

Elina S

Found Again

I glide through the fairgrounds, trailing a girl in an emerald green coat. She looks around hurriedly. I dodge into a line for corn on the cob to avoid being seen. She turns back around and sets off for the parking lot. I follow close- but not too close -behind. I put a finger to my earpiece and mutter, "Target's exiting the fair grounds- I need a lift."

The girl turns again, and this time there's nowhere to hide. So I just slow my pace and look around, acting like a normal fair-goer. Her eyebrows narrow. Suddenly a sleek black Porsche pulls up and the girl steps inside, still eyeing me. I curse under my breath. My hand flies up to my earpiece again. "She's getting away- Pierce, where are you?"

Not a second later, a blue lamborghini honks their horn and slows to a stop. The window rolls down. "Somebody order a chauffeur?"

I roll my eyes and plop down in the passenger seat. "Hurry, Pierce! Follow close, but just far enough that she doesn't know she's being trailed."

He revs the engine. "You got it, boss."

In no time at all we pull up to a gated gray mansion.

"Circle around," I order. He does just that. I spot an open window on the second floor.

"Bingo," I mutter. I grab a black ski mask (Don't judge, it's the only thing I had) and step out of the car.

As Pierce pulls away, I climb the ten-foot stone fence surrounding the estate. It's not easy work, but I make it over. As I begin to navigate the brick wall, it begins to thunder. Rain starts pouring down. I grumble as I grab the tiny ledge of the window. My hair is soaked by the time I pull myself into the house.

I find myself in a large, oval room filled with extravagant bureaus. *Jackpot.*

As silently and quickly as possible, I searched every drawer in the room for valuables. I pocket a diamond necklace, some silver rings, and a pair of gold earrings. As I reached for a gold Rolex watch, I hear a rustling behind me. I whip around, water droplets from my hair flying everywhere. A young man leans against the doorframe, looking bemused. I grumble a word I'd dare not say in front of my mother and make a break for the window. I'm about to fling myself out when the boy grabs my wrist. I struggle, his vise-like grip keeping me from escaping. As I flail, he manages to grab ahold of my mask and rip it off. I gasp as my curly brown hair tumbles over my shoulders.

"No, no, no, no!" I gulp. *So much for being a "top-tier spy"*. He looks at me, eyes as wide as saucers.

I think I hear him whimper.

“London?” He whispers, his voice twinged with grief.

“What?” I respond. I take advantage of the situation to rip my hand free of his steel grip. Forgetting about the mask, I race out of the oval room and down the hall. I soon hear thunderous footfalls behind me. They get closer and closer until I can’t take it and turn to face him. I throw my hands up, ready for a fight.

“London, wait!” he says breathlessly.

“My name’s not London, it’s Dev-” I stop myself. *Now’s not the time to be giving information to your target.* I throw a well-placed punch at his jaw. He looks at me, shocked, and maybe even...no...do I see...tenderness in those shining, mesmerizing gray eyes?

Why would he be...

Everything goes black.

I dream.

I’m in a car. Suddenly, an 18-wheeler next to me explodes in a blinding ball of flames. Fire and shrapnel fall from the sky, tearing through the ceiling of my car. Everything goes dark again.

When I wake up, I’m in a chair. The side of my face is sore. *He punched me.* I try to reach up to rub it and find myself tightly bound with ropes. I roll my eyes. *Amateur.* I look up to see the boy. He’s flanked by four burly bodyguards who look like they’ve been lifting weights since the age of one. Something’s different about the young man, though. Instead of that desperate, sad teenager I met before, I saw a cold, unforgiving glint in his eyes.

“Devyn Banks. Age nineteen. Worked for Samson Enterprises for exactly one year,” He went on, reading from a list he held. *How does he know this?* “A pleasure to formally meet you. Allow me to introduce myself. I’m Atlas Jay Quinn, head of the multi-million dollar company Quintus Tech Lodge. To cut to the chase, the girl you followed home this afternoon was my sister, Ophelia. Your mission is not secret. We know your motive, Devyn.”

I swallow my fear and fail to spit out a witty retort. Instead, I hiss, “You know nothing about me!”

I grimace at the cliché.

Atlas motions for the guards to leave. They do so reluctantly. He undoes my restraints. Strange. I rub where the ropes had dug into my skin.

“You’re right, we don’t,” he whispers, lips inches from my ear. “But do *you* know, London?”

London.

The name rings in my ears. In my mind’s eye I remember his moment of vulnerability in the oval room. It was like he was seeing a ghost.

The ghost of someone he loved.

“Who’s London?” I spit, glaring like that name had no affect on me.

I note the hesitation in his reply.

“How do you feel about cars?” he mutters.

I flash back to the dream. I have a gut feeling that somehow this will get me closer to an answer.

So I tell him.

His face drains of color and his eyes go wide. “Can’t be...” he mumbles.

“You owe me an explanation,” I hiss. That snaps him back to reality.

“She was my best friend since preschool...” He starts. “I loved her deeply, but I was too late to tell her...there was a car crash exactly one year ago. You were the only survivor...”

Suddenly, like floodgates opening, a rush of hidden memories hits me. Love. Joy. Sorrow. I remember it all. Birthdays. Prom. Everything in between...and I remember the crash.

“Atlas...I-” I stutter.

His eyes are searching. Desperate. Pleading. Longing. “Tell me it’s you. Please.”

I don’t reply. I just put a hand on his cheek, gazing into his stormy gray eyes.

I’m not sure exactly what happened.

But I know I kissed him.

I kissed the boy I barely remember.