

Chapter 9 - Daisy

That bitch.

Sorry.

Bad word. Thou shall not cast stones at other women.

That *bitch*!

She's blatantly invading my date with Cole! She gets him all the time! All the time! And I get one date with him and she's *here*!

I hate her so much.

But I really like her earrings.

Cole stands as she approaches, giving her a kiss on the cheek and putting a hand on her lower back to introduce her.

"Elsa? Like the ice queen?" I can't resist.

But she just laughs. "Like her but not quite. Eliza." She stretches out an easy hand with a bloody warm smile and I can feel a tiny little voice in my head wondering if I can think up a way to kill her. There isn't one.

I looked.

So I give her my warmest smile. "Nice to finally meet you. Cole has told me all about you."

He hasn't. He's been suspiciously close-lipped about her. But it's nice to be nice.

Cole shifts uncomfortably, but Eliza beams up at him.

"He made you share a hot dog, huh? He just loves sharing."

Does he, now? I wonder if that's what he's after. Me and Eliza.

Dirty boy.

"Oh yeah, but I love sharing." I say with a big smile- just in case that is what he's after. She is cute after all... I wouldn't mind. But then she looks at him with a note of adoration meant only for your own man.

Nope. Couldn't share Cole.

"Aw, you two are cute. How long have you been together?" I say, a sweet smile plastered on my teeth.

"Twenty-four weeks," Cole says at the same time she answers. "A few months."

Delicious.

My smile widens.

"Well, Daisy and I better get going. I want to show her Vitoro's truck, too." Cole says, and I look over at Eliza's reaction. But she doesn't seem fazed in the slightest.

Now this... this is gold. Her boyfriend is talking about me like I'm the girlfriend and she's the imposter. Which is true enough, but I'm the only one who knows about that right now. So... she should at least look a little miffed. But she doesn't, she looks....

... relieved.

Which means little miss perfect has a perfectly delicious secret just waiting for me.

Bubbles start in my stomach. Whatever, she doesn't want Cole to know I'm going to find it. And Cole will be mine.

I stand. "It was lovely to meet you, Eliza. Hope I see you again soon."

She says the same back in politeness, and I follow Cole out of the car park. I wait until we're a safe distance away, as the chill bites my cheeks. She doesn't care about him. There's no way. None. She didn't even notice I'm wearing his jacket.

If I found her wearing his jacket, I'd key his car in tiny love heart shapes.

"She's lovely." I say, with the sweet little happiness of someone who's just figured out how to get the man of her dreams. Although to him, I'm happy at having met his girlfriend. - Ew.

"Yeah, she's nice," he answers crisply.

Oh.... My heart giggles the noise I can't make right now. He doesn't love her either. He might care about her, but... they've been together six months. They have sex regularly (average 1.5 times a week) but this man isn't in love with her at all.

Which makes this so much easier.

"So how are you finding the city?" he changes the subject away from Eliza again.

"It's good. I needed to get away from home. I'm grateful that Uncle M put me up," I smile up at him, walking with my best cute-girl sashay. What can I do to make this more than a onetime thing? I give him a small pout. "Bit lonely though. Miss all my friends."

I don't have friends. Giant waste of time and energy being nice to people all the time. Never really understood the benefit.

But the line works a charm on my stoic macho man. He looks over at me with a smile and touches my arm.

"I had that when I first came out of the army."

This is it. I've been waiting for it. The only answer I need. And he's on the edge of a precipice of opening up to me. But no, he just looks forward and tells the pavement that, "Friends are important."

I don't mind telling you that my eyes rolled so hard in my head that it hurt.

I don't know who it is that he thinks he's kidding, but he has about as many friends as I do. Except I have my pack and he has *Eliza*.

Does she know? My stomach twists. My jaw tightening in fury that she might know him better than I do.

But it's only a matter of time.

"I can be your friend, Cole," I purr.

I'm lying.

Unless all good friends make you come so hard, you black out.

Which I've been told isn't generally a requirement for friendship.

His lips perk up in a polite smile as he tells me, "I'd love to be your friend, Daisy."

Which is a major let down from 'actually Daisy let's go pick out matching lobster tattoos'. But I'll live.

I let us walk in comfortable silence for a moment, the swish of my skirts the only sound above the pad of our sneakers against the pavement. I can't see the food truck he's taking me to, but the smell drifting over to me is making my mouth water almost as much as my pussy.

Okay, okay, too far. I'll stop.

"So, tell me about your time in the army. Did you deploy?" I wrinkle my nose and look up at him with a giggle. "Is that... a question I should ask?"

He chuckles and puts his hand on the small of my back (swoon!) to guide me through a gate to the food truck in the park.

"Yeah, I went abroad twice." He follows me to a small folding table. "You like tacos?"

When I nod, he disappears, reappearing with a receipt and two sodas. He opens mine like a gentleman and hands it to me.

"So, what made you leave?" I ask, taking a casual sip when my heart is hammering in my chest. I'm trying desperately not to stare at him. Not that he's gorgeous, although he is, but this... this is the only thing about Cole I don't know already.

I know his shoe size (14). I know how many push ups he does every morning (100) I know what his prom date said that broke his heart before he enlisted ("because he has a car." - kids can be mean) I know how many kills to his name and even what brand of hair wax he uses. But I don't know why he left the armed forces.

Because my man, my leather bound detective, left for Rhaduat with a promotion in the back pocket and returned with promises of another- only to turn it down and move straight into civvy life... and into therapy.

So when I look up at my detective, I'm digging his expression for answers. His face is a picture of torment, one black eyebrow sinking over his eye as he stares into the table like he's figuring out a problem. He's rolled his lips between his teeth so hard they're a thin line, giving him an almost comical look. It's like the air grows heavier around him. So much so I know what's about to leave his lips before he says it.

"It was time for a new chapter."

Dismissed.

Just like that.

And we collect our tacos and eat. Both thinking into the middle distance. Both our minds on Rhaduat.

And whatever happened that made Cole quit.

He knows something that I don't.

Eliza knows something else that neither of us does.

Reaching into my pocket, I run my thumb over the precinct janitor's ID badge like the caress of a lover.

Because, by the end of tonight, I'm going to be the only one of us that knows everything.