

Chapter 8

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Nina must have thrown half the contents of the refrigerator on the kitchen floor, so I have to make a run to the grocery store today. Since apparently, I'm also going to be cooking for them, I select some raw meat and seasoning that I can use to throw together a few meals. Nina loaded her credit card onto my phone. Everything I buy will be automatically charged to their account.

In prison, the food options were not too exciting. The menu rotated between chicken, hamburgers, hotdogs, lasagna, burritos, and a mysterious fish patty that always made me gag. There would be vegetables on the side that would be cooked to the point of disintegration. I used to fantasize about what I would eat when I got out, but on my budget, the options weren't much better. I could only buy what was on sale, and once I was living in my car, I was even more restricted.

It's different shopping for the Winchesters. I go straight for the finest cuts of steak—I'll look up on YouTube how to cook them. I sometimes used to cook steak for my father, but that was a long time ago. If I buy expensive ingredients, they'll come out good no matter what I do.

When I get back to the Winchester house, I've got four overflowing bags of groceries in the trunk of my car. Nina and Andrew's cars take up the two spots in the garage, and she instructed me not to park in the driveway, so I have to leave my car on the street. As I'm fumbling to get the bags out of the trunk, the landscaper Enzo emerges from the house next to ours with some sort of scary gardening device in his right hand.

Enzo notices me struggling, and after a moment of hesitation, he jogs over to my car. He frowns at me. "I do it," he says in his heavily accented English.

I start to take one of the bags, but then he scoops all four of them up in his massive arms, and he carries them to the front door. He nods at the door, waiting patiently for me to unlock it. I do it as quickly as possible, given that he's carrying about eighty pounds' worth of groceries in his arms. He stomps his boots on the welcome mat, then carries the groceries the rest of the way into the kitchen and deposits them on the kitchen counter.

"Gracias," I say. 

His lips twitch. "No. Grazie."

"Grazie," I repeat.

He lingers in the kitchen for a moment, his brows knitted together. I notice again that Enzo is handsome, in a dark and terrifying sort of way. He's got tattoos on his upper arms, partially obscured by his T-shirt—I can make out the name "Antonia" inscribed in a heart on his right biceps. Those muscular arms could kill me without him even breaking a sweat if he got it in his head to do so. But I don't get a sense that this man wants to hurt me at all. If anything, he seems concerned about me.

I remember what he mumbled to me before Nina interrupted us the other day.

Pericolo. Danger. What was he trying to tell me? Does he think I'm in danger here?

Maybe I should download a translator app on my phone. He could type in what he wants to tell me and—

A noise from upstairs interrupts my thoughts. Enzo sucks in a breath. "I go," he says, turning on his heel and striding back toward the door.

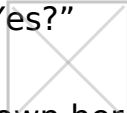
"But..." I hurry after him, but he's much faster than me. He's out the front door before I've even cleared the kitchen.

I stand in the living room for a moment, torn between putting away the groceries and going after him. But then the decision is made for me when Nina comes down the stairs to the living room, wearing a white pants suit. I don't think I've ever seen her

wear anything besides white—it does complement her hair, but the effort of keeping it clean would drive me crazy. Of course, I’m going to be the one taking care of the laundry from now on. I make a note to myself to buy more bleach next time I’m at the grocery store.

Nina sees me standing there and her eyebrows shoot up to her hairline. “Millie?”

I force a smile. “Yes?”



“I heard voices down here. Were you having company?”

“No. Nothing like that.”

“You may not invite strangers into our home.” She frowns at me. “If you want to have any guests over, I expect you to ask permission and give us at least two days’ notice. And I would ask you to keep them in your room.”

“It was just that landscaper guy,” I explain. “He was helping me carry groceries into the house. That’s all.”

I had expected the explanation would satisfy Nina, but instead, her eyes darken. A muscle twitches under her right eye. “The landscaper? Enzo? He was here?”

“Um.” I rub the back of my neck. “Is that his name? I don’t know. He just carried the groceries in.”

Nina studies my face as if trying to detect a lie. “I don’t want him inside this house again. He’s filthy from working outside. I work so hard to keep this house clean.”

I don’t know what to say to that. Enzo wiped his boots off when he came into the house and he didn’t track in any dirt. And nothing is comparable to the mess I saw when I first walked into this house yesterday.

“Do you understand me, Millie?” she presses me.

“Yes,” I say quickly. “I understand.”

Her eyes flick over me in a way that makes me very uncomfortable. I shift between my feet. "By the way, how come you never wear your glasses?"

My fingers fly to my face. Why did I wear those stupid glasses the first day? I should never have worn them, and when she asked me about them yesterday, I shouldn't have lied. "Um..."

She arches an eyebrow.  "I was up in the bathroom in the attic and I didn't see any contact lens solution. I didn't mean to snoop, but if you're going to be driving around with my child at some point, I expect you to have good vision."

"Right..." I wipe my sweaty hands on my jeans. I should just come clean. "The thing is, I don't really..." I clear my throat. "I don't actually need glasses. The ones I was wearing at my interview were more... sort of, decorative. You know?"

She licks her lips. "I see. So you lied to me."

"I wasn't lying. It was a fashion statement."