

# Four or Dead by GOA

## Chapter 59

Four or Dead

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Emma

The drive to the party was short and I curse myself yet again for my inability to recognize anything I spot out the window. How could I have lived in this city for so long and still know so little. After about fifteen minutes we pull up to a building that looks a lot like a museum. The building is large with columns lit bright with lights placed along the ground. Large red flags are draped over the sections of the building without columns. They each have the letters 'PAV' printed on them in

gold font. 7)

"What does PAV stand for?" I ask Zane as we line up behind several other limos and wait for our turn to walk..

"Is that a red carpet? With photographers and everything? Yes, yes it is

"People Against Violence," Zane says. "This is only one of the charity events I attend every year and it's our coming-out party. Most of my associates will be here tonight that I want you to meet." >)

Thankfully he wasn't looking at me when he said this because I couldn't resist the look of disbelief that took over my face. This man who has killed who knows how many people, supports an organization against violence. \\*)

The irony. Do his so-called friends know what he gets up to?

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Something tells me that the people waiting inside for us are just as hypocritical as the man sitting next to me. That's the thing about wealthy people, only a rare few actually give a damn about the world around them. I do not doubt that whatever money they collect tonight won't be going to the people who need it

A few moments later our limo stops right in front of the entrance and the door is opened by yet another man in a full tux. You know the ones that make them look like penguins, bow tie and all. Zane steps out first and adjusts his suit while I slip as gracefully as I can across the seat and wait for my turn to climb out. Only Zane isn't the one who holds a hand out to me, the man in the tux is the one who helps me out. He delivers me to Zane's side, and that's when Zane extends his arm out for me to take making sure my ring is on full display

The flashing of camera lights is almost blinding but I try my best to

keep my face relaxed. \ ) Fake smile in place? Check

As we slowly walk down the red carpet we stop to let each photographer get a good shot of us

"Mr. Dalton! Mr. Dalton! Over here! Is it true that you are under investigation for fraud?" One reporter yells out and I glance around trying to put a face to the voice but it isn't until he pushes closer do I get a good look

He looks about how you would expect a sleazy reporter would look

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Cheap suit jacket, no tie, scruffy facial hair, bags under his eyes, disheveled hair, and a cocky smirk firmly in place

"Miss! Miss! Do you know that Mr. Dalton's business is under investigation? What can you tell us?" My mouth opens and closes like a fish as I try to think of how to answer him

I don't know what to say since I haven't heard anything about this, and it's not like Zane would share that kind of information with me yet

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"No comment." That is all Zane says before leading me further down the carpet and on to the next group of photographers

"Mr. Dalton! Who is your date?" A woman calls out

I feel Zane's body relax as he leads me over to the side where the woman's voice came from. She is wearing a business suit but her top is cut low enough to show a good amount of cleavage. She isn't shy about using this to her advantage either given that she is bending over just a bit more than needed. She is also giving Zane a sultry smile that makes her intentions even more clear

I want to scoff and polite

Honestly, I don't think he'll keep his

hands off me. [? & ) ) "This is my beautiful resting hand

over mine and smi

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Gag. \\* "Hello," I say as sweetly as I can

"Fiancé? Why has no one ever seen her before?" The woman asks clearly annoyed by this news

"She has been living out of town for some time and I preferred to keep our relationship private," Zane replies.)

"Is that why you would be seen with different women at different events, to keep your real relationship private?" The woman asks taking a different tactic now. \\*

She must expect me to be upset by her question because she looks at me with a smug smile like she just dropped a bomb on me

"That's enough questions for tonight. Thank you!" Zane waves to the crowd before he turns me towards the entrance and leads me inside

"Sorry about all that. Reporters come up with whatever stories that will sell." (2)

He shakes his head and lets out a lighthearted chuckle like this is normal for him. Well, unlike him, I am not used to the spotlight being

on me

"It's fine. I understand they're just trying to do their job." I reply softly

He smiles at me like he is happy with my answer, and I hate that I have

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to pretend to get him to trust me. This sweet soft-spoken girl isn't me anymore

"Thank you for being so understanding." He says with a nod

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That conversation ends when we finally enter the main room where the party is in full swing. I can't stop the small gasp that escapes me when I take everything in. It's absolutely beautiful inside. Glittering chandeliers tower overhead and they are attached to a ceiling that is covered in the most beautiful mural I have ever seen. Warm clouds and what look like angels floating among them. It's stunning. [\*,

The rest of the room looks like something out of one of those movie adaptations of a Jane Austen book. It looks like a beautiful ballroom plucked right out of the 1800s and I am absolutely in love with it

The people standing around are out of place for the decor though, dressed in elegant but modern attire and carrying glasses of champagne. The women all seem to be wearing their best jewelry which is impossible to ignore with how the light is making them sparkle like crazy

All of this grandeur makes me feel completely out of place. My dress is beautiful but nowhere near the level of some of these women

"I feel a little underdressed," I whisper to Zane and he chuckles

"You look lovely. These women just like to flock around and show the world just how important they are. I prefer a woman with more humble

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beauty." He says looking at me appreciatively. .)

Man, he sure knows how to lay on the charm when he wants to. If I didn't know what he was really like I could easily fall into his honey

trap. Too bad for him, I prefer men dark, broody, and with a penchant for violence. \\*)

Who knew

"I guess these events are the only chance they have to really go all out," I say trying to keep the conversation light

"I suppose that's true but it's all a bit much if you ask me. And speaking of a bit much..." He cuts himself off and a huge smile as fake as mine spreads across his face

"Amanda." He draws in greeting to the middle-aged woman who is currently walking toward us

"Zane!" She says cheerfully before leaning forward and exchanging one of those air cheek kiss things

What is that called? I don't know. All I know is wealthy people seem to use it as their preferred greeting. \*)

"How is the family?" Zane asks and I want to snort at the upbeat sound of his voice that is clearly all part of his act

"Oh, you know. Kids are away at school so that leaves me time for the

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club and so on. Bill has been traveling on some business deal so I have been keeping myself busy. Ah, there he is." She smiles and holds a delicate hand out

A man slightly older than her with salt and pepper hair walks up and lets her cling to him

"William," Zane says reaching out to shake the man's hand

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"Zane. Good to see you." William replies before turning his attention to me. "And who is this stunning creature?" )

His smile grows when his attention focuses on me and I admit he isn't bad looking for an older man. [?)

"Emma," I say holding my hand out for him to shake

He doesn't though. He lifts my hand and places a gentle kiss on the top

"Pleased to meet you, Miss Emma. Zane is a lucky man to have you as a companion tonight." And now things are getting a little creepy. .\*)

The look I thought was charming and innocent has turned a little heated and he is still holding on to my hand

"Come now Bill, let Zane have back his date." His wife says giving him a teasing smack on the arm but there is a glint of anger in her eyes now

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\*Anger not towards him but...at me? \?

Why is it that women like to blame the other woman and never the man? Aren't women supposed to stick together and all that?

"Tell me dear who are you wearing? This dress is so unique it's like nothing I've seen before." She says once her husband is back by her side

I can tell by the sound of her voice that she isn't asking out of curiosity.

There is a hint of disgust and insult added that makes me want to shrink into myself and hide from her scrutinizing gaze

"Ym sorry I don't know," I admit honestly

"It's a custom piece I had made for her. I wanted to be sure my fiancé looked her best tonight and this look was perfect for her." Zane says offering me one of those smiles that would make any other girl swoon but has zero effect on me. ))

The smile that says 'I am a handsome, rich bachelor that all the girls want but I chose you.'

"It is darling Zane. It suits her very well, especially since this is her first time at an event like this. Is that right?" She asks with even more

smugness than before

"Actually her father was a good friend of mine. We first met at an event similar to this one." Zane replies, but he's wrong

The event we met at was nowhere near as fancy as this one, but maybe he doesn't want to admit I don't belong here. Even though my father was wealthy, he wasn't anywhere close to as wealthy as any of these people. This woman seems to know that and is swimming around that fact like a shark stocking its next meal. \\*)

She could eat me and spit me out without breaking a nail and she knows it.).