

**\*UNEDITED SCENE - CUT FROM BITTERSWEET REVENGE R.G. ANGEL\***

**Chapter 13 - Caleb**

I woke up surprisingly lighter today, something that I could not remember having ever happened before. I sighed, turning my head and looking at the cufflinks Esmeralda had bought me in Port Harbor. No, it was not the first time. The first time had been, ironically, the night after Theo's funeral. That was also a night I'd spent in peace. It was after my night with Esmeralda, Esmeralda was the quieting of the voices, the balm on my scarred soul and that was a problem, I could never rely on someone to provide me any peace, any relief because people left, they always did - she left me before and I knew she was going to leave me again.

*No man is an island* they said well I fucking hope they were wrong.

I ran my hand on my face and got out of bed, looking at the cufflinks Esmeralda bought me yet again.

I had not planned on kissing her last night, no I felt somehow rejected when I found out she was going to Port Harbor with everyone except me.

Something my father didn't miss to taunt me about.

I had pretended not to care, that I hadn't wanted to go, and in a way it was true or at least it had been the case before, before she entered my life, before she woke up the heart that I thought was dead but was simply on life support. I couldn't have imagined anything worse, spending a day shopping but it was Port Harbor and it was her - A combination that meant a lot to me - Just as our day meant so much to me last year. It was the first date I ever had, the first time I opened about anything willingly - about my love for Theo. No matter what happened after between us, Port Harbor was the first time I tried, and succeeded to feel normal, where I left all the damages behind and I'd been the Caleb I could have been. The Caleb who could have made Esmeralda happy.

But then she brought me back a gift, a tacky one sure and certainly not something I would have ever picked for myself but I knew the significance it had for her and I also knew she thought of me while in Port Harbor and it made this gift special- because it was personal and well thought.

I frowned at the knock down the corridor, I opened my door just a crack and saw my father knock at her door again - That man was relentless but Esmeralda was smart enough not to answer or open the door.

I opened the door a bit more and stepped out in the corridor still only wearing my pair of boxers.

"She won't answer" I forced a grin pointing toward my bedroom. "She's still asleep, I kept her busy most of the night if you see what I mean. Do you need her urgently?" I just hoped she wouldn't open her door and he wouldn't call my bluff.

His eyes flashed with a jealousy so raw it took me by surprise. It was unsettling in many ways.

He stood straighter. "Do you think it's wise to show your sexual promiscuity to all members of the staff?"

I raised an eyebrow, I would have laughed if I didn't want him gone. I didn't know a pretty maid here that had not had sex with my father in a corner of the house.

"Esmeralda and I are engaged. She is committed to *me* alone. I'm not sure what the issue is, especially with the wedding being a few months away."

“Ah yes,” He smiled, “the wedding.” He nodded and I hated the mischievous light in his eyes, the twisted smile, it promised pain.

“Is there anything else you need?” I asked, my patience was wearing thin.

“No, I just wanted to spend some time with my future daughter-in-law - try to know her. But maybe next time.”

*Not if I ever have a say in it, no.* I thought as a wave of protectiveness engulfed me. It was a feeling so powerful I’d never experienced for anyone other than Theo before. “When is your plane leaving?”

“At 3pm, maybe I’ll see you both before that.”

I shrugged. “Maybe, it all depends on how receptive she is to morning loving.”

He glared and took a step forward, I braced myself against the wall, he may have a few pounds on me but I was leaner, faster, taller and most of all younger.

He seemed to think better of it because he sighed, shook his head and walked away.

I threw on a pair of sweatpants and a tee shirt and went to Esmeralda’s room in case my father thought better of it, or at least it was my excuse to seek her company.

I knocked and when she remained silent, I couldn’t help the worry to settle deep in my bones. Was history repeating itself? Did one night of peace cost me her presence again? Did she run?

“Esmeralda, it’s m, open up.” I called after knocking once more. I looked down at the handle, hoping she was behind that door and that she wanted to see me.

I let out a sigh of relief when I heard the lock and she opened the door for me, the face pale, worried.

She’d been scared and I truly hated my father for this. I’d wanted to punish her when I first brought her back, that much was true but I never wanted her scared, especially not of something as horrific of any kind of sexual assault.

She was dressed in running gear, her hair in a high ponytail. I loved when her hair was up, I was obsessed with her slender neck, which I knew for a fact was just as soft as it looked.

She sighed, gesturing me in and at this moment I felt like a superhero, knowing she trusted me, looking at me for comfort - It was scarily how easy it would be to get used to that.

“I thought he was leaving today.” She rolled her eyes, sitting heavily on her bed. “I’m just glad I was late to go for my run.”

“Yea, that’s on me sorry.” I winced rubbing my neck. “But he’ll be gone this afternoon.”

She nodded, before detailing me. “Uh,”

“What?” I looked down at my sweatpants and barefoot.

“I think I never saw you in anything other than formal clothes, even when we went to Port Harbor.”

I rubbed my stubbly cheek. “You like the hobo style?” I teased but I was suddenly self-conscious which was also a first for me. My suits were my armor, an armor I seemed to be needing around her more than anyone else as she could pierce right my skin.

She grinned, “I do,” She confirmed. “It makes you look human, more approachable.” She shrugged. “Someone I’m good enough for.”

I frowned. I didn’t like this answer. Did she think I was too good for her? It was ludicrous! She was so much more than me. I rolled my eyes. “Why don’t we spend the day together? We could slum it and I could keep my father off your back.”

She shook her head. “No, I can protect myself.”

*Fuck kill me now.* “Okay, good just tell me if-”

“But I’d love to slum it with you today” She added standing up.

*Thanks fuck!* I might have had to go and off myself if she let me walk out.

“What’s on your mind?” She asked with a wide smile showing her excitement.

*If you knew, you’d run.* I thought and chased the image away before my body could react in a way, I would not be able to hide.

“There’re a few hidden treasures in this house, ready?” I extended my hand toward her.

She nodded and took my hand and as every time she did, I felt my chest turn lighter. I looked down to our clasped hands, how was that even possible?

I took her downstairs to the basement and turned to the opposite direction of the swimming to a room that unfortunately was barely used.

“Do you mind?” I asked, raising my free hand to her face. “I would like it to be a surprise.”

She nodded and once again, as I covered her eyes, I felt this irrational pride at having some of her trust, as small as it was, it seemed to be quite a gift after all that happened between us.

We stepped into the room, her back plastered against my chest. I was holding her a little closer than was perhaps necessary but I always wanted her close.

“Close your eyes, no peeking.” I ask, removing my hand from her face and turning on the light, deeming it to the perfect ambiance setting.

I took a couple of steps to the side, far enough to allow her to see the whole room but close enough to take in all her reaction. It was something to experience all these extravagances through her eyes, it was a given to us, we were born into it - but seeing her amazement, experiencing it with her - there was no comparing.

She opened her eyes and her face morphed in an awe, her luscious lips in a perfect o-shape as she took the room. The rush of pleasure it caused me was a high I never wanted to lose.

“You’ve got an actual cinema in your house?!” She asked. “Oh god!” She squealed as her eyes connected with the small concession stand at the back of the room. There were two popcorn machines, a glass fridge with over ten different types of pops, another glass fridge with ice cream from the best brands in the country as well as a large counter in front of it with as many types of sweets you could be in the mood for.

“It’s just-” She shook her head. “How come you never showed me this room before?”

I shrugged, burying my hands in my sweatpants pockets. “We don’t use it as much as we should.” I admitted and it was far from the truth - If I was honest with her I hadn’t stepped into this room in over 9 months, and even if not used, it was mandatory for all the fridges and cabinets to be full just in case, so much wasted food - Well not really, since Esmeralda entered my life and I understood things a little better I had ask the staff to ensure things were changed at least a week before expiry and given to the closest food bank.

“This is so unbelievable!” She grinned walking down the aisle to the screen. As far as home cinemas were concerned - ours was top of the range. It had three rows of four plush red leather chairs, much larger than your standard cinema seats but I didn’t remember having more than four chairs used at any given time.

“So, you’re basically taking me on a movie date in the comfort of your own home?” She asked jokingly.

“Yes I am.” A *date* - I loved the idea and what I loved even more was the fact that she seems happy about it.

"I love that!" She looked around. "What are we watching?"

"Ah it's a date, you pick." I went to the box by the projectors and gave her the names of the movie screeners we received recently.

"How come you have these films? They won't be out for months."

"My father is a producer for two of the major studios, they always send him the projects his money brought to life."

"Wow..." She was fazed, looking around the room again. "Is there anything you people don't have?"

*Love, trust, friendship, honesty, kindness... Take your pick* I thought bitterly but swallowed back my words. She was happy enough now; I didn't want to sour the mood.

"So, which one is it going to be?" I asked and she didn't seem bothered by the dismissal of the question.

She picked one, a suspense mafia romance based on a popular novel, at least she avoided the chick flick.

"Which seats are the best?" She asked, looking at the three rows, "you're the expert."

I jerked my head toward the last row. "Best view and we can make-out discreetly.... well when there's other people."

She blushed but nodded, fuck this day kept getting better and better.

"But before," I pointed to the concession. "I need to treat my lady to some snacks." I took the stairs two at the time and settled behind the stand, putting the White and Red Soda-Jerk paper cap on my head. "What can I get you little lady?"

She laughed, and it was magnificent - making my heart grow so much in my chest. I felt a tightness, a comforting one. It was unbridled, unguarded - It was Esmeralda in her purest form and it was a part of her I wanted to be mine.

"You are really taking this all movie theater theme very seriously!"

"Obviously!" I snorted jokingly. The truth was, when my father was asked for extra funds for some films, the Director himself usually came with a couple of people - sometimes even the actors to show my father the shots and kiss his ass until they got more funds. In this event, my father usually forced a member of our staff to dress like in the 50's to get the whole movie experience he always said but I knew he was just full of crap and did it just because he could.

She picked up chocolate and mint Ice Cream, butter popcorn and some twizzlers.

"Would that be all?"

"For now," She teased. "My date is paying and he is as hot as he is rich."

I could feel myself blush and that was also not a common occurrence. "He better feed you well, losing those beautiful curves of yours would be a crime."

It was her turn to blush and it truly felt like a date between two enamored teenagers.

We sat side by side and as the film progressed, her head made her way to my shoulder as I wrapped my arm around her.

When the film finished and I pressed the button to turn the lights back on, I heard her snuffle against my chest.

"Esmeralda, Are- Are you crying?" I asked looking down - but her face was hidden against my shirt.

"No?" She croaked.

I chuckled kissing the top of her head. "Why are you crying? It has a happy ending."

She turned around, her eyes bloodshot red. "How can you say that?" She asked with a tiny sob.

I grabbed the cuff of the sleeve of my Henley and wiped under her eyes gently. Because the villain died and she ended up being with the nice baker." I shrugged. "It was supposed to happen that way."

She shook her head stubbornly. "No, it wasn't! He was in love with her. That selfish, cold hearted man was in love with her and she loved him too. It was clear." She sighed. "She will never love the baker with the same passion she loved Antonio - No matter what she is telling herself."

"He was unfeeling. How could she have been happy with him?" I asked and I was hanging at her answer as a lifeline. Of course, I was not a mafia killer, but his character resonated with me - He also had physical and emotional scars he was wearing as armor.

She nodded. "I think so, yes she was. He didn't change but he laid his weapons down for her, he sacrificed himself for her. She made a mistake, she tried to change her monster instead of accepting him for who he was."

I was startled by her words. Could she accept my scars and all? Could she, if given the choice, stay with me instead of picking Deluca?

She shook her head, oblivious to my internal debate. "It's when she started to want something more than what he could give that they lost it and that was not his fault. He tried and I think it takes quite a powerful love for someone to sacrifice as much as he did for her but he was Mafia - There was no out for him."

"I never pegged you for a romantic." *Or a fool.*

She sighed, leaning back against her chair. "I guess I'm all about epic redemption arcs." She turned her head toward me and as her eyes locked on my lips my heart skipped a beat.

I leaned toward her slowly, giving her the time to turn her head but she didn't, she closed the distance and meet my lips, kissing me hesitantly, she was obviously not used to taking the lead, I let my hand trail up her arm, to her neck deepening the kiss and kissing her until my lips were numb.

I finally broke our kiss and couldn't help the male ego grin that settled on my face at her glazed eyes, satisfied look and swollen lip.

"I'll accept it, you know." She whispered after a while, once her breathing was back to normal.

"Accept what?" I asked leaning back on my seat, resting my head beside hers on the headrest.

"Your monster."

I looked up to the ceiling, not sure what I could even say. She might think so but she didn't know the extent of it and I was too scared to test her theory.

I knew it was only a few hours in my home theater but it had been probably the best time I had for a long time, maybe even forever.

A fleeting moment when I didn't have to fake, to protect myself from snakes looking for a weakness they could use to their advantage. It was freeing - That was what that woman was for me - freedom and that was the irony of it all.

She was freeing me whilst I was locking her in - How could it not be doomed?