

A woman with dark hair in a high bun and a long braid, wearing a shiny, form-fitting pink dress and high heels, stands on a red carpet. The background shows a hallway with stanchions and a red rope. In the foreground, a large camera lens is visible, suggesting a photo shoot.

# Star-crossed double-cross

A TG tale by ds1000

**38 Illustrations**

# *Star-crossed double-cross*

*Written and illustrated by ds1000*

Ahh, the life of an international pop star. The glitz, the glamour, the fame! The ability to entertain and move audiences while travelling to exotic far-flung destinations around the world. What many would give to have such a life. But it's not all fun and games. A lot of hard work and dedication goes into maintaining an appropriate physical appearance. Then there are the hours devoted to memorizing, recording, and rehearsing song and dance routines.

Not to mention the constant need to attend photo shoots and promotional events.

For small town boy, Lucian Styles the lure of a life in the music industry was always too strong to resist and after he's heard performing by a talent scout, he thinks he's hit the jackpot. But all is not as it seems, as an interesting offer comes his way, one which will take him on a journey to sparkly dresses and sky-high heels.

Thrust into the cutthroat world of show business, a place where the top dogs make their own rules, how will our protagonist fair? Can he overcome the obstacles in his path and save his sick mother before he's feminised beyond recognition? Read on to find out.

30 Chapters, 38,000 words, 38 Illustrations.

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## *Chapter 01 – Selling out*

Looking out over the sparsely populated room, Lucian felt a tingle run down the length of his spine. It was open mike night down at the crossroads tavern, and he was ready to blow the locals away. Taking a deep breath, he looked over at the miserable-looking sound technician, giving him the nod. It was time. Time to show the local rednecks and hillbillies what he could do.



Hearing his backing track start-up, Lucian strummed down hard on old Mona, his favourite guitar, as the nervous energy he'd felt pre-show evaporated away. Usually, a shy, introverted type of character, Lucian typically didn't enjoy social situations. But when he stepped foot on a stage, guitar in hand, he was suddenly in his element. After all, he was an artist. A superstar talent waiting to be discovered. There was no doubt in his mind that if he just

kept plugging away, it would only be a matter of time before he was snapped up by one of the big record labels. Even if the fifty or so people in attendance seemed oblivious to his presence.

Belting out the first line of his reworked version of the song imagine, he scanned the room, seeing tables of people chatting and mostly ignoring him. "They wouldn't recognise real art if it smacked them in the face," he thought as he crashed his plectrum against the strings before locking eyes with a man sitting in the front row.

Feeling a surge of energy as he looked down at the nodding man, clearly from out of town, judging by his darker skin tone and flashy outfit, Lucian focused on his timings. It didn't matter that the rest of the crowd were uncultured halfwits. He now had his audience.

His song ended to a smattering of applause, scarcely audible above the chatter in the room. With the majority of the people barely even noticing he had even finished. Apart from the man in the front row, that is. Stood on his feet, the Latino man was clapping enthusiastically and nodding away.

Shuffling down from the stage unnoticed, Lucian headed for the bar, where he knew at least one other person in the room would have appreciated his artistic masterclass.

Hopping up onto his usual barstool, his best friend Nancy greeted him with a smile and a bottle of beer. "Cool vibes, Luce," announced the tattooed covered rock chick. "I didn't think John Lennon and death metal would mesh, but that sounded sick."

Looking over at his blue-haired friend, Lucian smiled. "Right?" he announced confidently. "If I wasn't stuck in backwater Hicksville with all these Neanderthals, this place would be packed out."

"Well, one guy dug it," Nancy said, flicking her eyes. "That hot guy in the red leather jacket was going wild, and it looks like he's heading your way."

"What?" Lucian gasped, "what does he want?"

"How should I know, Luce? I'm not a mind reader." Nancy scoffed. "But you can tell me when I get back from serving Trent down the end of the bar."

"No, don't leave. What if he's weird?" Lucian blurted out as Nancy smiled and walked away.

Suddenly, Lucian could feel the man's presence looming over him. Glancing up to his right, he looked into the strangers piercing brown eyes and immediately looked away.

"Hola, amigo," the mysterious man announced. "I hope you don't mind me approaching you like this. I really enjoyed what you did up there and wanted to let you know. Can I buy you a drink?"

Flustered, Lucian looked back up. "Err... thanks, but I just got one in."

"The next one then," the man replied, taking up a seat on an empty stool and taking out a business card. My name is Raul Jimenez. I work for Synco entertainment. Maybe you've heard of it?"

Feeling a sudden surge of excitement, Lucian turned his body to face the man. "Synco entertainment? You mean, you work for Simon Powell?" he blurted out before staring at the man with his mouth ajar.

"So, you have heard of us?" the man chuckled. "If you are interested, I might have an opportunity for you. One that if everything works out, will make you a star."

Feeling like all his birthdays had come at once, Lucian tentatively took the professional-looking card from Raul and carefully read it from top to bottom. It seemed legit!

"You want to sign me?" Lucian muttered, still in shock.

"I want you to come to New York this weekend, so we can discuss things further," the confident man announced.

Lucian gasped, "New York? This weekend? I don't know if I can," he replied, thinking about his empty bank account.

"If money is the issue, you don't have to worry," Raul shot back as if he was reading his mind. "I will arrange a car to drive you there and back and a hotel for you to sleep, all expenses paid. Do you have a number I can contact you on?"



Pulling up outside, perhaps the tallest building he had ever seen, Lucian looked out of the window of his limousine and felt as though he was

dreaming. He was in New York! The Big Apple! And about to sign for the most famous record label in the world. Could it really be true?

After the conversation with Raul in the bar, Lucian had been sceptical at first. But after talking it over with Nancy, who was urging him to go, he had returned to his tiny apartment, knowing exactly what he wanted to do. Seeing the mould on the walls and the pile of bills next to his disconnected phone, it just didn't seem fair. He was destined for greater things. He deserved better!

Exiting the elevator on the sixth floor, Lucian walked across the polished floors of the expensive-looking office complex, hands in pockets, thinking about the first thing he would buy when he became a global superstar.



Approaching a reception desk, a cute looking woman stood up and introduced herself as Raul's personal assistant before showing him into the impressive office behind her. Inside the office, he was met by Raul, who surprised him with a kiss on the cheek before showing him over to a comfortable cushioned sofa.

After being offered something to drink and having to listen to Raul gush over how happy he was that he had agreed to come, Lucian finally got the chance to speak. "So, can you tell me more about this offer?" He asked nervously, looking across at Raul on the opposite side of the sofa.

"Straight to the point, I like that," replied the now serious-looking Latino man. "Well, what I have for you, Mr Styles is what you might call an unusual offer. One that will require a lot of dedication on your part. But if you agree to the terms, we'll make you rich and famous."

With his heart now thumping at twice its normal pace, Lucian leaned in and nodded, indicating that he wanted to know more.

"First, I'd like to try something," Raul announced, reaching to his right, and grabbing a piece of paper. "I want you to lip-sync to these lyrics," he added, passing the sheet across.

Grasping the paper, Lucian looked down, and his heart sank. Written on the page was some cheesy pop song. The type of song that was currently playing on all the popular radio stations, the kind of stations he avoided like the plague.

"You want me to sing this?" Lucian replied, his horrified expression clear to see.

"No, I want you to lip-sync, and do it with a smile," Raul shot back forcefully. "Is that a problem?"

Suddenly seeing all his dreams about to go up in smoke, Lucian gave Raul a half-smile. "Uhm... I guess I can try."

"Excellent," Raul answered, now looking much happier than he had a few seconds ago.

As if by magic, music began to play, and what followed was possibly the most humiliating event of young Lucian's life. Force to smile and bob along to

the upbeat sickeningly awful song about a girl getting over a man who had cheated on her, Lucian felt sick.

With the song coming to an end and his torture finally over, a red-faced Lucian sank back into the sofa, unable to look Raul in the eyes. He couldn't quite believe what he had just done, feeling as though he had just sold his soul to the devil.

"Not bad," Raul announced, clapping his hands enthusiastically. "I think this could work."

"That was some kind of test," Lucian muttered, confused by the reaction.

"Yes, and you passed," Raul announced, reaching over, and pressing a button on a nearby phone before proceeding to speak in Spanish. A few seconds later, the receptionist from earlier entered the room with what he would soon find out to be a contract.

"I want you to read this over," Raul said in a serious tone, "if you agree to our terms, we'll start your training tomorrow."

"Training?" Lucian repeated, feeling overwhelmed. "Mr Jimenez, I don't mean to sound ungrateful here. But I'm a little confused. You are offering me a record deal here, right?"

"Not exactly," Raul announced, leaning back in his seat. "What you have in front of you is an agreement to double for one of our current artists. You see, the celebrity lifestyle is so hectic, all our stars have look-alikes these days. It's necessary to throw the paparazzi off the scent, as you say."

Lucian looked over in horror, feeling as though a dagger had been thrust through his chest. "You want me to be a look-alike," he spat back in disgust. "You said you were going to make me rich and famous!"

"And I will boy," Raul answered, shuffling closer. "As a stand-in, you'll get all the same living luxuries as the celebrity you're doubling for. You'll travel the world, stay in the best hotels, and be dressed the most exclusive brands."

Placing the contract down, Lucian felt angry. "I appreciate the offer, Mr Jimenez, but I'm going to have to pass, I'm afraid. I'm an artist. Not some puppet!"

Raul edged closer once again before placing his palm on Lucian's knee. "If that's your final decision, then fine. A car will take you back to the hotel,

where you can enjoy all the facilities for the rest of the day. But I urge you to think this offer over. I perhaps should have mentioned the fifty thousand dollars we'll give you if you complete the training course. After that, if you still don't want to proceed, we can go our separate ways. No hard feelings. I'm sure that money will come in handy, especially with your mother being sick! We can also help you find her the best doctors and the most cutting-edge treatments."

"My mother, how do you know about that," Lucian shot back surprised.

"We've done our research, Lucian," Raul chuckled, "Mr Powell didn't get where he is today without knowing everything there is to know about his clients. We've done our research.

Still stunned, Lucian looked down at the contract to his left. "And what does this training involve," he probed nervously as he thought back to how much he'd cried when his mother had told him about her illness. A rare condition, with little chance of recovery, especially given their financial situation.

"I won't lie to you," Raul answered. "It will be intense. You'll need to have an open mind and commit fully. We'll need to alter your appearance. Nothing permanent, of course. But the hair, the exercise routines, and some of the outfits might make you feel a little uncomfortable at first."

Lost for words, Lucian didn't know how to respond. How could he possibly agree to such a thing? But then again, this man was offering to save his mother's life. How could he possibly refuse?

## *Chapter 02 - Mariana*

“Lucian, this is Mariana Lopez. She will be your mentor as you complete your training with us.” Raul announced as he walked Lucian into a large, well-equipped gym.

Lucian looked the striking woman up and down as she glared back and instantly felt intimidated. From the tips of her sparkling white sneakers to the top of her slicked-back black hair, everything about the gorgeous woman screamed perfection.

“Hola, Lucia,” the woman announced in a thick Spanish accent, “hablas Espanyol?”

“Err... what,” Lucian replied, not understanding a word.

The woman tutted loudly before turning to face Raul, rattling off a couple of sentences in their native tongue. Looking back and forth as the pair conversed in Spanish, Lucian had the same thought he’d been having all morning. “What the hell am I doing here?”

The day had started out alright, waking up in the most comfortable bed he’d ever slept in before devouring a delicious breakfast in the dining room of his five-star hotel. But it had been all downhill from there. Driven back to Raul’s office he had signed paper after paper, agreeing to god knows what! There was a contract as thick as a phone book, he started reading before giving up on page sixteen. And a non-disclosure agreement, where he promised not to speak about what he was doing to anyone. The whole situation was all very secretive, he hadn’t even told who he was supposed to be doubling for! That information would be given to him if and when he completed the training course.

When the conversation between the pair ended, Mariana stood with her arms folded, visibly annoyed as Raul turned to face Lucian. “I will see you in a few weeks, Lucian,” Raul said as he checked his watch. “Listen to Mariana and do everything she asks of you.”

“You’re going? He replied nervously. “Erm... I think I’ve changed my mind about all of this Mr Jimenez. I don’t think I can do this anymore. This is a mistake.”

Raul stared back and shook his head. "It's a mistake to make some money and save your mother? I don't understand."

Speechless, Lucian didn't know what to say. Although he hated to admit it, Raul was right. He was being given a once in a lifetime opportunity to save his mother. How could he live with himself if he walked out now just because he felt a little uncomfortable and embarrassed?

Seeing the look on Lucian's face and taking his silence to mean he had changed his mind, Raul nodded as he looked down at his watch once again. "I really must go now," he announced. "Focus on that thought you just had, Lucian. And anytime you feel uncomfortable, just remember that you are doing this for your mother. The woman who gave you life."

The pair locked eyes as Raul smiled warmly in his direction. Still feeling anxious, Lucian nodded his head, and as soon as he did, Raul turned and marched out of the door, leaving him alone with the beautiful stern-looking Ms Lopez.



Forty-five minutes later, Lucian stood silently in the centre of the gym as Mariana scrutinised his appearance. His usual black baggy attire had been replaced with tighter, more colourful workout clothes, making him feel foolish and uncomfortable.

"Ok, Lucia. Let's see how flexible you are?" Mariana barked, somehow unable to pronounce the n on the end of his name.

"Err... Mariana. My name is Lucian, not Lucia," he replied timidly, looking out from under his pink baseball cap.

Mariana didn't look impressed. "Si, Lucia. That is what I said, no? And you will call me Senorita Lopez. I am your teacher, not your friend."

Feeling defeated, Lucian sighed. Having already questioned this woman about his outfit, he was quickly learning that Mariana Lopez was stubborn and not willing to compromise. Feeling an unusual tight clinging sensation surrounding his legs, Lucian thought back to the lecture on how he didn't have any clothes of his own, and that if he was to be successful in impersonating someone else, he'd need to learn how to put his own personal preferences and tastes to one side. "Your body is now a blank canvas to be

dressed,” she had stated as Lucian had stared back blankly. “Your head a piece of clay to be sculpted.”



“We will off start easy today,” Mariana declared as she walked across the room. “Some dance and light exercise to test your flexibility. But don’t get too comfortable as I still expect your full dedication. Over the next few weeks, you will need to train hard and diet extensively to have any chance of being successful in our task.”

Lucian narrowed his eyes and ran the tip of his tongue along his slightly puffy bottom lip. Feeling a strange tingly sensation resulting from the lip balm Mariana had given him earlier. And as the room suddenly filled with an earache-inducing sickly pop song, Lucian let out a heavy sigh, thinking back to Raul’s comment about his mother. “I can do this,” he thought, “It’s just a few weeks.”

“Ok, watch me and follow exactly what I do,” Mariana hollered, having returned to the centre of the room. “Left leg up. Left leg down. Right leg up. Right leg down...”

## *Chapter 03 - Changes*

Having finished getting dressed, Lucian took great care to avoid his reflection in the full-length mirror on the wall of his new bedroom. Knowing what he'd see if he looked and knowing he wouldn't like it.

A week had passed since he had first arrived in New York. A week of dieting, rules, and exercise. A week of Mariana, his new housemate in the apartment he had been given within the training complex, barking orders at him. Every day was just a repeat of the last. Wake up, eat a meagre breakfast, take Spanish lessons, dance, exercise, sleep, repeat! A gruelling and absolutely exhausting routine, both physically and mentally.

Leaving his room, Lucian clomped down the hallway in the chunky pink sneakers he had been given to wear, still feeling very self-conscious about his outfit. As he walked towards the kitchen, he felt the silky material of bell-bottomed pants and short top slide against his skin and again thought back to the reasons, why he was there.

"Buenos dias, Lucia," Mariana chimed out without turning as he walked into the kitchen. "Como estas,"

"Buenos dias, Senorita Lopez, Lucian replied as he felt his stomach rumble, "Estoy bien, gracias."

"Muy bien. Now come and eat your breakfast. We have a long day ahead of us."



“We’re not training today?” Lucian asked as he plodded over to join her, both nervous and excited as he thought about a day off from the torturous training routine.

“No, we still train. But first, we have somewhere we need to be,” Mariana replied before taking a sip of coffee that was delivered each morning by the record company.

Lucian’s initial reaction was happiness. Having been stuck indoors for over a week, with only the demanding Mariana for company, the thought of the outside world was suddenly very appealing. That is until he thought about what he was wearing. “We’re going out?” He muttered, “I can’t go out dressed like this.”

Mariana tutted. “Por que? What is wrong with what you are wearing?”

“People will stare at me,” Lucian exclaimed, “They’ll think I’m weird.”

Mariana tutted again before turning with an angry expression on her face. “So, you want to quit? Give up over some colourful clothing?”

“I... err... I just don’t understand why I have to wear such embarrassing clothes,” Lucian stuttered. “Is the person I’m impersonating gay or something?”

“No, they are not gay,” Mariana shot back. “But even if they were, that is none of your concern. Your job is to look like they do and act as they do. No more, no less.”

“I remember,” Lucian replied, feeling frustrated, “But surely this man can’t always wear pink, silky clothes? He must wear black or darker colours sometimes, right?”

Mariana glared at him. “Of course, but this is not the point. You like black because black is safe. My job is to expand your horizons to take you out of your comfort zone. When you are doubling for another, you must believe you are that person. And to do that, you need to lock your personality away. Comprendes?”

“Si, I understand,” Lucian answered, looking away.

Mariana curled her lip “Muy bien. Now eat. And besides, the place we are going to is on the fourth floor. We won’t be going outside just yet.”



Feeling the cool air tickle his smooth hairless legs, having just gone through one of the strangest experiences of his young life, Lucian stood, shellshocked, staring at his reflection. In reality, it had only been a few hours since Mariana had left him in the beauty salon, but to him, it felt as if he’d been there for days. From the moment he arrived, he’d instantly felt uncomfortable. Surrounded by scary, unfamiliar equipment with his eyes watering as he inhaled the strong, chemical aroma in the air. Every instinct in his body was telling him to run. And it only got worse from there as a masked woman entered, only to stand silently in front of them. With his eyes bulging, Lucian stood rooted to the spot. Staring into the deep, dark-brown eyes of the mysterious woman wearing a white porcelain mask.

“You are not to talk to or ask questions to this woman,” Mariana explained. “You will obey her commands and let her do her job. Comprendes?”

Long over at Mariana, Lucian bit his lip and nodded his head.

Mariana smiled. "Bueno. I'll be back to collect you later. Relax and try not to get yourself too worked up." She added before turning and leaving the room, leaving Lucian alone with the masked stranger.

Offering him a robe, the intimidating woman asked Lucian to change. And knowing full well that he wasn't supposed to ask, he still tried asking why. After receiving a silent glare in response, he reluctantly put it on. He was then instructed to lie face down on a table where he again tried to understand what was happening. Once again, he was ignored.

He gave up asking questions after that, and by the time the first strip of wax was ripped painfully from the back of his leg, he couldn't help but start to panic. Crying out in distress as the masked woman tore away strip after strip, his mind searched for answers. "Why was his body hair being removed? And for what purpose?"

Still fixated on the image reflected back through the mirror, Lucian failed to notice as Mariana walked up and stopped by his side.



“Mucho mejor,” she announced, causing Lucian to jump.

“Senorita, Lopez,” he mumbled as he turned, “What is going on here? I don’t understand?”

“You are a blank canvas, remember?” Mariana replied. “You look more natural now with your hair like this.”

Turning back to the mirror, Lucian wasn’t so sure. Still finding it odd to see his natural hair colour after having his friend Nancy dye it for him for so long.

But on top of that, it now looked full and voluminous, standing out from the sides of his head with a strange shine to it. He didn't like it one bit.

"But why did she have to wax my body? And what was that laser thing she did to my face? Men are supposed to have hair. Body hair is natural," Lucian moaned.

"It's called grooming." Mariana shot back." Maybe where you come from men look like apes, but in show business, we like to have a cleaner appearance."

Knowing that he was fighting a losing battle, Lucian sighed before scanning down his body once more. Wincing as his eyes fell upon the girly looking shorts, he had been given to replace the shiny pink pants he had worn for the last week. "Can I at least have my pants back?" he asked, feeling embarrassed and exposed.

Mariana smiled, "No. You need to become more comfortable showing off a little more skin. Especially now they look more presentable. Now vamos. We need to get to the gym. We are already behind schedule. We'll have to work extra hard to make up the time!"

## *Chapter 04 - Balance*

“Esta bien. Cinco minutos para descansar.” Mariana announced as she turned off the deafeningly loud pop music.

Exhausted, Lucian tried to catch his breath. Every muscle in his ever-thinning body was aching as he grimaced, looking up at the clock, realising they still had at least three hours of practice to go. Plodding over to join his mentor, Lucian gulped down half a bottle of water before collapsing in a nearby chair.

“Senorita, Lopez. When can I wear some normal clothes?” He asked while looking over before readjusting his pink hairband and dabbing the sweat from his brow with a towel.

Marana raised an eyebrow. “Normal? You don’t think what you are wearing is normal? And why are you speaking English? En Espanyol, por favor.”

Lucian sighed, trying to form a sentence in his tired mind. “Por que necesitas skirt? Hombre no wear skirt!”

“The word for a skirt is falda,” Mariana chuckled as she sat down next to him. “And when asking that question, you can use necesito or better still uso.”

Lucian rolled his eyes and tried again. ““Por que uso el falda.”

“Almost,” Mariana replied, smiling. “But you can’t use el when talking about a skirt. You need to use la. A skirt is feminine. It should be la falda.”

“I know it’s feminine! That’s the whole point,” Lucian exclaimed angrily, thinking that he was going crazy.

Mariana shook her head and smiled. “Calm down, Lucia,” she shot back. “And to answer your question. You’re not wearing a skirt. You’re wearing shorts. There are two leg holes, si?”

Lucian couldn’t argue with her logic but looking down at the flap of bright pink material sitting across his hairless thighs, it sure as hell looked like a mini skirt to him.

“Now, no more complaining,” Mariana said, looking him straight in the eyes. “You are still too self-conscious. Why are you so concerned with how

you look? There is only the two of us here. I am not judging you.”

“I... I... just... I don’t know.” Lucian replied sheepishly. “I just don’t think these clothes are appropriate for a man.”

“Clothes are clothes, Lucia,” Mariana replied. “And to be successful here, you’re going to have to wear whatever we give you.”

“I’m trying, Senorita, Lopez,” Lucian answered, feeling for the first time in weeks as though Mariana was genuinely trying to help him. “I just feel so ridiculous wearing this stuff. What can I do?”

“I have an idea,” Mariana said while standing up. “We will kill two flies with one swat, as you say.”

Following her with his eyes, Lucian watched as the Latino woman walked over to the side of the gym. She then rummaged around for a while before returning with what looked like a shoebox. “Here,” she announced, passing the box across. “These will not only help with your balance but help you face your fears. When you wear them, I want you to think of yourself as another person. Comprende?”

Worried about what he’d find inside, with shaky hands, Lucian gently removed the lid of the box before dropping the lid to the ground. Letting out a loud gasp his head shot around to stare at Mariana. “High-heels!” he shrieked, “No way! Are you crazy?”

Mariana remained calm. “No, I’m not crazy. Think of it this way. You would never normally wear something like this. So, when you wear them, you are no longer you, si?”

“No,” Lucian shot back. “I can’t.”

“You can, and you will,” Mariana replied. “Think of your mother. Think of the money.”

Feeling sick, Lucian looked away in disgust. “Here, let me help you,” Mariana added, kneeling down at his feet.

Petrified with his leg muscled tensed, Lucian watched on as Marian removed his shoes and socks before placing the terrifying shoes next to his feet. “I... please, no,” he muttered.

“Calm yourself, Lucia,” Mariana said, smiling up at him. They are just shoes. They will not kill you. Now relax your feet and trust me.”

Before he could reply, Mariana had already slipped the first shoe onto his right foot. And, in what seemed like an instant, she quickly repeated the process with his other foot before fastening the ankle straps tightly.

“Now stand up,” she commanded, stepping to the side.

After a moment of hesitation, Lucian obeyed. Tentatively pushing himself up from his chair. Unsure of himself, he felt his whole sense of balance shift as he adjusted his footing, feeling his calf muscles stretch to their limits.

“Now, walk to the centre of the room,” Mariana ordered. “Small steps. One foot in front of the other.

Feeling like he was having an out of body experience, Lucian again obeyed, stepping forward slowly on his wobbly, weak legs. “What the hell am I doing,” he thought as he tottered across the gym listening to the unusual clicking sound, terrified he was about to roll his ankle. When he reached the centre of the room, he slowly turned, placing his hand on his hips. “Ok, I did it. Can I take these things off now?” He asked as he looked over at Mariana’s smiling face.



“Take them off? We are just getting started,” Mariana replied with a puzzled expression on her face.

“You mean... you expect me to dance in these stilts?” Lucian exclaimed in shock.

Mariana shook her head. “Men are so weak,” she shot back. “Always claiming to be superior to women, but they can’t do half the things we can do.”

“That’s not true,” Lucian countered. “It’s not that I can’t. It’s just not appropriate for a man to walk around in six-inch heels.”

“Who says?” Mariana answered. “Is it the law? And besides, those are three inches at most. My little cousin could handle them with ease. Are you telling me you can’t do what an eight-year-old girl can do? Are you that weak?”

“I’m not weak,” Lucian announced, all fired up and angry after being challenged.

“Esta bien,” Mariana replied with a smile, walking over to start the music. “Let’s see then. Same routine as before and with passion.”

As the room once again filled with the sound of cheesy pop music, Lucian looked down at his feminine looking legs, realising he had been tricked. The shorts that looked like a skirt were now the least of his worries as he shifted his balance in his new unfamiliar footwear. Taking a deep breath, he looked up at the clock. “You’re doing this for mom,” he grumbled inside his head. “They’re just shoes. You can do this.”

## *Chapter 05 - Revelations*

Stepping out of the gym after his morning workout, Lucian clicked along behind Mariana on his high-heeled feet. Now, pretty proficient, and confident walking on the previously daunting footwear after weeks of intricate dance routines and trotting around the apartment. In fact, if it wasn't for the racket he made each time his feet collided with hard polished surfaces, that seemed to cover almost every floor of the building, he may have even forgotten he was wearing them at all.

Looking down, he caught a glimpse of his shiny red nails and shook his head. Another one of Mariana's ideas to help take him out of his comfort zone. "You already had painted nails," she had stated as he complained upon leaving the salon. "What's the difference between black and red? It's just a colour." He had to admit, she had a point. Having always painted his nails black ever since his mid-teenage goth faze, he was used to a little polish. He just hated how feminine the new colour made his hands look. At least the rest of his outfit was comfortable. The jeans were a little short for his liking but paired with a comfortable hoody, he was grateful to no longer have to parade around in colourful bright outfits.



Daydreaming as he stepped into the elevator, everything seemed normal until he realised, they were going down instead of up. That's when he noticed the light next to the number four, and his stomach sank. Looking over at Mariana, she looked back at him reading his mind. "There's no time for lunch today, I'm afraid," she announced in Spanish. "We have an appointment later and have some preparations to do."

Puffing out his cheeks, Lucian nodded slowly. It's not like he was hungry anyway. After weeks of following Mariana's low-calorie diet, he rarely felt hungry these days. His body had adjusted, just like it had to all the stretching and exercise.

As the elevator doors pinged open, Lucian's stepped out to get a lung full of a familiar chemical smell. This would be his third visit to the salon, and he now had a better idea of what to expect. Not that it made him feel any happier about the inevitable changes in store for him.

“Ok, get changed into these,” Mariana announced, producing a small spandex piece of material seemingly out of nowhere. “The beautician is running a little late today, given the late notice of our appointment.”

The beautician! Lucian hated that name. In fact, he hated everything about the creepy masked woman and her place of work.

Taking what turned out to be a bikini bottom from Mariana, Lucian stared at her for a moment but seeing her glare back with one of her faces, that said, don't you dare complain, he decided to just do what she wanted. Rationalising that they wouldn't be too different to the tight colourful underwear he was given to wear each day anyway. That is until he re-emerged wearing them. Beet red with embarrassment, he stood in front of Mariana in the high-cut garment, looking down in disgust at his scrawny frame.

“Well, don't just stand there, come over here,” Mariana stated as if the situation was nothing out of the ordinary. “We'll set you up on the sunbed until she arrives. Your skin could use a little colour.”

“What is this appointment later anyway?” Lucian asked as he walked towards her. “I don't suppose you want to tell me about it?”

“No,” Mariana replied with a chuckle. “I'll tell you later. For now, put these on and try to relax,” she added, passing Lucian a pair of goggles and what looked like a swimming cap.



When Mariana returned a few hours later, she found Lucian slumped a chair, staring down at the ground with a stunned, miserable-looking expression on his face. “Muy bonita. But try to smile a little, Lucita!” she chimed out, using the pet name she had been using regularly to refer to him over the last few days.

Raising his head slowly, Lucian glared at her. “Smile!” he almost spat. Pushing a strand of blond hair from in front of his face. “Look at what she did to me! I look like a girl! I'm done! I didn't sign up for this!”

“You sighed up to look and behave like someone else,” Mariana answered in a much harsher tone. “This is a necessary step towards our goal.”

Lucian painted pink lips dropped open in horror as something clicked in his mind. Looking down at the flowing red skirt surrounding his smooth legs and still feeling the pinch of stud earrings in his newly pierced ears, it suddenly all made sense. The dieting, the clothes, the dance routines. “She’s a woman, isn’t she?” He almost shouted. “The person you want me to look like, it’s a woman!”

“Yes,” Mariana shot back. “It isn’t that common that Raul selects a man to double for one of our female stars, but he did his research and handpicked you for the role, meaning he believes it will work.”

The room fell silent as a thousand thoughts rushed through Lucian’s mind. The humiliation he suddenly felt, the craziness of the situation, his mother! “I can’t do it,” he mumbled, shaking his head. “I can’t be a woman! I don’t want to be a woman!”

“You won’t be a woman,” Mariana replied. “You’ll just be acting and dressing like one. It’s just a job, a very well-paid job, I may add.”

Another hush fell across the room before Mariana clapped her hands together loudly. “Now, get up, Lucita. What’s done is done. Nothing you are wearing is new, and the way I see it, you have two choices. Outside there’s a car waiting. You can give up now, and it will drive you home. Or we go to our meeting with Raul as planned. What is it to be?”



As Lucian left the meeting, nothing felt real anymore. And still finding it difficult to walk in a pair of much higher than he was used to, wedge-style sandals, Lucian stumbled along behind an angry-looking Mariana. Who hadn’t spoken a word since leaving Raul’s office, clearly frustrated, and annoyed by her boss’ reaction and how things had turned out.



From the moment they walked in the door, Lucian had seen the disappointment on Raul's face as he looked him up and down. His sulky behaviour and short answers probably hadn't helped things. What then proceeded was a heated argument between Raul and Mariana with Lucian barely catching a word even after weeks of Spanish lessons and being immersed in the language each day. From the little he did gather, Raul had seemed concerned that not enough progress was being made as Mariana defended herself, telling him that using a man for the role was a stupid idea.

Suddenly turning, Mariana glared at him. "Hurry up, Lucia," she barked. "I want to get out of here as quickly as possible."

“I’m sorry, Seniorita Lopez,” Lucian announced, giving her a sad look. “This whole thing was a bad idea from the start. It’s probably better that it ends it now.”

“End?” Mariana repeated loudly. “Nothing is ending. I going to show that hijo de puta exactly what I can do. We have a lot of work ahead of us, Lucia. We’re just getting started!”

## *Chapter 06 – Stepping it up*

Panting, Lucian glared over at Mariana and wondered how much more he could take. “Why are you stopping?” she boomed out in Spanish. “Again, and this time sway your hips more.”

Ever since the fateful meeting with Raul, Mariana had changed from tough trainer to army drill sergeant. The length of the gym sessions had been doubled. The intensity of the exercises had been increased. And to make things even worse, the small amount of low-calorie food he had been receiving had been reduced to nothing more than a few mouthfuls. As a result, Lucian was now in a continual state of anguish. His body ached from head to toe as his mind thought about nothing else but quitting as he was forced to twist, turn, stretch, and pirouette all day long.

Feeling his legs shake atop his high-heeled feet, Lucian gave Mariana his best puppy dog eyed look and frowned. “Senoria Lopez, Can we please take five minutes,” he said in perfect Spanish. “We’ve been doing this for hours. I can’t even feel my toes anymore!”

After a moment’s thought, Mariana gave him a nod. “Ok,” she replied. “Come over here and rest for a second. You’ve made some really good progress lately, Lucita. I’m very proud of you, you know.”

Lucian couldn’t help but smile as he heard Mariana praise his efforts. He didn’t know why it made him feel so good. Perhaps it was due to the weeks of isolation with only her for company. Or the fact, she was very sparing with her words of encouragement. Either way, Lucian suddenly felt a surge of energy in his tired body as he clicked over to join her.

“I’ve been doing well, then?” Lucian chirped as he sat down. “Does that mean we’re near the end of the training?”

Turning her head to face him, Mariana curled her lip and closed one eye slightly. “Do you feel ready?” She probed, giving him a quizzical look.

“Yes. I’m ready.” Lucian shot back excitedly, finally seeing an end to his torment. “I’ve done everything you’ve asked of me. I’ve put up with all the salon sessions. I’m thinner now than perhaps I’ve ever been. The dance routines you showed me are so ingrained in my brain I even think about them

in my sleep. Not to mention being able to do then in the higher and higher heels you keep giving me. I'm ready, Seniorita Lopez." He added, again in perfect Spanish.

"You are a quick learner. I'll give you that. "Mariana answered before pausing to think. "Ok, I was going to wait another week, but if you think you are ready, we'll move on to the next step."

"The next step?" Lucian moaned loudly, "How many more steps are there?"

"If you keep working as hard as you are. Not many more now, little Lucita." Mariana replied with a warm smile.

Running his hand along the side of his head, feeling his glistening wet blond hair tied up tightly in a bun atop his head, Lucian quietly groaned. Scanning down his slim toned body encased in a bright pink leotard and ball-crushingly tight pair of leggings, he shook his head gently, marvelling at how different his body now looked. He was well on his way to having what Mariana called a dancer's body. A toned twig-thin frame covered in a slender layer of muscle.

"So, are you ready for the next step or not?" Mariana asked, breaking his chain of thought.

Pushing his thighs together into what was a very effeminate position, Lucian balanced his right foot on the tip of his chunky four-inch heeled pump. "Yes, I'm ready," he announced, looking over. Not really looking forward to what was about to happen, but knowing if he wanted to ever get back to normality and save his mother, jumping through a few more of Mariana's hoops was the only way.



"Why do they have to be so big?" Lucian complained as he stared in horror at his chest through one of the salon mirrors.

Having already exhausted his line of questions over why he had to have the two jellowy mounds, currently attached to his chest, glued on in the first place, Lucian was now grasping at straws.



“They are the size they need to be,” Mariana answered calmly. “Tomorrow, we’ll see how you dance. Having breasts will take a little getting used to. Your whole centre of gravity will change, and you’ll need to adjust the way to stand and move to compensate for that.”

Biting down gently on his ever-expanding bottom lip, thanks to the lip-plumping gloss he was instinctively applying throughout the day at this point, Lucian felt nervous. Everything before that point, he could rationalise in his mind as being unusual but acceptable. Men danced. Men shaved their bodies and tanned. Men even had long blonde hair. But what men definitely didn’t have was breasts!

“Ok, Lucita. Go and get dressed, “Mariana announced. “There is a new outfit waiting for you over on that chair. Be gentle with the top. The glue around the edges may still need a little time to fully dry.”

Lucian didn't hear a word as he continued to stare at his effeminate tanned body. Acutely aware of the new sensation of gravity pulling down on his expanded chest, causing him to tilt his shoulders back a little further than usual, in an attempt to find a somewhat comfortable position. Could he really do this? Live with these monster boobs stuck to his body? All his thoughts were leading him to the same answer. An emphatic no! But then again, he had already come so far. He was close to the end; Mariana had said so. He couldn't just quit now, could he? As his breathing quickened, Lucian felt more lost than ever. Mesmerised, he glared once again at the scarily realistic looking spheres of silicon attached to his chest as they moved up and down to match the rhythm of his breaths. It felt as though a line was about to be crossed. Taking him down a path he didn't want to travel to a place he knew would be very difficult to return from.

## *Chapter 07 – Skirting around the issue*

“Lucian, honey. It’s so good to hear from you. I was so worried.”

“Hey, honey. It’s so good to hear your voice. I was so worried.”

“Hey, Mom,” Lucian answered down the phone. “Sorry I haven’t called sooner. I’ve been a little busy.”

“You’re not in any kind of trouble, are you?” His mother replied in a worried tone. “It’s not drugs, is it?”

“No, Mom,” Lucian groaned. “It’s nothing like that. I got the job in New York with that record company. I had to start right away and couldn’t call before now. Sorry.”

“Oh, Lucian! That’s wonderful!” His mother shrieked. “It’s always been your dream to be a singer. You must feel over the moon.”

“Yeah, over the moon”, Lucian answered, trying to sound enthusiastic while rolling his eyes. “I’ve got a few more weeks to go, then I’ll have the money for your treatment.”

After a few seconds of silence, the tone of his mother’s changed, “Let’s not talk about that now,” she said, sounding much more serious. “It’s too late for me. Spend the money on yourself. Use it to live your life and have fun.”

“Mo-oo-om,” Lucian groaned, stretching the word. “Don’t talk like that. You’re going to get better. This job pays more than enough for your treatment, and the record company has promised to help find you the best doctors available.”

Lucian shook his head as the conversation fell silent for a second time. It was the first time he had been allowed to make a phone call and even though he knew his mother to be a stubborn woman, he had hoped she would have responded a little more enthusiastically to all the sacrifices he was making.

“Anyway, tell me about this job.” His mother said, changing the subject. “They’re not working you too hard, are they?”

“No,” Lucian lied, feeling exhausted as always. Finding even holding the phone to his ear tiring. “It’s ok.”

“Oh, come on. Give me more detail than that,” His mother shot back. “What have they got you doing? What did you do today?”

“Well,” Lucian said sheepishly, looking down at his feminine outfit. “It’s mostly training and stuff at the moment.”

“Training?” His mother responded. “like singing?”

“Yeah. Something like that,” Lucian replied, screwing up his face as he thought back to the previous few hours.”



“Just one more minute, Lucita” Mariana called out enthusiastically. “Dig deep, Chica”.

Lucian didn’t respond as he stood like a statue on the tips of his toes, his thin girly legs locked in position on the tips of his toes. Not that he could see them with the fullness of his frilly tutu like skirt and the protrusion of his false breasts blocking his vision.



Fully concentrated on the task at hand, Lucian tried to block out the pain after nineteen minutes of pain, standing on the tips of his toes. As Mariana kept saying, It was all mind over matter as she had, day by day, slowly upped the time in which she expected him to stand there. He could hear her voice in his head as he stood there now shaking. Telling him how it would improve his pose and balance, making it easier for his feet to cope with the six-inch heels he was now expected to perform his dance routines.

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“You can’t just sing all day though?” His mother probed. “what else have they got you doing?”

“Erm... there’s some dancing too, I guess, and some stretches,” Lucian blurted out, instantly regretting mentioning it as he heard his mother giggle.

“You! Dancing!” his mother said while laughing. “Oh, I’d love to see that. You’ve always hated dancing. I remember that show you were in back in school. I’ve never seen anyone look more awkward!”

“Err... yeah. But it’s just... you know to get in shape and stuff,” Lucian answered, feeling his face turn red.

“Oh, I’m sorry, honey,” his mother replied. “I’m only teasing. I’m so happy that you’re living out your dream, and I do appreciate that you want to help me too.”

“Yeah, thanks Mom,” Lucian replied, looking down at the towering heels strapped to his feet, rolling his ankle to try and take the pressure off one of his standing legs.

“Ok, honey. I’ll let you go,” His mom said, sensing his tired mood. “But don’t leave it so long next time before you call, ok? I want to hear updates on how things are going. Love you, Baby.”

“Love you too, Mom. I’ll call again soon, promise,” Lucian said before hanging up the phone.

Hearing the clatter of his heels, Lucian turned and marched back into the gym. Handing the phone back to Mariana, he looked down, feeling embarrassed all of a sudden by the way he was dressed. Over the weeks, the skirts, the heels, even having a freaky feeling pair of boobs stuck to his chest, had become somewhat normal. But after speaking to his mother and remembering who he was, the bizarreness and humiliating nature of the situation had all come flooding back.

“Are you ready to start?” Mariana asked with a smile. “I want to see, “How I love you”. And I want to see it full energy with lip-syncing, ok?”

“Yes,” Lucian said with a nod, holding back the urge to groan, knowing that the sickly pop song Mariana was asking for was one of the most demanding he had been taught.

Tottering over to the centre of the room on his stilt-like heels, he turned slowly and took a deep breath as the song started up and he thought about the words. “Smile,” he thought to himself. “You’ve done this routine a hundred times before. Do it once and do it well. Mom’s counting on you.”

## *Chapter 08 - Alone*

Lucian felt his skin baking as he lay motionless inside the hot stuffy tanning booth. With each and every session inside the booth getting longer, the effect on his body was definitely becoming noticeable. His previous milky pale skin that rarely saw the light of day was slowly taking on a darker, healthier glow.

The tanning itself didn't bother him too much. It was just the time inside he hated. With his eyes covered and the bright lights shining, the small coffin-like walls felt as though they were closing in. And with only his self-doubt and insecurities for company, it was hard not to feel claustrophobic as time seemed to trickle by at a snail's pace.

Today the thoughts rattling around inside his head were particularly bad. Today he had another appointment with Raul. Meaning he would need to leave the safety of the apartment building and travel across the city to Raul's office. Once there, he would need to be on his best behaviour. Showing off all the skills he had mastered. Presented himself to Raul to be critiqued on the progress he and Mariana had made. The problem was, he didn't know if he could do it! The thought of going out crossdressed made his body shake and his stomach churn. The idea of the wind zipping around his smooth legs and blowing up his skirt. The thought of people gawking and laughing as he tottered by on his high heeled feet. Just the thought of him, Lucian Dominic Styles, dressed up as a woman and strutting around New York City. It was all so surreal.

Taking a lung full of chemically infused air, Lucian felt a wave of cool air rush into his pod as the lid was lifted. Slowly sitting up, he removed his goggles and winced as the bright salon lights hurt his eyes.

"Ok, over to the chair," the masked beautician ordered, passing him a robe.

Swivelled his body into a sitting position, he obeyed. Before threading his thin toned arms into the silky sleeves of the robe. Slipping his feet into the slippers provided, Lucian stood up, smiling slightly as he felt his feet press flat against the floor. It felt good not to be wearing a pair of high heels for once, even if he knew the feeling would most likely be short-lived.

Lucian sat down and tried to make himself comfortable after a short but terrifying walk over to where the intimidating masked woman stood like a statue awaiting his arrival. Not the easiest thing to do, when feeling terrified about the pending changes about to be forced upon you. Changes that would alter your appearance, making you look even more feminine.

Without a word of warning, the chair was suddenly swung around violently. As Lucian span, he felt the back of his chair drop before his head stopped an inch above the sink he was previously facing.

Lucian closed his eyes as he heard the sound of trickling water and saw a pair of gloved hands approach the top of his head. He was again alone with his thoughts as he dreamed about a time when all the craziness would be nothing but a distant memory.



“Oh no. no! no! no!” Lucian gasped as he looked upon the reflection that faced him in the mirror. It was worse than he had imagined. It was shocking!

He knew the result of the makeover was going to be bad after living through it for the last few hours. But seeing his unmistakable feminine face staring back at him, he suddenly felt a panic attack coming on.



The masked woman stood silently to his right as he tried to comprehend how it was possible to look so different. How could his appearance have been changed so much from when he walked through the doors just a few hours earlier?

The small mirror he held tightly between his painted fingers shook as he imagined the woman smiling under her mask, proud of her work after mutilating his face.

His eyes dashed from one change to the next, remembering them happening before he finally slowed down to take each one in fully. The most notable of the changes were the long feathery lashes, fluttering around in front of his vision. After seeing them, they suddenly felt even heavier. Blinking a few times, he felt the soft lash extensions tickle the tops of his cheeks, remembering the painstakingly long process as they were individually attached.

Scanning higher, his eyes fell upon his new eyebrows. Two delicate dark arches, framing his now dramatic-looking eyes, adding to his sultry appearance. It was hard to look away as he thought about the consequences of having them. He still wasn't sure what the woman had actually done. He remembered her fussing around, trimming and plucking before what felt like a pencil being drawn along his skin. There was a cold feeling, then small sensations of pressure that seemed to go on forever. Whatever she had done, the results were startling.

Glancing to the side, Lucian took another glance at the lighter blonder hair that now sprouted from his scalp. Something he had expected after the previous dye job, recognising the smell the second time around.

Finally, he looked back towards his lips and shook his head slowly from side to side. He had felt the needles go in as he lay with his eyes closed, so knew they would look different, but the puffy pouty, slightly sore, pink lips he was now looking at were hard to accept. How could they possibly be his? How could they belong to a man?

Hearing footsteps approach, Lucian's headshot around as he felt his blond curls bounce against his cheeks. "Senorita, Lopez. This is too much!" he cried. "I look like a different person. I look like a..."

"A beautiful woman," Mariana stated, finishing his sentence for him. "And you'll look even more beautiful when you're dressed. Now hurry up or we'll be late for our meeting."

"I can't," Lucian shot back. Noticing how strange his larger puffy lips felt as the words came out. "I... no! I can't go", he added before unintentionally pouting.

Stepping behind him, Mariana placed her hands on Lucian's shoulders. "I know it's a bit of a shock," she said in a calming voice as she started to gently massage his shoulders. "But you knew this was coming. Tell me, why are you here? Why are you doing this?"

"Lucian gulped. "For mom," he answered, almost choking on the words.

"Exactly. For your mother," Mariana replied. "And you'd do anything to save her, right?"

Lucian nodded slowly, feeling very tears form in the corners of each beautifully made-up eye.

“Then you need to be strong and do what is necessary, Lucita. And right now, this is necessary,” Mariana replied, reaching over to grab Lucian’s hand, raising the hand mirror to head height once more. “Today, you need to think and act like a beautiful woman. The woman you see in the mirror in front of you. Can you do that? Can you do it for your mother?”

Lucian glanced back towards the mirror. Just as shocked as the first time to see an attractive but miserable woman’s face looking back at him. He wasn’t sure if he could do what Mariana was asking. He wasn’t sure if he knew how! But he also knew he had to try.

## *Chapter 09 – I'm ready*

Shivering, Lucian stopped dead as he looked down at the hazardous path that lay ahead. He counted the scary-looking icy steps and found there were eight of them. Eight snow-covered banana skins, ready to send him tumbling off his sky-high heels.

Licking his glossed lips and tasting melon, he shivered once more, worried that he was about to break a leg and wondering if it would actually be a bad thing.

“Lucita, why have you stopped?” Mariana barked, turning around to see what the holdup was about.

Lucian looked up, about to tell her how he didn't know how to walk down steps, but then stopped himself, realising how ridiculous it would sound. Of course, he knew how to walk down steps. It was just that usually, he wasn't wearing a pair of 6-inch suede boots and a tight PVC skirt. “Coming,” he replied in a shaky voice before looking down at his nylon covered legs.

Pushing one of his tall stiletto heels into the ground to steady himself, he slowly manoeuvred his other leg until it dangled over the edge. Taking a deep breath, he bent his knee, feeling the slick nylon material slide across his smooth thighs. With a click, he reached the first step. “One down, seven to go,” he thought to himself, feeling his fake breasts heave up and down inside his rather revealing stretchy top.

Mariana watched on impatiently as Lucian clicked his way down trying to avoid her judging stare. There were already enough distractions without her pressuring him. The freezing wind against his exposed skin. The gentle tap of the large, hooped earrings against his cheek. The flash of blonde hair as it bobbed in and out of his vision. Even the simple act of carrying a purse felt strange.

“You look like an ape,” Mariana barked, “I taught you better than this. Lift your head and straighten your back.”

Lucian took another deep breath and counted the remaining steps before doing what his tough taskmaster demanded. “Does she want me to break my

neck,” he thought angrily to himself, looking her straight in the eyes while pursing his glossy red lips.



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“She’s not ready,” Raul said, looking over at Lucian, sitting on a sofa next to Mariana with one pantyhosed leg crossed over the other around mid-thigh.

Annoyed, Lucian opened his eyes wide, feeling the full extent of his eyelash extension as they fanned out, dominating his field of view. He couldn’t believe what he was hearing. After all the weeks of training. The dieting. The exercise. Not to mention, how he had just been forced to march up and down this man’s office like a catwalk model. He had even done a dance routine with lip-syncing. The nerve of this man!

“I’m ready!” Lucian shot back in perfect Spanish. “How can I prove it to you?”

Raul paused for a second before turning towards Mariana. “You agree?” he asked. “She’s ready?”

“Yes,” she replied with an emphatic nod.

Glancing back towards Lucian, a smile crossed the Latino man’s lips. “Ok, we need a test,” he said, looking back toward Mariana. “Set it up and report back to me. But don’t push things along too quickly. We still have time.”

“Bag or show?” Mariana replied as Lucian looked on with a sinking feeling in his stomach, wondering what he had just talked himself into.

“Bag,” Raul replied. “Set her up with the right look and see how she copes. After that, if all goes well. We’ll move on to the final stage.”

“All will go well,” Mariana answered assertively while standing up. “Lucita is a brilliant student. She knows exactly what to do.”

Lucian watched as Raul followed Mariana in standing up. For a moment, he sat there in a daze, his brain struggling to catch up. That is until Mariana glared down at him, motioning for him to stand up with her hand.

“Oh, sorry,” Lucian muttered, grabbing his purse and pushing himself back up onto his high-heeled feet.

Raul chuckled before placing his arm around the feminised man’s waist and walking him over to the door. “Remember this is your chance to show us what you’ve learned,” he said, leaning in and kissing Lucian on the cheek. “Don’t be nervous and listen to what Mariana tells you.”

“Err... I will,” the feminised man replied, trying not to show his discomfort as he looked into the smiling man’s eyes. Shellshocked after being kissed by another man and disgusted that the edge of his lips had brushed his own.



Back out on the snowy streets of New York City, Lucian once again stood shivering as he waited with Mariana for their car to pick them up. Reaching over, he grabbed his soft shawl-like coat and pulled it tightly around his thin frame. Around him, the noise of the city was deafening as cars honked and people shouted.

“Senorita, Lopez. Do you really think I’m ready?” Lucian asked nervously, bowing his head to look down at his elevated suede feet.

“Yes,” Mariana replied with a nod. “You just need to be confident and believe in yourself.”

“And what is it I actually have to do?” Lucian mumbled back, now mesmerised by the snowflakes landing briefly on his glossy red nails before quickly evaporating away.

“I’ll explain everything in the morning,” she replied as the car pulled up. “Don’t worry about it now. Everything will become clear in the morning.”

In a flash, the driver appeared from behind the stretch limousine. “Good evening, ladies,” he said cheerfully as he opened the door.

“Good evening,” Mariana replied as she gracefully entered the car.

Lucian paused for a second as he stared blankly into space. Hearing the driver speak to him in English after hearing only Spanish for so long had felt strange. For a moment, he had forgotten the words to reply. A couple walked by, and he tried to listen in. Again, it felt strange to hear English words.

“Lucita, get in,” Mariana shouted from the back seat. “It’s cold!”

“Sorry,” Lucian answered apologetically, “I’m coming.” Turning his body, he placed his plump backside on the leather seat, feeling his slippery skirt slide as he swivelled his nylon encased legs into position.

“Phew. Thank God that’s over with,” he thought to himself as he reached down to massage the back of his sore calves, relieved to be back in the safety of the car but also very anxious about what lay ahead.

## *Chapter 10 – The test*

Curling his fingers, Lucian stared down at his hand, horrified at what he saw. When he had entered the nail salon an hour earlier, trying desperately to remember Mariana's instructions, he didn't really understand what they meant. Now, looking down at the monstrous talons extending past the end of each fingertip, the words, full-set acrylic and ballerina, made a lot more sense. If he wanted them to or not.



“We are all done, miss Sanchez,” the perky nail technician announced. “Your bill is paid, and your car is waiting outside. I hope you’ve enjoyed your experience with us today, and we hope to see you again soon.”

“Err... yeah, thank you,” Lucian mumbled, finding it hard to take his eyes off his shockingly long nails.

Standing up, he took a second to find his balance on the tall platform heels strapped to his pantyhosed legs. They were probably the tallest heels he

had been given to date, and with the restrictive outfit accompanying them, Lucian had been forced to hobble around all afternoon in a constant battle to stay upright.

As he locked eyes with the nail technician, she smiled warmly, “Have a nice day now,” she sang out in a chirpy voice.

“Err... yes, you too,” Lucian replied as a woman appeared to his right to pass him his bright orange purse. As he took a hold of the strap everything about it felt wrong. Slipping about the palm of his hand, he struggled to gain any sort of grip as his glossy red nail tips prevented his fingers from making closing fully.

“Be careful with them for a few hours,” the nail technician stated, seeing his awkwardness. “Try to avoid using your hands for a few hours. After that, they will be as hard as concrete, and you’ll be able to use them normally,”

Lucian gulped. “Hard as concrete!” he thought as he forced his plump lips into a half-smile. “Normal! I can’t even bend my fingers. How the hell am I supposed to do anything normally!”

“Ok, thank you,” Lucian muttered after clumsily resting his expensive designer bag across one shoulder. “Erm... bye,” he added before turning on his heels and clicking loudly across the room.



Half an hour later, parked up outside of a high-end shopping centre, Lucian sat shaking as his body refused to move.

“I don’t know if I can do this, Seniorita Lopez. Can’t we just go home? Lucian pleaded as he stared down at his long shiny fingernails resting atop his sleek pantyhosed thighs.

“Calm down. You’ve been practising for weeks. You know what to do. Walk in there with your head up and be confident. Remember that today you’re a different person. A sexy young woman called Rosita Sanchez. Out to do a little shopping on her lunch break.”

“It’s easy to say,” Lucian answered, looking over at Mariana. “What if someone finds out I’m a man?”

Leaning across Lucian, Mariana pulled open a concealed mirror before grabbing the back of his head. Then, With more force than he expected, she spun him around to face his feminised reflection. “Tell me what you see?” she announced assertively. “Do you see a man?”

Breathing out heavily through his nose, Lucian scanned his altered face, searching for any masculine traces that might be left. But all he saw was a beautifully made-up feminine face, framed by a shoulder-length wig.

“I... Erm...,” Lucian spluttered, lost for words as he stared passed the glass of his fake glasses at the long feathery lashes surrounding his smouldering eyes. Above sat two perfectly arched brows, which no man would ever have, and below sat a pair of plump, pouty lips, coated in lipstick and lined to perfection.

“Now go!” Mariana ordered. “Confidence and attitude. You are the customer. You have the power.”

Before Lucian could answer, the back door of the limo swung open. Spinning around, he suddenly came face to face with the driver. “Let me help you, miss,” the driver said as he offered his hand to the crossdressed man. Feeling Mariana’s hand on his back giving him a gentle push, Lucian placed his long-manicured fingers into the larger palm of the driver and stepped out into the sunshine.

“Thank you,” he replied softly, looking up into the driver’s deep blue eyes and feeling rather foolish. Back on his high heeled feet, he quickly stepped by the smiling older man before scurrying off towards the entrance.

Not stopping to ponder how surprisingly warm the weather was for the time of year or where the snow from the previous day had mysteriously vanished too, Lucian marched on. His head held high as the heat from the sun’s rays warmed his tight skirt and blazer, and the silky material of his blouse beneath caressed his smooth skin. “You can do this,” he repeated, over and over to himself as he minced through the entrance. “Today, you’re just another woman out shopping. Let’s get this over with.”



“That’s a wonderful choice, miss,” the saleslady announced as Lucian stood awkwardly clutching the handbag she had just passed him. “That one is so in

right now. All the hottest celebs have been pictured carrying it lately.”

Twisting his ankle a little to relieve the pain he was feeling in his left foot, Lucian nodded back, wondering what he was supposed to do next.



Was he supposed to walk around with it? Try holding it in different positions? He felt completely lost and confused.

“If you’d like to look at some other options, I can bring a few out,” the saleslady announced as she sensed something odd about the smartly dressed businesswoman in front of her. “Perhaps something in a lower price range?”

“No!” Lucian said, almost shouting, remembering his instructions about conversing with confidence and attitude. “This is the one I want. The price is

unimportant.”

“Oh, ok, great,” replied the blonde saleswoman, slightly taken aback by Lucian’s sudden and abrupt answer. “If you’d like to come this way, I’ll ring it up for you.”



Twenty minutes later, Lucian emerged from the shopping centre bag in tow. His facial expression was blank, but inside he was mightily relieved to have completed his task and be heading home. He quickly tottered up to the car. Still cringing at the thought of the humiliating experience at the cash register, fumbling around inside his purse as he tried to retrieve the credit card Mariana had given him. His long nails had made the task next to impossible. He’d eventually managed to prise it out with the edge of his thumb and index finger, but things only got worse from there as he watched it, in slow motion, tumbling towards the ground. Not able to bend in his tight outfit, the skirted man had then been forced to claw around on his hands and knees as he desperately tried to grab the slick plastic card. All the while, the saleswoman just watched, glaring down at him with a bewildered look on her face. Only after what seemed like an eternity of humiliation, scratching around on the ground like some animal, did she finally help. Swooping down, she picked up the card with ease and passed it over, giving the humiliated man a condescending smile in the process.

“Any problems?” Mariana announced as Lucian swivelled his legs into the car.

“Err... no easy peasy,” he lied, hearing the door click shut behind him. “I have the bag you wanted right here.”

“Bravo, Lucita,” Mariana announced, leaning over to hug him. “I’ll call Raul immediately and tell him the news. This is so exciting. I’m sure to get a large bonus this time. We are weeks ahead of schedule.”

## *Chapter 11 – Final preparations*

As Lucian entered the Salon, the sound of his heels clicking loudly in his ears, he couldn't help but feel as though he had made a mistake. With the previous day's meeting with Raul still fresh in his mind, it was as though he was experiencing an out of body experience. Why had he signed the contract? Was it the money they had offered? Was it the record company's promise to continue helping his mother? Or was it the nagging feeling that if he quit now, all the pain and suffering he'd endured over the last few months would have been for nothing? Either way, it didn't really matter. He had signed away the next year of his life, and now he'd have to live with the consequences.

The first order of business for the day was a session in the sunbed. Used to the claustrophobic box by now, Lucian lay there motionless, counting the seconds. The earphones he'd been given, blasting out cheesy pop music as his hairless oiled skin soaked up the rays, taking on an even darker golden glow.

Feeling the lid open, Lucian had mixed feelings. With a small headache now, thanks to the music, on one hand, he was delighted to be out. But then again, on the other, he could see the chair that had been set up for his makeover and knew today it was likely going to be an extreme one. Later that day, he was going to be assigned his first real job as a body double, and if that thought wasn't scary enough, Mariana had been fussing and worrying all morning, driving him crazy.

Seated in the chair, Lucian looked through the mirror at the masked woman behind him and took a deep breath. There was no point asking what was about to be done to him. He would be getting no answers. All he could do was submit and let her do her work!



In his mind, hours had passed, but in reality, roughly thirty seconds had gone by as Lucian had stared bewildered into the mirror before him.

Surely the alluring woman reflecting back couldn't be him? It must have been some trick, right? The whole situation felt so surreal and farfetched but having watched the transformation first hand as improbable as it seemed, it was impossible to deny the truth.

Lucian's feminised body shuddered as he recalled the needle pricks that had assaulted his face only a short while ago, transforming it into what now lay before him in the mirror. Wincing, he could still feel the little pricks piercing his skin. Especially his lips, which now felt more swollen than when Tommy Judd had punched him in fourth grade. His collagen loaded kissers, clearly visible past his thick fluttering lashes, were now almost comically large. Two Swollen pillows that would invite the unwanted attention of any red-blooded man that happened to lay their eyes on him.

But, the biggest change of the day, and also the most shocking, was his new nose! At the time, he had no clue what was happening as the masked beautician pushed his chair back, standing in front of him, blocking his view of the mirror. As she poked and prodded, he'd thought back to three days prior, when she had coated his nose in some sort of liquid. At the time, he just thought it was any other skin treatment, even if it did seem odd at the time how the liquid had hardened before she carefully pulled it off.

Only once the prosthetic nose had been firmly attached to his face, did he realise what had happened! Now glued in place, the collagen prosthetic had completely altered the appearance of his face, making him look like someone else, someone who looked strangely familiar!

Reaching up, Lucian placed the tip of a long acrylic nail against his new nose, feeling nothing.

"Don't touch," the masked beautician snapped, swatting his hand away.

Mariana, who was now standing by her side, also pulled a face. "Lucita, you need to let it set. Do you want to start all over again?"

Batting his lashes in shock at the hard swipe to his hand, Lucian looked up at Mariana with puppy dog eyes. "Seniorita, Lopez. Can you please tell me what is going on today?" he pleaded. "Who am I supposed to be?"

Mariana's face softened into a smile." Ok, maybe it's time," she announced, nodding her head. "Look into the mirror once more, Lucita. Does

it not seem familiar to you?”

Turning, Lucian looked back into the mirror. This time, studying his reflection in more detail. The face staring back at him once again seemed oddly familiar, but he couldn't quite place it. One thing was for sure, he definitely didn't look like himself. “I... I don't know,” he replied while staring blankly at the feminine beauty before him.



“What if I give you a clue?” Mariana replied, broadening her smile. “‘Stuck on you’. ‘Don’t call me baby’. ‘I need your love tonight’.”

For a moment, Lucian thought his mentor had gone crazy as the words of the random sentences seemed to make no sense. But then, as a lightbulb turned on in his mind, his plump, pouty lips dropped open, and his eyes widened. “No,” he moaned softly. “No, I can’t! You can’t expect me to be her.”

“Look at yourself, Lucita!” Mariana shot back. “Why do you think you were chosen for this assignment? The resemblance was always there. You just needed a little polishing.”

“But... you’re talking about Bianca Cabello,” Lucian gasped. “She’s like the most popular person on the planet.”

“That’s right,” Mariana answered, touching his shoulder. “Bianca Cabello, International pop star, and rapper. Twice voted the sexiest woman on the planet and three times rear of the year. You can probably imagine how tiring it gets with people following her everywhere she goes. That’s where you come in. You draw their attention while Bianca slips away in peace.”

Feeling the room spin around him, Lucian placed his red-nailed fingers against his forehead. “So... they’ll follow me? How is that better? They’ll know I’m not her!”

“Don’t worry your pretty little head with details like that right now,” Mariana replied, removing his hand. “And stop touching your face. Now we have to finish your hair and get you dressed. Bianca flies in at 6 pm, and we can’t afford to be late!”

## *Chapter 12 – The switch*

“Keep your head down,” Mariana barked as Lucian tried to look around the busy airport terminal he was being led through. Obeying his mentor, he looked down at the ground once more.

The petrified boy felt more uncomfortable than he perhaps ever had even if the outfit he was wearing, a pair of loose pants, a hoody, and a pair of chunky sneakers were a welcome change to his usual attire.

“Don’t draw attention to yourself,” Mariana added. “If anyone sees your face, it will give the game away.”

Lucian gazed at his shaking legs for a few more minutes as he was guided through the crowd of travellers before he felt an arm around his shoulder pulling him through a door.

Hearing the door click shut behind him, Lucian lifted his head to survey his surrounding but instantly wished he hadn’t! Lost for words, his mouth fell open as he looked upon the unbelievable scene unfolding in front of him. There in a state of half dress was Bianca Cabello, surrounded by two of her assistants.

“This is her?” Bianca questioned, stepping closer to get a better look at her newest lookalike. “I guess she will do.” She added before returning to her two assistants, one of which was holding a makeup removal pad.

“It’s a... nice to meet you,” Lucian stammered, not knowing what else to say to the global superstar opposite him, whose makeup exactly matched his own.

“Yeah, yeah,” Bianca shot back without looking. “Can you hurry up and get undressed already. I’ve had a long flight. I want to get out of this disgusting little room and rest.”

Lucian opened his mouth to reply, but no words came out. Mariana stepped forward to take charge. “Of course, miss Cabello. Sorry for the delay, she said before turning back to Lucian with a focused look in her eyes. “Lucita, take off your clothes and hand them to me. And be quick about it.”

“My clothes,” Lucian repeated, feeling confused and dazed.

Mariana exhaled loudly and made a tutting sound. "Fine let me help you," she announced, pouncing on the shellshocked boy before starting to carefully remove his hoody.

The hooded top was gone within seconds, leaving him standing with only a padded bra to cover his slim and toned upper body. The sneakers and pants soon followed before Mariana expertly unclipped his bra.

Instinctively folding his arms across his fake breasts, Lucian cringed with embarrassment as he suddenly found himself standing in front of one of the most famous people on the planet with only a pair of silky black panties for protection. Beet red beneath the layers of makeup caked onto his face, he stared down at the ground once more and wanted to disappear. Luckily for him, no one noticed his shame as the whirlwind of activity continued around him.

Bundling up the pile of clothes, she had just removed from Lucian shaking body, Mariana stepped forward and handed them off to one of Bianca's assistants. What happened next only took an instant as Bianca, now devoid of any traces of makeup, slipped into the clothes and sat down as another assistant quickly did up her laces.

"She knows what to do, right?" The free assistant asked Mariana in a stern voice. "She's not going to embarrass Miss Cabello, is she?"

"No, of course not," Mariana answered in a calm voice. "I trained her myself. I assure you all will go to plan."

Nodding her head, the assistant seemed satisfied with the answer. "Good. Miss Cabello's outfit is on the chair. Leave through the main door and only give them thirty seconds to a minute. Do you understand?"

"Yes," Mariana replied in a slightly irritated voice. "This isn't my first time, you know? I know what to do."

"Great, well we are done here then," the woman replied as she turned. "Time to go, Miss Cabello."

Without another word, Bianca Cabello, now wearing a pair of large sunglasses, stepped passed Lucian and exited the room, taking not only her assistants with her but also Lucian's outfit. Alone once again with Mariana, he stood quivering, wondering how things could possibly get any worse.

The next few minutes went by in a blur as Mariana grabbed the feminised man by his long-nailed hand, practically dragging him over to a nearby seat. Paralysed with fear, Lucian felt a pair of pantyhose being carefully raised up his smooth legs. They were followed by an extremely tight top being placed over his head.

“Ok, stand up,” Mariana ordered as she helped him onto his nylon clad feet.

On command, Lucian lifted his legs as a tiny blue skirt was hoisted up his ankles before being shimmed over his slippery thighs and fastened tightly around his waist. An incredibly soft fur jacket was then placed across his shoulders before he felt his feet being slipped into a pair of ramped shoes. Mariana then went to work fluffing up his newly dyed locks as Lucian stared blankly at her, wobbling back and forth on the extremely high pumps crushing his feet.

“There. All done. Take this,” Mariana stated, handing the feminised man a diamond-encrusted handbag. “It’s time to go.”

Lucian didn’t move. Crippled by fear, he was rooted to the spot. That is, until, he felt a rather forceful slap catch him clean across his beautifully made-up face. “Snap out of it,” Mariana yelled. “We don’t have time for this. This is what we trained for. All those hours in the gym. All those days of dieting. All you have to do is walk out the door, stand for one minute, and we’ll be done.”

Looking as though he was about to burst into tears, Lucian lifted his dangerous-looking hand up to rub his stinging cheek. “Don’t you dare cry and ruin your makeup,” Mariana roared. “In fact, stop touching your face,” she added, reaching up to remove his hand. “You may be dressed like a girl but it’s time to man up and do your job. Or are you just a little sissy wimp after all?”

“I’m not a sissy,” Lucian shot back angrily. “But this is insane. I can’t go out there dressed like this.”

“This is show business, it’s all insane,” Mariana replied. “And you’re going out there if you like it or not. Look around you. There is nothing else to wear in here, and I’m leaving. If you’re not out there in thirty seconds I’m getting airport security.”

“What you wouldn’t,” Lucian cried. But his words fell on deaf ears, watching in horror as Mariana turned, marched across the room, and exited

through the door.

“Shit, shit, shit,” Lucian thought to himself as looked down at the expensive-looking flashy outfit he was now wearing. Taking a step forward, he felt the full height of his new heels as his ankle ligaments strained and his toes crushed against the front of the sparkly death-traps. That’s when he looked to his left, catching a glimpse of himself in a full-length mirror. For a moment, his heart stopped as a gasp of pure disbelief left his glossy pink lips. He didn’t see himself anymore! He was looking at Bianca Cabello, someone he had always secretly had a crush on, and it felt unbelievably bizarre.

A loud tannoy sounding off from outside the room snapped Lucian from his stupor. Turning away from the mirror, he breathed in deeply, filling his lungs with as much air as his tight top allowed. He knew what he had to do. He knew he had no choice!

Inching forward on his towering footwear, feeling his restrictive outfit compress his slim emaciated frame. The crossdressed celebrity clone made his way towards the exit, terrified of what lay beyond.



Flash! Snap! Flash! The scene in front of him was like something from a movie as the petrified man stood rooted to the spot outside the airport terminal. A chorus of voices screamed out, Bianca as the surrounding paparazzi snapped picture after picture.



Pushing down hard on his trembling legs, Lucian pursed his swollen lips together and held his breath, trying to come to terms with the crazy scene in front of him.

His fake bosom heaved up and down. A chill ran up his pantyhosed legs. And his extended hair tickled his neck.

“It’ll be over soon,” he kept telling himself as the seconds felt like hours.

The flashes continued around him as he started to feel lightheaded and faint. The screaming and shouting no longer sounded like words as they blended together into a deafening, drilling like sensation in his jewellery laden ears.

There was a sudden gasp from the crowd as Lucian stumbled forward on his designer heels, catching himself at the last minute just before faceplanting to the ground. Within an instant, a large man appeared to his right. The delirious boy felt a strong-arm wrap around his waist. Another even larger man then appeared, clearing a path through the crowd as Lucian was almost dragged towards a waiting car. Helped inside and still blinded by the lights, he could still hear the racket around him. Quickly bundled inside, the door slammed shut as the car screeched away into the night.

## *Chapter 13 – On-call*

Waking up in a cold sweat, Lucian looked around his drab little bedroom, feeling numb. Physically and mentally exhausted, he needed sleep. But every time closed his eyes, the memories of the previous few days came flooding back.

He would suddenly be transported back to in front of the airport, indecently dressed and teetering on his sparky heels. Every eye was on him as the cold evening wind assaulted his pantyhosed legs. Rooted to the spot, he would grin like a fool as the shouts from all around deafened him.

Then suddenly, he would be in the back of a car, racing through the streets of New York as the Paparazzi gave chase. Tossed from side to side as the car sped through traffic. There was the feeling of nausea as his tiny skirt rode up to his silky thighs before resting halfway up his plump backside. When the car finally stopped outside a fancy five-star hotel, the back door would fly open. Refusing to get out, he would then be dragged to his high heeled feet before being escorted inside to the safety of the luxurious interior of the building.

After a short ride in an elevator, he would be back in the hotel room. The type of room, he had only seen in movies. Chandeliers hanging from the ceiling and a hot tub overlooking the iconic city skyline. But Lucian would have no time to admire his new environment, coming face to face with Mariana, who stepped forward as soon as he entered the room to hug him. She would congratulate him on a job well done before proceeding to help him out of his sexy outfit.

He had lived through the same dream many times, but he still had no idea what she said as she removed his makeup, including his fake nose.

Transported forward in time, he would then wake up in bed the next morning, tired and confused. This was one part he enjoyed, rolling around in the silk sheets as his fatigued body sank into the memory foam mattress. But this little moment of bliss was quickly taken from him as Mariana ripped back the duvet and ordered him out of bed. Resenting her and full of anger, Lucian would silently obey. Only for his mood to change as he noticed they weren't

alone. Fear would take over as he spotted the masked beautician standing across from him, next to a makeshift makeup station.

His would then flash forward again. Now staring into a mirror at a different version of himself. His makeup was subtle (well as subtle as it could be with his long fluttering lashes and bee-stung lips). All the colours were light and understated, giving him a more natural look. On top of his head, his long hair had been tied up in a bun, with just two longish strands left loose to frame his face. He was now dressed in one of the hotel uniforms. The plan was to walk out one of the side exits and enter a waiting taxi before being taken back to the training complex. The paparazzi, who were still hanging around outside, would hopefully be none the wiser.

The plan worked. And in the last part of his dream, dressed in a tight navy-blue pencil skirt and matching blazer, he would mince out into the street and hop in a cab. Arriving home, the fake nose would be instantly put back in place before he was told to sit and wait. He was on standby.

That had been his life for the last three days. Waiting around for Bianca to call. Waiting around, ready to spring into action at a moment's notice. Where he would surely be thrown into some humiliating situation, he wanted no part of.



On the fourth day, the call came in.

“Get that sexy backside of yours up. It’s time to go, princess,” Mariana announced as she entered the room to find Lucian lounging around on the sofa, watching a popular reality TV show.

“Go where?” He replied, looking up from the sofa, already knowing what the answer would be.

“Bianca’s got caught out by the Paparazzi while out shopping. They have her trapped,” Mariana answered, motioning with her hands for Lucian to get up.

After a quick change of clothes into an inconspicuous casual outfit, Lucian was bundled into a car and whisked across the city. The last part of the journey was on foot, with the car stopping a few blocks up from Bianca’s

location. Walking alongside Mariana, Lucian didn't need to ask where they were going. The crowd gathered outside the shopping mall was causing quite a stir, and the scenes only got more chaotic as they entered the building

Taking a hold of Lucian's long-nailed hand, Mariana guided him through the crowd. He followed her lead, keeping his head down as instructed. Not that anyone would recognise him anyway with a scarf wrapped around his lower face, a pair of sunglasses covering his eyes, and a big floppy hat atop his head.

They found Bianca in a public toilet, frustrated and annoyed. "I just don't understand how they found me," she moaned to one of her entourage as Lucian and Mariana entered the room.

Looking over at the tarted-up pop princess, Lucian had a fair idea. She wasn't exactly blending in her flashy outfit, even if she had placed a wig on her head to try and disguise her look slightly.

"Oh, good. You're here," Bianca screeched before running over and grabbing Lucian's hand.

After dragging him into an empty cubicle, she wasted no time in getting undressed. Within seconds, she was down to her underwear as Lucian stood staring down at her perfect body. "Hey, wake up and put these on," Bianca snapped, pointing to the pile of clothes she had placed on the back of the toilet.

"Err... sorry," Lucian muttered, feeling embarrassed. Standing next to one of the most beautiful women in the world, who happened to be half-naked, he couldn't help but admire her sexy body.

Bianca huffed before flinging open the door to join her entourage, who, as it happened, had another outfit waiting for her. Before leaving, she stopped briefly just outside the door. Looking Lucian dead in the eyes, she peeled a long red wig from atop her head. "Here," she announced, passing the fake hair to the nervous boy. "laters," she added, blowing him a kiss before skipping out of sight.

The door closed, leaving Lucian to change. And wanting to get things over with as quickly as possible, he wasted no time stripping down to his own bra and panties. Searching through the outfit left for him, he found Bianca's

discarded pantyhose, still warm to the touch. Picking them up, he brought the thin nylon material to his nose and inhaled deeply.

“Are you ok in there?” Mariana shouted from outside the cubicle. “Do you need any help?”

“Uhm... no. I’m fine,” Lucian shot back, feeling panicked. “I’ll be right out.”

Quickly sitting on the closed toilet seat, he rolled the pantyhose up his legs before locating Bianca’s top. Again, warm to the touch and reeking of perfume, he made quick work of the top, slipping it over his head before stepping into Bianca’s skirt. A frilly, short number, but not too uncomfortable. He had worn shorter! Zipped in, Lucian lent down to collect together the boots, Bianca had kicked off earlier in her haste. Thrusting his feet inside the tall platform boots, he struggled to tie the laces with his acrylic nails.

“Ah, good. You’re almost ready,” Mariana announced, having pushed open the door to check on her protégé. Pushing his knees together, Lucian grinned awkwardly. “Let me help you,” Mariana added, leaning down to tie the cross-dressed boy’s shoelaces in a double bow.

When done, she helped him to his feet before holding out Bianca’s colourful fur coat for him to slip his arms inside. She then positioned the wig on his head and placed a different pair of sunglasses on the bridge of his prosthetic nose. “Ok, that will do,” she remarked as she passed Lucian the same diamond-encrusted handbag he had been forced to hold outside the airport.

Tottering out of the cubicle behind Mariana, Lucian was surprised to find three members of Bianca’s entourage still present. “Step over to the sink, please.” One announced, holding what looked like a makeup kit in her right hand. “I need to get you looking presentable. Then we’ll head over to the nail salon. Miss Cabello just had her nails done this morning and yours are the wrong colour. So, keep your hands in your sleeves until we get yours to match.”

Lucian stared at her as he wobbled atop his tall platform boots. Rolling his right leg slightly, he got the feeling it was going to be a long and tiring day!



## *Chapter 14 - Showtime*

Just when Lucian thought life couldn't get any more surreal, here he was. All dressed up inside a lavishly decorated hall as some of the most famous people on the planet, casual sauntered by.

Finding it hard to move, stuffed inside a one-of-a-kind designer dress that clung to his silky, talcum powered body like a second skin, Lucian stood motionless on his skyscraper tall heels, feeling completely out of place.



Looking around nervously, Lucian thought back to just a few hours earlier. Lounging around the apartment, tired after a session in the gym, he thought he was in for a quiet night.

He wasn't exactly enjoying the Romcom that was playing on the TV when Mariana interrupted him, but after hearing what she had to say, he would have given anything to sit there and watch the inevitable sappy ending.

"Time to move, Lucita. We have a job tonight." Mariana announced, causing Lucian's head to shoot around.

"Tonight!" he gasped, getting a sinking feeling in his almost empty stomach. "But tonight's the American music awards!"

"And you get to go," Mariana replied cheerfully. "Very few people get to experience a red-carpet event like this, you know? You're one lucky girl."

"Red carpet... what...? No way. Senorita Lopez, I can't do that," the stunned boy answered. The fear in his eyes clear to see as he stared up at Mariana, imagining himself tripping along in some ridiculous pair of shoes with the world watching on.

"You can, and you will," Mariana replied calmly. "It's your job. Bianca has an appointment she can't miss. Don't worry. No one will talk to you, and it won't be for the whole event. You just need to walk in, pose for a few pictures, and then take your seat. When Bianca arrives, we'll swap you two out. You'll be back here by ten-thirty at the latest."

Lucian gulped before breathing out heavily. “You promise I won’t have to talk to anyone?” He questioned, holding his bare knees as his legs bounced up and down uncontrollably.

“I already said that didn’t I,” Mariana shot back, shaking her head. “Why would we put you in a situation where you could mess up. You may look like Bianca, but you still have a long way to go before you can act like her.”

“Ha-ha, yeah. Hopefully, I’ll never have to do that,” Lucian said while laughing nervously.

Mariana didn’t laugh. Instead, she just curled her lip into a half-smile and nodded. “Come on then. Get up.” She called out. “It’s time to get you dressed and made up. With enough padding, your body is now an almost perfect copy of Bianca’s. But the dress still might need altering a little. After all, it was custom made to fit her.”



As Lucian felt his incredibly long hair painfully tugging around his forehead, he forced his plump, glossy pink lips to smile. Gathered around his crown, his sweet-smelling locks had been braided into an extremely tight top knot that now reached all the way down to his PVC clad backside.

With his soaring stiletto heels sinking into the plush carpet below, the tightness and weight of his extended hair were not the only inconveniences the feminised boy had to contend with.

Weighing a tonne, his sparkly diamond hoops pulled downwards on his earlobes, causing them to ache.

Thick and sticky, long, fake, spider leg like lashes fanned out wildly obscuring part of his vision. Coated in layer upon layer of mascara, Lucian thought against gravity as the monstrosities pulled down on his beautifully painted eyelids.

At this point, His hands were practically useless, thanks to the claw-like attachments bonded to the end of each finger. Made all the worse by the tightness of his dress that made lifting his arms more than a few inches practically impossible.

Walking was also a struggle with his gait restricted by the tight clingy material of the dress. The skirt portion being particularly stiff, reaching down beyond his knees and refusing to stretch an inch.

Then there were the shoes! Bright pink and ludicrously high! Mariana had actually given him a painkilling injection in the bottom of each foot, so, in her words, he could get through the evening. Combined with the high neck of his outlandish dress, forcing him to hold his head up high. Lucian had minced around, unable to feel or even see the dangerous-looking pumps, shocked that he had managed to navigate the red carpet without tripping.

When he thought back to what he had just done, the PVC clad boy felt weak in the knees. But he had to admit that Mariana's advice had somehow helped him get through the harrowing experience.

As he'd gracefully swung his beautiful legs out of the stretch limousine, he had emptied his mind and focussed on his breathing.

As he'd taken a suited man's hand and carefully hoisted himself up onto his stilt-like shoes, he had purposely looked away from the screaming fans and crowds of photographers.

Even standing on a predetermined spot as a firing squad of cameras went off, half blinding him, Lucian managed to control himself. Breathing in and out in a rhythmic fashion, he had concentrated on what was important. His sick mother (recently admitted to hospital) And the thought of her getting better.



“I’m just going to check if your seat is ready,” Mariana whispered, leaning in close to Lucian’s painful ear.

“You’re leaving me?” Lucian uttered back in a quiet, shaky voice.

“Just for a second. Look around you. You’re not alone!” Mariana answered, waving her arm to indicate the half a dozen people surrounding the crossdressed man. “Just smile, stay calm and don’t talk to anyone. I’ll be right back.”

Watching as Mariana strolled away, Lucian scanned the assortment of people gathered around him. Ranging from a snotty looking makeup artist to a burly bodyguard who glared at him as they made eye contact. Quickly turning away from the menacing man’s gaze, Lucian’s heart skipped a beat.

Directly in front of him, a very recognisable and extremely familiar-looking person was waving and heading his way. As the attractive individual approached, Lucian felt a twinge of excitement but mostly fear. As this was not a person that the sexily dressed lookalike had ever met or spoken to.

With his pearly white teeth gritted behind his half-smiling bloated lips, Lucian held his breath as the distance between the pair decreased. The last thing he wanted at that moment was a conversation pretending to be Bianca Cabello. But stood there in her tight pink dress, done up and filling in for the flashy pop princess, he knew that he didn't have much of a choice in the matter!

## *Chapter 15 – Surprises*

“Bee,” a feminine voice called out, causing Lucian to peek upwards. In desperation he had momentarily looked away from the woman in the sparkly red dress, hoping that she was waving at someone else. But now only a few feet away and staring right at him, Lucian knew that this woman was expecting to speak to Bianca Cabello.



“Hey, I was hoping to see you here tonight,” the beautiful woman announced as she leaned in to air kiss Lucian on each cheek. “How have you been It’s been far too long.”

“Oh... yeah... far too long,” Lucian stuttered, wondering what to say to the gorgeous creature, standing in front of him. After all, it wasn’t every day that the starstruck young man got to experience being in such close proximity to an International megastar like Melena Gomez!

Lucian pursed his lips, stepping back a little as he gazed into Melena's beautiful, deep brown eyes. Melena gave him a look in return that made him feel as though he needed to say something, but his mind was blank. Quickly glancing left and then right, Lucian tried to gauge the reaction of the group of people who were supposedly keeping him from interacting with anyone. All the while, the subtle yet powerful scent of Melena's flowery, sweet-smelling perfume lingered in his airways.

"Am I disturbing you" asked Melena, in a somewhat firmer tone. I can leave if it's still too soon

Turning back to face the sexily dressed pop star, Lucian noticed the smile on her face had changed to a frown. "Err... no," Lucian stammered. "Sorry, I just feel a bit faint. It's so hot in here. And this dress is so tight, I can hardly breathe," he added, rambling on to the horrified looks of his entourage.

Melena stared him in the eyes, making him sweat for a second before starting to chuckle. "Well, uncomfortable or not, you're slaying it tonight, girl. That dress is fire paired with those Loub's. Who's it by"

"Looking down at the sleek, bright pink material wrapped around his padded and shaped body, Lucian let out a nervous giggle. "Uhm... It's a custom," he replied, remembering Mariana's words from earlier.

Melena seemed confused by the answer, squinting her eyes as a quizzical look appeared across her strikingly beautiful face. "Loving your dress, by the way," Lucian quickly added, improvising to try and rescue the situation. "It's so fierce and... so...so... on fleek. Next to you, I feel like I'm dressed in an old garbage sack."

Nervously curling the edges of his plump lips to form a half-smile, Lucian gazed into Melena's mesmerising eyes, feeling relieved as her smile returned. The words he'd used, surprised Lucian. He wasn't entirely sure where they'd come from or how they'd found their way into his vocabulary. But it wasn't worth dwelling on, he was just happy to have said something Melena liked.

Suddenly, Melena burst out laughing. Leaning in, she gave the cross-dressed boy a hug. "You know, I like this new side of you, Bee," she remarked while continuing to laugh. "I never realised you were so funny! Hey, let's hang out sometime this week It's been so long since we did anything together. I know I hurt you, but that's ancient history now, right"

“Err... sure, that would be great,” Lucian replied with a huge grin on his painted face. Forgetting for a moment where he was and how he was dressed, as the idea of spending time alone with Melena Gomez, who was gripping him tightly, dominated his thoughts.

“Fabulous,” Melena squealed, squeezing Lucian even tighter. “My people will message your people tomorrow. We’ll set up something fun. I’m so happy you’ve finally chosen to forgive me. I’ll make things up to you, I promise.”

There was one final round of air kisses before Melena turned on her heels and tottered away.

“Ok, we’re all set,” Mariana announced as she returned to the group. Pausing, she looked around, noticing the nervous smiles on the surrounding faces. “What’s wrong Has something happened Why does everyone look so guilty”



Amongst the rich and famous of the music industry, Lucian sat bolt upright in the packed-out theatre, failing to find a comfortable position as he rolled his pantied buttocks from side to side.

With his padded chest heaving up and down, the tense young man watched on through thick eyelashes as legendary artists and world-renowned celebrities graced the stage before him. One after another, they would appear to tell a few bad jokes before announcing a name. Everyone would then clap as the winner ascended to the stage to thank God, their family cat, and anyone else they could think of! This was the pattern of the night, only broken up by a few singing performances scattered amongst the announcements.

Lucian wanted to enjoy the show and take it all in. After all, being a musician himself, walking onto the stage of the American music awards to accept the best new artist award had always been a dream of his. The problem was that he was far too distracted to focus.

Dressed up and forced to behave like a pampered pop princess, Lucian was afraid to look around in case he made eye contact with anyone. With

Mariana still angry about the conversation he'd had with Melena earlier that evening, he didn't want to make the situation worse. Even if he had tried to explain to her that it wasn't his fault.

Forcing himself to look straight ahead, Lucian found it virtually impossible to ignore the excruciating pain darting up and down his legs and lower back. The fact he was sitting so close to VIPs and world megastars, some of which he idolised, only compounded the issue, making him feel even more uncomfortable. Unable to cross his legs due to the restrictive nature of his clingy dress, Lucian was forced to hold them firmly together. And after almost two hours of sitting in this position, with his six-inch stilettos pushing his knees upwards and his numb toes downwards, his quivering legs were beginning to cramp up. With his made-up face showing signs of discomfort, barely a moment passed where he wasn't thinking about the pain. But Just as it was reaching the point of being unbearable, a saviour arrived. "Take my hand and come with me," announced Mariana, standing to his right.

Lucian gladly obliged, placing his long red nails inside her palm before allowing her to help him to his severely arched feet. Finally able to stretch out his aching muscles, Lucian let out little moans of pleasure as he was led out along a row of celebrity faces. Mariana turned to give him a disapproving look, but by this point, the feminised boy was beyond caring what anyone else thought of him. His humiliating night of suffering was finally over. He was going home, or so he thought!



"Lucita, are you listening to me" Mariana barked as Lucian stared blankly into space. He nodded in response, but, in reality, her words washed right over him. He was still in a state of shock. Or was he asleep Surely, what was happening to him only happened in nightmares, right

When it was explained that Bianca had been delayed and couldn't make it to the award show that evening, his heart had skipped a beat.

When he was taken to her dressing room backstage for an outfit change and to have his makeup redone, he almost vomited.

"It's only one song. You know the routine. We've practised it a thousand times," Mariana said softly, trying to comfort the petrified boy.

Lucian nodded again. Only one song! Is that all, he thought as the room span. Stumbling forward on his towering heels, Mariana quickly darted forward to catch him.

“Here, sit down for a minute,” She demanded, dragging the delirious boy over to an empty chair.

“Here, take these,” she added, opening a bottle before pouring a handful of pills into Lucian’s palm.

Shaking, Lucian looked down at the colourful tablets and hesitated. “What are they” he asked in a trembling voice.

“Nothing special. They will just help you calm down,” she replied while grabbing a bottle of water from a nearby countertop. “Now, like it or not. You’re about to go out and shake your booty as you lip-sync along to Bianca’s new single, ‘Dirty girl’. So, trust me and swallow them. It’ll make the whole experience easier for everyone.”

Looking passed the masses of dark curls sprouting out around his heavily made-up face. Lucian peered down at his feminine-looking hand, resting gently atop his dark pantyhosed thigh.

One thought crossed his mind. How could things possibly get any worse

Lifting his hand, he placed its contents between his bloated lips and washed them down with a swig of cold water.



From his seat, high up in the auditorium, Simon Powell, English entrepreneur, recording executive, television producer and personality, looked down at the stage and smiled.

Stood centre stage on what appeared to be a floating platform, gyrating her body in a sexy formfitting, black outfit was Bianca Cabello. Or so everyone believed! Simon, of course, knew the truth. Being a stickler for details, he hadn’t gotten to where he was in life by chance.

When he was informed earlier that evening that Bianca was going to be absent, he didn’t raise his voice or show any sign of anger. Calmly, he had given the go-ahead for Lucian to take her place. After all, it wouldn’t be the

first time or last time that one of his lookalikes was required for a situation like this one.

Examining Lucian's movements as he performed the complicated dance routine, made all the more difficult by the killer heels strapped to his feet, Simon allowed himself to smile. When reviewing the options for Bianca's double earlier in the year, selecting the boy had been a risk. But the facial resemblance was there and when you were as rich and famous as Simon Powell, at times, life could get a bit boring. And for this reason, he'd sometimes try somewhat unorthodox methods, just to witness the outcome.

The grin on Simon's heavily Botoxed face grew larger as the smile plastered across Lucian's suddenly vanished. Chuckling slightly, he found it entertaining that nobody had informed the boy that when the second chorus kicked in, he'd be losing his skirt! Having been only attached with Velcro straps around his tiny waist, the glittery piece of material had just been whipped clean off by an invisible wire before flying across the stage and disappearing out of sight.



## *Chapter 16 – Lane*

After groggily clambering out of bed, Lucian trudged his tired body to the kitchen, only to find Mariana in a foul mood.

“Good Morning,” Lucian mumbled as he walked over to pour himself a coffee. The response he received was a grunt and a shake of the head.

Sighing, Lucian took a sip of his bitter black coffee before joining his grumpy mentor at the kitchen table. He knew she had something to say, and he also knew he wasn’t going to like it. “Is something wrong” He asked, his long acrylic nails forcing him to hold the mug comically between the palms of his hands.

“It’s about the conversation you had with Melena Gomez a few nights ago at the award show,” Mariana stated while glaring at Lucian disapprovingly.

“Not this again,” Lucian moaned, rolling his eyes. “I told you, I had no choice in the matter. She walked up to me.”

“Well, that might be true,” Mariana snapped back. “But it doesn’t change the fact you told her that Bianca would be willing to meet up with her sometime this week.”

“I was put on the spot, and I didn’t know what to say,” Lucian answered, feeling frustrated. “What’s the big deal anyway”

“The big deal is. It’s been leaked to the press. It’s all over the front cover of every magazine,” Mariana replied bluntly, tossing a magazine on the tabletop. The cover read, ‘Bianca and Melena to resolve issues.’

Still half asleep and confused, Lucian looked down at the cover before raking his long nails through his hair, scratching at his scalp.

“This is a big problem! My reputation is at stake, perhaps even my job,” Mariana screeched, causing Lucian to jump slightly. “The record companies want this meeting to happen for the publicity. They have already set up a date. And as I’m the one responsible for you. If this doesn’t happen, the axe comes down on me!”

Lucian continued to stare at Mariana, still unaware of the problem. “Do I have to spell it out for you” Mariana barked. “Bianca hates Melena after what she did last year. She’s refusing to go. Which means...” as she dragged out the end of the sentence, Mariana tilted her head, giving Lucian a familiar look.

Lucian banged his mug down to the table as what Mariana was implying suddenly dawned on him. “Oh no! No! No! No! You’re not suggesting I...” He anxiously announced while shaking his head.

“I am,” Mariana replied, cutting him off. “You made this mess. Now we have to fix it!”



With an awkward silence having descended across the room, Lucian grinned nervously at his beautiful companion, desperately trying to think of something to say. “Erm... I love your outfit today. Red really suits you. It really makes your eyes pop,” he told Melena, who smiled at the compliment.

“Thanks, Babe. You look fabulous too,” she replied, smiling. “I guess someone in PR had the bright idea to put us in matching outfits today.

“Yeah, I guess so,” Lucian replied, knowing exactly what she meant with them both wearing red jumpsuits and open-toed stiletto heels. Both outfits hugged their respective wearers’ feminine-looking bodies like a second skin and had a cut-out design. Melena’s, across her midriff, with Lucian’s chosen to emphasise his artificial cleavage.

Shifting uncomfortably in his seat, Lucian thought back to the circus outside the ice cream parlour when the pair entered. Led by a team of security guards with his arm linked through Melena’s, the pair were practically dragged through the army of paparazzi, set up and waiting on their arrival. Once inside, they were positioned side by side for a quick photo opportunity. Assuming the pose he had been taught, Lucian twisted his right leg to the side slightly to show off his designer pumps and stared straight ahead while pouting. After twenty seconds of holding the pose, Lucian was mightily relieved to see the photographers being ushered away. The door was then slammed shut, leaving him alone with Melena in the eerily silent room.



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“Is everything ok” Melena asked, looking a little concerned. “You sure are moving around a lot. Are you feeling nervous or something”

Letting out a nervous giggle, Lucian nodded. “A little,” he replied, telling a half-truth but omitting the part about his aching testicles. Strapped up tightly between his legs, the pressure placed on them by the crotch area of his playsuit was distracting at best. “It’s just so quiet in here, he announced,

trying to deflect the question while he tugged unsuccessfully at the velvety material surrounding his thighs, wishing he'd been allowed to wear a skirt that day. Why are we meeting in here anyway In this closed ice cream shop”

As the room fell silent, Lucian slowly looked back up to see Melena with a shocked and horrified look written across her face. “You don’t remember all the happy times we had filming here” she asked while squinting her eyes.

“Err... of course I remember,” lied Lucian, tapping his nails against the tabletop as his eyes darted furiously around the room. “The show we did years ago. The one we were in it together,” he added, remembering seeing it once or twice on one of those kids’ network channels and suddenly recognising the room as the set.

“We’re not that old!” Melena joked, breaking the tension. “It was just a few years back that we wrapped up filming.

Yeah, of course, Lucian said, looking around the room, searching for a new topic of conversation.

You know, Bee, I really miss this place and our days filming here. Those times on the set, laughing and having fun with you and Zane, were probably some of the happiest of my life. I want, more than anything, to be friends again. For the three of us to hang out just like we used to! I’m so so sorry about how things worked out. Do you think we can get past this” Melena rattled off. Picking up a napkin, she dabbed at the corner of her eyes.

“Erm... sure. Water under the bridge,” Lucian announced, with absolutely no idea of what she was referring to but also wanting to comfort the teary-eyed starlet who sat opposite him.

“Really!” Melena shrieked excitedly. “You really mean that”

“Erm... yeah,” the confused boy replied, finding it strange how someone’s mood could change so quickly.

“Thank you, she squealed, hopping to her high-heeled feet before dating around the table to give Lucian a tight bear hug.

Ok, I wasn’t sure if I was going to do this. But now that you’ve said that. I think this will work,” she added, releasing Lucian before whipping out her phone to send a quick message.

Arranging his plump, glossy red lips into a half-smile, Lucian looked up into Melena's eyes as they bounced between the doorway and her phone. With his anxiety levels rising, the feminised boy was now more confused than ever.

Suddenly, a noise erupted outside, making Lucian turn to face the doorway. Baffled as flashes of light bombarded the glass exterior of the building, he tried to make out the muffled shouts as he wondered what on earth was going on out there.

The young crossdressed man wouldn't have long to wait for an answer as ten seconds later, the front of the parlour door swung open. Unfortunately, what he found standing in the doorway, only served to conjure up more questions.

Casually closing the door, as he ran his hand through his short shaggy brown hair, was Zane Efron! Actor, singer, superstar! Grinning to show off his pearly white teeth, Zane then proceeded to stroll across the room as Lucian watched on with his ruby red lips ajar.

Stopping next to Lucian and Melena's table, Zane tilted his head slightly and gazed at Lucian with his sparkly blue eyes. "Afternoon, Ladies," He announced in a deep, calm voice. "Mind if I join you"

menu

Cranberry and nutbread ₹ 90

Chocolate and in

Chocolate ₹ 90

Double chocolate ₹ 100

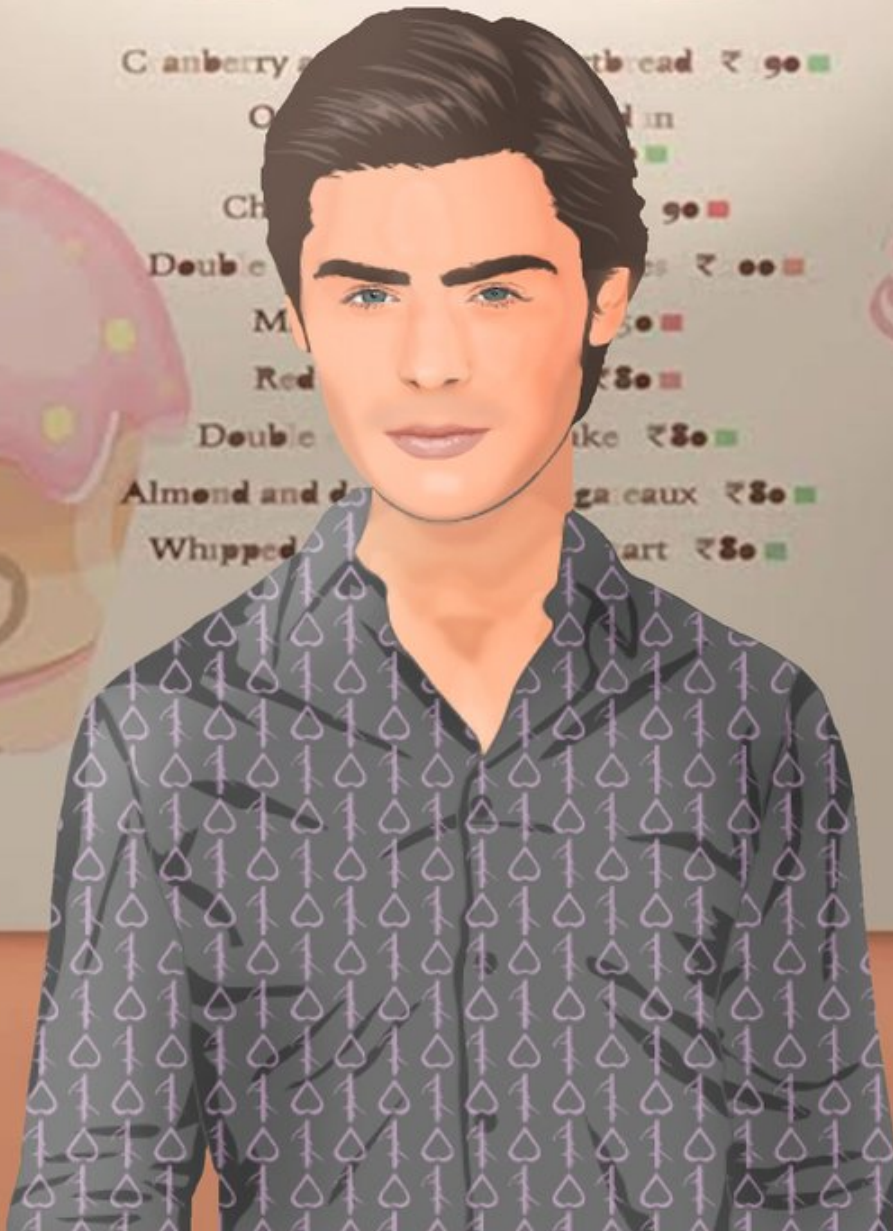
Mint ₹ 80

Red velvet ₹ 80

Double chocolate cake ₹ 80

Almond and dark chocolate gaucoux ₹ 80

Whipped cream tart ₹ 80



## *Chapter 17 - Repercussions*

Lucian wiped the sweat from his brow as he was ushered into what looked like a dressing room. Taking off his large, oversized coat, the cause of his overheating, he looked around the brightly lit room. On one side, almost covering the whole far wall, lay a table covered in assortments of drinks and snacks. Puffing out his cheeks, he looked away. It was too early to eat. It was too early for anything, especially sugary desserts, and greasy fast food.

The other side of the room had been set up as a dressing area. The focal point being a rack of glittery, colourful fabrics hanging above a row of towering high-heeled shoes. Adjacent to the expensive-looking garments would be his destination for the next hour or so, an elevated chair placed in front of a vanity covered in cosmetics and beauty products.

“Take a seat, Lucita,” Mariana instructed in a tired-sounding voice. “I’ll make us a coffee.”

Lucian nodded before shuffling over towards the chair. He knew what was expected of him that morning and didn’t feel like talking.



Having just finished dressing, Lucian sighed as he stood teetering on a pair of clear platform shoes. Looking down at his nylon-clad legs, peeping out from beneath a sparkling white tulle skirt, he noticed them glistening in the light of the dressing room.

“Come back over to the chair, please,” requested his makeup artist, who by this point no longer intimidated him with her masked face. “I need to finish your lips.”

Plodding over, Lucian smoothed his soft skirt beneath his pantied backside before arranging his feminine legs in a ladylike manner. The masked woman approached with a red lip lining pencil as the tired boy stared past her into the mirror behind.

The image he saw conjured up thoughts of a zombified beauty queen. Tired heavily made-up eyes stared back, surrounded by extended curled

lashes drenched in mascara. It was a dramatic look for six-thirty in the morning, but with Bianca scheduled to sing her raunchy new pop song on the morning talk show, the time of day seemed to matter not.

His long dark hair, framing his overly-painted face, was now at maximum volume with a full can of hair spray having been used to create the wavy poodle-like do that flowed past the shoulders of his fitted, silky, peplum-style top to rest just above his fake blossom.

Five minutes later and his over-injected lips popped once again. Drenched in sticky lips gloss, they now matched his pantyhosed legs, gleaming in the artificial light like a diamond. It turned out to be perfect timing because just as the masked makeup artist finished her work, the dressing room door flew open. Fresh from her stage performance, In marched Bianca Cabello wearing an identical outfit. "Everybody out," she hollered. "I want to speak to this bitch alone!"

"What's this about" countered a concerned-looking Mariana, jumping up from her chair to block the path of the incensed pop princess.

"None of your business," Bianca shot back as she stormed towards Mariana on her stilt-like pumps. "Now move out of my way or so help me!"

"I can't do that," Mariana answered, staying calm as she placed her hands on her hips. "My job is to stay with her at all times."

Stopping a yard in front of Mariana, Bianca angrily eyeballed the stern-faced Latina woman. "I'm not in the mood for this, Mari," Bianca snarled through her glossy red lips. "I just want to talk to her. I'm not going to hurt her. So, how about you give us five minutes Unless you want me to tell Raul about you and Diego and what you two got up to in Miami last October"

Appearing as if she had just seen a ghost, a pale-faced Marian glanced at Lucian before turning to face the masked makeup artist. "Give them the room," she declared, lowering her head in defeat.

"Thank you," announced Bianca with a fake smile.

"What" A shocked Lucian shouted. "You're leaving

Shaking her head and muttering an apology, Mariana stepped to the side. Then without looking up, she vacated the room, accompanied by the masked beautician.

With the closing of the door, Bianca folded her arms and glared at her look-alike. “So we’re finally alone,” she announced forcefully. “There’s a lot we need to talk about!”

Feeling intimidated as he peered up at the annoyed superstar, Lucian lent back in his chair, gripping the armrests tightly with his long-nailed fingers.

“Oh, don’t look so scared, Bianca stated as she glared down at the cross-dressed boy. I meant what I said. I’m not going to hurt you. But that doesn’t mean I’m not angry. Why are you trying to fuck up my life”

“I’m not,” Lucian replied, quivering. “I... I’m just...”

“Just acting like besties with that whore, Melena Gomez!” Bianca interrupted, stamping her tall stiletto heel loudly into the wooden floor beneath. “I mean after what she did, what were you thinking First, she gets given the album written especially for me. But then, after it becomes a worldwide bestseller, she goes and steals the love of my life while touring it. I can’t stand the sight of that weaselly-looking backstabber. And now, thanks to you, I’m supposed to have forgiven her.” She added, turning her body to the side as she looked up at the ceiling, pouting. “Am I supposed to just pretend as if nothing has happened”

“I’m sorry,” Lucian replied, shaking his head. “I never wanted any of this. I just wanted to help my mom. But crazy things just keep happening. I have no control over them.”

Turning to face her mirror image, Bianca scoffed. “Well, isn’t that noble of you. But I don’t give a crap about your mother. This is my life you’ve made a mess of! And you’re going to put things right.”

“Put things right! How” Lucian exclaimed while folding his arms across his padded chest.

“Well, for starters, anytime Bianca is forced to be around that skanky Ho, that’s going to be you and not me! But that’s not all,” Bianca announced in a sinister-sounding voice while tapping her long acrylic nails together. “You’re going to hurt her. Hurt her just like she hurt me. Together we’re going to deliver a little retribution to that rat-faced Judas!”

Stepping out of the television studio into the warm morning sun, Lucian's body was on autopilot as he tottered toward the car, waiting to whisk Bianca Cabello away.



Ignoring the line of paparazzi shouting and snapping pictures, the sexily dressed boy trudged on. Once a terrifying prospect, the attention he garnered was now the least of his worries. He had much bigger issues to deal with as his life continued to spiral out of control.

## *Chapter 18 – Nippon*

“Five minutes, Miss Cabello,” called out a woman, popping her head around the corner of the open-air changing room.

Lucian shook his head, watching as his newly dyed hair hardly moved in the mirror in front of him. Now bright blonde with pink highlights, it had been styled for maximum volume, held in position with multiple pins and clips. Below, his glossy pink lips glistened, their colour matching his dramatically applied eye shadow.

“Now, don’t be nervous,” Mariana announced as she threaded a long dangly pink gem earring through one of the holes in Lucian’s left ear. “You remember what to say, right”

“Konnichiwa, Tokyo. I’m super happy to be here,” Lucian sang out in a high feminine voice as he felt his restrictive multi-coloured pleather mini-dress squash his fake breasts and crush his ribcage.

“Very good,” Mariana replied, moving on to the other ear. “Just remember to smile. You only have to perform two songs, and then we can leave.”

Lucian nodded and forced his inflated lips into a half-smile. Placing all his weight on his left leg, he balanced his right foot on the tip of its tall stiletto heel and thought back to how he’d arrived in this situation.



Two weeks earlier

“Oh, don’t look so glum,” Said Bianca, rolling her eyes. “Most people dream of being a famous singer. You get to travel the world and live out that dream.”

“Yeah, except most people aren’t blackmailed into doing it,” replied Lucian, unzipping a leather skirt from around his waist. “Where are we even going”

“Well, as you know. The plan is to get back at Melena by messing up her relationship with Zane. So, I’ve talked to the record company, and after

hinting at the possibilities for some good publicity, they have arranged for Bianca to join Zane out on tour for a few select dates in Japan.”

“Japan! This is crazy, Bianca,” Lucian responded as he continued to get undressed. “I’ve never even left the states. I know nothing about Japan. What do you expect me to do while out there”

“Easy. You’ll be me. You’ll perform in a few concerts, attend some press interviews, and take part in a few staged events,” Bianca replied as she took from Lucian the skirt, he had just removed.

Spinning his half-naked body around to face her, Lucian’s jaw dropped. “I can’t take your place on stage for a whole show. I’ll mess up,” he stated in utter shock.

“Unlikely,” Bianca replied while tutting. “My whole life is one big list of instructions. Just do as you are told, and you’ll be great.”

“What about the other times I don’t know how to be you in social situations,” moaned Lucian as he started rolling a pair of pantyhose down his legs. “Isn’t it too risky Someone’s definitely going to realise that I’m not you!”

“Doubt it,” Bianca retorted, shimmying the skirt up her legs. “All the interview questions will be vetted beforehand with your answers scripted. And When you are with Zane or Melena, just act like you did last time. They seemed to buy it.”

Sat there in just his frilly underwear set, Lucian pouted. “Please, Bianca! Don’t make me do this,” he begged, looking deep into his doppelganger’s eyes.”

“Hey,” shouted Bianca, causing Lucian to jump. “Stop that puppy dog shit. You brought this on yourself remember. You’re doing this! if you don’t, I’ll go to the newspapers and tell them your whole story. I can see the headline now. ‘Bianca’s boy double.’ ‘Superstar’s sissy stand in.’ Don’t think I won’t do it. I’ll tell everyone it was the record company’s doing. That’ll teach them for refusing that new contract I’m owed.”

Closing his tired eyes, Lucian sighed loudly. He still didn’t know how Bianca had found out his secret, but, either way, it didn’t really matter. She had him over a barrel, and now he had no choice but to bend to her every

will. “Yes, I know. You’ve told me like five thousand times already. I just don’t understand why you’re doing this.”

“We’ll have less of that sass, thank you. But, duh, come on girl. We’re getting back at Melena by messing up her relationship with Zane. You can’t expect me to go near that bastard after how he treated me!” Bianca replied, flicking her hair. “And seeing as nearly every activity organised on the trip involves Bianca spending time with either Zane or Melena. Oh, by the way, who will also be in Japan touring. You’ll have to be the one to do it!”

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“Konnichiwa, Tokyo. I’m super happy to be here,” Lucian sang out in a high feminine voice as the crowd of people out to see Bianca Cabello cheered wildly.



Lucian shivered as he looked out into the screaming mass of excited people, his thin fur jacket and pantyhose doing nothing to fend off the chilly early evening wind. Dazed and frightened, the crossdressed boy now found himself in one of Tokyo's busiest districts. Standing on a temporary stage, he was about to impersonate one of the most famous people on the planet and do it in front of a crowd of people while performing an intricate dance routine in six-inch heels.

Hearing music erupt from the speakers above him, Lucian forced himself to smile as he thought about the ludicrous scenario he was now at the centre of. All those people! Thousands, possibly millions, given the size of the city, all inconvenienced by the closing of the road. And why? So people could listen to a few generic, cheesy pop songs being sung, or in this case, lip-synced. It was pure craziness!

“Showtime,” Lucian thought as he felt his restricted body start moving atop his impractical footwear. Jetlagged, he was eager to get the event over with. Even if he knew it was just the start, of what would undoubtedly be, a long and exhausting, weeklong adventure in the land of the rising sun.

## *Chapter 19 – An unwanted invitation*

“Is everything alright, sweetie” Melena asked from across the table. You’ve hardly eaten a thing

Looking up through his thick lashes, Lucian smiled. “Yes, I’m fine, he lied as he fumbled with a set of chopsticks, his long pink acrylic nails making the task near impossible. “I’m just not very hungry. I’m not a big fan of raw fish.”

“Oh, you should really try to eat it,” answered Melena, seemingly oblivious to how uncomfortable the skirted man opposite her was. “My yoga instructor, Gaya swears by it. He said it’s full of omega-3. It’ll make your hair thick and healthy and your complexion blemish-free.”

“Perfect, just what I need,” Lucian thought as he continued to force a smile. “To look even more feminine!” The way he currently looked was something he tried not to think about, finding it easier to ignore the changes happening to his body. He had always been of the mindset that everything done to him was temporary and could be reversed. but lately, he had caught himself examining his altered body more and more. There was the obvious, like his bloated rubbery lips, jutting out from his face and showing no sign of deflating. Then there were the more subtle changes, like his ever-expanding backside, buttocks, and chest, which surely couldn’t be the result of the exercising and dieting alone!

“You don’t need to worry about all that, Bee,” Zane pipped in as he chomped down a salmon nigiri. “You always look fantastic.”

Felling embarrassed by the compliment, Lucian looked down at the short hem of his silky dress resting high on his nylon encased thighs. Shifting his legs slightly, one of his sexy-looking legs slid effortlessly over the other, causing the humiliated boy to shudder. “Thanks, Babe,” Lucian replied, regaining his composure as he looked up into Zane’s eyes. He needed to stay in character, and Bianca Cabello wasn’t the sort of girl to get all shy over some harmless remark.

“And what am I Chopped liver over here” Melena commented, folding her arms while tutting loudly.

“Oh, come now, my Queen,” Zane quickly remarked, leaning across to take Melena’s hand. “You know that in my eyes, you’re the most gorgeous, most perfect creature God ever crafted. After creating you, he didn’t just need a day of rest, he was forced to take a month.”

“Awww, Baby,” Melena cooed, leaning across the plates of sushi to kiss her sappy boyfriend.

Pushing down on his stiletto heels, Lucian pushed his chair backwards, making a loud scraping sound. Plucking the napkin from the lap of his expensive designer mini dress with his long nails, he placed it next to his practically untouched plate of food. “I’m going to the bathroom,” he announced as he pushed down on the balls of his sore feet to lift himself up.

“Sure thing, Boo,” Mumbled Melena, her lips leaving Zane’s barely long enough to deliver the sentence.



Returning from the bathroom, Lucian tottered across the high-end restaurant as the loud click-clack sound of his slender, skyscraper heels announced his presence. As he sauntered by in his expensive dress, curious customers took a momentary break from chowing down on their overpriced sushi to admire and criticise the scantily clad starlet.

Not particularly wanting to return to the awkward dinner date set up by the record company, Lucian had taken his time in the bathroom. But there was also only so long he could stand looking at himself in the large, mirrored surfaces covering the walls. Everywhere he’d looked, the sight of a gorgeous young blonde in a little black dress dominated his vision. The sight of her dark smoky eyes staring back at him as he applied a new layer of sticky pink gloss was still as devastating as ever to his crushed male ego.

Reaching the table, Lucian stopped dead on his heels. It was empty! “

Eek,” he squealed as he spun around to find Zane standing a little too close for comfort. “I’ve got your coat,” he announced, holding out Lucian’s warm fur coat.

Instinctively, the startled young man turned and lifted his arms, allowing Zane to place the garment on his delicate frame. “Where’s Mel,” Lucian

asked, looking around the room and hoping to spot her.

“She had to leave, but don’t worry. I’ll make sure you get back to your room safely,” Zane said, smiling as he placed his arm on Lucian’s thin waist.

“Err, ok,” Lucian replied, gulping. With him, Zane, and Melena all staying at the same hotel and also not really knowing what else to do, he reluctantly allowed himself to be led out of the restaurant and into a waiting car.

The ride back to the hotel was an awkward but thankfully short one for the confused crossdressed boy as Zane, once again, sat just a little too close for his liking while telling a long-winded, boring story about his latest concert.

Lucian nodded along and feigned laughter as he kept his slippery pantyhosed legs firmly pressed together. The last thing he wanted was to arouse suspicion and blow his cover, even as Zane’s wandering hand occasionally found itself resting on his knee.

Exiting the car, Zane offered Lucian his hand. Thinking the pop star was being polite, Lucian accepted, allowing his grinning companion to help him to his high-heeled feet. It was only after their ride drove away did he realise; that Zane was not letting go.

“This way,” the confident man announced before leading Lucian into the hotel lobby. Once inside, he headed for the elevator before turning to speak again. “Bianca, do you have ten minutes” Zane asked, looking deeply into Lucian’s heavily made-up eyes. “I would really appreciate your advice on something.”

“Oh,” Lucian replied, still uncomfortable holding Zane’s hand. “I... err...”

“Please” Zane interrupted, leaning down with pleading eyes. “It’s about Melena. You’re the only person I can talk to about this.”

Lucian looked around but quickly realised no one was coming to help him. Feeling pressured and uncomfortable dressed as he was, he reluctantly agreed to accompany Zane up to his hotel room.

Inside the room, Zane took their coats and told Lucian to take a seat before heading off to find them something to drink. He returned with a bottle of wine and snuggled up close to the skirted young man on the sofa.

After pouring, Zane passed Lucian a glass. "Cheers," he announced, clinking the glasses together.

Without reply, Lucian took a sip of the fruity red liquid before placing the glass on a nearby coffee table. "So, you wanted to ask me something" Lucian questioned, hoping to get straight to the point so he could make some excuse and escape the luxurious suite.

"I love this dress," Zane said, reaching across to take a hold of the short hem of Lucian's dress. "Is it a Versace" he asked as he slowly rubbed the soft material between his thumb and forefinger.

"Err.... Yes... but...I... need to use the bathroom," Lucian blurted out before jumping to his feet and scurrying off to the safety of the restroom.

Standing in the centre of the room, the shaken young man took a second to catch his breath and process his thoughts. Had he overreacted or had Zane Efron really just come on to him



Detangling a lock of curly blonde hair from one of his large, hooped earrings, Lucian sighed, feeling rather foolish for getting himself into such an uncomfortable situation. He was racking his brain for an acceptable excuse to leave when, suddenly, the door opened behind him. Pirouetting on the spot, Lucian's arms dropped to his side as his inflated lips parted.

"I miss you, Bee," Zane announced, marching towards the terrified boy with a look of lust in his eyes. "I messed up big time when I left you for

Melena. And after seeing you again, I can see that now. I want you back. And I know you want me too.”

“Zane...I...,” Lucian said, backing away as he tried to talk the approaching man down. He didn’t get the chance as before he could finish his sentence, a strong pair of arms gripped his shoulders as Zane leaned in to passionately kiss at his Botox-filled lips.

Panicked, Lucian struggled in his tight mini dress and heels. He tried to push Zane away, but his arms were pinned. He tried to scream, but his lips were being bombarded with kisses.

Clearly enjoying himself (evident by the lump pushing into Lucian’s stomach), Zane moved his arm down before grabbing a handful of Lucian’s bum. Suddenly, able to move, Lucian seized the opportunity. Swivelling his body, he brought up his knee with ferocious force, slamming it into Zane’s balls.

The pair screamed simultaneously, Lucian telling the horny pop star to get the hell off of him with Zane just howling in pain.

“You bitch,” Zane screamed as Lucian felt the vice-like grip on his right shoulder tighten.

Lucian felt his whole body quiver with rage, all those weeks of humiliation and frustration finally coming to the boil. Bringing down his foot, he drove the heel of his six-inch stiletto right into the bridge of Zane’s foot. There was a brief crunching sound before it was drowned out by an ear-piercing scream.

Zane’s strong frame crumpled and dropped to the ground in a heap. “You asshole!” screamed an enraged Lucian, ignoring Zane’s pleas for forgiveness as he repeatedly kicked out at his whimpering fallen attacker.

## *Chapter 20 – A little too big for your boots*

“What the hell have you done” Bianca screamed as she angrily stormed towards Lucian. Not in the mood to talk to the angry pop princess, Lucian shook his head and sighed loudly before continuing to scroll through his phone.

“Hey, bitch, I asked you a question,” Bianca shouted, striking the phone from Lucian’s long-nailed hands.

Annoyed, he stood up and looked his double directly in the eyes. “I don’t want to talk about it,” he growled, narrowing his perfectly arched brows.

“Well, tough shit!” Bianca countered. Zane is in the hospital! You broke his foot and three of his ribs. What the hell were you thinking”

“Good,” Lucian spat, “That creep got what he deserved. Perhaps next time, he’ll think twice before he forces himself on someone.”

“That was the whole point. The plan was to break him and Melena up by seducing him. Not put him in the A&E. The press is all over this story. My reputation is in tatters.” Bianca replied, stunned by the crossdressed boy’s blasé attitude.

“That was your plan, not mine. It might not look like it, right now. But I’m not gay!” Lucian announced, spreading his arms wide and looking down at his mini dress and high-heeled sandals. “And I couldn’t care less about your reputation. My job is to be your double. To take your place when you’re too lazy or can’t be bothered to live your privileged, pampered life.”

Bianca’s face turned bright red. “You have no idea how difficult it is to be me,” she cried out, shaking a fist in Lucian’s face. I have no free will, no privacy, no life at all! You’re going to regret making an enemy out of me, you sissy bitch!” She added before turning on her high-heeled feet and storming out of the hotel room.



That evening, holding his glitter-covered eyelids shut, as long curled lashes gently tickled his cheeks, Lucian still felt irritated after his earlier altercation

with Bianca.



“In. one, two, three, four, and release,” he repeated to himself as he went through his breathing exercise. A type of meditation that always calmed him down. Especially when he was about to do something terrifying, like perform in front of a packed arena of screaming fans.

Opening his eyes, Lucian turned on his ridiculously tall heels and had a quick look out of the backstage window. Even with a pair of earplugs in, the sound of the people cheering was deafening. He gulped and shook his head, causing some of the strands of his wig to stick to his glossed lips. Gently raking his long pink nails across his face, he removed the fake hair and looked over at the rack of costumes next to him. Over the next three hours, he would be

wearing all of them, and he still wasn't sure if it was even possible to change as quickly as they wanted him to. After all, it had taken almost ten minutes to fit him into the tight, revealing outfit, he currently wore, and another twenty to do his makeup! How they expected him to change next time in under five minutes was baffling.

Seeing an approaching stage assistant, Lucian knew it was time. Resting his right ankle boot on the tip of its enormous seven-inch heel, he stretched out his calf muscle. His legs were already sore, and the night had barely begun.



Back in the safety of the dressing room, Lucian stretched out his aching feet as an assistant removed his makeup. The concert was over, and judging by the crowd's reaction, he had done a pretty good job. With his mind calmed by a pill, he'd popped before stepping out on stage, he'd danced his heart out and nailed every step. The more the crowd cheered, the more he lost himself in the moment. By the time he'd changed into his second costume, the smile on his inflated lips as they mimed along to the sickly lyrics was genuine. Out on that stage, for a brief moment in time, Lucian forgot that he was an aspiring male songwriter. He was Bianca Cabello. A sexy pop princess out to shake her booty and please her army of fans.

"Leave us," Mariana forcefully announced, striding into the room.

Emptying her hands, the assistant tending to Lucian nodded before quickly scurrying away.

"You looked like you were enjoying yourself out there tonight," Mariana announced as she took a seat on a sofa to Lucian's left and crossed her legs. "Tell me. Now you've tasted the celebrity lifestyle, do you crave it for yourself?"

"What?" Lucian gasped, turning to face her with a confused look on his face. "What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about you! The new attitude! The way you've behaved recently!" Mariana replied, rolling her eyes. "Have you forgotten who you are Or has the image you see in the mirror corrupted your mind into thinking you are the pop star diva it sees?"

“I know who I am,” Lucian replied, pouting. “I’m just sticking up for myself. That’s all. Why should I just sit back as everyone takes advantage of me”

“Ha,” Mariana snorted while shaking her head. “Oh, little Lucita, you have much still to learn. This is show business. Until you reach the top, that’s how things are.”

“No, that can’t be true. I imagine that when you’re a beautiful woman like you, some men will try and take advantage, but they can’t all be like that.” Lucian countered.

“Well, I’m glad you’re suddenly an expert on the topic,” Mariana stated as she stood up shaking her head. “Because from now on, you’re on your own. Your actions recently have embarrassed the record company and seeing as I can’t control you, I’ve been let go.”

“Let go As in fired” Blurted out Lucian as he rose to his feet. “They can’t do that. I’ll...”

“Have a word with them” Marianna said before chuckling loudly. “Yes, you do that, darling. You can tell Raul when you see him later.”

“Seniorita Lopez, I’m confused. What do you mean later” A surprised-looking Lucian asked. “We’re meeting him tonight What does he want”

Still chuckling, Mariana started walking towards the door. “Not us, you! And what he wants is no longer my concern,” she added as she opened the door. So long, Lucita. And good luck to you!”

## *Chapter 21 - Relax*

Stepping out of the car, Lucian's tired feet once again assumed their arched position as the dazed young man rocked back and forth on lime green designer heels. With the pungent smell of fish filling his airways, he scanned the darkened area, littered with shipping containers, and realised he had been dropped off in what looked like the port or harbour area of Tokyo. There was an eerily quiet feel about the place, and given the air of mystery surrounding the impromptu meeting, for the first time in a long time, Lucian felt genuinely scared for his wellbeing.

He jumped as the driver's side electric window buzzed open. "Over there," the driver barked in a deep gruff voice, pointing towards the waterfront.

"Why" Lucian shot back, stepping closer and leaning down to look inside. "What am I doing here And who am I meeting"

"Over there," the driver repeated, this time in an angrier, more impatient tone. He then closed the window and glared through the glass pane until the feminised boy felt uncomfortable enough to turn away.

A gust of wind blew in from the Tokyo bay, sending a shiver up Lucian's nylon clad legs. Tugging on his long, designer coat with his gloved hands, the frightened boy attempted to cover his midriff, which had been left exposed by the little top and skirt he had been given to wear. It was an unusual choice of outfit. Described by the masked beautician, who had arrived shortly after his conversation with Mariana earlier, as a disguise to blend in as he made his way to the meeting dressed as Bianca. The outfit wasn't the only thing she had done to conceal his identity. His long-extended hair was now tucked beneath a shoulder-length black wig. His makeup had been applied in a different style. But perhaps, most image altering of all, she had replaced his prosthetic nose. This new one, which was a completely different shape from Bianca's, changed the shape of his face, making him look like an entirely different person.

Reaching the water's edge, Lucian did a three-sixty before turning back to stare out over the Tokyo bay. What am I doing here He asked himself as he

stood there shivering with only the sound of the waves for company.

Five minutes passed, five minutes of worrying and imagining the worst, until the sound of a car engine came into earshot, snapping him back to reality. The sound of the chugging engine got louder, as did the brightness of the approaching headlights until the car stopped a few meters in front of Lucian. The engine turned off, and then, silence!. What was happening Why was nobody getting out Was he supposed to go over These were just some of the questions firing through the confused crossdresser's mind as he stood there gormlessly staring on like a deer in the headlights.



Wincing, Lucian brought his arm up to shield his makeup covered eyes as the car headlights flashed. Half blinded but taking it as a signal, he slowly minced forward on his flashy shoes. As he reached the front of the car, the back door slowly opened. Tottering forward once more, the frightened boy reached the backdoor before peering in through his thick eyelashes.

“Get in,” Raul commanded, who was sitting in the backseat with a drink in his hand. Relieved for a second to see a familiar face, Lucian smoothed out

his coat and hopped in. Instantly regretting his hasty decision as the electronically controlled door clicked shut behind him.

“Good evening, Lucian,” Raul announced, taking a sip of his drink. “Firstly, I want to express how much I enjoyed your concert earlier tonight. And apologise for the necessary precautions in attending this meeting. But what we have to talk about is extremely important. No one can know.” He added before nodding towards the driver. Catching Raul’s eye through the rearview mirror, the driver took the hint. Nodding back, he exited the vehicle, leaving the pair to talk in private.

“What’s this all about, Mr Jimenez Please tell me! I’m feeling a little uncomfortable here” Lucian spluttered.

“There is no need to be frightened,” Raul replied calmly with a half-smile. “You are safe here. But if you want to get straight to the point, let me be blunt. Lately, my employers have been having major concerns with the erratic behaviour displayed by Bianca Cabello. And due to some recent decisions, some involving you! She is now viewed as a problem and a liability. Therefore, as of tonight, she has been terminated.

“Err... that’s... erm... terrible news,” Lucian mumbled, shocked and confused by what he had just heard.

“Regrettable, yes. Terrible, no,” Raul calmly replied while looking Lucian up and down.

Suddenly feeling incredibly uncomfortable, Lucian instinctively leaned away, trying to distance himself as much as possible from the intimidating Latino man to his left. “But...erm... Mr Jimenez, if you don’t mind me asking, sir. Why are you telling me this” He mumbled through his shiny lips.

There was a moment of silence as Raul looked away before it was replaced by a sinister-sounding chuckle. “You are a sharp one. I’ll give you that,” he declared, now fully composed once more. “And the answer is a simple one. If you think hard enough, I’m sure you can work it out for yourself. You see, the company needs a Bianca Cabello. Her brand name is worth millions. We just don’t need the one we currently have!”

It took Lucian a moment to react, allowing the words time to sink in. “What You’re not suggesting... I... no... you can’t expect me to... I...” Lucian

blabbered before reaching for the handle and finding the door locked. I think I need to go now, Mr Jimenez.

“You will take her place,” Raul suddenly declared, in such a nonchalantly way, that anyone who didn’t know the man would have assumed that he was joking.

Pressing his pantyhosed legs together and bringing his arms inwards, Lucian’s pretty face dropped.

There’s some work to be done before you are revealed to the world but time is on our side,” Raul added, before pausing to take another sip of his drink and look down at his watch. “After all, the reports of Bianca’s car accident should be circling right about now. They will surely understand that she will need a little time to recover.”

“No! Please, I don’t want this!” Lucian cried. The sudden outburst, causing the usually calm and composed Raul to jump slightly. “I won’t do it. You can’t make me.”

Leaning over, Raul gripped Lucian’s nylon encased thigh tightly, causing the feminised boy to cry out in pain. “What you want is unimportant,” the man calmly replied before squeezing even tighter.

Whimpering in pain, Lucian reached out to remove the larger man’s hand but had his long-nailed hand easily swatted away. “But I can see why you might be reluctant,” he added with a smirk. “Without the right incentives in place, how can a man hope to convince another man to do what he wants. Well, how about I give you a choice Would a choice help you ease your fears” Still whimpering, Lucian furiously nodded as tears began appearing in the corners of his darkly lined eyes.

“Very well,” Raul stated, bringing his face closer to Lucian’s. “Option one is simple. You again forget your place and refuse to comply. Santiago out there will put a bullet in your head, and I’ll book an earlier flight home.”

“Or there’s option two,” Raul announced, releasing his grip on the quivering boy’s leg before giving it a little pat. “You accept my offer. You live a life of luxury that most people can only dream of while we continue providing your mother with the best health care available.”

A silence fell over the backseat of the car as Raul looked on expectantly. "One or two" Raul roared, gripping Lucian's leg in the same spot, this time applying even more force through the tips of his nails.

"Two!" Lucian screamed out amongst the howls of pain. "Option two."

"Good choice," Raul exclaimed in a cheery tone, releasing his leg. "I knew you'd come around. Now, let's drink on it," he added, before passing Lucian a glass of liquid from a shelf in front of him. "To Bianca Cabello and her continued success," he added, before clinking his glass off Lucian's and chugging down the liquid in one.

Nervously, Lucian brought his own glass up to his inflated lips. With his eyes locked on Raul's, he took a sip, but an angry glare told him he needed to finish it.

The strong alcohol burned as it went down but Lucian would have no time to think about it as almost immediately the inside of the car began to spin. He tried to move, to scream, but his body refused to move.

"Don't fight it," Raul softly said as he lay Lucian's head gently across his lap. "Just relax. You're in good hands."

## *Chapter 22 – Lucian 2.0*

“Happy birthday, Luce,” Lucian’s best friend Nancy announced as she passed him over a wrapped object.

Accepting the gift, Lucian smiled. “Thanks, Nance. What is it?”

“Come on, Luce. You don’t expect me to tell you, do you I mean. Why would I go to all the trouble of wrapping it if I was just going to tell you what was inside,” Nancy quipped as she raised both brows.

Lucian shook his head and chuckled before ripping into the paper to reveal a piece of black cloth. “Oh, sweet,” he yelled upon unfolding the fabric, “Skullcrusher’s tour shirt from last spring. Wow, thanks, Nance. I’ve regretted not getting one of these ever since the gig. When I looked online, I couldn’t find one anywhere. Where on Earth did you find it?”

“I have my ways, and you’re welcome,” Nancy announced with a chuckle. “I thought you could wear it to the festival in Brownsville next weekend. That is if you want to go with me She added, producing two tickets from her pocket.

A huge smile crossed Lucian’s face. “You managed to get tickets he yelled out excitedly. “You’re the best friend ever. Of course, I want to go with you. Are you kidding”

“I know, I’m pretty awesome, aren’t I” Nancy replied, hamming it up. “I’ll even do your makeup if you want”

“My makeup!” exclaimed Lucian, looking a little confused all of a sudden. “I guess some guys will be wearing a little eyeliner or something.”

Nancy smiled. “Eyeliner, shadow, mascara. I have this really cute new lipstick that will match that dress I just gave you.”

“Dress! you mean...” Lucian stopped mid-sentence as his mouth fell open in shock. The black tour T-shirt he had been holding moments earlier had somehow magically morphed into a pink mini dress. “What the hell” he screamed, tossing the dress onto the table.

“Are you ok, Lucia” Nancy said, picking up the dress. “If you don’t like it, I guess I can return it. But you should try it on first. Now that you’ve recovered

from your boob job, your girls are going to look spectacular with that low V-neck front.”

“Lucia Boob job Nancy, what the hell are you talking about I... arrrggg...” Again, Lucian failed to finish his sentence, this time stopping due to raw terror as he glanced down to see himself wearing Nancy’s gift. But as scary as it was to be suddenly wearing the dress, it was what lay beneath that unnerved him the most. A huge pair of very real looking breasts! Jumping to his feet, he stumbled forward on his stiletto-heeled shoes, which had, moments earlier, been a pair of Converse. Crashing into the table its contents were sent to the ground with a loud thud.

“It’s Bianca Cabello,” someone screamed as the heads of the people sitting around began to turn. “I love you, Bianca,” another called.

“Nancy, what’s going on here Where did all these people come from And why am I dressed like this” Lucian muttered as he stumbled about, trying to regain his balance.

“Nancy, who’s Nancy” Mariana answered in a stern voice. Come now, Bianca. We’ve got a lot of training to do if you’re going to be ready for your world tour.”

“No... ahhhhh...no,” Lucian cried out at the top of his lungs. “Get away from me. I don’t want this. I’m not Bianca! I’m Lucian! I’m a man!”

Turning to run, he tripped on his heels and fell forward as the ground opened up in front of him. Plunged head first into darkness, Lucian screamed as loud as he could until suddenly, he awoke in a cold sweat.

Disorientated, Lucian blinked a few times as the light dancing around the unfamiliar room hurt his eyes, making them water. “Oh, you’re awake!” A startled voice announced. “Try to stay calm, Miss Cabello. You are safe here. Just relax, and I’ll call Mr Jimenez!



“Impressive work, right” Raul Jimenez announced, breaking the silence that had fallen upon the room.

Lucian was too startled to reply, his eyes locked on the reflection before them. Feeling sick to his stomach, he studied the lingerie-clad woman looking

back, refusing to accept that it was him.



“Not very talkative, eh? Well, that’s ok, for now at least,” Raul said as he stepped into sight behind Lucian. “You’ll need some time to recover and adjust to your new body after being out for so long.”

“How long” Lucian mumbled in a croaky voice.

“Almost four months,” Raul said, finishing Lucian’s sentence. “You’ve been kept in an induced coma to give your body time to heal after the surgeries.

“Surgeries Lucian whispered, finding his mouth almost too dry to speak.

“Yes, you are now officially Bianca Cabello and have her exact body proportions. One of the top surgeons in the world flew out especially,” Raul stated, placing his hands on Lucian’s shoulders. “No more fake nose for you,” he added as Lucian shuddered. “The rhinoplasty and facial sculpting will mean getting ready will take less time, from now on. Of course, we did make a few changes. After we leak the story, everyone will believe Bianca went in for some cosmetic surgery. You’ll deny it, of course. But no one will actually believe the car accident story.”

Feeling dizzy, Lucian tried to place his feet flat on the floor, but they refused to bend. “Get used to standing on your tip toes,” Raul declared as he began to massage the terrified boy’s shoulders. “Your achilles tendons have been shortened to help you cope with the busy schedule ahead. As you know, Pop stars like you are expected to constantly wear impractical shoes. Now, you’ll have no trouble at all, even wearing the highest of heels.”

Lucian felt a cold tingly sensation ripple down his body as he fought the urge to collapse. A soft moan then escaped the feminised boy’s lips as Raul wrapped an arm around his slim waist. “Ah yes, sorry,” Raul commented as he began to run his index finger along Lucian’s side. “You’ll be a little sore around this area for a while yet. Your top two ribs have been removed to give you a sexier shape. This sexy little corset isn’t just for decoration, it will help support you while you recover. The same goes for the bra.” Raul’s hand moved up to cup Lucian’s right breast as another soft moan left the shaken boy’s lips. “Real breasts are a lot heavier than those forms you used to glue on. You’ll need this to stop any sagging. And then there’s down there...”

“Stop...please... I... I need...” Lucian gasped as the room began to spiral around him. Unable to fight it, he collapsed into Raul’s arms.

Lifting the new Bianca up as if she weighed nothing, Raul grinned and shook his head. “Let’s get you back to bed, shall we” he remarked as he walked across the room with Lucian in his arms. “You’ll need your energy for training next week. After all, Being a full-time pop star is a lot harder than it looks.”

## *Chapter 23 – A whole new world*

Swivelling to the side, A nervous Lucian moved his gold mini-skirted backside into a position where he could see the entrance. And after sweeping his shiny red locks behind his right ear, he now had a clear view in case his new boyfriend came back early from the restroom.

He had finally been gifted a few rare moments of privacy, but even so, the skirted boy knew he'd have to be quick if he didn't want to get caught.

Swiping Zane's phone from the table, Lucian clumsily entered the pin he'd previously overseen his gropey popstar companion use. With a flash of light, the phone unlocked. Revived that his tipsy mind had remembered the six-digit code, Lucian allowed himself to smile. But the smirk on his plump red lips lasted but a second as the hard work was only just beginning. He needed to send a text message, and with the long red acrylic nails attached to the end of each of his fingers, the task was going to be tricky at best.

With a heavy sigh, Lucian looked around the brightly decorated room, and with his ears throbbing from the pulsating music pumping in from the nightclub below, he cursed his luck. A phone call was out of the question, but he'd still been given an opportunity. A chance to send out a plea for help. A chance to contact Nancy.

He started the message three times, each time deleting what he'd written. "Come on, focus," he voiced aloud, rubbing his smooth patterned thigh through his pantyhose. He'd been dreaming about this moment for months, carefully Structuring the perfect message in his mind. But now, under the pressure, he was freezing up.

How much was he going to tell her They hadn't spoken in such a long time. All she knew was that he'd been hired by a record company in New York. He hadn't told her about the crossdressing, the dance training, or how he'd been transformed to look like an exact copy of one of the world's most famous female singers. And that was all before he'd been essentially kidnapped and had his body surgically altered.

Hearing a noise from the doorway, Lucian panicked. Thinking fast, he crossed one nylon-clad leg over the other, leaving one of his ludicrously tall, high-heeled pumps dangling in the air. He then quickly rested an arm on his knee, made a duck face and snapped a selfie. Panicked, he slowly turned to explain to Zane how he was just borrowing his phone to take a few sexy pictures.

The fake smile on Lucian's large, rubbery lips quickly changed to a pout. Suddenly annoyed at being disturbed but also relieved that the person standing in the doorway wasn't Zane, the stand-in Bianca Cabello stared at the man with disdain.



“What do you want” Lucian roared above the thump of the music.

Taken aback by the outburst, the nervous-looking waiter almost dropped his tray. “I’m sorry to disturb you, Miss Cabello. I just came to see if you wanted another drink or had any empty glasses that needed clearing.”

“What I want is to be left alone!” Lucian screamed. “Wait a minute. Did you wait for my boyfriend to leave before coming in here to attack me I don’t

know exactly what you had planned, but if you take another step forward, I'll rip your balls off before feeding them to you."

"Err... no. Of course not! I didn't plan anything like that. I would never!" The flustered young man stuttered. "I'll leave right now. I'm sorry to have bothered you."

Watching the waiter quickly scurry away, Lucian felt a little sorry for the young man. After all, he was just doing his job and didn't deserve to be spoken to like that. But then again, he needed to get rid of him fast, and with Bianca Cabello known for being a bit of bitch, he hadn't acted out of character.

Getting back to his message, Lucian tried to focus. There was so much he wanted to tell Nancy, so much he wanted to get off his chest. He wanted, more than anything, to tell her about the months of movement and voice training he'd had to endure. The endless hours of schooling where the topics were memorising Bianca's mannerisms and the phrases she used in everyday speech. Then there was the physical and mental pain he'd suffered through, trying to come to terms with the incomprehensible modifications made to his body. "No, keep it simple," he told himself as he once again started tapping his long nails against the screen. "Tell her you're being kept against your will and need her help. The Bianca part can wait until later."

Sending the message, Lucian slipped the phone down the front of his panties, where it nestled in oddly, sending a shiver up his feminised body. Just in the nick of time too, as Zane almost instantly walked back into the room.

"Hey, Baby. I'm back," he announced as he strode confidently across the room. "Did you miss me?"

"Like herpes," Lucian mumbled, forcing a smile.

"What?" Zane asked, having not heard the comment over the loud music.

"Like, of course, Babe," Lucian said as Zane sat down next to him and started to run his pantyhosed knee. "But can we like go soon I think I'm getting a headache or something."

"What! No way. Come on, Babe. We've only just got here. The night is still young," Zane replied, leaning in for a kiss. Lucian turned his face away.

Annoyed, Zane leaned back and folded his arms. "Fine, be like that. I'm going to... Hey, where's my phone"

"Phone What phone" Lucian stated, trying not to sound or look suspicious. When he'd taken the phone, he knew it was a risk, but how else was he supposed to read Nancy's response

"My phone. I left it there on the table," A slightly flustered Zane announced, pointing his finger as he manoeuvred to get up.

Grabbing Zane by the arm, Lucian dragged him back down onto the sofa. "Just get a new one." He said, placing his long-nailed hand on the man's crotch. "focus on me instead. Your girl needs some attention."

Feeling sick inside, Lucian watched as Zane's eyes grew wider and a smile crossed his lips. The last thing he wanted was to give the horny singer any encouragement, knowing it would lead to another heavy make-out session followed by Zane's wandering hands roaming and fondling his girls. If he was lucky, he'd be able to make an excuse before he ended up on his knees choking. But that seemed unlikely, given the circumstances. There always was going to be a price to pay to get out of there without the cell phone tucked away in his panties being discovered, and this, unfortunately, was it!

## *Chapter 24 – You can do it if you put your back into it*

“Ok, cut. Take five, Bianca,” called out the snarly music video director.

Lucian glared at the man, tired and annoyed. After dancing to the same routine for hours, his muscles were cramping, and his legs were killing him. Wanting to punch the director in his chubby face, the comments he’d received all morning played through the sexily dressed boy’s mind. “Smile more, Bianca. Come on, shake that backside, and thrust those hips. Straighten your back and give me some sex appeal.”

“You try dancing dressed like this, asshole,” Lucian thought, sending the man evils. “Did we really have to do that routine like sixteen times The first one was fine.”

Hearing the clattering of feet approaching, Lucian turned to his left to see two over-enthusiastic makeup artists bounding towards him. “No, he shouted forcefully. Stretching out his arm to halt the women with the palm of his pink-nailed hand. “Not now. I need to rest, he added in an angry tone.

The feminised man then turned before strutting loudly across the room on the six-inch pumps he’d been forced to wear all morning. The funny thing was, after the operation on his calves, he no longer felt any pain, even after long sessions in the tallest of heels. A small mercy on a day like today, but overall, a terrifying thought. Now unable to place his feet flat on the floor, Lucian had all but resigned himself to a lifetime of having to wear high heels just to be able to walk about.

Heading towards the restroom, the only place he’d have any peace, Lucian strode through the exit, being careful not to slip on the polished wooden floor beneath his elevated feet. Uncomfortable after hours of shaking his booty inside a tight leather miniskirt, he couldn’t wait to close the cubicle door and relax for a minute. As his long curly hair bounced up and down in rhythm with his augmented chest, Lucian felt his damp pantyhose clinging to his legs and made a decision to take them off as soon as he was alone.

“Ah, there you are, Bianca” came a familiar voice, stopping Lucian dead in his tracks. “I love that outfit. Very sexy.”

“Yeah, why don’t you wear it then” Lucian replied while folding his arms, far from pleased to see Raul blocking his path.

“Less of the attitude, Chica. Remember your place,” Raul shot back angrily.

“Sorry, Mr Jimenez. How awesome it is to see you. How can I please you today” Lucian answered back, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

ignoring the tone, Raul linked his arm through Lucian’s. “Well, it’s awesome to see you too, he said giving the feminised man a kiss on the cheek. And you can please me by listening to what I have to say. Now come, it’s been too long since I’ve been able to check in on my favourite girl,” the slick-backed-haired man said as he guided Lucian back into the room he had just exited. “I hope all is going well with the recording”

“Yes, no problems,” Lucian replied as he forced a smile on his large glossy lips and allowed the Latino man to guide him to the centre of the room.

“Perfect,” Raul said, smiling back. “With the recording of your new album complete, we’ll be able to start the publicity tour next week.

Taking the opportunity to release his arm and step away, Lucian looked Raul dead in the eyes. “Publicity tour” he stated confused. He, of course, already knew about the existence of an album. For days now, he had been recording the music video to the debut single, ‘fill me up,’ but having not recorded the album himself, the word tour scared him.

“Yes, publicity is an important part of promoting any new album,” Raul replied with a nod. “We’ll get you on the usual morning and late-night talk shows and get you on a few magazine covers. Oh, talking of photoshoots, you’re scheduled for one with Melena Gomez tomorrow. Someone will fill you in on the details later today.”

Lucian’s mouth fell open in surprise. “What After you forced me into that sham relationship with Zane, she hates my guts.”



“Don’t worry about Melena, she will do what we tell her,” Raul replied with a smirk. “And you should stop referring to your relationship like that. Not only do you never know who’s listening but from what I hear, young Zane is quite taken by you.”

Lucian Shuddered at the thought of Zane’s hands running down his body, playing with his... “And what if I refuse”

“You won’t,” Raul responded confidently. “You have nowhere to go now that you have Bianca’s face. And I don’t have to remind you of the care we are providing your dear mother, now, do I”

“I want to see her,” Lucian shot back, stamping his high-heeled foot. “I haven’t seen her in months.”

“Impossible,” Raul blurted out, “Well, at the moment anyway, he quickly added in a softer tone. The treatment she is receiving, although going well, is at a very delicate stage. I can assure you she’s being well taken care of. And if you play your part, you’ll see her fit and healthy soon enough.”

“How do I know you’re telling me the truth” Lucian asked while pouting.

“You don’t. But the way I see it, you don’t really have much of a choice.” Raul answered while looking down at his watch. “Now, I’ve got to go to another meeting, and you’ve got to wrap this shoot up. We need you done by four so Zane has time to film his parts too.”

Seeing Lucian looking back at him with a stupefied look written across his pretty face, Raul chuckled. “Did no one tell you this single is a duet The public love this kind of stuff. They are going to lap it up, “Raul announced as he motioned to leave. “Once your boyfriend’s done in makeup, you two can film the bed scenes together. Now, if you’ll excuse me. I really must be going. Be good, Bianca. I’ll check in again in a few days.”

As Raul took his leave, Lucian slowly turned. Blinking a few times as his heavy fake lashes wafted through the air, his darkly lined eyes fell upon the bed behind him. Previously thinking it to be just a prop, with a camera now set up to face it, its presence on the set suddenly took on, a completely new, and quite frankly, horrifying meaning.

“They need you in wardrobe and makeup, Miss Cabello,” a perky-sounding assistant announced from behind.

Lucian didn’t respond. Instead, with his long auburn locks gently swaying from side to side and his long-nailed hands pressed up against the sides of his surgically altered nose, he just stared blankly at the bed in disbelief.

“Miss Cabello, are you alright Miss Cabello Bianca”

## *Chapter 25 – Question time*

“Ladies and gentlemen. Please welcome the princess of pop, Bianca Cabello.” The audience erupted into a mixture of cheers and applause as the late-night television presenter introduced his final guest of the evening.

Stepping out from backstage into a sea of smiling faces, Lucian waved to the crowd and grinned. Trotting towards the centre of the room, he took great care not to trip on his block-heeled sandals before greeting the host of the show with a peck on each cheek.

“Come on everybody. Give it up for one more time for Bianca Cabello,” the host yelled as Lucian smoothed out the skirt of his short floral dress before sitting down and seductively crossing his pantyhosed legs.

Feeling calm, Lucian waved to the crowd one more time, just as he’d been coached. He had learned through the countless interviews he’d had to sit through over the last couple of weeks that there was an art to it. It was actually quite simple. The questions were always pre-determined with his answers displayed above the camera he was supposed to look into at any given time. All he had to do was sit up straight, smile, and flirt a little.

“Bianca, welcome. Thank you for coming over to see us,” the TV host said, leaning back on his chair behind a big oak desk. “And looking incredible as always tonight.”

“Thank you, Craig. It’s a pleasure to be here,” Lucian replied, looking the older grey-haired man directly in the eyes. “You’re not looking too bad yourself.”

“Oh, Miss Cabello, are you coming on to me” Craig said playfully as he leaned across and placed both hands on Lucian’s nylon-clad knee. “I’ll warn you, I’m not that easy, you know. At least buy me dinner first.” He added as the audience burst out laughing.

Having to play out the cheesy pre-planned act, Lucian wanted to roll his eyes but resisted. “Your place or mine” he cooed, placing his long-nailed hands atop the hosts.

Pulling away, Craig leaned back on his chair once more and dramatically fanned himself while playing up to the cameras. “Phew. Now there’s an offer, but I need to calm myself down. I’m not sure my heart can take this much excitement.”

When the crowd settled down, Craig leaned forward once more. “So, Bianca. You’re known as a tough straight-talking kind of gal. Shall we put that to the test I’ve got some pretty tough questions for you tonight.”

“Bring em on Craig,” Lucian answered with a smile, reading off the autocue above camera number two. I’ve got nothing to hide.”

“Alright then, let’s talk about your new album,” Craig announced as a picture of Lucian wearing sexy lingerie while lying seductively on a sofa flashed up on the screen behind the pair. “As we all know, you’re an extraordinarily talented young woman. You can sing and dance. You write all your own songs, and on top of that, you are incredibly beautiful. How can we all be sure you weren’t grown in a lab somewhere”

The Audience burst out laughing as Lucian giggled along. “I’m human, just like everyone else. I was just lucky enough to have incredibly supportive parents and then worked tirelessly to develop the gifts given to me by God.” A round of applause rang out around the room in response to the answer.

“Well, we’re all looking forward to seeing your talents when you sing us your latest release later. And talking of the single. I have to ask about the name, Fill me up. You’ve been quoted as saying the inspiration for the song was your new relationship with one Zane Efron. It’s a bit of a saucy name, isn’t it”

“Ooohhh,” went the crowd as Lucian forced his thick lips into a smile and threw his shiny red hair over one shoulder. “Haven’t you got a dirty mind,” he announced with a chuckle. “But you’re wrong. The words just express how complete I feel with Zane by my side. I love you, Baby,” he added before blowing a kiss into the camera, making the crowd coo and himself feel sick.

“Ahh, how sweet. You two do make the perfect couple. I wouldn’t be surprised, in thirty years, if your babies are ruling the world,” Craig joked. “But, let’s talk about your accident. Some people claim it was faked while you got plastic surgery. Is that true” The host asked as a picture of the old Bianca appeared on the screen.

“That’s a lie, invented to sell magazines,” Lucian responded emphatically. “To be honest, Craig, it sickens me how people can write stuff like that. The accident was a very traumatic and scary experience. It took a lot of strength to recover, and yes, I had a few operations to repair the damage done, some on my face. But none of it was out of vanity. I’m proud of the way I look, I wouldn’t change it by choice.”

A round of applause broke out around the studio in support of Lucian’s words with Craig joining them. “Well said,” the smiling host announced. “There’s far too much negativity in the media these days. We should all learn to celebrate the achievements of others rather than try to drag them down.” The applause got louder in response to the comment as people hollered and whooped.

“Thank you, thank you,” Craig announced, trying to quieten down the crowd. “Ok ladies and gentlemen. The next section will be a surprise for Bianca and for all of you. Please welcome record producer and agent to the stars, Raul Jimenez.”

Spinning his head to the right, Lucian’s face dropped in surprise as Raul strode across the stage to make a completely impromptu appearance. After greeting Craig, Raul kissed Lucian on the cheek before taking a seat in a chair that had magically appeared.

“Raul, welcome to the show. Thank you so much for joining us. I’m really excited to have you here.” Craig said, leaning back in his chair.

“Thank you, Craig. I’m delighted to be here.” Raul said as he nodded and smiled at Lucian, whose beautifully made-up eyes darted around the room, trying to work out what was happening.

“So, let’s get straight to it,” Craig announced, replacing his question cards with a set from under the desk. “Bianca’s appearance has changed a lot recently, and she claims not to have had cosmetic surgery. If that is true, how would you explain the changes”

“Well, that’s quite simple Craig,” Raul said as he sat up straight in his chair. “You see, Bianca Cabello was a difficult person. Always complaining and creating problems for the record label, so we had her killed and replaced her with the person sitting to my right.”

The crowd gasped before exploding into chatter. “That’s right, folks,” Craig shouted above the noise. The girl sitting here is not Bianca Cabello, in fact, she’s not even a girl. The person sitting here, wearing Bianca’s clothes, and living her life is Mr Lucian Styles from North Pennsylvania.” As Craig spoke, the picture on the screen changed to show Lucian before his transformation.



Feeling his stomach churn, Lucian's body shook as he looked at Craig and then at Raul. A cold tingle oscillated up and down his feminised body as he prepared to defend himself. To say his piece. To tell everyone how he had been tricked. No blackmailed into his current situation. But he couldn't speak. He tried to scream, but no sound came out.

Suddenly, the mood in the room changed as everyone began to laugh and point in his direction. "Eww, she's a boy." "What kind of pervert would do this, were some of the comments Lucian overheard as he grabbed his head as a shocking pressure in his brain started to build. The pain grew, and the room spun until suddenly, he awoke in his bed in a cold sweat. Out of breath and soaked through, he brought his pillow to his chest and clutched it tightly to his bosom. The dreams were getting worse and becoming more frequent. Rocking back and forth, Lucian began to sob. Overwhelmed, he was at his breaking point. Something had to change. He couldn't live this way anymore.

## *Chapter 26 – Hard truths*

“Hey, Nance. Sorry, it’s taken me so long to call,” Lucian said into his stolen phone, hearing the squeak of leather on leather as his mini-skirted backside slid across the cover of the sofa.

“Me who Nancy replied, not recognising the high falsetto voice with a hint of a Latin American accent. “Who is this”

“It’s me, Lucian,” the skirted boy replied, trying to make his voice sound deeper but failing. “I know I sound a little different, but I don’t have time to explain it right now. This is the first chance I’ve had to call you, and I haven’t got long.”

“Luce, oh my God! Is that really you What’s happened to your voice You sound like a girl! And why haven’t you been answering me When I call it goes straight to the answering service!” replied Nancy, speaking at a hundred miles per hour. “You can’t just tell me you’re in trouble and send one message every five days. I’ve been worried sick.”

“I’m sorry,” Lucian replied, looking up at the ceiling before letting out a heavy sigh. “I’ve had to keep this phone off to conserve battery, and I can only answer you when I’m alone, which hardly ever happens.”

“Lucian, this is crazy,” Nancy shot back, sounding very concerned. “You keep telling me in your messages that you’re in trouble, but you won’t tell me what has happened to you. Are you ok”

Lucian closed his eyes, feeling his long soft lashes brush against his cheek. Opening them again, he looked down past a pair of fleshy mounds spilling out of a little tartan crop top to see a pair of smooth shiny nylon legs disappearing inside a pair of thigh-high boots. “No, not really,” He answered in a sad-sounding voice. “I need your help, Nance,”

“Tell me what you need. I’m here,” came the instant reply, making Lucian start to tear up.

“I need to get out of here, but I don’t know how!” Lucian said while stretching out a leg to examine the killer six-inch heel on the end of his boot.

“Just come home,” Nancy shot back. “Just walk out. Get on a bus or a train and come home, Luce. We all miss you here.”

“I...I can't,” Lucian stuttered, holding back the urge to cry. “It's not that simple. They are always watching me, and even if I could slip out, I have no money or anything to wear.”

“Nothing to wear!” Nancy repeated, sounding shocked. “They keep you naked! My God, Luce. This all sounds insane. We need to call the cops. No, the FBI.”

“No, don't” Lucian cried out, thinking about the newspaper headlines. “You can't do that, please. It's not that bad. I think I'm just a bit tired. I'm wearing clothes. They give me clothes.”

There was a moment of silence until Nancy spoke again. “Lucian, whatever is going on, I can't help you unless you let me. If anyone else was telling me this stuff, I'd think it was some kind of sick joke or a mental breakdown, but I know you. Let me help you, please.”

Suddenly there was a light knock on the door. “We need you on set in two minutes, Miss Cabello,” came a voice from the other side.

Removing his hand from the speaker, Lucian brought a long red acrylic nail up towards his face to wipe away a tear that was rolling down his cheek. “Thank you, Nancy. I appreciate you trying to help, but it's a complicated situation. I need a little more time to think things through. I've got to go now. I'll call you back soon, ok”

“Wait before you go, I've got to tell you about your Mom,” Nancy blurted out. “I didn't want to tell you like this, but she's really bad, Luce. The doctors say she might not last much longer.”

Almost dropping the phone, Lucian started breathing faster. “Bad I thought she was getting better! How do you know this Did you visit her The facility she's in is on the other side of the country!

There was another short pause in the conversation.

“Lucian, your mom is in the local hospital. She had a fall a few weeks back. It's not looking good. I went to see her a few days ago, and she was asking about you.”

Lucian dug his acrylic nails into the leather sofa, gripping so tight he felt pain in his nailbeds. “Mother fuckers,” he screamed out in a high feminine voice. “Those lying sons of a bitch. They’ll pay for this. Nancy, please look after her. I’m coming. I don’t know how yet, but I’ll be there, even if it kills me.”

“Of course, I will, Luce,” Nancy replied in a reassuring voice. “Is there anything I can do?”

There was another knock on the door, this time more forceful than before. “It’s time, Miss Cabello.”

“When I get home, I’ll need a ride and a place to lay low for a while. Can I stay at yours?” Lucian asked, staring at the door.

“Uhm... yeah, there’s not much room, but yeah, we can sort something out,” Nancy answered, confused as to why Lucian would need to stay at hers when his house across the street was sat empty.

“Thanks, Nance. You’re the best. I knew I could count on you. But I really do have to go now though. I’ll call you soon, promise” Ending the call, Lucian quickly slipped the phone back down between his breasts just as the door opened. “How dare you just walk in here without being invited,” Lucian cried out. “What’s your name, girl,” he added as he rose to his high-heeled feet and stormed towards the frightened-looking young woman standing in the doorway, “I’ll have your job for this.”



“Love it, so fierce. Give me more of that, Bianca baby,” called out the photographer while Lucian stood posing.

Too angry to think straight, the sexily dressed boy glared at the camera, pouting, his gloved hands resting on his slim waist.



“You’re an animal,” yelled the photographer as he snapped away. “Roar for me, Baby.”

Letting out all his pent-up and bottled frustration, Lucian screamed out at the top of his lungs as the grin on the photographer’s face grew wider. For the first time since he’d taken over Bianca Cabello’s life, he didn’t feel nervous or embarrassed. After talking with his oldest friend, he just felt angry, mostly at himself, unsure how he’d allowed this charade to get so far out of hand.

## *Chapter 27 – Home sweet home*

Still shaking, Lucian looked out of the train window as green fields and tall trees whizzed by. It hadn't been easy, but he had done the impossible, he'd actually gotten away.

Hearing a door at the end of the carriage open, Lucian peeked over, desperately hoping not to see the ticket inspector again. With no money in his possession, he had, so far, successfully avoided the inspector by hiding out in the nearby toilet cubicle. But now, being so close to home, the thought of getting caught was almost too much to bear.

Lucian let out a sigh of relief. It wasn't him. Instead, it was just some young blonde woman. In the clear, Lucian motioned to turn back towards the window before suddenly stopping himself. He knew this woman! Her name was Judy Sommerwell, and she was the girl he'd had a crush on throughout high school.

Staring over, Lucian watched as the woman reached up to take down a suitcase as her short jacket lifted to reveal her thin waist. Scanning down her frame, he instinctively scrutinised the rest of her outfit. She was wearing a pair of ripped jeans, not too dissimilar to the tight pair compressing his legs, the only difference being that his rips had a pattered nylon-type material sewn in where hers didn't.

On her feet, Judy wore a pair of ankle boots with a short blocky two-inch heel and a small platform at the front, a comfortable choice for a train journey. In complete contrast, Lucian had patent platform boots tightly laced to his feet. Their six-inch stiletto heels a necessity after the involuntary operation on his calf muscles. Smiling, Lucian thought back to all those times in high school, when he'd dreamed of getting into Judy's panties. How ironic, he was now wearing a pair himself and wearing a similar outfit to boot. Well, almost. In a perfect world, he'd be wearing a pair of shoes like hers. A simple pair that were easy to move in and wouldn't stand out. But it wasn't a perfect world, and he'd have to live with the mistakes he had made.

Continuing to stare at the woman who used to consume most of his thoughts, Lucian tugged on his fur hood. As ridiculous as it was, he was trying

to hide his face, knowing full well that Judy would never recognise him after all the months of surgery and beauty treatments. There was more chance she would recognise him as Bianca Cabello, but with his fake glasses and face devoid of makeup, that also seemed unlikely. After all, he'd been travelling for hours now, and no one was yet to out him.

A jingle suddenly sounded from the speaker causing Lucian to jump. "This train will shortly be stopping in Ravensfield. Please ensure you have all your belongings with you when alighting. Thank you for travelling with Amtrak. Have a nice day now."

Taking a deep breath, Lucian looked down at his feminised body and felt nervous. Tucking a few strands of red hair into his hood, he unfolded his legs. In a few moments, he would be face to face with Nancy after she'd agreed to pick him up, and all of a sudden, the reality and bizarreness of the situation hit him. What would she think when she saw him? He had been too embarrassed to tell her what he looked like over the phone. Would she believe his story? Would she cause a scene at the station?

Knowing it was too late to change anything now, Lucian stood up, feeling his feet rest into their familiar slanted position. The outfit he was wearing was the best he could have hoped for under the circumstances. A little flashy for Ravensfield, but still just about casual enough to blend in.

Shuffling into the aisle, Lucian thought, once again, about the questions, Nancy might ask. He imagined his body and face would be first on the agenda. Something he didn't fancy discussing much on the platform of his hometown train station. Having already thought about it, he would give her a few details before changing the subject to how he escaped. He would tell her all about the masked makeup artist, whom he had always been intimidated by, and how, in the end, she had turned out to be his saviour.

It all came about a few days back as Lucian sat having his makeup done before a television appearance. Looking sullen and glum, the woman surprised him by starting a conversation. "You always look so sad," she'd said while curling his long thick lashes. "Why is that?"

Lucian thought for a minute before looking straight through the eyeholes of her mask. "It's my mother," he'd replied in a sad voice, "she's dying in the hospital, and the record company won't let me see her." As it turned out, the

masked makeup artist had a sick mother herself, and after offering to help, Lucian begged her to find him some plain-looking clothes and help him sneak out. She did better than that, suggesting that if he wore her mask, he'd be able to sneak out of the building, perhaps even the city, before anyone noticed.

Stepping out onto the practically deserted Ravensfield platform, Lucian watched as Judy ran into the arms of a muscular-looking man waiting for her. Seeing Nancy waiting for him, Lucian hoped for an equally warm embrace.



With his heart pumping furiously in his chest, Lucian gazed over at Nancy, who was easy to spot, given the lack of people.

Nancy looked Lucian's way, then away. A few seconds later, she came around for a second glance. This time scanning the high-heel-wearing boy from head to toe. Confused, she again looked away and got out her phone.

Hearing Zane's phone ringing in his coat pocket, Lucian slowly plucked it out and answered. "Hello," he said as he kept his gaze fixed on Nancy.

“Lucian, where are you” A concerned-sounding Nancy announced, “I thought you said you were on the four twenty”

“I was,” Lucian replied with a gulp. “Remember you said before that I sounded like a girl. Well, there’s a reason for that. Look towards the train again.”

In what seemed like slow motion, Nancy’s head swung around to face Lucian once more. Raising his free hand, he gave her a wave and a weak smile. “Hi, Nance,” he said as Nancy’s mouth flew open, and her cell phone bounced off the platform floor.

## *Chapter 28 – The aftermath*

Giving Lucian an awkward smile, Nancy placed two bowls on the kitchen table before taking up an empty seat to his right. It was a frosty atmosphere over breakfast that morning, with neither friend knowing quite what to say to the other. Avoiding eye contact, Lucian scooped a spoon full of granola into his mouth, feeling embarrassed to be sitting there while wearing Nancy's pyjamas. Meanwhile, Nancy just stared at her friend, still in shock from the drastic changes to his appearance.

"Are you really just going to sit there in silence" Nancy questioned, sounding annoyed. "Seeing how tired you looked last night, I let you sleep, but if I'm going to help you, I think I'm at least owed an explanation."

Placing down his spoon," Lucian lifted his head and looked his friend in the eyes. "What do you want to know" he replied while slowly nodding his head.

"Well, how about starting with why you look like the spitting image of Bianca Cabello," Nancy stated, raising an eyebrow.

Starting at the beginning, Lucian spent the next thirty minutes telling Nancy his story, having to stop more than once to answer her questions. When he finished, the kitchen fell into a hushed silence, the only sound to be heard, being the dripping of the sink faucet.

After ten seconds, Lucan couldn't take it anymore. "You don't believe me" he blurted out, feeling very vulnerable.

"No, I do," Nancy shot back, reaching over to take a hold of his long-nailed hand. "You're an honest person, and that story's too crazy to make up. It's just a lot to take in, that's all."

"Yeah, tell me about it," Lucian replied, smiling. "Imagine having to live through it." The little joke broke the tension in the room, making the pair chuckle.

Standing up, Nancy stepped forward and hugged Lucian tightly. "Everything's going to be ok," she said sweetly before kissing him on the

cheek. "After breakfast, we'll head over to your place and find you something to wear. You'll soon be yourself again."

Snorting, Lucian pulled back. "Nancy! he stated, looking deadly serious. I can't go back to my old self. Have you seen my body None of my old clothes will fit, and even if they did. They'll send people to look for me. I need a disguise and somewhere to hide out for a while."

"You can't be serious They'll come after you" Nancy said, sounding shocked. "Lucian! If that's the case, we need to call the police."

"I will," he replied, squeezing her hand. "But, later. First, I want to see mom."

"Ok," Nancy replied, patting her friend's knee. "If you don't mind looking like a girl for a little longer, I guess you can borrow some of my clothes."

"That's fine," Lucian replied, forcing a smile onto his plump lips, not sure how to tell Nancy that if they were to strip down naked, to an onlooker, he would appear just as feminine as her!

∞∞∞ Catching a glimpse of his reflection in a mirror on the wall, Lucian stopped dead on his cork-wedge heels. The image he now faced was a scary one. It wasn't Bianca Cabello or Lucian Styles, but some hybrid of the two.

Hearing his tight leggings creak, Lucian swivelled to examine his new look further. It felt strange to have short hair again after so long, but even more bizarre, part of him hated how ugly it looked. Reminding himself that the dye job and cut were the best Nancy could do given such short notice, he tried to suppress his feelings of remorse.

Missing his long hair was an unexpected feeling, but one thing was for sure, he was definitely glad to be rid of his claws. Clipped down and painted black, he once again had the full use of his hands, an almost indescribable feeling after being hampered by long acrylics for months on end.

Reaching down, Lucian massaged his sore chest through Nancy's denim shirt and let out a little moan.

Strapping down his breasts and then having to cope with the uncomfortableness that came with it had felt necessary at the time, but looking at himself now, he wasn't so sure. The plan was to help him blend in,

but with his pouty lips, sculptured brows, and thick lashes, he was still attracting a lot of attention.

“Ehem... Can I help you, Miss,” sounded out a voice, making Lucian jump. Quickly releasing his chest and spinning around, the startled former boy came face to face with a rather stern-looking nurse.



“Err... sorry. Yes. I’m here to see Sarah Styles. Do you know where I can find her”

The nurse paused for a moment to look Lucian up and down. “Are you a relative How do know Mrs Styles”

“Yes, I’m her son,” Lucian blurted out before catching himself as the nurse gave him an extremely strange look. He faked a cough. “Ahem... her son’s girlfriend.”

“I see,” the nurse replied while squinting her eyes. “Well, I’m sorry, but Mrs Styles is in a critical condition. Only immediate family are allowed into the ICU. I’m afraid I’m going to have to ask you to leave.”

Feeling tears well up in the corners of his eyes, Lucian teetered a few steps closer on his towering wedge sandals. “Please, her son Lucian can’t make it at the moment, but I’ve known Mrs Styles all my life. She’s the only family I have. Can I please just see her for a second Just to see if she’s, ok”

Breathing out through her nose, the nurse paused for a moment to look around before taking pity on the sad creature in front of her. “Ok, but only for a few minutes, and through the window. My name is Katie. What’s yours”

“Thank you, Katie Thank you so much,” Lucian said as a tear rolled down his cheek. “My name is Luci...” He added before again catching himself.

“Ok, Lucy, come with me,” nurse Katie said in a softer voice. “But I have to warn you, Mrs Styles is very ill. She’s in an induced coma and on life support. I’m warning you now that all the machines can be a little overwhelming for some people.”

Led down the corridor and through a couple of double doors, Lucian discovered just how right nurse Katie had been. There through the glass, lay what was left of his mother. A thin skeletal figure with wire and tubes sprouting out everywhere he looked.

Unable to control his emotions any longer, Lucian began to bawl his eyes out. Falling into the nurse’s welcoming arms, he felt his shiny black legs wobble atop his ramped feet. Held up by nurse Katie, a host of emotions flooded through him. Guilt for leaving his mother. Stupidity for believing the record company would help him. But most of all, anger for what they had done to him.

Feeling as if he was about to explode with rage, at that moment, Lucian suddenly knew what he needed to do. From that moment on, he would do

everything in his power to wreak his vengeance on Synco entertainment.  
Vowing not to stop until he destroyed them, just as they had done to his life!

## *Chapter 29 – No escape*

“Good afternoon, Ma’am. I’m agent Morales, and this is my partner, agent Currie. We’re looking for Mr Lucian Styles. Is he here” The FBI agent said while flashing his badge.

Scanning left to right; Lucian examined the two suited figures in front of him. Both men were larger than him, and both looked rather intimidating in their sunglasses. “Err... I’m Lucian Styles,” he replied, feeling slightly embarrassed to admit who he was while standing there wearing a girly top, leggings, and a pair of tall platform-heeled sandals. But having called the FBI and told them all he knew about the record company and the role they had played in Bianca Cabello’s disappearance; he had been expecting their visit. “Please, come in,” he added, turning his body to the side and gesturing with his hand.

“Thank you. But I think it’s best we talk somewhere more private.” Agent Morales replied. “How about you come with us to the car, Son”

“Why” Lucian asked, suddenly feeling nervous as he took a step back on his elevated feet. He couldn’t quite place it, but something felt wrong. Very wrong. “I don’t want to go out right now.”

Pouncing forward with the speed of a wild cat, Agent Currie grabbed Lucian’s arm and twisted it behind his back. “Whether you want to go out or not is none of my concern,” the robotic agent Currie announced. “Now, I suggest you walk your pansy-ass to the car without making a fuss. Nobody need get hurt here.”

“Oww! Let go of me,” Lucian cried as he tried to loosen the agent’s grip, “You’re hurting me!”

“I guess we’re doing this the hard way then,” Agent Currie announced, grabbing Lucian’s free arm with a half chuckle in his voice. “Come on, sweetheart, let’s get you home.”

“Home” Lucian screamed as he was dragged out through the front door with his heels barely touching the ground. “You can’t just arrest me like this What have I done wrong”

“We’re the FBI, Mr Styles. We can do whatever we like,” Agent Morales announced as he walked calmly beside his partner, who was edging Lucian towards a waiting black Sedan parked by the curb. “And who said anything about arresting you. We’re taking you back where you belong. Mr Powell would like a word with you.”

“No, I won’t go back,” Lucian yelled, wiggling his feminine body before driving the heel of his stiletto shoe down into Agent Currie’s foot.

There was a crunching sound before agent Currie momentarily released his grip as he yelled out in pain. Seeing his opportunity, Lucian swivelled his body before bringing up his knee. He knew instantly that he’d made a sweet connection. Not only did he feel it, but he could see it in the man’s eyes as he cried out in pain before falling to the ground clutching his groin.

“Bravo, Mr Styles,” Agent Morales announced as he proceeded to give him a slow clap. “But what now Do you really think you can outrun me in those shoes”

With his body shaking from the Adrenaline coursing through his veins, Lucian glanced around, weighing up his options. Agent Morales was right. He couldn’t outrun the man or outfight him, but perhaps he could make it back to the house. But then what

His thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the roar of a car engine, followed by the screeching of tires. And before he could even think about reacting, Agent Morales dived onto the grass to narrowly avoid being splattered across the hood of Nancy’s old beat-up Ford pickup truck. “Get in,” Lucian heard her scream as the passenger door flew open.

Not needing a second invitation, Lucian leapt headfirst into the truck as Nancy took off across the lawn, smashing through the neighbour’s fence on her way out.

“Nancy, that was amazing,” Lucian squealed as he looked back to see the agents drifting out of sight. “You saved me. But what happens now”

“I heard everything, and I couldn’t just let those corrupt bastards take you,” Nancy yelled out over the roar of the engine. “Don’t worry, I have an idea. I’m going to take you somewhere safe until we can come up with a plan.”

Looking over towards the driver's seat, Lucian smiled, realising just how blessed he was to have a friend like Nancy. "I love you, Nancy, he said, feeling overwhelmed with emotion. "Thank you for doing that, but are you sure about this I don't want anything bad to happen to you."

"Ha! Too late for that now and besides, what's the worst they can do to me" She shot back emphatically. "Reckless driving Disturbing the peace Speeding I'll be fine. Now buckle up, beautiful. We've got a long drive ahead of us."



"Now, there's a package I wouldn't mind getting inside," said a squeaky voice.

Spinning around, Lucian's eyes fell upon Carl from accounting, licking his lips and looking him up and down like a piece of meat.



The playful flirting was something Lucian had become accustomed to, having worked in the office for the last month. A month of making coffee, opening mail, and photocopying. All while pretending to be a new hire called Mary-Lou.

“Let me guess. I’m supposed to pretend to be all embarrassed or angry then, you tell me some line about how you were talking about one of these boxes over there,” Lucian replied while rolling his eyes.

“Oh, you’re no fun, Mary-Lou” Carl answered with a smile. “But how about I take you out this Friday My treat.”

“Thanks, but I’m busy,” Lucian answered while straightening his pencil skirt. In truth, he felt a little sorry for Carl. He was nice enough, once you got past all the cheesy comments. He was just a lonely guy hitting on a sexily dressed secretary. He wasn’t to know things weren’t as they appeared to be.

“Girls, like you, always are,” Carl answered with a sigh.

“What’s that supposed to mean” Lucian shot back, feeling frustrated, having tried his best to dress like any other girl in the office. He wore the same high-necked blouses and modest-length skirts, the only difference was the height of his heels, a consequence of the surgery on his legs.

“Oh, you know,” Carl answered. “Hell, you’re Beautiful Mary-Lou. You look just like Bianca Cabello but even hotter.”

Lucian’s eyes widened at the comment. After being driven a state over by Nancy to stay with her Cousin Beth, who owned a small business. They had determined that the best course of action was to give him a new identity. That’s how Mary-Lou had come to be. They had removed his fake lashes, and given him a plain-looking hairstyle, even faked the paperwork. But perhaps it hadn’t been enough. “You’re crazy,” Lucian replied. “I look nothing like her.”

“Crazy!” Carl replied, smirking. “You two could be sisters, especially now her hair is black like yours.”

“Black hair!” Lucian said in a confused tone. “Carl, what are you talking about Bianca’s missing. Most likely dead. Don’t you read the news”

It was now Carl’s turn to look confused. “Dead! Ha,” he replied with a chuckle. Dead sexy perhaps. I saw her today on that early morning show. She was talking about how she had just come out of rehab and was ready to start touring again.”

Looking like he had just seen a ghost, Lucian tottered forward, running past Carl as fast as he could muster on his tall heels.

Mary-Lou! Mary-Lou! What’s wrong Carl called out in vain as he was almost bowled over.

Back at his desk, Lucian sat his pantied backside down before opening up his internet browser. Then, as quickly as any secretary with a month’s worth

of experience, he typed in the name Bianca Cabello and the day's date and pressed enter. His large dark red lips parted as the pictures popped onto the screen, making his heart skip a beat. There she was, just as Carl had said, Bianca Cabello on the morning show, chatting and singing. Feeling dizzy, Lucian quickly reached for the phone and dialed Nancy. "What the hell is going on here Surely, it can't really be her! Can it He thought to himself as he breathed heavily down the phone. "Come on, Nancy! Pick up the Goddam phone, will ya.

## *Chapter 30 – That's show business*

“Here, Mary-Lou. I made you a coffee,” Carl said as he placed down a cup next to Lucian.

“What, no sexist remark today” Lucian said while turning away from the photocopier before giving the young man a curious look.

“No, just doing something nice for a colleague,” Carl replied with a smile. “Why don’t you sit down for a moment and take a load off I mean, you sure do look sexy strutting around in those heels all day, but they can’t be very comfortable on your feet.”

Picking up the cup, Lucian wondered what the smirking man was after. He was acting out of character, and it was a little unsettling. But Carl was right about one thing. He could do with a rest after standing by the copying machine for the last hour, not so much his feet but his upper legs and back. “Sure, thanks, Carl,” he remarked before tottering past the greasy-haired man to take a seat in the break room next door.

Sitting comfortable opposite Carl, Lucian took a sip of his coffee. “Ugh! Did you put salt in here or something It’s really bitter,” he remarked while screwing up his face.

“Err... no. It’s just... umm.... A new kind of bean. Low fat and good for circulation, they say. It’s what all the celebrities are drinking. I thought you would have heard about it” Carl stuttered while shifting around awkwardly in his seat.

Looking sceptical, Lucian tried another sip. “Really” he announced. “Because it tastes awful. What’s it called”

Carl chuckled nervously, “Err... umm... celebrity juice.”

“Celebrity juu...,” Lucian tried to say but suddenly found his lips refusing to move. Starting to panic, he attempted to move his arm but found it too was paralysed by his side.

With his eyes starting to tire, Lucian watched in horror as Carl walked around the table and planted a sloppy kiss on his inflated lips. “I’m sorry,

Mary-Lou, I really am,” he announced as he gave Lucian’s right breast a squeeze through his silky blouse. “It was just too much to turn down.”

“Is she out” announced a familiar voice that sent a shiver down Lucian’s spine.

“Yes, do you have my money” Carl answered.

“Right, here,” the man replied. “Now, take it and get off of her.”

“Hey, I was just...” Carl said, trying to defend himself. “Now,” the man boomed. “Before I have second thoughts about your payment.”

Lucian listened while Carl and the mystery man exchanged a few more words. Carl then left the room with the envelope of money in hand as the man took up the vacant seat opposite Lucian. “Hello, Lucia. Long time no see.” Raul announced, sending Lucian’s panicked mind into overdrive.

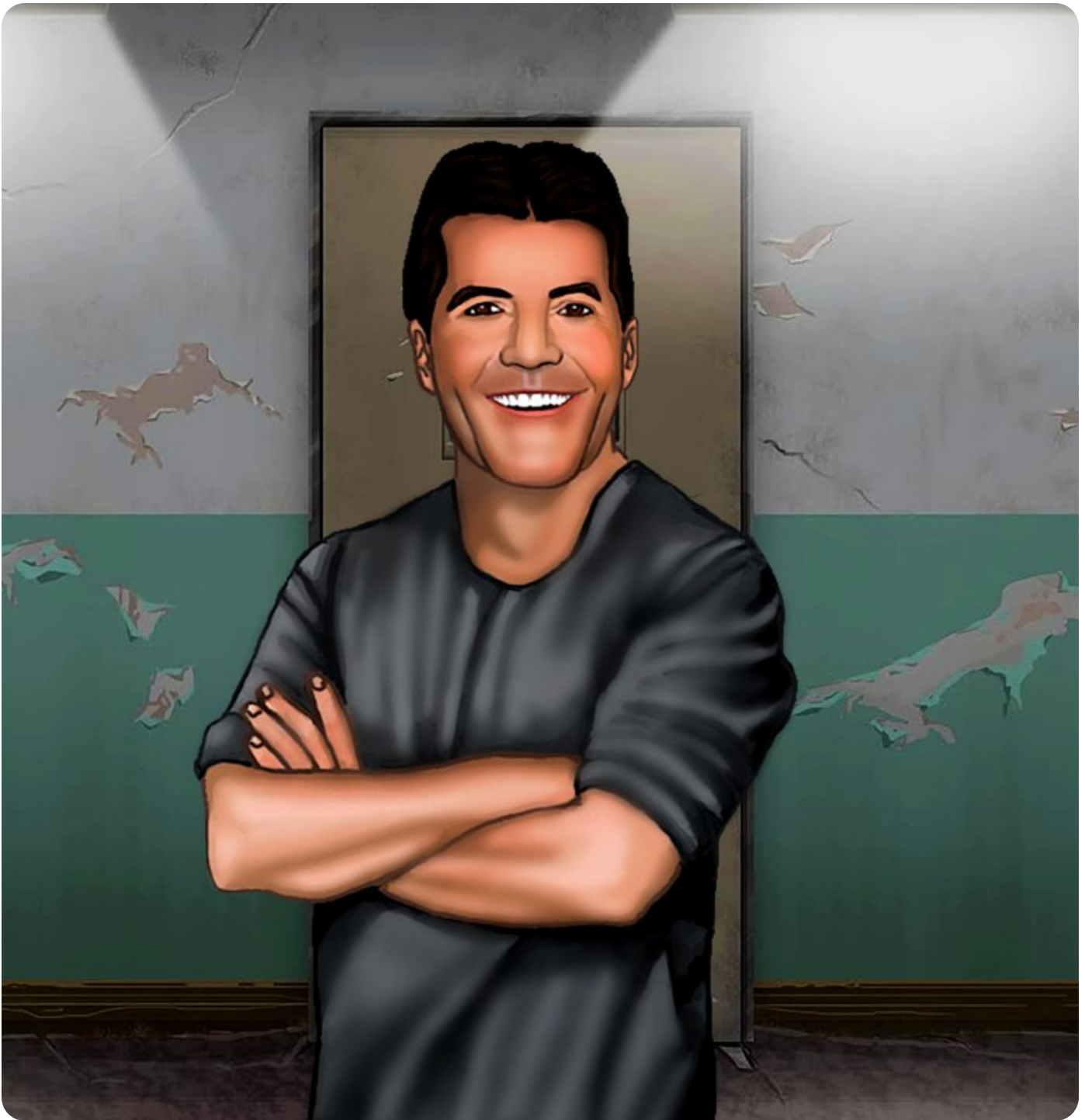
“Try to stay calm, girl. There’s no need to worry,” Raul added as Lucian’s eyelids began to feel like lead weights. “It’s just a mild sedative. No one is going to hurt you. It’s just a precaution following what happened last time we tried to bring you in. And bravo to you, I might add. You really have given us the runaround. If you hadn’t slipped up by calling your friend, we may never have found you.”

Slumped on the chair, Lucian allowed his eyes to close. With all his fight gone, he drifted off to sleep.



“Welcome back to the land of the living, Darling. Before we begin, I must apologise about the décor. it is rather ghastly, but we had to keep this one of the books, you see.”

As his dry eyes began to focus, Lucian looked around, finding himself strapped to a bed in what looked like a jail cell. Paint was peeling from the walls, and the humid air smelt stale and musty. And there, looming over him at the foot of his bed, was a face he instantly recognised. They hadn’t met before, but the face of Simon Powell was universally known.



“Where... how...cough... cough.” Lucian tried to speak but found his mouth too dry to form sentences.

“The Dominican Republic, in a clinic of sorts,” Simon replied. “As for how long. Almost two months now.”

Lucian tried to move but felt a pain shoot down his side. “Argh... I... cough... I need... cough.”

“Don’t try to move. You’ll only hurt yourself on the restraints, Darling,” Simon said as he unfolded his arms. “You know you’re a lucky girl. I don’t always make these types of visits, but I was in the area, and you’re a special one, a real fighter.”

“You really have caused me a lot of bother, but I do like a girl with character,” Simon added as he opened a bottle of water and poured a few sips into Lucian’s parched mouth. “That’s why I’m giving you the opportunity to start a new life. Here on this beautiful Caribbean island.”

“You’re insane if you think I’ll go along with this,” Lucian snarled angrily. “What’s to stop me from telling my story to the world”

Simon broke out into a hearty laugh before looking Lucian dead in the eyes. “Oh, Darling. You really are a feisty one, aren’t you But I’d put all ideas like that out of your mind. I own the media; nothing gets published without my approval.

“Then I’ll go to the police,” Lucian announced, not willing to back down.

“You can try,” Simon replied with a chuckle. “But you need to realise one thing. You are no longer Lucian Styles. Over the past few months, you have been surgically altered to take on a new persona. You are now Flavia de la Cruz, an orphan girl turned dancer and entertainer. Lucian Styles is a wanted criminal. In some parts of the world, they would call what he did euthanasia. But placing a pillow over your mother’s head, a kindness or not, is still murder. The police have you on video running from the room at the time of her death. I doubt they’ll believe it was a lookalike.”

“What... you... you killed my mom” Lucian gasped, struggling to breathe as tears started forming in the corner of his eyes.

“She was in pain, Dear. She was put out of her misery. I assure you it was quick and painless,” Simon stated with not even a hint of remorse in his voice. “Now you need your rest, Flavia, Darling, and I have a plane to catch. We’ll see each other again soon. I have a house not far from here. I’ll call for you when you’re all patched up. We can chat more then. Ciao for now, Darling.”

A single tear rolled down Lucian’s cheek as he watched Simon saunter from the room. He wanted to be angry, but inside he just felt numb. Feeling

himself sinking into the hard mattress of the shady back-alley clinic, he closed his eyes and fell back to sleep.



“Move, bitch! You’re in my seat,” Shouted Irene, Lucian’s main rival at the club where he now worked six nights a week.

Jumping to his high-heeled feet, Lucian stared her down. “Who are you calling a bitch Bitch,” he replied in Spanish. The language he almost exclusively spoke these days.

“Oh, you think you’re something special, Barbie,” Irene shot back. “You think that fake blonde hair makes you number one around here. Well, let me tell you. I’m the reason people come in here and don’t you forget it.”

“Hey, Flavia, Are you listening to me Or did you lose half your brain cells when you got that tacky hairdo” Irene added, seeing Lucian staring blankly over her shoulder.



Lucian wasn't listening. Instead, his heavily made-up, cat-like eyes were fixated on the muted TV hanging on the back wall. The screen showed Bianca Cabello, chatting away on yet another TV show.

Annoyed at being ignored, Irene turned to see what her main competitor for tips was looking at. But as soon as she turned, she too got lost gazing at the image on the screen.

You see, unbeknown to the pair of miserable strippers, they had a lot more in common than they knew. Both girls having once upon a time, for a brief moment in time, lived the life of Bianca Cabello. A made-up person, like all the major names on the books of Synco entertainment. Taylor Swaft, Justin Bebop, all created to sell records before being swapped out with lookalikes when they became troublesome. Most ended up in places like the one Lucian now resided. Out of sight and out of mind, ready to pleasure Simon when he felt the urge to call upon them. After all, you don't become the richest man in the music industry by playing by the rules.

The End