

This is a draft so some things may change. This scene is a flashback that takes place 4 months before the end of Once A Crime Lord.

Four Months Ago

“You like that, baby?”

Carmen didn't respond to her dance partner. She had no idea what he looked like and didn't care. All she cared about was the relentless beat of music, the liquor flowing through her veins and the bulge pressed against her ass.

Tonight was the night. She was going to exorcise Vinny once and for all. She couldn't take it anymore. She needed to feel *something*. Need, excitement, anticipation, lust—anything but sorrow. Everyone was moving on. Her mother had such a busy social life that Carmen had to make an appointment to see her. Lyla, who had been attacked by a psychotic serial killer was pregnant. She seemed content with her marriage and was making plans for the future. Everyone seemed to be able to leave the past in the past, everyone but her. How could she when the monster responsible for the hit on her husband was still on the loose? It wasn't over for Gavin either. How could it be when the man responsible for murdering his father and maiming his wife was still out there?

For a decade, she melded herself to another human being, the love of her life and now he was gone, leaving her in a world with muted tones. Tonight, she was going to break her tie with Vinny by indulging in the oldest sin of all time. Sex.

“You want to take this somewhere else?”

Carmen turned and looked up at her companion. He had been grinding against her for a good ten minutes now. She hooked her arms around his neck and surveyed him dispassionately. Hispanic, around twenty one, very white teeth and waxed brows so he was a bit on the metrosexual side. He had a nice body and would be labeled by most women as hot. None of that mattered to her.

“Lead the way,” Carmen said.

He tried to play it cool, but the colored lights showed his dilated pupils and hard nipples through the thin material of his shirt.

“Okay,” he said and twined his hand with hers before he began to lead the way through the crowd.

Carmen briefly searched the crowd for Janice and Alice. She met them for dinner at a Pyre Casinos restaurant to plan Lyla's baby shower. Carmen bullied them into the club and lost track once she started doing shots at the bar.

When she noticed her prospect heading towards the exit, she tugged on his hand. He turned back to her and leaned close when she went on tiptoe.

“I want you to fuck me here,” Carmen said.

His Adam's apple bobbed. “Here?”

“Bathroom.”

Fast and dirty, that's the way she wanted it. She didn't want to go to this guy's apartment and act as if this was anything more than a random hookup. This was a wham, bam, thank you ma'am and she wanted it over quickly before her conscience sobered up, which is why she was nice and drunk. She was married, but she wasn't... and it was killing her. Love was carving up her insides. If she was going to be miserable, she wanted a damn good reason to be.

“Are you sure?” he asked.

Despite his question, she could tell this was a dream come true for him.

“Yes.”

She started towards the bathroom and rolled her eyes when she saw the long lines. She veered towards the private lounge. Her prospect pulled on her arm.

“That’s for VIPs,” he said.

Carmen walked up to the bouncer who inclined his head and opened the door.

“Whoa, that was cool. You got connections, mama?”

Carmen ignored his question and dragged the prospect down a long hallway filled with private rooms for VIPs and their entourages. He was thoroughly distracted now, which pissed her off. Carmen made a beeline for the door at the end of the hall and yanked him into the women’s bathroom. The bathroom was opulent and done in black and gold. A bright-eyed bathroom attendant sprung off her stool with a belt full of makeup brushes, perfume, pasties, glue, condoms and more. She was ready to assist in any way.

“Scat for a couple of minutes. Watch the door,” Carmen ordered and handed over three hundred dollars.

“Whoa, you’re *rich*?” the prospect asked.

The bathroom attendant took the money and exited while the prospect started talking excitedly.

“Are you famous or—?” he began.

Carmen pushed him against the wall and kissed him. He stopped talking and clamped his hands on her ass. Carmen rubbed her crotch against his to entice her pussy to feel even a spark of interest. Nothing.

Carmen broke the kiss. “Go down on me.”

He hesitated. “I don’t—”

“If you don’t go down on me, I won’t go down on you.”

He dropped so fast, it would have been funny if she was in a laughing mood. She wasn’t. She was beginning to panic. Was she destined to be a numb, celibate zombie for the rest of her life?

She was about to raise her dress to bare her pussy when the bathroom door opened. Carmen opened her mouth to tell them to get lost when Marcus walked in. Marcus looked extremely fine in a navy suit that fit him like a glove. He let the door swing shut and looked down at the man on his knees in front of her, clearly about to eat her out. The fact that Vinny’s replacement seemed determined to interrupt her from moving on was beyond annoying.

Carmen crossed her arms. “Can I help you?”

“I thought I saw you,” Marcus said pleasantly, as if they were at a cocktail party and not in the women’s bathroom. “What are you doing, Carmen?”

“What does it look like?” she snapped.

“It looks like you’re about to make a mistake.” Marcus jerked his chin at the prospect. “Get lost.”

“Hey, buddy, this isn’t your business,” the prospect protested.

“It is,” Marcus said, “and I run this place. Get out.”

The prospect got to his feet and held his hand out to her. “Come on, mama, let’s get out of here.”

And go where? She wanted to be banged right here, right now in a public bathroom where it would be sordid and final. She didn’t want to get a room for an hour. She examined the prospect objectively. Her sex radar told her he would be a lousy lay. He would be selfish and not bother to get her off, which would make her feel worse than she already did. The prospect wasn’t old

enough to move past jack rabbit sex.

Carmen slumped against the wall in defeat. “Maybe next time.”

The prospect was clearly bewildered. He looked between them before he shook his head and walked out of the bathroom.

Carmen crossed her arms. “What do you want, Marcus?”

“You can do better than that, Carmen.”

“I don’t *want* better!” She stalked forward and prodded him in the chest. “This is the second time you’ve cock-blocked me. What’s your problem?”

“I seem to have a problem with you trying to have sex in my clubs.” When she opened her mouth to shout he added, “And watching you sell yourself short.”

“I can fuck whoever I want! I *am* gonna get laid tonight, even if I have to do it in the back alley.”

“Why in a public place?” he asked.

He didn’t sound shocked or appalled, merely curious. For some reason, this pissed her off even more. She’d run into him several times after Incognito’s opening. He attended Lyla’s baby gender party and she bumped into him at two other functions. He always made a point to come up to her and chat as if they were old friends, which couldn’t be further from the truth. Despite her one word answers and subtle put downs, he remained unfazed by her attitude. Carmen didn’t want to like him, but he handled Lyla with genuine affection and riled Gavin, which should have made him her partner in crime, but it felt wrong, almost like she was cheating on Vinny by enjoying Marcus’ company. No one could replace her husband, but that’s exactly what Marcus had done. Gavin had more free time than he ever had with Vinny as COO and business was booming due to Marcus’ business ventures. Carmen didn’t know how she felt about him, so she avoided him to no avail. He popped up when she least expected him—like now. She could understand Gavin’s irritation where Marcus was concerned. Every time she saw Marcus he was affable and unruffled.

The urge to shock him made her say, “I need a fuck and I don’t want anyone to get the wrong idea about what this is. It’s a hookup, nothing more.”

She started for the door, but he stepped in front of her and put his hands on her shoulders. His eyes were crinkled with concern.

“Carmen.”

She held up a hand because she could already hear what was coming. “I don’t need you to tell me I’ll get past this. It’s been two years and I’m not *past it*. It’s isn’t going away. I need to snap myself out of this. I need to feel *something* other than pain...” she trailed off as her breathing hitched.

“Carmen,” he began again, with such gentleness that her alcohol suppressed emotions began to stir.

She knocked his hands away and stepped back. “This is none of your business, Marcus. I know you have a brother complex, but I’m a big girl. I can take care of myself.”

Carmen walked around Marcus who didn’t move or speak. She reached for the door handle, but Marcus’s hand splayed over the shiny surface, keeping the door closed.

“Is that what you really want?” he asked.

“Move,” she bit out.

His body pressed against her back. The smell of his cologne wafted around her and she stiffened as his body heat penetrated through the thin material of her slutty dress.

“I’m willing,” he said.