

Chapter 6

Sunday 27th of September 2014

Maria's laughter melted into a soft sigh as Boris lifted her effortlessly onto the worn wooden dining table. He kissed her gently, fingertips brushing through the loose strands of her damp hair. His hands, warm and firm, moved slowly beneath the sheer white fabric of her nightdress.

"You're quiet," Boris murmured between kisses, eyes searching hers.

Maria felt the familiar tug in her chest, words slipping from her control. "I...have one more slide to show you."

He paused, pulling back slightly, curiosity and amusement flickering across his face. "Now?"

She flushed, embarrassed yet strangely compelled. "It's important, trust me."

He studied her face a beat longer, then nodded. "All right-after."

Their kisses deepened, the table creaking softly beneath them. Maria surrendered herself fully, senses sharpened by the scent of sea salt clinging to Boris's skin. His hands moved deliberately, igniting sparks that blurred thought into sensation, the heat building between them until all words faded to whispers, then silence.

Afterward, her head rested against his chest, heartbeat slowing to match the distant rhythm of the waves. Boris gently stroked her shoulder, voice soft but insistent. "So, what's on this slide that can't wait?"

She pulled away reluctantly, straightening the fabric of her gown as reality returned. Her laptop hummed awake, bathing their faces in pale blue light. Maria clicked the next slide into view, title stark against white:

"Wealth was Always just with us"

Her chest tightened as she watched Boris's expression darken, jaw clenching slightly. "This again?" he asked quietly, eyes intense.

Wealth was always just with us.

- We must ensure middle class **wealth goes back to us**

- For centuries, wealth distribution was:

- **Dominant 1% owned 50%**
- Further Richest 9% owned 40%
- **No middle class**
- Poor 90% owned 10%



- **Middle class emerged post-WWII**

- Own 40% of wealth - took from us!
- Poor 50% still own 10% only

"I keep thinking about it," Maria admitted. "How they frame everything-shifting wealth upward. Away from us."

Boris leaned forward, eyes scanning the figures. "The rich keep getting richer, the poor poorer. Same story, different century."

"It's worse," Maria said, voice rising in frustration. "It's planned. Deliberate."

Boris stood abruptly, heading toward the kitchen. She watched him return holding a bag of anelletti pasta, spilling golden rings onto the tabletop.

"What are you doing?" Maria asked, puzzled.

"Explaining in a Sicilian way," Boris said dryly, holding up a single pasta ring. "One of these is a hundred thousand euros. Two rings-two luxury cars."

Maria smiled faintly. "I'll take a Range Rover then."

He smirked, placing two rings aside. "Now, a modest villa by the sea-another five rings." He separated a small pile. "Children's private education-four more."

Maria watched him silently, unease creeping beneath her amusement.

"So, with ten rings, we live comfortably." He shook the nearly full bag at her. "This entire kilo? A hundred million euros. A billionaire like top US technology moguls? Seventy times this. Seven hundred kilos-a truckload of pasta. That's their wealth."



Maria face was shocked. "Look Boris, I saw this massive pasta pack at the Palermo airport. Do you know, you are telling me story which seems to be a fiction, but all of this happens around us. It looks like accident, but look at the photo. Did they put it accidentally, or this story is known to billionaires and pack is there to remind them about their obscene wealth?"



Boris looked at the photo on Maria's phone and didn't answer. Maria stared at the scattered rings, nausea rising suddenly in her stomach. "I helped them, Boris. At the resort-I delivered their water, smiled at their arrogance."

His eyes softened, voice steady. "You also walked out alive. Now help me burn it down."

Maria's throat tightened sharply. His words echoed in her mind, heavy and dangerous. Could she risk that again?

She didn't answer, couldn't yet. Instead, she turned away, feigning sudden exhaustion. "Let's sleep. Tomorrow."

"Tomorrow," Boris agreed, gathering the pasta quietly.

Sleep claimed her swiftly, but rest was fleeting, dreams marred by

shadows and whispered accusations. When Boris shook her awake, his eyes gentle yet firm, Maria knew the night wasn't finished.

"It's almost three," he whispered, urgency brightening his gaze. "Festival's finale."

She dressed quickly, pulse quickening as they stepped into Sferracavallo's crowded streets. Torches flickered amber, music already swelling into an ecstatic crescendo. Maria gripped Boris's hand tightly, pulled into the whirlwind of drums and brass instruments. The air felt charged, alive with devotion and exhaustion mingling like incense and sweat.

Statues of Saints Cosma and Damiano danced above the crowd, bearers barefoot and straining beneath ornate wood and gilded crowns. Maria felt her breath catch, heartbeat matching the relentless rhythm as villagers surged, laughing, praying, crying out together in a shared fever.

Boris pressed closer, voice hoarse from shouting above the din. "This is Sicily. Joy, pain, everything raw. Nothing hidden."

Maria glanced at him, eyes wide. "Is that why you brought me?"

He hesitated briefly, shadows flickering across his face. "Maybe to remind you-this is worth fighting for."

The procession reached its climax at the church doors, silence descending swiftly as statues vanished inside. Maria felt tears sting her eyes, the depth of communal loss and hope overwhelming.

As the crowd dispersed slowly, Boris squeezed her hand. "Thank you for staying, Maria. Tonight was-"

He broke off abruptly, attention snapping to a shadowed figure across the square. Maria's skin prickled as the figure moved deliberately closer, face obscured but intent unmistakable.

“Stay close,” Boris whispered urgently, muscles tensed and ready.
Maria felt her pulse surge again, dread and anticipation twisting together sharply.
The festival was over - if only she would know, it’s her last peaceful night with Boris...