

Carina Press Blog Tour Program: *Hate Crush* by Angelina M. Lopez
Excerpt

Aish pulled the bud out of his ear and straightened, never taking his eyes off her as he held it out. When she took the bud from him, she let her fingers linger. His fingertips were warm and that tiny touch sent a frisson down her arm.

She unwrapped the headphones from around her neck and stuffed them into her back pocket. But she didn't move back.

"I'm a musician," he said, voice low.

"I know."

A corner of his mouth went up. "What else do you know?"

That he made every millimeter of her skin buzz. That he smelled like boy and sweat and ocean salt. She hated the nose-clogging scent of cologne. There was nothing fake about the way this boy smelled.

She pulled her long braid over her shoulder and tugged on it. "You're from LA, your father designs clothes, your mother is a famous fitness instructor. *Y*...you're very good at surfing, singing, partying, working harder on less sleep than everyone else and...oh, *sí*, ménage à trois."

Shock, mortification, and humor created a palette across his expressive face. "Who said I'm good at threesomes?"

Sofia ran a hand down her braid and shrugged, all Spanish cool. "*No sé*. I keep my nose to myself. It's everyone else who talks."

When he grinned this time, he looked like he might lean down and taste her. "And what does everyone say about *you*?"

Sofia worked to maintain her smile. She wanted to be no one to nobody. She wanted to have nothing said about her. But even if she'd lived a cloistered life in a high tower, her story would be marred with her parents' dramas and affairs and fights, ugly public episodes that stripped Sofia of dignity without her involvement. And Princesa Sofia hadn't lived a cloistered life. Maintaining her dignity hadn't been high on her list when she'd mooned the crowd from atop a Semana Santa float in Cádiz or when she'd waved drunkenly to the paparazzi from a movie star's hotel balcony when she was supposed to be presented to the Queen of England. She'd been neither drunk nor sleeping with the star. But her humiliated mother had abandoned the duke's bedroom she'd been occupying to drag Sofia back to the Monte.

She didn't want to think about her scandalous past. She didn't want to think about the demands of her future. All Sofia wanted right now was to be a dirty, half-naked girl wrapped around a beautiful boy in a wine tank.

"I know some stuff about you," Aish said quietly.

Sofia focused on the air in front of his face and ran her hand down her braid.

"Your name's Sofia. That's...really fucking pretty." He hadn't said Princess Sofia. He hadn't said Sofia de

Esperanza y Santos. Just Sofia. And he thought it was pretty. She focused again on his eyes.

"You've got a great accent." The air between them felt like it was warming up. "You like grunt work, which is so hot it kinda hurts."

Nothing about her royal status. Nothing about her reputation. He'd just arrived; perhaps none of the interns had told him about the princess in their midst. Perhaps his uncle had just said, "Make sure the new intern hasn't passed out. Her name is Sofia."

"You're not wearing a bra." Her mouth opened at that, surprised, as his eyes gripped shut. "I noticed and if you noticed I noticed, I'm sorry 'cause I don't want you to think I'm a total fucking creeper and scare you away..."

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“I don’t think you’re a creeper,” she said, reaching to brush her fingers over his clenched fist. Her breasts were so small she seldom wore a bra. But this boy acted like they were an irresistible temptation.

Aish opened his eyes. “Are you for real?”

Sofia smiled up at him, feeling helpless and foolish and floating.

“I mean, am I having some weird acid flashback?” His urgency seemed to express that it was a real possibility.

“Wouldn’t I be having one, too?” she asked. “And I’ve never done acid.”

“No, no.” He was a lit fuse aimed in her direction. “This could be my own personal hallucination. Because, what the fuck. My uncle tells me to go check on the new intern and inside a tank is a kick-ass, bare-skinned fairy girl listening to elf music. I feel like I’m tripping. Am I?”

With amazement beaming from her, Sofia shook her head.

He reacted like she’d punched him. “Fuck. Your smile. Can I kiss you?”

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