

## First-Round Edits

The cold air cut through the numerous layers Landi wore as she hurried through the snowy slush to her apartment building. It was late, it was cold, and she was in one hell of a foul mood.

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New Year's was coming up and she was bitter. She could admit that. Business was great—not a single complaint in that department. It was her personal life that lacked. Having no one to kiss as the year turned over sucked brass balls. Big shiny ones.

Comment [SJF1]: How much time has passed?

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She snorted as she walked in her building. “Like I have a damn personal life.” Shrugging, she forced a smile as another tenant walked by. Instead of continuing on, he stopped and touched her arm.

Comment [SJF2]: Grabbing seems a bit aggressive.

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“Evening, Ilanderae,” he said. “Glad to see you back in town. And just in time for New Year’s Eve.”

“Hello, Hanson. How are you doing? How are your kids?”

He smiled. “We’re all doing great.”

Shifting her weight slightly, Landi nodded. “Wonderful.” *All I want is to get to my apartment and close out the outside world for a few hours.*

“So what about you? Any special plans for the big night?”

Landi ground her teeth. She wasn’t in the mood for this. If she were a drinking woman, a large bottle would be in her future. As it was, she just wanted to relax and wallow in her pity.

“No, Hanson, no plans.”

“Humph, you need a man, Ilanderae.” He patted her arm. “Don’t worry, one day you’ll realize it’s not all about work.”

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Her smile was more of a grimace. “Give my best to your family. Goodnight, Hanson.”

She walked toward the elevator, grateful when the doors closed behind her. Pressing the button for her floor, she thought about Hanson's words as she took off her wool coat and leather gloves.

It wasn't like she didn't *want* a man. It was more that no man could measure up. Dimitri's ghost had resurfaced and didn't seem inclined to give her any peace.

Dimitri's face reared up in any man who remotely interested her. Those damn golden eyes of his appeared to stare into her soul. Perhaps they dared her to forget him. Or maybe they were searching for something... something she wasn't quite ready to give to him. Even Kacy had told her to let him explain.

Stepping out the elevator onto her floor, Landi shivered as a chill ran up her back. Not from the cold, from something else. With a strong shake of her head, she walked toward her loft. Putting the key into the lock, she hesitated. *I'm freaking losing it.* Landi turned the knob and pushed open her door. Then she froze.

The lights were on and there were flowers everywhere. All of them were different shades of pink. And in the middle of it all stood a man she had met in Greece. AJ Melonakos. Dimitri's cousin.

Kicking the door shut with the heel of her shoe, Landi demanded, "What the hell are you doing here?!"

An enchanting grin crossed his face. "Dima," he said, ignoring her question. "I think you should come out here."

"I asked you a question!" Landi snapped, dropping her bag and coat. Her eyes refused to let him go.

"Hello, Landi," AJ spoke in that deep voice he had. "Lovely to see you again."

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She glared. “Are you gonna tell me what the fuck you’re doing in my apartment?”

A shadow moved behind AJ; and to Landi’s shock, it materialized into Dimitri Melonakos. “Hello, Landi,” he said. The words surrounded her like a warm, velvet blanket.

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Her legs began to tremble, her mouth went dry, and her palms became sweaty. Her heart rate went off the charts. He looked so damn handsome. Black hair, deliciously shaggy and perfect. He wore a dark-gold shirt tucked into black slacks. Black leather shoes poked out from the cuffs of his pants. A black belt with a gold buckle united shirt and pants perfectly.

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She ran her gaze over his upper body that was impressive in the gold that matched his eyes. The sleeves were rolled up, exposing muscular forearms. In one hand he held a single pink flower. The burning intensity in his stare made her feel he only wanted to be with her. And that memory made her remember the pain and betrayal she had felt that day.

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“You!” she seethed. “Get the fuck out of my apartment!”

“Hear me out, Landi,” Dimitri said.

*Hear him out? Was he serious?*

Her lip curled as she honed in on AJ who stood there with a half grin on his face. “You can leave and take that...that...that one with you!”

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“Don’t you think you should give him a chance to explain? He came all this way to see you,” AJ reasoned.

Landi scoffed. Hands on hips, she shot daggers at the taller of the two. “Well, he can take his ass right back the way he came. And you can go with him! I owe him nothing. I don’t owe either of you anything! Breaking into people’s apartment—is this common in Greece?” Her voice kept rising. AJ

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opened his mouth and she slashed a hand through the air. “Don’t even! You’re family. You’d say anything to protect him!”

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“Landi—” Dimitri began.

“Get him out of here,” Landi bit off, refusing to take her gaze from AJ.

A smile crossed his handsome face and his green eyes sparkled. AJ shook his head. “No. I think I should be going now. I’ll leave you two to work this out. Goodnight. It was wonderful to see you again.”

“Where are you going?!” Landi didn’t want to be alone with Dimitri. “If you go, so does he.”

AJ approached her, cast a glance back toward Dimitri, and kissed her on the cheek. “Go easy on my cousin.” At the door he said something in Greek and left.

The door shut with such finality. Landi looked everywhere but toward the dark-haired, golden-eyed man moving closer to her.

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“Talk to me, Landi. Yell, scream, whatever, just talk to me, please.”

Crossing her arms, she arched a brow tapped out a cadence on her hardwood floor with her foot.

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“I’m not going anywhere.”

She bit the inside of her lip. He looked even better than he had in Greece. Landi wanted to touch him, feel his hard body against hers, and indulge in what his touch would bring.

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“Look at me, Landi,” he ordered in a sensual tone.

Smoothing a bland expression on her face, she did. From his shoes up to his head. Her eyes lingered on the stem he held a Moth Orchid, A pink moth orchid.

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Comment [SJF3]: Earlier you said he had a single stem in his hand.

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## Fourth-Round Edits

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