his gaze fixed into the distance. Hearing me, he turned to me.

"Rosebud?" His arms spread for me to fly in them, and I did. Without wasting a second.

Filling my lungs with his intoxicating soothing scent, I closed my eyes against his chest. A sigh left me with his arms firm around me.

My home. At that moment all the anxiousness and tiredness from all the incidents washed off from my body. I was in my Ace's arms.

Snuggling his nose into my hair, he inhaled deep. "Where were you? I was waiting for you to come here so that we can leave for home."

"In my cabin. Matt told me you were busy in a meeting," I mumbled into his arms.

"That wasn't important. And even if it was important, you should've come and stayed with me. I don't like it when you're not before my eyes."

A smile touched my face. Kissing his chest, I looked up at him. "I'll keep it in mind."

"Good. Now can we go home? I want to spend some quality time with my Rosebud."

I nodded, not saying anything.

What secret he was hiding from me?

His grey eyes narrowed. "What happened, baby? Is anything bothering you?"

I gazed into his beautiful grey orbs. Those little black and golden streaks around the grey, had me

breathless.

Raising my hand, I grazed his cheek. "Ace, now that we're in a relationship, I want everything to be proper. There should be no boundaries between us, no restrictions, no hesitation."

Cupping my cheeks, he brushed his lips against mine, kissing the corner of my mouth softly. "There's no boundaries between us, my rose. And if there's, I will wipe them off. Nothing can come between us, not even a single gust of air."

"I want to know everything about you, Ace. Everything that i don't know."

"You know everything about me, baby. What more do you want to know?" He frowned.

I held his gaze. "Your past. Everything about your past."

He stiffened. Something flashed across his eyes.

But it was gone soon as he kissed my forehead.

"What do you want to know?"

I was surprised at the ease his stance was radiating. I'd have believed he wasn't bothered by my words if his grey eyes weren't so blank that I couldn't trace even a hint of emotions. And it unnerved me.

"Where's your mom?" I asked. "After your father's death, she was gone from your life. Where is she, Ace?"

His face remained neutral as he said, "She's in Italy now."

"Why did she leave you and Caleb like this? You had literally no one to look after you. Didn't you try to stop her?" As far as I knew, she always adored Ace and Caleb. But I didn't understand what had gone wrong then.

His grip tightened on my hips. "As I told you before, after my father's death, she couldn't take it, so she left. Due to her depression and habit of consuming alcohol, she needed an escape from her life and this place. To get herself better, she left us to Arthur and left for the UK for treatment. And then she couldn't come back, it'd bring too many bad memories for her to do that."

As he spoke, I didn't find any hint of hatred towards his mother. I thought he hated her for leaving him like that. But he didn't. Instead, he was giving me justification for her.

And she went to the UK for treatment? And now she was in Italy. Didn't she even try once to meet her son?

"You're still connected to each other? I mean, I understand why she doesn't want to return, but, doesn't she wish to meet you every once in a while?"

He nodded. "I do meet her on some occasions. Especially on her birthdays. But except that, we just talk sometimes on the phone."

The edge in his voice had my heart clench. He must miss her a lot. I noticed how he didn't say she wants to meet him, instead he said he meets her every once in a while. What made her turn into like this? Didn't she miss her son?

"Do you miss her?" I whispered.

A muscle of his jaw ticked. He was holding off his emotions.

"Sometimes."

I rubbed his chest to provide some comfort. "Why don't you talk to her everyday?"

He averted his gaze. "Because she doesn't like that. She had got out of her depression with a lot of difficulties. And seeing me and Caleb, means her past, brings her... unwanted memories."

Seeing her own son brings unwanted memories?

"But she does try. That's why we talk sometimes," he added. He still loved her no matter how much she stayed away.

My heart tugged for him.

Nodding my head, I cleared my throat. Come on, Emerald. Ask it.

"What happened to your father?" My eyes held his stormy greys. "Why did he commit suicide?"

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His entire stance tensed as soon as I asked the question. His eyes still away from mine as he took a deep breath, his jaw locked tight.

"Rosebud, we just got together. Let's just keep the bitter chapter of my life out of our new beginning, shall we?" Grey orbs met mine. They held a desperation for me to understand. "I don't want to relive

my past when all I want is to make new beautiful memories with you." I knew it hurt him to talk about his past. But I couldn't let this go. I had this intuition that whatever

Arthur was talking about was related to his father's suicide. There could be something else also. And I needed to know everything to sort things out.

So even if it pained me to torture him with his memories, I didn't back off. "Until you're clutching on your past like that, you can't start fresh. You can't be truly happy. I can see it, Ace. You're battling

with something. There's something that's bothering you. And it's not just Antonio. Please tell me,

what's it? What happened to your father? I want to know everything." Closing his eyes, he pulled away and showed his back to me. Facing the window again, he stood there with his hands fisted.

"There's nothing much to know, Rosebud." His voice came out cold. "I used to always look up to my father as my idol. I wanted to become like him. Until I got to know his real face."

I didn't dare to interrupt him, fearing that he would just switch off again. So I just stood there silently, listening to him.

"He was a womanizer. After some years of his marriage with Mom, he started to cheat on her. And that broke my Mom," he revealed. A gasp slipped through my lips.

"But even after being unfaithful, he had always loved his reputation more than anything. He was always discreet about his affairs. Because he wanted his image to be great before the society and his children. Mom had always doubted his activities until one day he wasn't careful and she caught him with one of his girlfriends in their own bed."

I stood there immobile, shocked at the revelation. So that's why they never had a good relationship.

"And it wasn't only Mom who caught him. I and Caleb were also present there, so did Tobias and

Tess." The broad shoulders of his were rigid. "And not being able to handle the shame, he ended his life."

Silence.

The whole cabin echoed silence as he stood there with his tensed posture. Only his heavy breathing reverberated across the room.

Something clenched into my chest at the pain he wasn't willing to show. I knew how much it was affecting him.

Padding closer, I wrapped my arms around him from his back. My hands rubbed across his chest slowly, trying to provide some comfort.

"I'm so sorry," I whispered.

Grabbing my hand, he pulled me in front of him and engulfed me into his arms.

With his arms wrapped around me tightly, his head snuggled at the crook of my neck. And I hugged him back, running my hand through his hair softly.

"It was the worst day of my life. That night still haunts my dreams sometimes," he said. It pained me the way his voice cracked.

I placed a kiss on his shoulder. "I know saying it sounds easier than done, but you've to let it go, Ace. I

know whatever happened would be traumatic for anyone, but you can't let it affect your whole life

this way. Let it go. I know you still can't accept it. But you have to.

Accept it and move on. I can't see you suffering like this."

His arms around me tightened. "I'm trying. But the demons of my past pull me back into their darkness whenever I try to move on."

Moving away slightly, I cupped his face. "Then we'll fight those demons together. I'm always here with you."

"But will you always be there with me?" The unreadable look in his grey eyes left me questioning it.

I brushed my lips against his. "I will," I promised. "I'll be always there with you."

Watching me for a moment, he smashed his lips with mine. The intensity of his kiss told me how he

wanted to convey his feelings through the kiss.

Pulling away, he let out a sigh and pulled me into his arms again. "I love you, my Rosebud."

"I love you too." I snuggled into his chest.

Even though he told me everything, somehow I still felt like something was still left out. Whatever he

told me, I didn't find anything that Arthur can use against him. Was Arthur really telling me the truth?

Or Ace didn't reveal everything before me?

Whatever it was, I decided not to ask him any more questions for now.

He already told me enough. I

didn't want to torment him further.

But the tight grip of him around me as if I'd disappear somewhere at any moment made me disturbed.

What was he hiding from me?

Stirring the pasta into the pan, I put the cake into the refrigerator after getting it out from the oven.

Then I went busy with preparing the icing.

A pair of strong arms snaked around my waist from behind. The fragrance of his soap from his shower

reached my nostrils. A smile tugged on my lips.

"What's my Rose doing?" His husky voice rasped into my ear. His thumb brushed on my belly into circles.

"I'm preparing dinner for the guards." Tossing the pasta, I sprinkled some more salt in it.

He raised his brows.

I rolled my eyes. "Of course I'm making food for both of us. Though we can also send some for them. I

made a good quantity."

"No. Only I can taste the food my Rosebud makes for me." The place between his brows furrowed.

Shaking my head, I chuckled.

Unbelievable!

He snuggled into my neck again. A shiver ran through me as his stubble tickled my skin. I let out a giggle.

"Stop! It's tickling!"

He rubbed his face more against my neck, making me laugh.

When his fingers crept up to my sides, I let out a squeal, trying to get away. But holding me back, he tickled my sides, throwing me into a fit of laughter.

With a smile stretched across his face, he just watched me wiggling into his arms, cackling like an idiot.

"S-stop! I can't breathe!"

But he didn't stop. His laughter followed behind, it sounded musical to my ears.

And when I started wheezing, only then he stopped. Wiping the tears from the corner of my eyes, I

glared at him. And he just grinned, pulling me into him again.

"I'm hungry," he whispered, his hand crawling up into my blouse.

His tone told me which hunger he was referring to.

I bit my lip at the tug in my lower abdomen. "Dinner first."

"I can't wait anymore. I need you, baby," he groaned, his hands inches closer from my chest.

Completely pulling away from him, I put off the pasta from the stove.

"No, I'm making dinner and

we'll enjoy the food now. Other plans are for later."

He grumbled, trying to touch me again. But put the ladle between us, halting his movement.

"Now off you go and let me finish my job. I need to ice the cake now."

His lips pressed together. "Alright. Let me help."

"No. Today is my turn to feed you. So I'll do everything myself. I'm almost done anyways. You go and finish if you have any work left."

"Oh, I can't wait for you to feed me," he commented, licking his lips.

My cheeks flamed at his double meaning. Letting out a laugh, he pressed a kiss on my lips and walked away.

Shaking my head, I let out a sigh.

Though he was behaving like nothing happened, I could tell his facade. Behind his all teasing and

laughter, I could see the storm brewing in his eyes. After our little talk in his cabin, he seemed more at edge than ever.

Something was bothering him a lot.

Turning under the sheet, I found myself all cold. I didn't wake up to the warm body I went to sleep in.

My hand stretched for him on the bed, but he wasn't there.

Reaching out, I turned on the lamp that lightened the dark room. He wasn't anywhere around.

The bathroom and balcony doors were locked either.

Where did he go?

After our dinner, he took me to the bedroom and made love to me until I was exhausted and couldn't

move a limb. With his gentle touches and sweet whisperings into my ear, I had found myself into a peaceful sleep.

But now he wasn't here.

Ignoring the discomfort down there, I got up and put on his t-shirt, the one he threw on the floor earlier during our hot session.

Padding out of the room, I went to the hall and kitchen. Not finding him there, I checked the other rooms. But he wasn't anywhere.

"Ace?"

Silence.

And then my eyes went to the small hallway that led to the library, gym and his office.

Biting my lip, I trudged through the hallway and stopped before the gym.

Through the gap beneath the door, I could see the lights were on.

I frowned.

What was he doing here at midnight?

Twisting the knob, I pushed the door open and walked inside. "Ace..."

And I was cut off with the scene I saw before me.

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Sweat trickled down his strong back along the tensing and flexing of his muscles and shoulders as he

was lost into killing his huge punching bag.
Only the sound of his ragged breathing and punches echoed around the gym.
But what had me shocked was the bloody spots on the punching bag.
And I knew where they were coming from.
Rage boiled inside my veins as my fists clenched. He was doing it again.
"Ace! Stop it!"
His movement stilled with his hands gripping the bag to halt its swaying.
The broad shoulders of his moved up and down with his every heavy breath as he moved his head to me. Dark stormy grey eyes met mine flaming turquoise.
Striding closer, I snatched his hands from the bag. A gasp left me at the sight. They were worse than I'd ever seen before. They weren't just bruised, they were bloody.
"What the hell you're doing!" I snapped, my eyes burned with tears as I held his gaze. "Have you lost it? You're bleeding! How many times do I have to tell you not to do this! You're hurting yourself again!"
But my outburst didn't seem to reach his ears. His eyes were too busy to watch me, roaming onto every feature of mine.
But when a tear slipped down my cheek, he got back into his senses.
"Rosebud? What happened, baby? Why are you crying?" He cupped my cheeks, grey pools alert. "Are you hurt?"
Didn't he even realize what I was talking about?
Something squeezed inside my chest. Where was he lost into so much?
What was bothering him to that extent that he didn't even realize his own pain?
"Yes, I'm hurt."
Concern etched into his beautiful face as they searched for any injuries on my body. "Hurt? Where? How did you get hurt?"
"You hurt me," I whispered.
He stilled, watching me in silence. A pain flashed across his eyes as if even the idea of hurting me

hunted him. "I could never hurt you, Rosebud. I'd rather die before doing that."

"But you did. Not physically, but emotionally. You're hurting me by hurting yourself." Taking a hold of his bloodied knuckles carefully, I held them before his face. "You lied to me. I thought you told me it'll stop once I'm in your arms forever. But it didn't. I guess, I'm not important enough for you to soothe your pain."

Shaking his head, he tried to touch me but I stepped back. A grimace touched his face.

"Rosebud, there's nothing more important than you for me. You're the sole reason I live for." He gulped, pain flashed across his eyes as another tear rolled down my cheek.

"Then why? Why do you torture yourself like that?" I sniffled. Glancing down at his knuckles, a muscle of his jaw ticked. "Pain makes me forget, Rosebud. It helps me escape my fears and insecurities. And intense working out helps me with my frustration and the storm that rages inside me."

Fear? Insecurities?

Hearing those words from Achilles Valencian's mouth sounded foreign. What fear this powerful man before me could have?

"What fear?" My voice came out as a whisper.

Grey eyes met mine. "Fear of losing you."

For a moment my heartbeat slowed down as I stared at him, speechless.

"Why would me lose me? I'm not going anywhere."

He averted his gaze. With fists clenched, he turned away. "It's late, Rosebud. You should go and sleep now."

"Do not change the topic!" Grabbing his arm, I made him face me. "I'm not accepting my questions being unanswered anymore! You're definitely hiding something from me and that's eating you alive!

What is it? Tell me. Please, Ace. Don't keep me in the dark anymore."

"I'm not hiding anything from you," his reply came out cold.

"Of course, you're! I'm not a kid you could just lie that easily," I snapped, my temper rising.

I couldn't let him torture himself like that. There was something that was ruining him from inside, and he needed to let it out. And I definitely needed to know why he had this fear of losing me. Because I wasn't going anywhere.

"You're still hiding something from me about your past, aren't you? You didn't tell me the entire truth."

His whole stance tensed as his dark eyes snapped to mine. His hands shook at his sides, the unreadable emotions swirling around his orbs were unknown to me. "I told you everything that you needed to know."

I tilted my head. "So that means the things you hid from me weren't important enough for you to tell me?"

His lips pressed tight, eyes flashing. "I don't want to talk about this anymore."

"No! You have to! I won't let you torture yourself like that! Nor will I let you keep me in the darkness anymore!"

"Why do you have so much interest in my past!" His voice boomed across the room, making me flinch.

"I've been hearing these questions the whole fucking day! Can't you get this one thing that I don't want to talk about it? Leave my past the fuck alone!"

I stood still. Shock, surprise and hurt ran through me at once. He had never talked to me like that.

What happened years ago that made him react like that?

Seeing my shock, guilt washed over his face as he let out a curse, rubbing his face in frustration.

"Rosebud, i- I'm so sorry! I'm so sorry, baby!" His features were laced with agony. "I didn't mean to shout at you. I just- I lost it."

When he tried to reach me again, I took another step back.

"It's alright, it can happen sometimes. I don't mind. As long as you tell me the truth."

Closing his eyes, he pinched the bridge of his nose. "Emerald, please stop it. I can't."

Even I couldn't. As selfish as it sounded, but he didn't know what dagger we had dangling on our

necks. To truly start our life together and defeat Arthur, I needed the truth.

"I won't. You've kept me in darkness for seven years and it made both of us suffer for years. I won't

let you do it again. Tell me, Ace. Please, I beg..."

"Oh, for God's sake! Stop it! Don't be so fucking stubborn, Emerald! I can't tell you anything. What you needed to know, I told you that. You don't need to know anymore. So let's just keep it that way!

It'll be good for both of us!"

Before I could say anything else, he passed me and stormed out of the gym, slamming the door behind him.

I just stood there silently. So many questions were swirling inside my head like a wildfire. But I had no answers.

He used Emerald two times today. And that wasn't a good sign.

I padded inside the bedroom again. Leaving the door ajar, I walked towards the bed and sat on it.

Letting out a sigh, I glanced at the clock.

One in the morning.

After our fight, he left the penthouse before I could even come out of the gym. When I heard him slamming the door close, I knew he wasn't returning for at least some hours.

Where did he go?

Now that I was calmed down a little, I felt how harsh I was with him. I knew how sensitive this matter was for him, but I continued to poke him. Nagged him for answers. I should've just given him some time instead of snapping like that.

How could I be so careless?

It was the fear of Arthur's doing some harm to him and the desperation of removing him from our lives. And now seeing how much the truth is affecting him, I needed to know everything even more.

I wanted to heal his wounds. I wanted to give him comfort, tell him that I was there with him, that I understand. But how could I do that if he wouldn't let me in completely?

If he didn't open up to me completely, it'd become a hinder between us for the rest of our lives. It'll always weaken our relationship.

I wanted him to open up to me. I wanted him to trust me with his secrets.

Maybe I should just give him some time.

And then I remembered that I didn't bandage his knuckles.

Picking up my phone, I dialed his number. But it directly went to voicemail. I called again, but no vail.

Where the hell is he?

His wounds are needed to be taken care of.

Frustrated, as I slammed my phone on the bed, it began blaring.

With a skip of my heart, I picked it up. But disappointment soon followed as Warner's name flashed on the screen.

Rubbing my forehead, I received the call.

"Hey! I called you earlier the day, you didn't pick up. What's up?"

Honestly, I didn't have the strength to talk about Arthur right now.

"I was busy digging out some worms, but guess what? I've found a snake instead," his voice spoke from the other side of the phone.

I frowned. "What're you talking about?"

"Remember once you told me how you didn't know a lot of things about Achilles's past. And knowing how sensitive it was for him, you were hesitating to ask him?"

I remembered talking to him at Tess's wedding. When he saw Ace and me together, even though he didn't look happy, he did congratulate me. And when he asked me what was my next step in our relationship, I told him how I wanted to know more about Ace. It'd be our first step of our new life.

But seemed like it was turning out quite difficult.

"Yeah, but why are you talking about that now?"

"Well, I thought I could help you a little. And guess what? I was right from the beginning. That man doesn't deserve you. Because he never told you any truths. All he did was keeping you in the dark and manipulating you in his trap with his sweet lies!" he hissed through the phone.

I stood up from the bed. "What do you mean? What are you talking about? I thought I told you not to talk about him like that..."

"I'm just stating the truth, Em. I just called you to tell you what a liar he is."

My eyes narrowed further. "Come to the point. What lie did he say to me? What do you want to say exactly?"

"He told you his father did suicide, didn't he?"

Something churned inside me as I slowly nodded even if he couldn't see me. "Yes?"

"His father didn't suicide, Em. He was murdered."

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What? Murdered?

I stilled, his words were slowly processing in my head.

"W-what are you talking about? Everyone knows he did suicide. And I even know why he did that. Ace told me everything."

I heard him scoffing.

"Your Ace definitely lied to you again. Just like did every time. Just like he created a sham to break your heart."

I ignored his jab and the urge to right his words. Though he was right, there was a truth behind that act also.

"How do you know that his father was murdered? Who told you that?"

"Digging out Arthur's truth as we got to know what illegal businesses he runs, I had a suspicion that

Achilles could have some connections with his uncle's activities. I mean, Arthur was doing all these

under his nose and he had no idea about it? Now that sounds a little unbelievable. So I told my cousin

to look into Achilles's past. And look what I found."

I let out a breath of disbelief.

If he was murdered then why everyone, even the media said he did suicide back then? And why did

Ace lie to me about it?

"Do you have any proof? What made you believe that he was murdered? And who'd murder him and why?"

"Rich people, they can do anything with money, even hiding evidence, Em. After his death, even the forensic reports said he was murdered. But the Valencians fed some cash to the cops and all settled out," he said. "Your Achilles Valencian did a good job of wiping off all the evidence of the murder and any mentions of the person who did the crime. So we didn't get any proof except some words from a person who was a former cop involved back then in the case. And when we asked him if he would give any statement about it to the police, he replied with a big no. We only could make him spit out this information once we got him drunk at a local bar."

Shocked, I slumped on the bed. His voice rang into my head again and again.

His father was murdered and he destroyed every evidence against the criminal?

Who was he trying to save? And could I even trust Warner's information? Did Ace really do it?

But my heart said he couldn't do it. He wouldn't save his own father's murderer.

"D-did that man tell you that Ace did it? He bribed the cops?"

"He said 'the man from Valencians' side'. And as Arthur wasn't in the country at that moment and

Caleb was too good to even think of that, who do you think would do that if not Achilles?" he asked,

tone mocking. "What a great man you love, Em. The man who saves his own father's murderer."

My jaw clenched. "Warner, you don't know the whole truth. So I'd suggest you not to reach any conclusion so soon! I know Ace, he'd never do that! He loved his father!" He did, before he knew his father's real face.

And I meant what I said. Yes, I was shook at the revelation. But I wouldn't doubt him like that. I'd just

directly ask him. And for that I needed him to come home.

"You don't understand, Em. Something really fishy is going on. That Achilles, he isn't the right person

for you! He's only manipulating you into his trap..."

"I'll talk to you later." With that, I cut the call.

A headache started to form into my head. Keeping the phone aside, I rubbed my temples.

I had no strength to argue with him right now. All the mess spilling into my life from the last few

months was rising up an exhaustion in me. Why were there so many questions out there and I had no answers?

And the person who could relive me from the torture, wasn't ready to open up to me.

I had tried to tell him about Arthur so many times, but every time I chickened out thinking I could ruin

our relationship out of my rash decisions. But now that I finally was ready to tell him everything with

Liza's subtle confession, Arthur's threat to destroy him stopped me.

Was Arthur talking about this? Something that related to Ace's father's murder and his protecting the

real culprit? But what could it be that's lethal enough to ruin him?

And is this secret also connected to Ace's fear of losing me?

D-did he think once I found out that how he closed the police's mouth to hide a crime, I'd leave him?

Letting out a frustrated breath, I picked up my phone and called him again. But again it went to freaking voicemail!

And my hours passed like that. Half asleep half awake, waiting for him.

But he didn't return. Nor did

he call. I even called Carter to see if he knew anything, but even he didn't have any idea of his

location.

The flashes of his enraged grey eyes that hid an unspoken agony behind them was replying in my

mind when darkness wholly engulfed me.

Sorry, Ms. Hutton. I still couldn't find out the boss' location. But don't worry, he's fine. He'll come back soon.

Sighing, I put the phone on the counter and took a sip on my tea.

It was ten in the morning and he wasn't still here. I again called Carter to look for him but this was

what I got as an answer.

Worry was nagging me constantly. With Arthur and Antonio's roaming around free, I couldn't sit in

peace. That infuriating man didn't even take the guards with him!

No matter how much sinfully built he was, he can't fight against five or ten men, can he? He shouldn't

have left like that alone.

I swear I'll put some brain into his big ass brain once he comes back!

The blare of my phone put a break on my fuming.

Tess's blinding smiling face showed up on the screen after I received the video call.

"Em! You won't believe how beautiful this place is! Look at the background! It's the view from my

balcony!" Her gushing in happiness put a small smile on my face.

She and Caleb left for Greece for their honeymoon right after their wedding reception. And this was

the first time we were talking since that day.

"Yeah, it's amazing. How are your days going there?" I kept my voice as chirpy as I could.

"It's going great! Even though we're spending most of our time in the bed. The views are amazing. I

totally fell in love with this place!" She giggled.

As envious as it sounded, I wished I and Ace also could go somewhere far from here, just the two of us,

away from all the tension and threats. Though he was planning a vacation for us, with all this going on

I didn't think it was possible now.

Just then Caleb's always happy face appeared beside hers.

"Hey, Achilles's Rosebud! What's up? My cousin is treating you good at my absence, right?"

I smiled. "I'm good. And don't worry, he's pampering me too much for me to get lazy soon." Well,

except his behavior last night. But I'd blame his situation for that. "And what about you? You better

treat my sister well in my absence, mister. Otherwise you'll find me chasing you all around Greece

soon."

Letting out a laugh, he kissed on Tess's temple. "Oh, though I'm not as romantic as Achilles, I'm trying

my best. Ain't I , baby?" His filled with love puppy eyes fell on my blushing sister.

"You're doing great," she whispered.

I cleared my throat, getting both of their attention back.

"Don't ruin my morning, guys! I can talk to you later if you need some privacy," I teased.

Caleb awkwardly scratched the back of his head, grinning sheepishly while Tess just got more red.

"No need!" saying, she pushed Caleb away from the camera. "You go get something for me to eat. I'm

hungry. Let me talk to my sister in the meanwhile."

Grumbling he complained about how bossy she was and walked away.

And then Tess's eyes got back

on me. A serious look etched onto her face.

"What's wrong, Em? Your eyes are not as chirpy as your voice sounds. Is everything alright?" she

asked.

My smile dropped. Anyone could see that with my dark circles under my eyes and dull appearance if

they looked closely.

"Nothing. Just didn't get much sleep last night."

"Don't lie to me. Tobias called me to tell what's happening there. What happened that he left like that?

Has he returned yet?"

Along Carter, I also sought out my brother's help. But I got no luck in it too.

I shook my head, my shoulders slumped down. "He didn't. We had a little argument last night. And he

just... snapped."

Her brows furrowed, disbelief flashed across her blue orbs. "He got mad at you?"

I shrugged. "It was my fault. I was pushing him too much."

"Is it about Warner? Because the only thing that can get him mad at you is his jealousy."

Well, there was another thing you didn't know.

"No, not Warner. I was just trying to know something that I felt he was hiding from me. About his past.

And I can see it, Tess. It's eating him alive. Something is bothering him a lot. But he wouldn't just tell

me."

Understanding laced her features. "You know how sensitive his past was, right? Maybe that's why?

There's some parts that maybe you don't know about his parents. He only told you bits on your date night."

"I know everything. He told me yesterday. But still, he's still hiding something." I fidgeted into my chair. "Uh, do you know about the reason behind his father's suicide, why did he do it? I know why he did it, Ace told me. But, is there something else that he doesn't want anyone to know?"

Maybe she knew something more than Ace told me? Maybe she was aware of the murder case?

Her frown deepened. "No, he did suicide because of shame. There's nothing else. Why do you think so?"

I shrugged again. "I don't know. Don't you think it sounds a bit odd that the man who didn't care and respect his wife's emotions and went around in her back even after knowing her suspicion, takes his life just because his family caught him red handed?"

She pondered for a moment, biting her inner cheek. "I don't know, Em. I was present there that night when we saw him with his girlfriend. But after that Tobias and I left not wanting to intervene into their personal matter. And the next day I heard the news. I don't think there's anything more to this.

Achilles would've shared it with us then."

Sighing, I nodded. I didn't know whose words to believe. But Warner wouldn't just lie to me without any solid information.

"Alright, Caleb is here. I'll talk to you later. And let me know when Achilles comes back," she said, glancing behind. "And Em, take it slowly. I'm sure, if there's something, he'll tell you. Sooner or later."

Smiling, I nodded again and bid her bye before cutting the video call. My ardent eyes went back to the clock. Waiting.

When will he come back?

I think Tess is right. I should take it slow and give him some time. I could at least do it for him no

matter how this new information bothered me. I really didn't want to reach any conclusions without knowing the whole truth.

Where are you?

I let out a groan. I missed him.

And just then the doorbell rang making me leap up to my feet. My heart started to thump into my chest.

He is here!

Sprinting to the door, when I pulled it open, my smile faltered.

The familiar brown eyes greeted me as I stood there surprised.

"Warner? What are you doing here?"

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"Came to meet my best friend. Why? I'm not allowed in Achilles Valencian's cave?"

I rolled my eyes. I knew inviting him in could cause a catastrophe if Ace comes and sees him here, but

I couldn't just send him away.

"It's not like that. Come in!"

He strolled inside as I opened the door wide for him.

"Coffee?" I asked while he looked around the penthouse, his hands stuffed into his pockets.

"Thanks!"

Nodding my head, I padded into the kitchen and he followed behind.

"So, what brought you here all of a sudden? You didn't tell me you were going to drop by."

"After last night, I thought to talk to you personally. I wanted to see if you're okay," he replied.

"I'm fine, Warner. Don't worry!" I put water on the stove.

"Did you ask him yet?" He watched me carefully.

A sigh left me as I shook my head. "I didn't get the chance. He isn't home since last night."

One of his brows raised. "Home, huh?"

I ignored his bitter tone.

"I mean, his home." Though it's just been two days I was staying here, this penthouse just started to

feel like home to me. Well, he was my home.

So wherever he stays, my home resides there.

Once I made him a cup of coffee, we settled in the hall.

I just hope Ace doesn't show up at this moment.

"So, you got any more information on Arthur?"

Then something clicked in my head. How could I be so irresponsible? I

forgot to tell him that Arthur

knew about him and his detective cousin.

"Unfortunately, no. We tried our best but..."

"You've to tell your cousin to stop investigating right now!" I cut him off,

causing a crease to settle

between his brows. "Arthur knows everything. And he even threatened

me to stay out of his path."

His eyes widened. "What? Shit! That's what I was fearing about!"

Shaking his head, his eyes landed

back on me. "And what threat? Did he do anything to you? Are you

okay?"

I nodded. "Yes, I'm fine. He just warned me to stay away otherwise... uh,

you know what he can do."

I didn't want to involve him more into this by telling him what Arthur

threatened me about. He

already suspected Ace, I didn't want him to go after Ace's past any more.

If Ace hid something from

the world, there must be a reason behind it. Making everything worse

wouldn't be a good idea.

"I'm really sorry, Warner. I shouldn't have involved you guys in this. Now

you and your cousin also

came into his eyes," I apologized. "Please stop whatever investigation

your cousin is running. Thank

you so much for your help, but I'll handle everything myself from now

on."

Shaking his head, he took my hand in his. "It's not your fault, Em. It's me

who offered help. And don't

need to thank me, it's what friends do, right?" He smiled. "And there is

no way you're also doing this

anymore. It's risky, Em. Don't instigate him further. He already warned

you once."

"I'm not scared of him. Nor am I gonna back out. He'll rot behind the

bars. And I'll make sure of that!"

Determination etched through me.

It was just a matter of time.

He let out a defeated sigh. "Why aren't you telling Achilles then? Arthur threatened you by showing his real face. Isn't that enough for Achilles to believe you? Or you also think that he's involved with his uncle's sins?"

I snatched my hand from his, giving him a pointed look. "We're not doing this again, Warner. I told

you not to assume anything before you've solid proof against him."

"Solid proof? Didn't you hear what I told you last night?" His voice rose, jaw tightened. "He destroyed

every proof that could prove his father's murder before the world. He's saving a criminal. A heinous

criminal to say. And you're saying not to assume anything? I can't believe you, Em!"

"You don't know the whole story. Whatever happened years ago, we don't know anything about it.

Even the man you talked to. There must be a reason why Ace did it, or there's also a possibility that he

didn't even do anything! That man could be talking about someone else." I tried my best to keep my

tone calm. "So, please. Until I know the whole truth, I don't want to hear any more about this topic.

It's my and Ace's personal matter, Warner. I'd like you to stay away."

A dry chuckle left him, sadness flashing across his eyes. "I almost forgot that you're not my Em

anymore."

I averted my gaze. I should've felt guilty right now, but I didn't. He was crossing his limits now. I had to stop him.

"I'm still your Em, your best friend, Warner. It's just that, things are different right now. I really

appreciate your concern for me, but trust me, Ace isn't what you think he is. Even if I believe your

words that he's lying to me, there must be a reason for that. Because I know, he wouldn't do anything

to hurt me intentionally. He loves me, Warner," I said, softly.

His brown orbs met mine. "Even I'd loved you, Em. But that didn't make you stick with me that much

you're doing it for him."

"Warner..."

He rubbed his face. "I'm sorry! I again crossed my limits, didn't I? I just... can't accept the thing that you're with someone else now."

I sighed. "It's for the better, Warner. No matter how much I loved you as a friend, I never loved you as a lover. My heart was always for someone else, and you knew that. We weren't meant to be together.

Even if Ace hadn't come into the picture and somehow we were still together, trust me, Warner, any of us couldn't stay happy. I could never make you happy. So it was necessary to end it before we made it worse."

"Well, that's just your opinion. Because I was very happy with you in our relationship."

But I wasn't. I wanted to add, but decided against.

"There's someone out there who's worthy of your love, Warner.

Someone who can give you equal

love in return of your affection. And I'm sure, you'll find her soon," I

whispered. "Anyways, let's not

talk about it anymore. How's everything going in your life? You're probably going back soon to Seattle,

right? I'm quite impressed that your boss let you take leave for that long. I thought he was a snob?"

Taking a sip on his coffee, he shrugged. "I quit my job."

"What?" I gaped. "But why? I thought working in such a massive company was your dream?

Everything was going smooth, then what happened all of a sudden?"

His gaze locked with mine. "Achilles Valencian happened."

I frowned. "What do you mean?"

He let out a sigh. "As you already know that my boss was an ass. I didn't know why, but he had an

allergy with me taking any leave. So even when I wanted some days of leave for Tess's wedding, he

denied. Of course, my main purpose was to meet you. But I couldn't stay there in Seattle without

sorting things out with you. Yes, I was mad with you, but there was still some hope that I could win

you back." Casting me a glance, he cleared his throat. "Anyways, so I didn't wait for his approval and

left. I just told him that I was sick and can't be present for some days."

"Then what's the problem?" I probed.

"The problem is that the owner of the company got to know about my leave and demanded my immediate presence in the office. And if I didn't do it, I'd have to lose my job." His laughter was dry. "I was surprised that why an owner of a multi billionaire company would be interested in an ordinary employee's leave? So I looked him up on Google. And guess what? What a coincidence, my big boss and your boss turned out to be friends."

Now my frown deepened. A warning bell rang at the back of my mind.

"Friends? You mean, Ace's friend?"

He nodded. "Can you connect the dots? Now I understand why among so many candidates, some even from most prestigious colleges, they chose me. They made me shift to Seattle. Or should I say he made me. To keep me away from you."

I just stared at him, flabbergasted. I didn't know what to say.

Did Ace really send Warner to Seattle to keep him away from me?

"How can you be so sure?" My tone low.

He threw me a look of disbelief. "After everything I told you, you're still trying to defend him? Isn't everything clear? He clearly told his friend to get me a job in his company so that I'd have no way but to leave you behind. So that he could have his chance with you. And he did! He took you away from me!"

His fists clenched and unclenched, eyes flashing with anger.

"That's why I didn't fall into his trap again. I quit the job even if my boss told me that if I quit the job just like that, it'd breach the contract they made me sign. And I'd be responsible for the big red mark on my career." His jaw ticked. "But I couldn't let him win this time. So I quit. And Achilles Valencian did what he said. He literally made sure I didn't get any job anywhere. First he took you away from me, and now he ruined my career."

"I can't believe this!" Putting my head into my hands, I let out a breath.

What the hell is wrong with him? What the fuck was running into his head when he did all these things?

He couldn't just let his possessiveness ruin someone's career, for God's sake!

That freaking prick!

"Now you know why I keep telling you that he's not the right person for you? You're an obsession for him, Em. He wanted to get you at any cost. And he did. But trust me, Em, obsession doesn't stay for long. Once he gets bored with you, he'll toss you around like you're nothing."

His words didn't reach my ears, because all I could think about was how to smash something into his head when he comes home back. Rage boiled into my veins like a lava. How dare he do that to Warner?

I looked up at him. "I'm so sorry, Warner. I don't know what to say... I'm extremely sorry. I'll talk to him, don't worry. Everything will be fine. You'll get back your job, I promise."

He shook his head. "So you're still not leaving him? Even after everything?"

Closing my eyes, I pinched the bridge of my nose. "I love him, Warner. I can't just leave him like that."

He stared at me for a moment and then averted his eyes. Nodding slowly, he got up. "I guess I should leave now. And you don't have to talk to him about my job. I'll do something myself. Thanks for offering help."

"Warner, stop!" I stood up as he turned to leave. "Don't leave just like that. I'm extremely sorry, but..."

"It's okay, Em. You don't need to say sorry. I should've known that no matter how much I try, I can't take his place in your heart. I've to be somewhere right now. I'll see you later." And then he was out of the sight.

My shoulders slumped. The broken look in his eyes made my heart ache. I didn't want to hurt him.

But still, I did. And to add salt on his wounds, my freaking boyfriend just ruined his career!

He has a lot of answering to do!

But where the hell was he?

Picking up my phone, I called him again. But it went to the voicemail again.

Letting out a curse, I threw the phone on the couch. It bounced off and dropped on the floor. It

definitely had a crack on its glass.

But I didn't care to pick it up again. To get some fresh air, I took my purse and stormed out of the penthouse.

I needed to collect some clothes back from my home. And to have a small chat about my sudden relationship with Mom and Dad of course. They had been nagging to know what was going on with me and that prick!

And yes, as much as I was angry at him, I was going to come back.

Otherwise, how'd I get to knock some sense into his thick head?

Parking my car before the office building, I got out with my duffle bag. Heavy breeze blew my hair in different ways as the thunder cracked among the dark sky. The hefty clouds covered the moon completely tonight, inducing an ominous ambience around.

The sudden change of the weather in this early winter was kinda unexpected. It was a good sunny day today. But now it seemed it'd pour at any moment.

Greeting the watchman, I strolled inside and got into the VIP elevator. Due to the bad weather, most of the employees seemed to be in a hurry to leave earlier tonight. Because of all the tension and headache he gave me, I didn't join the office today.

I didn't know if the devil was home yet or not. As I didn't take my phone with me, I didn't get any calls from Carter or anyone else, nor did I call him. I was even thinking to give him a silent treatment for leaving like that all of a sudden and doing that to Warner.

My jaw clenched at the thought of what he did. He had a lot of answering to do!

Meeting with my parents went smooth. I was grateful that they didn't ask many questions about why

I didn't take him along. He was supposed to go there with me. But they were actually pleased that I

decided to give Ace a chance.

But I didn't think they would be happy if I had told them what their favorite Achilles Valencian did.

Shaking my head, I padded out of the elevator as the doors slid open.

The bodyguards' postures were too stiff than usual and their nods were tighter than normal.

What's with them tonight?

The sound of lightning reached my ears again as I walked into the penthouse and closed the doors

behind me.

A frown was immediate to form between my brows.

The lights were off. But I left them on.

Was he home?

Shrugging off my coat, I trudged inside. Goosebumps crawled across my skin as the cool air touched

my bare arms.

The hall's lights were dimmed and the eerie silence suddenly unnerved me.

And then I saw a shadow. Sitting on the couch, its posture was slightly leaned forward with its elbows

rested on its knees.

My heartbeat ran fast. "A-ace, is that you?"

And the only reply I got was silence.

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"Ace?" I called again, but the shadow didn't move.

Padding closer, I squinted my eyes. The lightning that cracked outside left a flash of luster on his face

for a fleeting second. Stormy grey eyes were set on me. But they were dark tonight. Much stormier

than I'd even encountered.

I let out a sigh of relief. "What the hell is wrong with you? You almost gave me a heart attack!"

When he didn't answer, I found the switch and turned the lights on.
And there he was.
Still in his last night's pants and a fresh black shirt, the one he must have worn before storming out,
his disheveled form sat silently on the couch. Some of the buttons of his shirt were undone, giving me
a sinful sight.
Even the dark circles under his eyes and a day's of old stubble didn't do anything to make him look
any less sexier.
I missed him.
I gave myself an inner shake. It wasn't a time to drool over him.
"So you finally got time to come back?" My tone sharp. Wasn't I planning to give him a silent
treatment?
I pressed my lips together when he just continued to stare at me with his icy cold gaze without saying
a word.
"I'm talking to you! Where were you the whole night and the entire day? I was going crazy out of
concern!"
"You were concerned about me? I thought you were too busy spending a nice time with your special
friend." His cold voice came out with his head tilted to the side.
Special friend? What was he talking...
Oh!
But how did he find out about Warner? He wasn't even here.
Crossing my arms over my chest, I held a straight face. "I don't think it should bother you if I spend a
little time with my friend."
"Of course, it should bother me!" He snapped, shooting up to his legs. And my flinching back at his
thunderous voice was immediate. "My woman is getting cozy with her ex-boyfriend at my back in my
own house, and you're saying it shouldn't bother me? It does fucking bother me!"
I stilled.
At his back?
"A-at your back? What are you trying to imply, Ace?" I asked. It was more like a whisper.

My chest tightened. How could he even imagine that I'd ever do that to him?

Shock flashed over his eyes in place of rage as realization of his own words hit him. "I meant..." Tone thick. "When I wasn't present here. What was he doing here in my penthouse? How did you even let him in? Even after knowing how'd I feel about it? Even after knowing how he feels about you!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry! I didn't know I wasn't allowed to let my friends in your penthouse. I'd have definitely asked for your permission if you were available on the phone." I faked a sweet smile.

I thought it was our home...

I blinked away the burn in my eyes. Was he even aware of the fact that how he was hurting me getting lost into his anger and jealousy?

His fists clenched. "Emerald, don't test my patience. You know very well what I'm talking about."

Emerald again?

"I don't know what you're talking about. Warner came here to talk to me and we had a little chat.

Then he left. I don't know what we did for you to think that I was cheating on you."

Striding closer, he pulled me to him by my arms. "I said I didn't mean that! Don't twist my words!"

I wiggled out of his grip. "I'm not twisting your words! I'm just stating what you said. You were clearly implying that I was cheating on you! I can't believe you think I could ever do that to you. How could you?"

"I know you can't ever do that, damn it! The one I don't trust is that man!" He cupped my cheeks, holding my gaze with his furious ones. "Can't you see what he's trying to do? Can't you see what he

wants? He wants to take you away from me. And you're letting him!"

"Just like you took away his career from him? Just like you sent him away to Seattle because you wanted him away from me?"

A muscle of his jaw ticked but he stayed silent. His unapologetic flaming gaze drove my temper to a

haywire.

I shook my head. "I can't believe this! How can you ruin someone's career like that? He's just a friend to me, he always was. How many times do I have to tell you? I always ignored every craziness you did in these past months. Your buying Cooper's company so that you could make me transfer back to California, putting guards after me, threatening off any men who come near me and making me an equal owner of everything you own." I counted the only incidents that I could remember at this moment. "I let everything go thinking you'll come around eventually. But I won't tolerate this! I won't let you do this to Warner!"

Pulling me flush against his chest, the dark pupils of his darkened more, his nostrils flaring. "Why?"

I frowned.

"Why is he so important to you? Why even after I'm telling you that he wants to steal you from me but still you're fighting me for him!" He roared, cupping my jaw. But no matter how furious he was, his grip was gentle. "Why do you still care for him that much now that he isn't your boyfriend anymore?!"

I gritted my teeth. Didn't he hear what I was saying again and again?

"Because he's one of my best fri...."

"You love him?"

Words caught at my throat as soon as the question came out his mouth. Pressing his forehead against mine, his thumb gently brushed over my cheek. Vulnerability flashed across his eyes along the light of thunder that fell on us through the open window. "Do you still have feelings for him, Rosebud? Does he love you more than I do? D-do you regret leaving him, leaving a good sensible man for a crazy obsessed man like me who has a tainted past?"

"W-what?" The crack in his voice hit my heart like a sharp dagger. Achilles Valencian was showing me his fear, insecurities. So that's why he was so vexed about

Warner's roaming around me that much? Not only his jealousy, but his insecurities made him do all these things. Because he thought he wasn't good enough for me? But why would he think like that?

"I wouldn't be with you right now if I regretted even a bit to choose you. I wouldn't be in your arms like this if I had loved him and not you," I held his gaze as I said those words. "If I didn't love you, and only you, I wouldn't be waiting here for you even after the way you left last night."

"Then why do you still care for him so much? Why are you still letting him be into your life?"

"Oh for God's sake, Ace!" I jerked away from him. "Just because we broke up doesn't mean I'll throw him out of my life! And I won't because he's my friend, and I'm telling you this for a thousand times! I don't love him, I never did! I don't understand why you're so insecure about him being around me?"

"Because even after you broke up with him, he still wants you! He wants you back in his life, can't you see it!" His shoulders fell up and down with every heavy breath he took. "You don't know him, Rosebud. He wants to take you away from me. He..."

"I don't care if I know him or not!" I cut him off. "Nor do I want to know him. But I thought I knew you. But guess what? I'm not certain anymore about it."

A tear left my eye as I stared at him. His gaze followed it, hands clenching at his sides.

"You lied to me," I whispered. "I didn't think my Ace would lie to me like that."

His lips pressed tight. "I never remember you asking me about Warner's suddenly getting hired and anything regarding his job."

"That's one of the things you hid from me. But I'm not talking about these right now," I said. "I'm talking about your father's death. You told me he did suicide. But it's not the truth. He didn't suicide, he was murdered."

His shoulders tensed. In place of the rage on his features, sat an unreadable mask now. But no matter

how much he tried to hide his true feelings, those stormy grey eyes of his revealed everything. Shock, confusion, frustration, anger and... fear.

I had decided to give him some time to reveal everything before me. I didn't want to force him to do anything. Understanding how sensitive it was for him, I thought I'd give him his needed space before he was ready to let me in.

But now seeing his irrational fear, insecurities and jealousy, seeing to what extent he went under the influence of them, I couldn't sit quiet. Because of that past, he had this assumption that he wasn't good enough for me. That I could leave him anytime realizing the fact. A secret that was eating him alive and was the reason behind his fear of losing me, I wanted to be aware of that. Because the way he was behaving every time at the mere mention of his past, I didn't think he'd be ever ready to tell me anything.

Because he thought if I got to know this dark past of his, I'd leave him. And he'd do anything but let me go.

I wanted him to trust me, to let me in. I wanted to heal him. I wanted to be beside him, the thing I couldn't do years ago.

And for that, I needed to know everything.

"How... how do you know that?" Greek accent was deeper than ever.

"Who told you about this?" A

silent tension was rolling off his stance, ready to explode any moment. His nails dug into his palms.

Even though I knew Warner wouldn't lie to me, I was still shocked knowing that his father was indeed murdered.

"It's true, isn't it?" A shaky breath left my lips. "Your father was murdered."

"Who told you that?" Sharp jaw tight as rock.

"Who did it, Ace?" I asked, ignoring his question. "And why did you hide it from me?"

He inhaled deep, eyes darker than earlier. "I didn't lie about anything. Whoever told you this

nonsense doesn't know a shit. So just forget about it."

"Don't lie to me again, Ace! I can see it in your eyes!" I glared. "I don't know why even you're hiding anything from me. We both know what's the truth. Then why...wait," I tilted my head, "are you trying to save someone? Are you trying to hide the person who killed your father?"

The unnerving silence and the storm brewing into his gaze was my answer. His fisted hands shook at his sides.

I gasped. "S-so, it's true then. You're trying to save a murderer."

"Emerald, stop it."

Shaking my head, I gaped at him. "So it's also true that it was you who bribed the police to save the culprit."

"Stop..."

"How could you? No, no, no. I don't believe this. You can't do that. There must be a reason behind that, right? There was a valid reason. You can't do that to your own father..."

"I said stop!"

I flinched at his thunderous roar. My horrified gaze met his flaming ones. "Fucking stop it already! I've had enough! Can't you get one fucking thing in your head that I don't want to talk about it?" He hissed. "I don't owe you anything. I don't need to tell you every fucking thing about my life. So just stay the hell out of my past! And leave me alone!"

Turning away, he stormed away, to his bedroom.

My hands curled into balls. My blood boiled into my veins. I wouldn't let him have his way tonight.

Not after everything he did!

Soon my legs followed him inside the bedroom.

"No! I won't leave you alone until you tell me everything! I won't let you hurt yourself every night just because you like to keep everything in your mind. I won't let you behave like this with me just because you don't want to share anything with me! And I'll definitely not let you blame me of

cheating out of jealousy because you fear that you will lose me if I know about your past!" I held my

ground. "You have to tell me! I've every right to know..."

"You've no right to know anything! You're not my fucking wife that I need to explain everything to you!" he snapped.

My breath caught at my throat.

A pain shot through my heart as his words.

I had no right? No right?

My lower lip trembled, but I was quick to bite it still. I could feel something breaking inside me.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I should've known my boundaries. Silly me, I thought I meant something to you," I

whispered, my treacherous eyes blurred with tears no matter how much I tried to mask my feelings.

His gaze snapped to me. Guilt washed over his face as again realization of his words set in him. The

pain he caused me reflected into the windows of his soul. His grey eyes.

"Rosebud..." he gulped. Cupping my face, he made me look up at him.

"I'm sorry, baby. I'm so sorry. I

didn't mean that. You mean the world to me. You're the reason I'm alive..."

I shook my head. A tear slipping down my cheek. "You can't just say

sorry and explain you didn't

mean it after you literally accused me of cheating on you and then

telling me that I didn't mean

anything to you."

His words hurt like bitch. I knew he was disturbed, but he couldn't just spit venom at me like that.

"You're not my Ace. My Ace would never speak to me in that manner.

He would never hurt me like

that. You're not the Ace who promised not to hurt me ever on purpose."

I removed his hands from my

cheeks. "And you're hurting me purposely."

I could see how my tears affected him.

"No, baby. I- i'd never hurt you on purpose. You're my whole world. I'm

so sorry I said those things. I was mad. I didn't have any control. I just

wanted to make your questions stop. I didn't mean it at all.

I'm sorry, Rosebud. Please forgive me."

"You're not sorry. If you were, you'd explain to me why you're doing all these. Why you're behaving like that. You'd let me in. If I was really everything to you, you'd trust me and open up to me. You'd let me be there for you, help you with your past. But you clearly don't want that. Because I might not be that important to you for you to tell me the most important truth of your life," I said, Warner's words echoing throughout my head. "I must be just an obsession for you that you don't want to lose. That's it I'm to you, ain't I?"

A muscle of his jaw ticked as he pulled me flush against him. "Yes! You're my obsession! You're my obsession because I love you! I'm obsessed with you because I can't live without you! And I don't want to lose you because my heart fucking denies to beat without you!" Letting out a sigh, he closed his eyes for a moment before they met mine again. "But... I can't tell you this, Rosebud. Please don't force me. I can't tell you this one thing. I just can't."

"Why?" I whispered.

"Because you'll hate me once you know how tainted my past is. You won't want to stay with a damaged man like me."

I held his gaze. "Do you think just a bitter truth that happened in your past will make me leave you?"

"Do you think my love for you is that shallow?"

*Rosebud..."

"Don't you trust me, Ace? Don't you trust my love? Don't you trust me enough to let me know your every dark secret?"

Silence. Nothing came out of his mouth. He just stared at me.

"Ace?"

Nothing. Not even a word.

I stepped away from him.

My heart was breaking slowly into pieces.

"You don't trust me," a whisper slipped through my lips.

Another step back. He tried to pull me in again but stopped when I shook my head. Tears fell down my cheeks. My throat tightened.

"If there's no trust in a relationship, then that's nothing but a shallow facade. You say you love me.

But love comes with trust. And there's no trust in your love," I said, stepping another step away.

A shaky breath left my lips.

"And I don't think I can stay in a relationship where there's no trust in it."

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With clenched fists, I stood there with tears brimming into my eyes, watching him going still. Color

slowly drained from his face, as his grey eyes widened to a friction.

"W-what did you say?" his deep accent asked.

"I said what you heard. If you don't trust me at all, I don't think this thing between us can work."

Shaking my head, I wiped my tears furiously. "I'm tired of you continuously keeping me in the dark!

I've already suffered for years because of your one sided decision, I won't take more. You can now

happily stay in your penthouse with your stubbornness, secrets and privacy! No Emerald will nag you

again and again to know your past from now on!"

Ignoring the way his shoulders tensed, the crazed look that flashed across his eyes, his clenched jaw, I

turned around and stormed out of the room.

"Don't you dare put even a step out of the penthouse, Emerald! You aren't going anywhere!"

This time I didn't flinch at his roar as he started to approach me. Instead, as soon as I stepped out of

the room, I closed the door from outside, locking him in. I knew he wouldn't let me leave at any cost.

But if he was stubborn, so was I.

His heavy fists landed on the opposite side of the door. "What are you doing? Open the door, Emerald!

You're not leaving me! No way in hell! I won't let you!"

"I will! And you can't stop me!" Yelling out, I strode towards the main door. On the way out, my

phone lying on the floor caught my eyes. I picked it up.

"Emerald! Stop it! Open the door, please! You don't mean what you're saying! You can't leave me!"

The door jiggled with the force he was trying to open it. "Rosebud, please! Baby, open the door. You belong here with me. You can't just leave like that. I won't let you! Please, baby. Open the door!"

Shrugging my jacket on as I pulled the main door open, his voice made me hesitate.

"Baby, please! I- I love you..."

I gulped the thickness of my throat. My filled with tears eyes went back to the closed door of his bedroom.

Should I leave?

Then the words he spit out earlier rang into my head again. The ache in my heart added fresh fuel to my anger. Gritting my teeth, I wiped my cheeks furiously.

"Goodbye, Achilles Valencian!"

"No! Don't you dare, Emerald..."

I slammed the door close behind me stepping outside, and the sound of his violent pounding on the bedroom's door stopped along.

I strode towards the elevator as fast as I could. My heart pounded along the relentless pouring of my tears. The guards' heads turned to me, definitely thinking of my disheveled appearance. And the moment I stepped into the elevator, a distant thump reached my ears. And I knew really well what it was. He freaking broke the door down! But too late! He couldn't reach me now.

And the moment the elevator's doors started to slide close, I saw him storming out of the penthouse.

That instant his oddly crazed pair of dark stormy grey orbs met mine, making my heart skip.

"Emerald stop!" His voice boomed across the corridor. The guards went on alert, looking back and forth at us.

But before he could even move from his place, the doors closed and the elevator then began to go down.

The cool breeze along the heavy rain slapped against my face when I stomped outside, ignoring the relentless pouring. Even the rumbling sky and flashing thunders couldn't stop me.

I just needed to be away from this place. I needed to breathe. With my soaked clothes, I slid inside my car and drove away, without looking back, with as much speed as I could. I knew he was coming after me. And his finding me so soon wasn't in my wishlist right now.

Once I was far enough from the office building, I slowed down beside a park. The road was almost empty, only some passing cars and hurrying people under their big umbrellas.

The raindrops poured over my windshield relentlessly with the wipers sliding over them in a tireless motion.

Letting out a breath through my lips, I leaned against the seat, closing my eyes. A tear slipped down at the side of my face.

Do you trust me Ace?

He didn't answer. He didn't even say a word. I'd have understood if he had said that he did trust me

but he needed some time. I'd have kept quiet. But he didn't say it.

My lower lip trembled as I bit back a sob. I knew I was rushing him to give me answers. I knew leaving

like that was immature and an act of a coward not being able to face the problem. But I just couldn't

stay there after he said those hurtful words to me. I knew he was jealous and insecure. But that didn't

give him license to literally accuse me of cheating. That didn't give him an excuse to tell me that I had

no right to know anything about his past right in my face.

I knew I pushed him too. I shouldn't have started the conversation right then. I should've stuck to my

decision to give him some space. But I just... burst out.

He remained all night and day without letting me know about his location or if he was alright when I

was dying out of concern. And then he came home and started all that jealous boyfriend act. And this

time he crossed his limits.

I always had ignored his over possessiveness over me. But I couldn't tolerate when he said those

words. At his back.

I was already shocked and mad at his telling me such a huge lie and for doing those things to Warner.

I always thought him doing all the insane stuff for me would stop someday. But now after knowing what he had done to Warner, how he sent him away, bought the company to bring me back to California, binding me into a contract and then when Warner came back into the picture, he threatened him to destroy him if he didn't go back to Seattle using his friend. And when Warner didn't, he stamped a big red mark on his career.

Anyone in my place would've freaked out if they were me. When they'd know how an insane man trapped them with their insanely insane ways, they'd have run for the hills! But here, I just ran out of the penthouse.

Because even after everything, I freaking loved that man! Even after knowing what he did back at that night seven years ago. Yes, he did it for me, but it didn't hurt any less. I tried to let it pass and focus on forgiving and moving on. Because that's where both of our happiness lies. But tonight, I felt like everything was just crashing on me at once.

Not to forget that he bribed the police to save his father's murderer. Even if that wasn't the whole truth, he wouldn't tell me. Why? Because he didn't trust me. What did he think? That I'd leave him once he told me about his past? Or I'd tell his secret to someone else?

Punching on the steering, I got out of the car under the open air. The rain wasn't heavy anymore, but it was still there. With slow steps, I approached a bench at the side of the road and sat on it. Fresh cool air of the rain filled my lungs.

My phone hasn't stopped buzzing since I left the penthouse. I thought it wouldn't work after I slammed it down.

I let it be. I knew who it was anyway.

Letting out a sigh, I looked up at the sky. Even after the heavy pouring, the dark clouds still engulfed the clear sky.

I knew he was looking for me. But I wasn't going back to him so soon. Not after what he did.

Yes, I told him I was leaving him. But the truth was, I even knew at that moment that my statement wouldn't stay consistent for long. I knew I couldn't live without him for long.

Even after everything, I couldn't hate him a pinch.

But that didn't mean I wasn't hurt. He didn't trust me. And it hurt me the most.

I could still hear his silence. And it hit my heart like a sharp dagger.

And above all things, there was still a sword hanging over my neck.

Arthur.

I hadn't seen him after that day. Well, I didn't go to the office after that.

Though he didn't do anything

else after that confrontation, I knew he wasn't going to sit still. Knowing that I knew his truth, not

whole but partially- well, that's what he thought, he'd always have this fear of being exposed in his

mind. And he would definitely do something to prevent that. Do

something big so that he wouldn't

get stuck into any kind of problems.

And that vexed me. I wanted him out of our lives as soon as possible. But until I knew what part of

Ace's past he was using as his weapon against me, I couldn't do anything.

And that was half of the

reason behind my urgency to know the truth.

I could just tell Ace about it, but I couldn't take the risk of Arthur's doing something to Ace either. I

just couldn't. What if he was telling the truth? What if he really did know something, the same thing

Ace wanted to hide from me?

I groaned. Frustration built up in me, making me want to break something. Everything was turning

into a mess. And all of this because of that snake and my beloved man's secret!

My phone buzzed again. I glared holes at his name that was flashing over my screen.

No matter how much you call, I won't receive.
I didn't know what I was going to do next, but I definitely wasn't going back until he tells me that he trusted me and promises not to repeat the words he spit tonight. And definitely not until he rectifies his mistake and apologies to Warner. For everything he did to him. I knew he wasn't going to apologise so easily. But if he wants me to go with him, he'll have to apologise. To me also.
I cut his call and wiped my face. The rain has already stopped, leaving goosebumps on my skin with the chilling breeze it left. I was only in a thin cotton red sundress. And the wet fabric clung to me like a second skin now.
My phone buzzed again. And this time, it was a message. From Warner. Please, Emerald. Just one last time. Don't I even deserve it? I frowned in confusion. What was he talking about? And then I read the other message he sent me earlier. It read it was delivered in the evening. My phone wasn't with me then, so I couldn't check it earlier.
Em, I know I crossed my line again today. For that, you must be mad at me. And I'm really sorry for that.
I'm leaving for NY tonight. I don't know when I can see you again. So... can you please meet me one last time before I go back? I want to remember your smile when I leave. My frown deepened. He was leaving? Tonight? But why all of a sudden? Then I sighed. Of course. After the way I hurt him and after what Ace did to him, why'd he want to stay? And he had a life of his own.
I also didn't want him to leave with a bitter note.
And I didn't have any place to go to right now anyway. I couldn't go to Mom and Dad's place, they'd be concerned seeing my state. Casie wasn't in the town either. And going back to the penthouse wasn't an option for me right now. I couldn't even go to Tobias' apartment. He was staying at Mom's tonight.
Maybe I'd just go to Beth's after meeting Warner. I wanted to apologise to him for Ace's action again.

Sniffing, with a still heavy heart, I got up and walked to my car. When the phone buzzed again with the devil's name flashing on the screen, I turned off the phone. I wasn't important enough for him to tell me anything right? Let him taste his own medicine now.

The Trap Of Ace

Chapter 59

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Knocking on the door, I waited.

The hallway of the hotel was quite empty. I didn't even notice much rush of customers around. This

hotel's being so old and deep in the city could be the reason behind it.

This was the hotel Warner was staying at for the time being. He once gave me his address to meet him

there, but I couldn't make up my time to do so. Well, I had been ignoring him a lot in the last few days,

even months. And here I was thinking not to hurt him anymore.

It was my luck to have such a great friend like him. Even after everything, he was here for me.

When some moments passed and nobody answered, I knocked again.

And this time I heard his voice.

"Who's it?" asking, as he opened the door, his slightly swollen eyes met mine.

Surprise flashed in them.

"Em? Y-you came?" A uneven smile stretched across his face. "I thought you don't care for me enough

to keep my last request before I go back."

I frowned. His words totally went ignored by me as I took in his appearance.

Disheveled hair, half tucked button down white shirt, some of the buttons were undone. The redness

in his eyes, dark bags under them and the slur of his voice had me concerned.

"Warner, are you drunk?"

His shake of head was immediate. "Not at all. Was just having one or two glasses." Rubbing his face,

as if to make him look better, he held the door wide. "Come in."

Wrapping my arms around me, I walked inside. And the crease between my forehead formed again.

He had booked a small room with an adjoined bathroom and balcony with it. It'd be pretty cosy if it wasn't so messed up. Things were everywhere. Some of his clothes were scattered on the floor and on the bed. The cushions of the couch lied on the floor, the center table was upside down. Even the sheet of the bed was half hanging down and half covering the bed. It seemed like a storm had passed through this room. I glanced at Warner. He awkwardly looked around the room, before starting to pick up the cushions and his clothes.

Did he do the mess?

"Sorry, i- I was a little upset," he said, swaying a little on his feet. "I thought you weren't going to come to meet me. I thought I wasn't going to see you for one last time. But..." A goofy smile tugged on his lips. "You did come. I was wrong, you do care for me. I was missing you a lot, you know?"

I smiled sadly. "Even after everything you're saying you were missing me. Even after everything you had to go through because of me. The things Ace did to you..." Sighing, I shook my head. "I'm sorry again, Warner. I swear I had no idea about these. I wouldn't have let him do those to you if I knew.

I'm really sorry. But I promise, I'll make everything right."

His brown orbs met mine. "I know you wouldn't let him do anything if you knew his intentions, Em.

It's not your fault. It's him who ruined everything." His tone turned bitter with the mention of Ace.

I let it pass. I myself was mad at him tonight.

"You're just too innocent that he caught you in his trap."

I wanted to disagree with this statement of his, but he cut me off.

"Anyways, let's not talk about him anymore. Let's talk about something else. Like old times," he said,

pointing towards the couch for me to sit, swaying slightly on his feet he walked towards the landline of the room. "Tea?"

"I'm fine. You don't need to call the room service for that." Running my hands up and down my arms,

I sat on the couch. The temperature of the room was cold for my state.

"You're soaked."

"Yeah, got caught up in the rain on my way. You noticed it now?" I asked, glancing at him. But his somehow now darker gaze was roaming over my body clung with my thin sundress.

Averting my gaze, I tugged the end of my dress over my knees as a feeling of discomfort rose in me.

"Yeah..." he cleared his throat, shaking his head. "I was too surprised to see you here to notice

anything else. Anyways, let's have some drinks."

Putting the center table back in its place, he brought a bottle of Whiskey and two glasses for us before plopping beside me.

"I'm not in a mood of drinking right now, Warner. And you shouldn't drink either. You're already slurring."

My switched off phone was in my mind constantly.

A certain someone must be going crazy out there. Well, he deserves it.

"Oh, come on, Em! One glass won't do anything. And I'm fine, don't worry about me," he said, pouring the liquid in both of the glasses.

When he pushed one towards me, I shook my head, hesitating. I didn't come here to drink here with him. Though I already said sorry several times, I wasn't sure if he really did forgive me.

"Just one drink, Em. For me? Can't you do that for old times sake?"

His expectant eyes had me sigh. Nodding my head, I took the glass in my hand. The bright smile that etched across his face was instant.

Before I could take even a sip, he gulped the whole substance in one go and slammed the glass on the table. I frowned when he refilled the glass.

"Aren't you drinking too much tonight? You don't drink that much usually."

Letting out a humourless chuckle, he gulped the second fill. "Situation changes a man accordingly,

Emerald. And this thing," he pointed at the bottom, "can be quite a good friend when you're all alone.

It makes you forget everything."

Guilt washed over me as I looked down. "Well, it can't. Because even when you're drunk now, it's not helping with your problems at all. You still remember everything." He shrugged carelessly, filling his glass again. "Let's not talk about the problems tonight. Let's talk like old days. I've missed our time back in NY." I smiled, twirling my bracelet. "I missed it too! Life was so simple back then." And then came Achilles Valencian. Like a storm, he put my life upside down. And unbelievably, I still loved that storm. He nodded. "I wish I could get back those days. Where there would be only me and you. No one else." When I went to open my mouth, he put his hand with his glass still in his grasp in the air, stopping me. A sudden dry laugh left him. "I know, I know. I'm crossing my limits here again. Sorry, I tend to forget the lines every time." Pinching the bridge of my nose, I took a sip on the drink. The sweet and bitter taste of it burned down my throat. "By the way, you told your cousin to leave Arthur's case? Because I don't want him to get hurt, you know?" I changed the subject. I didn't want to argue with him on the night he was leaving. He just nodded. Suddenly going all quiet, he just sipped on his drink and watched me. Shifting a little in my place, I put the glass on the table. "I tried to call Sierra again but her phone went unreachable again. I really don't know what to do..." "Can you just stop it, Em? I thought we were having some 'us' time like back in NY. And here you're, starting with your problems again. I'm tired of listening to all your problems now!" With his lips pressed tight, his voice turned demanding. I just stared at him. He had never behaved with me like that. Not even when he was in his shittiest mood. But his behavior was totally different from the Warner I knew. Maybe it was the alcohol? I cleared my throat. "Yeah, uh, sorry. I was just a little worried for her."

His mood changed all of a sudden as he smiled. Adoration filled his eyes as his eyes roamed on me again. "I know, my Em is always concerned for everyone." Sliding closer, he grasped my hand. "Did I ever tell you that this color suits you? It brings out your perfect skin tone so gracefully."

When his thumb brushed over my knuckle, I tried to pull my hand back but his grip was firm. His eyes didn't leave my face as he tucked a strand of my wet hair behind my ear. "You're turning more and more beautiful day by day. California's weather is suiting you well, I can see." His tone dropped to a husky voice.

With unease, I pulled my hand from his grasp and made some distance between us. All of a sudden, I felt slightly suffocated in this room with him. And I didn't miss the way his features hardened with my reaction. His fists clenched.

"Uh, thank you!" I averted my eyes. "C-can I get a towel? I need to dry my hair I guess. They're still dripping."

Remaining silent for a moment, he slowly nodded his head and then stood up. Stumbling once on his way, he went into the bathroom and then returned with a white towel. "Thanks!"

Taking it from his hand, I started to towel dry my hair. And he just watched me silently. An unreadable look on his face. And the way his dark brown gaze slid down my body, a chill ran down my spine. The eerie silence was making me nervous all of a sudden. I planted a tight smile on my face as I put the towel on the table and stood up. "Uh, I think I should go now. It's getting late."

I thought coming here, I'd have a good talk with him before he goes back. But now, I didn't want to stay here any longer. His behavior was different tonight. I had seen drunk Warner before, but his presence never made me feel that uncomfortable like I was feeling right now.

His face dropped as he took an urgent step towards me. A frown formed between his brows. "You

want to leave? So soon? We didn't even talk much yet."

"I know. And I'm sorry for that. But I've somewhere to go," I excused.

"So, uh, I'll see you soon?"

Maybe when you're sober.

He shook his head, lips curling up in displeasure. "It's Achilles, isn't it?"

You don't want him to wait for

you much longer. But you can definitely leave me here when all I wanted was just to spend some

quality time with you before I leave."

I sighed. "It's not Ace. I'm going to Beth's place right now. And I did come to meet you, right? And you

also must have some packing to do. So... I'd just leave now. You get sober up and pack your bags.

Otherwise you'll get late."

His gaze hardened. "So everyone in your life is important for you other than me. You've time for

everyone except me?"

"Warner please. It's not like that, and you know that. You wanted me to meet you here and I did. But I

think I should go now. And I can't stay in these wet clothes all night," I explained. "As you're leaving

tonight, I think you should start packing now. I'll see you soon."

Gathering my purse, when I turned to go, his voice stopped me.

"Wait! Won't you even give me a goodbye hug before you go? Did I lose that right too?"

I turned to him. Though my brain was telling me to say no and get out from here, my heart called out

for my friend. I could at least give him a bear hug before I go, right?

Nothing was wrong in that.

Flashing him a smile, I nodded and wrapped my arms around him. The strong smell of alcohol filled

my nostrils instead of his familiar smell.

He didn't waste even a second to pull me closer in his hug. More closer than I was comfortable with.

"I'll miss you so much, Em," he whispered in my ear, his hot breath fanned my neck.

Ignoring the unease, I patted on his back. "I'll miss you too! But it's alright, we can talk everyday on

the phone. And we can meet whenever we can. We're not worlds away, right?"

As I tried to pull away, he tugged me in his hug again, placing his head at the crook of my neck. "Don't

leave me, Em. I want you here with me."

I pushed his shoulders but his hold on me only tightened, fingers dug into my skin.

Panic set in my mind as I wiggled into his grip. "Warner, let me go."

"I can't, I can't tonight," his husky yet demanding voice in my ear made me feel disgusted. A chill ran

down my spine when his hands started to roam over my hips, to my sides.

"Warner! Leave me! What's wrong with you?" I pushed at his chest, making him stumble back. "What

the hell were you doing?" I snapped. But that unfamiliar gaze of his lingered on my lips.

Shaking my head, as I turned to leave, I was harshly pulled into him again.

A shriek left my mouth with the force I collided against him. And then I saw him leaning in, but I was

quick to move my head away.

"What the fuck, Warner? Let go of me!" I tried to push him with force, but he didn't budge.

"Just one kiss, Em. Just one. I've been dying to taste those lips since I came here. But you didn't even

let me hug you properly," his voice came out urgent as he tried to reach my lips. His vice grip on me

didn't budge with my continuous fight.

"Warner! No! Leave me! What are you doing! Let me go!"

Tears started to blur my vision as his lips landed on my jaw and cheek. I pushed away his head with

my hands.

Letting out a curse, he took my hands and put them at my back. "Just one fucking kiss! I was after you

for two fucking years and you're treating me like that! You cheated on me with that bastard, broke up

with me but I still tolerated your shit and helped you with Arthur's matter! But you can't even give me

a kiss?" he hissed. Gripping my hair in his fist, he tried to turn my head to him. "Just give me one

fucking taste and I'll let you go!"

"No! Warner, please!" I whimpered at the sharp pain with his vice grip on my hair. Tears were rolling down my cheeks, my heart pounded down my chest with the panic that ran through my veins. "You're drunk! It's not you! Come back to your senses! What the hell are you doing? Let go of me!"

He twisted my arm at my back making me hiss. Cupping my jaw, he forced me to face him. "You'll kiss me tonight. I swear, you'll repent the moment when you decided to leave me. No one can make you feel like I can. I'll make you forget him."

I screamed when he wrapped one arm around my hips and the other in my hair, his fingers dug into my flesh. "Get off of me!"

"You're mine, Emerald!" He went for my lips again, but again, just by some inches he missed as I moved my head away.

"Warner, let me go!"

In the hustle, furious pounding on the door reached my ears. Hope started to fill me. Just as I opened my mouth to scream for help, I heard his voice.

"Emerald! Open the door!"

Ace?

With my eyes blurred with tears, I let out a sob. "Ace! Ace, help me!"

"Shut the fuck up!"

I hissed as Warner pulled at my hair harshly. His eyes were dark, wild as he pulled me close to him, desperately trying to get my lips. "I won't let you go with him tonight! You're mine, Em!"

Leaning away, I kept my face away from him throughout the fight as much as possible.

"Emerald! What the fuck..."

His voice was cut off. Panic washed over me once more not being able to hear him anymore. But then

I heard the door being pounded harshly.

"Ace!" I pushed at Warner again. "Let me go, Warner!"

"You're not leaving!"

When his lips fell at the side of my lips, using all the power I had, I hit my knee against his groin and pushed at his chest.

Letting out a hiss, he flinched away as I stumbled on the floor. And at the same time the door slammed down on the ground.

And there he was. With rigid shoulders, clenched fists, tense jaw, he stood at the doorway. And

then his dark alert stormy grey orbs fell on me. "Rosebud..."

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Chapter 60

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Letting out a cry, I got up from the floor and ran to him. His strong arms wrapped around me as

protective wings as soon as I reached him.

I shook in his chest as hot tears ran down my cheeks. With my heart still pounding from panic, knees

weak, I clung to him as if my life was depending on him.

"Rosebud?" he called out. "Hey, hey! Baby, look at me, are you alright?

What happened? What did he

do? Tell me?" Cupping my face, he attempted to make me look at him,

but I hid my face in his warm

chest again, still trembling from what just happened.

"He... he..." I hiccuped in between my sobs, not being able to form any words. His arms tightened

around me.

I could feel his turning all rigid, the way his muscles tensed. His hands shook around me. His breathing

came out heavy.

"WHAT DID YOU DO?" Deep Greek accent echoed in his voice, tone darker and rougher than I had

ever heard. "What had you done to my Rosebud?"

The malice in his voice would've sent a shiver down my spine if I wasn't too absorbed in my own

shock now. My hold only tightened around him.

"She's not yours! She's my girlfriend! You stole her from me!" Warner's slurred reply reached my ears,

rising a vile up my throat. "I was just trying to get what's rightfully..."

He didn't get to finish the line as Ace untangled me from him and

stormed towards him, connecting

his fist with Warner's jaw. A faint crack reached my ears. With a hiss

when he fell on the ground, Ace

grabbed his collar and pulled him up.

"You fucking piece of shit! You dared to touch my Rosebud!" His thunderous roar echoed throughout the hotel room, making me flinch. His almost dark orbs flared with untamed rage, redness spread across his face and neck when the veins of his temple stood up with him shaking with anger.

"Let go of me, you bastard! I'll kill.. oomph!" Warner let out a cry when Ace's polished shoe met his stomach. And as if a demon was unleashed in him, he didn't stop.

"You'll regret the moment you took birth in this world! How dare you touch her! Even after I warned you twice, you still dared to come near her!" Blinded with fury, he continuously punched Warner's already bloodied face. Warner's whimpers and yelling out in agony went unheard by him as he twisted his arm and kicked him in the stomach again, making Warner cough out blood.

"I'll fucking destroy you!" He roared again.

Clutching the door frame to keep balance with my wobbling knees, I called out for him. "Ace... stop!"

But my voice didn't seem to reach him. Employees of the hotel rushed inside the room hearing the chaos. But no one seemed to have enough courage to get close to him. Warner whimpered as Ace delivered another punch against his jaw.

"Ace! Please, stop!" I cried, my voice cracked. "Stop it! You'll kill him!" I didn't want to stay here anymore. I just needed his arms around me right now. I wanted him to get me away from this place.

"He dared to touch you! I'll fucking kill him!" He sneered. Some of the hotel employees finally went forward and tried to get him off of Warner, but he shrugged them away and went for him again.

"Ace, please! I- I need you," I said, more tears sprung out of my eyes as I slid down on the floor, not being able to stand up anymore. "Please, stop!"

And that got his attention as his murderous gaze fell on me. Realization of my need for him right now flashed over his features. Soon concern took the place of his anger. Throwing Warner on the floor, he rushed to me and scooped me in his arms.

"Rosebud, I'm so sorry, baby! I'm here! Everything will be alright!" he said, pulling me into his chest.

Though his voice was soft, the anger still lurked around. He placed his lips on my forehead as I let out a whimper.

"No one will come near to you. I won't let anyone touch even a strand of your hair, my Rosebud. I

promise you that! Don't cry, baby."

The chaos around the room and people's whispers went vague in my ears. I only concentrated on his soothing voice.

"Get me away from here," I whispered. My hands clutched his shirt in my fist in a vice grip.

Nodding his head, he stood up with me in his arms. My head didn't move away from his chest, nor did my grip on him loosen.

"Let's go home." Placing another kiss on my forehead, he walked out of the room. And I didn't even dare to look back.

Once reaching the penthouse, he carried me inside the bedroom and then straight to the bathroom. In the whole car ride, I didn't move away from his arms. Nor did he say anything. The journey was quiet, but his soothing slow rubbing on my back, arms, lingering soft kisses on my head, forehead and the tight grip of his arms around me gave me comfort.

When he tried to put me on the sink countertop, my arms tightened around his neck as a protest. A whimper left my lips.

"I'm not going anywhere, baby. I'll be right here, with you. Let me get the water ready. Then I'll run you a shower," he murmured.

Hesitantly, I nodded my head and unwrapped my clutch from him as he sat me down on the countertop. When he walked away, I felt cold without his warmth. My fists clenched as I hugged myself closer.

Once he came back to me again, he put me off the counter.

"Lift your arms," clutching the ends of my dress, he asked softly.

I obeyed. As he pulled the dress off of me, I shivered at the cold air that generated goosebumps across my skin. I tried to hug myself again, but he didn't let me. Instead, he then unhooked my bra and let it fall on the ground, my panties followed next. Instead of hiding myself from his eyes, I wrapped my arms around him again. Staying away from his warmth for this long was bringing back the fear in me. Fear of the man I never thought I'd loath even the slightest idea of him in my wildest dreams. Picking my bare and trembling body in his arms again, he walked us inside the shower and gently placed me down on my feet. Undressing himself, he joined me and let the soothing warm water pour on us. I stayed quiet as he squeezed some shampoo in his palm and started to wash my hair, gently massaging my scalp. A hiss left my lips when his hands went to the back of my head, where Warner had pulled at my hair harshly. His shoulders tensed at my reaction. A muscle of his jaw ticked, grey eyes flashed. But he put on his calm mask again and went extra careful with the back of my head. No matter how much he stayed normal, I knew the storm that was building inside him. I knew even if he said everything was alright now, it wasn't for him. My hands were firmly clutched onto his waist as he shampooed my hair. I continuously needed his touch at the moment. No matter how much I tried to close off the memories back at the hotel in my mind, they kept rushing back. I could still feel his hands on me, his lips on my jaw, cheek and neck, his strong smell of alcohol. His harsh touch and violent behavior. The malice in his brown orbs where all I saw was adoration and respect in the last three years since I knew him. My stomach clenched at the memories that flashed over my mind, rising a vile up my throat. I felt disgusted. I felt dirty with the way he tried to touch me.

Tears started to blur my vision again as I started to rub my arms and face harshly, trying to rinse off his touch from my skin.

"Rosebud? What are you doing?" he asked, gripping my wrists. "Stop it." I tried to break free. I needed to wash myself. I needed to clean myself off from his touch.

My tears washed away with the restless water as I fought against him, but he only pulled me into his chest and wrapped his arms around me.

"Calm down, baby! Everything will be fine. I'm here with you. Nothing will happen to you, I promise.

Just calm down," he said, rubbing my back.

I couldn't stop the sob that broke out of me. Clutching him harder, I cried my heart out in his chest.

And he let me.

"I- I trusted him. I thought he was my friend. I- I never thought he could do something like that to me..." I spoke out through my hiccups.

His hold tightened. "Shh, don't cry, baby. Don't waste your tears on someone like him. It's not your fault that you trusted him. He was always there for you until..." with a deep breath, he gritted out, "

he showed his true color. But don't worry, Rosebud. He can't hurt you anymore. You won't see his face ever again, I promise you that."

Snuggling more into him, I hid my face at the crook of his neck.

Then he lathered soap on my body, washing every part of me with utmost care. Once finished with

the shower, he towel dried my hair and body, followed by his own and thus carried me back in the bedroom again.

When he finished dressing up both of us, he made me sit on the bed.

"Stay here, let me get something for you to eat."

I shook my head. "I'm not hungry. I want to sleep."

I was exhausted. Mentally and physically. Mostly emotionally. I wanted to sleep and forget about everything.

"But..."

"Please." My voice came out croaky.

Sighing, he nodded. Walking closer, he arranged the pillows and laid me down before moving the blanket over me.

I grabbed his hand, making his eyes snap to mine. Though he was calm, the fire in his grey orbs was clear. And this was the calm before another storm rose.

"Sleep with me?"

He leaned in and kissed my temple. "You don't have to ask."

Turning the lights off, he slipped inside the blanket with me, pulling me into him not wasting a second.

But something didn't feel right.

"No clothes," I complained.

Letting out a low chuckle, he moved away slightly and discarded his t-shirt. And next went mine, the only thing I had on.

When my palm felt his sculpted chest, firm abs and strong broad shoulders, and when our skin

touched as he hugged me to himself, I let out a sigh of content.

The feel of him against me, his skin against mine made me relax. I loved to sleep with him topless and

he knew it. It always soothed me. It gave me more closeness with him.

Not only physical, but also

emotional. And tonight I needed him more than anything.

His big calloused hand roamed over my hips and back. A silence fell over us. Even while lying down

with me, his form didn't relax.

"D-do you hate me?" I whispered.

Under the dimmed light, I found his brows furrowed. "What? Why are you asking such a thing,

Rosebud?"

I gulped. "F-for what happened back in the hotel... he- he tried to force himself on me. You must feel disgusted..."

"Rosebud..." he warned.

"I swear he couldn't do anything. H-he tried to kiss me but I didn't let him..."

"Enough!" He cut me off, hovering over me. "How could you assume that I'd ever think something like

that? It's not your fault what happened. Even if he really did something, which he couldn't because

you fought him bravely, I'd never feel disgusted by you. Never. I'll always love you and support you no matter what, Emerald, always keep that in your mind."

My lower lip trembled. "Then why didn't you kiss me yet?"

It was me always who had to push him away to take some breath because he wouldn't leave my lips and chest alone when he would finally get me all to himself at night. But tonight, he didn't once try to kiss me, not even a peck on my lips.

A sigh left him. Pressing his forehead against mine, he bumped his nose with mine. "Because I didn't want to do any reckless act out of my desperation that'd trigger anything for you."

His words surged warmth through my heart.

I shook my head, circling my arms around his neck. "You're not him. Your touch would never trigger something for me. The only thing it can do is soothe me. Make my heart feel content."

Letting out a breath, he cupped my cheeks. "You want me to kiss you?"

I nodded.

"My queen's wish is my command."

And then his lips were on mine. Moulding our mouths into a passionate knee weakish kiss, he pulled me closer. It wasn't his regular kiss, hard and demanding. It was slow, soothing but yet possessive.

The kind of kiss that would make anyone forget anything.

Wrapping my legs around his waist, I clung to him and enjoyed his kiss as much as I could, forgetting everything for a moment. His touch made me forget. Only he could do that to me.

Pressing a firm kiss on my lips one last time, he pulled me back into his chest. I placed my head right where his heart beat.

The steady rhythm of his heartbeat, calmed my own.

"Thank you!"

"What for?" he asked.

"F-for always being there for me. For coming at the right moment to save me." A single tear left my eye. I shuddered even thinking of what could happen if he hadn't arrived there on time.

I could feel him shaking his head. "I'd always be there no matter what. But you don't need me to save you. You can do that yourself. You were doing it pretty good. He was hissing in pain when I broke in."

Though he tried to lighten my mood, I could feel the edge of his voice. I could hear his need to destroy something there. Destroy him.

"I'm sorry," I whispered.

"Now what's that for?" He played with my hair.

"For everything. For forcing you to tell me everything about your past, for not understanding your pain and... for leaving like that. If I hadn't left, this wouldn't have happened. I wouldn't go to meet him if not for his message. He was leaving California tonight and wanted to meet me. So I went there."

I knew he wanted to know why I went to meet him again. What happened out there. But he decided against it. The thing that he respected and cared about my situation right now, made me fall more in love with him. Even if it was even possible.

"It's not your fault, Rosebud. You didn't know his true intentions." One of his hands ran over my back.

"And... you don't need to say sorry to me for earlier tonight. I- I shouldn't have lied to you. And those words that I spit out..." He let out a sigh, his voice held pain. "I'm so sorry, baby. I was so lost in jealousy and anger that I didn't know what I was saying. You don't know what even the mere thought of you leaving me does to me. I- I was scared of losing you. To him." At the mention of Warner, his arms tightened around me. "And there was also the fear that after you get to know the whole truth about my past, which is your right to know, you'll leave me. The fear, the jealousy, both surrounded my mind so much that I couldn't see how I was hurting my Rosebud. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean even a word. I do trust you, baby. I trust you more than I trust myself." His words lifted a burden off of my chest. Just the word 'trust' changes everything.

I was right. His jealousy and securities were the reason behind his behavior. But no matter how much I wanted to ask him to tell me why he felt that way, I won't. I won't make the same mistake again. I'd give him the space he needed. No matter how eager I was.

"It's alright. I understand," I said, kissing his chest. "I was just hurt that when I asked you if you trusted me, you didn't say anything. That hit the most."

"I'm so sorry, baby. There's no one in this world I trust more than you. You're the only one who matters to me." He brushed his lips against my brows. I sighed, snuggling into him. "I just needed to hear that." A smile tugged on my lips. "I love you."

"I love you too." He pulled me closer.

When some moments passed without another word said, I thought our conversation for the night was over. And this conversation did help my mind off of the incident tonight. I thought I could at least sleep in peace in his arms now, until he opened his mouth again, snatching every bit of sleepiness from my eyes.

"You want to know everything, right? Everything about my past, about my father's murder?"

My heart ran faster as I nodded, not saying anything.

"I'll tell you everything. Everything you want to know."