

Adrenaline

Valentina's blood-drenched hair hung in front of her face as she sat in the interrogation room, making eye contact with Detective Strauss.

"Okay, Ms. Rodriguez, if you can tell me what happened, maybe I can help you." Valentina shook her head slowly, her face splattered in red. "You can't help me, Detective." Strauss leaned forward, interlocking his fingers over a manila folder. "Ms. Rodriguez, a young man is dead. We found you at the scene of the crime tonight. It's hard to believe that a young, pretty woman like yourself could've had anything to do with his murder. We're just trying to get some answers. How did this happen? How were you involved in this?"

Valentina lifted her bloody, cuffed hands and pulled her hair back, smearing the thick, red substance on her forehead. A long, thick chain connected the cuffs to the floor. "You're looking at me, Detective, and you're probably imagining what I look like without the blood all over me. You're probably imagining how I look naked, too." Valentina gripped the end of her sundress tightly under the table and gritted her teeth behind her closed lips. "Pretty Colombian girl who just somehow got tangled up in a bad situation, huh?" Valentina looked over to the detective's authorization card. "I'll tell you right now, you're looking through the wrong pair of eyes, Adam." Detective Strauss bit his lower lip. "Why don't you help me see through the right pair of eyes? Tell me what happened."

Valentina folded her hands and placed them on the metallic table. "My brothers were gang members, but they weren't like most of the idiots you guys come across. They've killed many men, but you, nor your department, have ever caught them. They're too smart, too quick for anyone to stay on their trail. My brothers taught me how to protect myself. They told me to pay attention to the heartbeat of a man. I'd know his intentions by the rate of his heartbeat, the sound of that blood rushing through his veins, the feel of his increasing pulse... but I got addicted to it; I sought it out.

"My first kill was my mother's boyfriend. My brothers were moved out already, and he never liked to be told no. One day, he got too familiar with her, and I went after him. He was bigger, but the pulse in his neck drove me wild. I squeezed and squeezed until he stopped moving. My mother couldn't bear to see me locked up, but she couldn't look at me anymore.

"I left and moved in with friends from school. Guys would come over, and I always stayed locked up in my room; I was afraid of it happening again.

"One night, I couldn't help myself. My roommate had her boyfriend over, and he was really, *really* planning on having a good night with her. I could hear his heart pounding... it sounded like drums calling to me."

Valentina gripped at her dress again, pulling it up past her thighs. Strauss' eyes held concern and confused excitement; he kept his face straight.

"He went to the bathroom alone, and I fought; I really tried to stay in my room, but his heart was calling me. All that blood was circulating for *me*. When he came out of the bathroom, I was standing in my doorway, in just my underwear. He came in, and I had my way with him. We didn't have sex, though his pumping, young, foolish blood cried for it! No one heard him scream because he couldn't. Of course, I couldn't let my roommate see what happened to him; I hid him until I had a day off to get rid of the remains."

Strauss rubbed his hair, letting out a deep breath. "So, you killed two *other* men; tonight wasn't your first." Valentina shook her head, smirking slightly. "I've killed many... and that *boy* you found... he wasn't my last. Ya see, men have this tendency to get excited when they think they're about to seal the deal with a woman... They feel powerful... until they meet *me*, and then... they don't."

"I get a rush from hearing their heartbeats when they're in the throes of lust, or how some sentimentalists like to call it, 'passion'. I lured men to me with false promises of getting their rocks off just so I could repeat that glorious experience of getting a heart rate as high as it could go... only to stop it... just like what I'm about to do to you, Detective..."

Valentina jerked her hands upward, the handcuff chains breaking from the floor. She flipped the table and pounced onto Strauss, knocking him backward. The manila folder spilled open, photos of a mangled, young man scattering across the floor. She clutched her hands around his throat. Strauss squealed in agony. "How-How did you-"

"Adrenaline."

Valentina looked Strauss in his almost lifeless eyes. "I heard your heart rate increase when you first laid eyes on me..."

Rapid pounding came from the door as policemen frantically tried to get in the room.

"...when I mentioned being naked..."

Her palms crushed his jugular veins. "...and when I lifted my dress."

Strauss' eyes closed slowly as his breathing ceased. Valentina drove her hand through his chest, palming his heart.

Policemen burst through the door, their guns drawn at the petite, Colombian killer. Valentina sniffed the air deeply, whispering to herself. "Soooo much blood." She set her sights on the crowd of officers and lunged at them, their handguns spewing rounds of bullets at her, shouts and hollers of grown men echoing throughout the police station.