

## Chapter 0029

Anastasia

My words, as totally badass as they were, gave me a moment to swallow back the bile climbing up my throat. Goddess, what had come over me? Or rather, who?

Alpha Caius—douchebag—Blackwell, that's who.

I mean, seriously! How dare he? This wasn't the first time I'd been treated like a common whore, which was pathetic considering sex work was a very valid career. But to have my boyfriend—albeit fake boyfriend—say such a thing was just... Well, it was downright rude. 1

"Don't puke!" Ziva snarled viciously, her pride on the line. "Don't you dare puke, Ana."

I looked down at the bastards kneecap and paled. "Oh Goddess. Oh that's bad. Oh fuck, is that—is that bone?"

"So fucking help me, if you puke—"

"I feel queasy." I groaned, hiding my nausea beneath a thick layer of resting bitch face.

Ziva's anger pulsed through my veins. "Pull yourself together, woman! We chased down a car full of men on a motorcycle wearing nothing but a sundress! You will not puke over a little shattered kneecap. Now get your perky ass out of there before you embarrass us." She huffed, "You might not care about our reputation, but I do." 2

Bossy bitch.

I stormed back to the bedroom I'd been sleeping in, pointedly ignoring Caius as he lumbered after me like a fumbling giant. Okay, so he wasn't fumbling or anything, but who cares? What he said was absolutely uncalled for.

Sure, I could be an adult and tell him the real reason why I ran away from home, but why should I? He didn't deserve to know the truth if it was that easy for him to sling accusations.

His snarl followed me down the hall, "Anastasia! For fuck sake, woman. Give me a chance to explain myself.

"Explain this, dickhead."

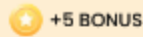
I grabbed hold of my magic and froze time, only releasing it once I was inside the bedroom, the door locked behind me. Caius paced in front of it for a few fleeting moments before storming off to brood and scowl in peace.

- - -

I wish I could say the following month and a half improved my relationship with Caius, but that would be a lie.

Three times a week we would venture out on dates, frequenting restaurants, high-end bars, and exclusive clubs. I'd put on my best outfits, a coating of crimson lipstick, and curl my golden locks, all to pretend I was falling madly in love with the brute that was Alpha Caius.

He was possessive, and demanding, and everything I loathed in a male, yet my body came alive from his rare and infrequent touches, no matter how fake they might be. It was truly a gamble spending



any significant amount of time with him. When he deigned to open his mouth would I want to claw his eyes out or ride him until the sun came up?

Who knew? Because I sure as fuck didn't.

Each date I preened at his side, stroking a hand down his chest as I gave him my best fuck-me-eyes. He'd start growling, his body practically vibrating beneath my palm. Was it desire? Indigestion? Flat out annoyance? Again, who knew? 3

There were times where his restraint would snap and he'd say something suggestive like that night at Mercury, something that made me feel as though Alpha Caius wasn't as cold and unfeeling as he made himself out to be. Of course, he typically ruined said moment by spouting off some nonsense afterwards.

We still hadn't even kissed yet, and I was beginning to think we never would.

For our one-month anniversary we went to Eden, a highly coveted restaurant that was booked out until the next year. Of course all it took was a phone call to get a table. Perks of dating the Alpha and all.

I was elbows deep eating what was easily the best steak of my life, making all sorts of sounds that had Caius white-knuckled as he gripped his knife, when a photographer darted over. They weren't technically supposed to be in the restaurant, yet here they were. 1

