

Oxicity

“What are we going to do? Go up against the biggest company in the world? The two of us versus the corporation who single handedly killed every tree on the planet and somehow profited off of the fact that nobody was able to breathe anymore? What exactly is your plan, Sam?”

Well, she hasn't thought that far ahead yet. The Oxicity banquet is next Saturday. Exactly nine days away. Get in first. Figure out what to do second.

That's as far as she's gotten.

She's been trying to convince Roberto to use his many connections to get them into the event for months now, but she hasn't thought about what she's going to do once she *makes* it in. Ruffle a few feathers. Pickpocket a couple rich guests. Maybe spill some punch on someone's dress. Something small. Something big.

Probably something big.

That's what she does best, anyway. What she *really* wants is to have Oxicity's CEO, Niro Zeffer, pay for what he's done. But she doesn't exactly know how to do that.

Hence the reason why Roberto's looking at her like she's grown a second head under her oxygen helmet. It's his *be serious, Samora* face. A face she's grown quite accustomed to over the years, and one that's probably warranted most of the time. One that's probably warranted *this* time. But you'd think 15 years of friendship would be enough to blindly convince him to get them into one of the biggest parties of the year and wreak some havoc.

“I don't have a plan yet,” she admits sheepishly, watching Roberto's arms cross in annoyance.

“But at least we’ll get some free food out of it! Free *rich* people food. You can eat all the fancy hors d'oeuvres you want!”

Roberto’s eyebrows narrow at that, and she can hear a muffled sigh under his oxygen helmet, the gears in his brain turning at the thought of salmon puffs. If 15 years of friendship wouldn’t convince him, the potential of free food definitely will.

“Fine. I’ll get us in. But I don’t want to know what plan you come up with, okay? Leave me out of it, please.”

Sam nods in agreement. Of course she wouldn’t bring him into this. It would be too dangerous, and if she’s planning to ruin anyone’s life, it would certainly not be Roberto.

She squeals in excitement and wraps her arms around his waist, their oxygen helmets clanking together between them. A constant reminder of the unfortunate existence that is Niro Zeffe.

He needs to be brought down and destroyed. Treated like all the forests he’s slaughtered. Given a taste of his own medicine. Made to regret everything he’s ever done.

It’s all or nothing. She just needs a plan.



She doesn’t have a plan. Not really, anyway. Her plan only works if she’s able to locate Niro and keep him in her line of sight until 9 pm. That’s when the real show begins.

She lost Roberto to the dessert table a half hour ago, and she’s been wandering aimlessly ever since, trying to find Niro in the endless sea of morally compromised billionaires. Nowadays, most buildings are equipped with oxygen converters so that people can take off their helmets inside. But this building is a bit older. Bigger, so it can hold more people for an event like this. The downside is that everyone has to wear their helmets the majority of the night.

Upside.

Definitely an upside.

Everyone in attendance is dressed to impress, many of the women in floor length gowns and the men in perfectly tailored suits. They're all talking and laughing, like being in a room full of oxygen helmets is a *normal* thing. Which, she guesses, *is* normal now. Ten years ago, Oxicity ravaged the remainder of earth's trees and started mass marketing oxygen helmets to make up for it, and things have never been the same since. The rich got richer. The planet got sicker. And Niro Zeffer needs a reality check.

Sam spots him a little bit later, just in time for the main event. She hacked into the building's electrical system earlier and set the lights to go out in exactly five minutes. Looking up at the cameras in the room, she sees that the red lights that indicate they're on, are now black. Perfect. Security system is dead. Now she just needs to get into character.

She grabs the edges of her dress and walks towards Niro with as much confidence as she can muster. This is the moment she's been waiting for. She takes one breath. Then two. Three breaths, and she taps him on the shoulder, making him turn around in surprise.

"Hi. I'm Samora," she says as breathily as possible, reaching her hand out to shake his.

"Niro Zeffer. It's nice to meet you," he smiles, taking a look at her dress and how it hugs the curves of her body.

"Nobody seems to be dancing."

Sam tilts her head in a way that makes her seem innocent, the lights in the room making her eyes sparkle. She runs her tongue across her bottom lip, biting down on it with her teeth. She watches as his eyes track the movement.

“No, they don’t. Would you like to change that?” He answers, holding his palm out for her to take.

How easy it was to make him fall for that. It’s hard to believe he’s responsible for the downfall of the world as they used to know it. There appears to be no coherent thoughts in his oxygen deprived brain.

They dance for a couple minutes, making small talk with each other. Sam laughs at his terribly unfunny jokes and bats her eyelashes at his compliments. She glances up at the clock and sees the seconds tick by until 9 o’clock. 7 seconds. 5 seconds. 3. 2. 1.

The lights go out.

Screaming ensues.

There’s so much chaos swirling around her, that she almost forgets what she came here to do.

Stay focused, Samora. You only have one chance.

She grabs the latch at the back of Niro’s neck and unlocks his helmet, tearing it off of his head in one fell swoop. She can barely make out the sounds of him gasping for air over the symphony of screams.

It’s a comforting noise. Sounds like justice.

And vengeance.

She lets the helmet drop out of her hands, hearing the shatter of the glass as it hits the ballroom floor. Then, she makes her way through the crowd of terrified elites towards the exit. She catches a glimpse of Roberto before she leaves. His stare sends a shiver up her spine. He knows what she’s done.

There’s a glimmer in his eyes.

In ten minutes, the lights will go back on, and everyone will notice Niro Zeffer splayed out on the ground. His face pale. His helmet useless.

Dead.

Like the trees.