



BURN – Chapter 3

A Sick Boys Prelude Short Story by Clarissa Wild

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Vincenzo

She can barely speak without stuttering. “What do you mean?”

But I think she knows exactly what I mean.

I tilt my head. “I want to take you home with me.”

“Home ... with you?”

Is it such a preposterous idea? To be taken home by a man like me?

Or is she just scared of what I might do?

I release her hand and take another bite of my steak, swallowing it down. She watches me like a hawk, almost as if she’s tempted by the mere idea of coming home with me but too afraid to take the leap.

“You’ll have your own room and bath. A key to lock the door.” I look up into her beautiful eyes that could haunt my soul if I let them. “I won’t bother you... unless you want me to.”

A glimmer in her eyes makes it so damn hard to keep the predator in me at bay.

“What’s the catch?” she asks after a while.

I cut off another piece of my steak. “There is none.”

“But you must gain something from doing this, right?”

She doesn’t trust me, and I understand that. We barely know each other.

But she’ll become acquainted with me soon enough.

“The opportunity to help someone in need is enough for me,” I reply.

She takes another bite of her food. “So you’re like ... pretending to be a Robin Hood or something.” She snorts at her own comment.

But I don’t find it funny. “Yes.”

She looks up and swallows with trouble. “You’re serious.”

“Yes.”

She frowns. “So you’ve got all this money and want to spend it on me?”

“Yes.”

I don’t know how many more yeses she needs from me to understand my goal.

“Wow.” She cuts into her steak and takes another bite.

“Is it that strange for a rich man to want to share his wealth?”

She makes a face. “Well, you’re the first rich man I’ve met who’s attempted it.”

“Then you’ve only met bastards,” I reply.

She puts her fork and knife down and pushes herself away from the table. “So do you do this often? Randomly help people in need?”

“Only when I find those worthy of giving it to,” I respond.

She sure has many questions for a girl plucked from the streets. But I understand. In her precarious position, she must be careful.

It is the exact reason I wanted her off those streets, to begin with.

“So will you accept?” I ask.

She looks up at me for a moment, her cheeks slowly turning red, which she hides behind a veil of hair. “I don’t know, I mean my mom, she—”

“Was the reason you were in that alley. No?” I interrupt before she can start making excuses. “She doesn’t need you. If your fight was that bad, you deserve a safe space to stay. For now.”

She narrows her eyes at me like she can’t believe I’m offering this. Like it’s some kind of trap. She refuses to touch her food, despite enjoying the taste. I guess it’s a bit too much to take in all at once.

I place my card on the table and signal the server. “I’d like to pay.”

“Of course, sir.” The server takes my card and quickly swipes it before bringing it back. “Thank you, sir.”

I put back my wallet while the girl still looks at me like she can’t decide what to do, so I get up and say, “Think about it. Once you’ve decided, I’ll be outside waiting for your answer.”

As I walk off, a hand suddenly wraps around my wrist. “Wait.”

Her eyes find mine, and for a moment, it feels as though the world around us completely disappears and all that’s left is her and me, and the words she’s about to speak from that pretty little mouth of hers.

“Yes.”

And a wicked smile forms on my face. “Good choice.”

Emilia

His house is huge. I don't think I could even call it a house. It's like a giant mansion with endless corridors and rooms all around, lavish carpets, expensive leather furniture that looks almost untouched, several big, erotic paintings hanging from the walls, and crystal chandeliers scattered all around. Like a small castle but with a modern take.

I could never imagine visiting a house like this, let alone living in it. I feel like I'm walking inside a museum where you're not allowed to touch anything, that's how squeaky clean it all looks.

Suddenly, my eyes land on a couple of guards standing near two doors. I turn to look behind me. The car is gone, and the door is being closed by a bunch of guards as well.

All of them visibly wearing guns.

And it becomes harder and harder to breathe.

So I was right. This kind of money does come at a price.

Who in the hell have I involved myself with?

"C'mon, I'll show you to your room," Vincenzo says.

Fuck. Too late to turn back now.

I walk behind him, careful not to touch anything for fear I might break his precious things. I don't want to anger a man who's so generously opened his home to me.

Especially when he's got men like that guarding this place.

But I still feel a little uneasy with how simple this all feels. Like it's somehow a trap, and I'm walking straight into it.

I swallow back the nerves as we head up the giant staircase. His footsteps are soft but firm, like a man who knows he's impressive without having to appear aggressive. Dominant but without the overbearing, threatening part.

And I don't know why, but for some reason, just the way he walks makes it hard for me to look anywhere else but at him as he guides me down a set of hallways and into a room.

"This is yours for as long as you'd like," he says, pointing inside. "Go on. Take a look."

I head inside and marvel at the beauty around me, the huge windows in the back with giant black curtains hanging to the side, the bathtub in front of the windows, and the big bed in the middle of the room with black-and-white satin sheets. It's all so perfect I could cry.

"Do you like it?" he asks.

I push away the tears. I don't know what I did to deserve all of this ... and that the cost won't be steep.

"It's gorgeous," I say. "So much more than I could ever ..."

I sigh. I can't even finish the sentence. I just want to look around and bask in all the wealth before it's all taken away again.

I check the room, touching every inch of it like it's precious. A closet to the right is filled to the brim with clothes and shoes, all as beautiful as the dress I'm wearing. The one he bought me.

I walk to the window and stare outside at the beautiful garden underneath with a field filled with flowers. Beautiful, just like this house. Just like him. Almost too beautiful to be real.

Is this all just a wild dream concocted in my mind after falling asleep from pure exhaustion, and will I find myself back in that alley like nothing ever happened?

A cold shiver runs up and down my spine.

Suddenly, two hands land on my shoulders, making me jolt up and down.

"Don't be frightened of me," he muses, his voice soft, almost... seductive. My body erupts into goose bumps.

But it's hard not to be afraid, knowing the kind of power he holds. "Your men wear guns."

"It's for protection," he answers softly.

"Whose?"

He leans in, whispering into my ear, "Mine ... and yours."

I struggle to even breathe at all. He's right there, breathing into the nape of my neck, every hair on my body aware of his presence so close I could feel his aura rub against mine.

"Are you scared?" he whispers.

I suck in a ragged breath. "Maybe."

"I won't harm you," he says. I could listen to his soft and seductive voice for ages, and it still not be long enough.

How is he, a man I barely even met, able to have such an effect on me?

"Who ... who are you?"

"You know my name," he responds. "Ask the right question."

"What do you do to make all of this money?"

"I am the don of the Ricci Mafia family," he says, the words creating a visceral throbbing in my heart.

"A mobster," I say under my breath.

Oh God. I really have gotten myself into some deep shit.

“Yes. But I don’t operate like any other mobster.” He stares at me through the glass of the window.

“How so?”

“I sell my goods only to the rich and powerful at exorbitant prices and rob them of their wealth.” He slides aside a few strands of hair and tucks them behind my ear, exposing my neck. “Their wealth I give to people in need.”

“The Robin Hood of the Mafia,” I say.

“If you want to call it that,” he replies.

And I’m his next altruistic target.

“Does it frighten you?” he asks.

After a while, I shake my head.

“You’ve seen much worse, haven’t you?”

I lower my eyes and gaze at my own belly, which seems so big now that I really know what’s been growing inside me all this time while I just thought I was getting fatter.

Even if this man is dangerous, I’m in no position to say no to the things he’s offering me. A room, a warm bed, delicious food, a hot shower.

And I definitely want all of those things.

“You can stay here for as long as you like,” he says.

I turn around to face him, but it’s so hard to look at a face as handsome as his. “What will it cost me?”

He tilts his chin up, and I swallow down the nerves.

Every man is the same. They all want only one thing.

Sex.

And I know how to do that.

I place my hand on his chest, my hand sliding down his body, but when I reach his belt, he grabs my wrist and stops me.

“Is this what you were forced to do?”

I gasp.

“Is that how you got this?” He places a hand on my belly.

I lean back in shock. “How did you know?”

He snorts. “I’ve seen you looking at your belly. It’s obvious you’re pregnant.”

I wince at hearing those words out loud again.

“Is that why you were out on the streets?” When I look away, he tilts my chin with a single finger and forces me to look at him. “Answer me, please.”

“Yes.”

His nostrils flare, and his lips twitch.

“This pregnancy ... is it your choice?”

I swallow, not wanting to give the answer to a man I barely even know. But what choice do I even have? I don't want to seem ungrateful.

After a while, I shake my head. “I'm not on the pill. He didn't want to use a condom. Said it would stop the pleasure. I wasn't able to say no.”

Vincenzo releases my wrist, and I try to compose myself, but it's hard when faced with a man as impressive and dominant as him. It's like every look, every gaze, every word of his is laced with power. The kind I've never had.

“Thank you,” he says. “For your honesty.”

I lick my lips and let my eyes travel down his chiseled face and chest, the buttons of his shirt barely able to contain the pecs hiding behind. It's rare that I meet anyone with such a physique who's also a gentleman. And I don't think I'd even mind it if I had to pay for my stay with body contact.

But he steps back and grabs my hand, bringing it to his lips for a kiss so gentle it takes my breath away.

Until his eyes look up, boring straight into mine. “You do not need to earn your keep ... but I do require you to tell me who it was that got you pregnant.”

I gulp. “Um ...”

His grip on my hand grows stronger. “The truth, Emilia.”

“Dean Johnson. He lives downtown. St. Peter's Street thirty-five, upper floor apartment number twenty-six.”

His eyes twitch again, and a fire grows inside them. One I haven't seen before.

“Thank you.”

He presses another kiss on top of my hand and releases me, then turns around and waltzes off. And I just know I set off a ticking time bomb that'll be impossible to defuse.