



HE'S IN LOVE WITH A MARRIED WOMAN.
SHE WANTS HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

His Wicked Obsession

THE CARDARELLI BROTHER'S

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

K.L. DONN

*HIS WICKED
OBSESSION*

MAFIA MADE

BOOK NINE

KL DONN



CONTENTS

I'd love to connect with you!

Synopsis

Introduction

Prologue

1. Bella

2. Donato

3. Bella

4. Donato

5. Bella

6. Donato

7. Bella

8. Donato

9. Bella

10. Donato

11. Bella

12. Donato

13. Bella

14. Donato

Epilogue One

Epilogue Two

[Mafia Made World](#)

[What to read next?](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Also by KL Donn](#)

[Audio Books](#)

[Tell Me More...](#)

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His Wicked Obsession

Mafia Made Book 9

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SYNOPSIS

From USA Today Bestselling Author KL Donn comes the final book in the Mafia Made series.

Donato Cardarelli is in love with a married woman.

His obsession began the moment he looked into her eyes.

It evolved after their first kiss.

It consumed him when she called for help.

Now that he's got her right where he wants her, Donato won't let her go.

Because he knows, she was always meant to be his.

Bella Marino wants happily ever after.

Love, marriage, babies. It was always her dream.

Even after the atrocities of her childhood.

Even if it's with the wrong man.

Calling for help after being taken, after being led to believe she'd gone crazy, Bella never expected to see the man who professed his love for her.

In his arms again, she feels protected and safe for the first time in more years than she can count.

When the truth about her past comes out, will she trust the love Donato has given her from day one, or will her heartache break them apart?

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *USA Today* Bestselling Author KL Donn's Mafia Made world, featuring *Award Winning* Author E.M. Shue with 3 of her own books included in the Mafia Made series.

You can find complete details of the series here: [MAFIA
MADE WORLD.](#)

While the books are interconnected, each book in the series can be read as a complete standalone story.

DEDICATION

*To all the readers who stuck with the series, I hope I give you
the ending this family deserves.*

PROLOGUE

BELLA

She did it.

Bria broke free.

My best friend, the other half of my soul, is finally living the life she was always destined to receive. I couldn't be happier for her and Maso—a man who broke through all her barriers and showed Bria she deserved the love she refused to allow anyone else to give her.

Even me.

As I gaze out the back of my palatial home, my insides feel as tumultuous as the storm crashing onto our tiny island. Lightning sparks the sky, thunder rattles the ground, and as I open the door and step out into the pouring rain, I consider the risk.

The danger I face.

I always knew my sister would find that epic kind of love one day, but I'd be a liar if I didn't say that I had hoped I'd have her to myself for a few years before it happened. However, it wasn't meant to be. I'm once again left behind, afraid of my own shadow. Living in a home with someone who carries more secrets than he'll ever share with me.

Lude Vella is a good man with a dark side that he hides from me. It's why I can never love him, much as I want to, and honestly, I don't think he knows how to love. Not me, anyway.

No one wants to love me.

Except him.

My stalker has been circling the drain for weeks. I feel his presence...the sinister stares and late-night visits. He's here now. It's the reason for the danger I face.

I don't know if he means me harm, but I'm sure, eventually, my time will come.

And at this point, I'm hoping it's sooner rather than later.

The pain I live with every day has become far more than I can bear, and I'm ready to meet my maker.

“Hello, darling.”

CHAPTER 1

BELLA

ONE MONTH LATER.

Voices, voices, everywhere. In the corner and on the stairs.

Voices, voices, invading peace. Taking space.

Voices, voices, everywhere...

I sing the silly song I made up to try and maintain my sanity. I no longer discern when I'm hearing it or when I'm imagining it.

"Hello, darling." Every morning like clockwork.

Nine a.m. on the dot. The deep baritone lacks warmth and humanity, but I don't know if it's intentionally mechanistic. I'm always alone when I hear the menacing syllables. Nobody else picks up on them, and I've stopped asking so I don't get the weird looks.

I'm fairly certain the household staff thinks I'm nuts at this point, but they smile politely and continue with their duties.

Lude hasn't been home in two weeks, either, because of business with his brother Natan, so I can't even speak to him about what's happening. The fears I have. I've spent far too much time on the internet reading about people who hear voices in their heads, and I don't like any of the answers I've come across.

I want to call Bria, to hear her voice. One that I know is real. I want to confide in her what's been happening, but I don't want to burst her bubble of blissfulness. Maso has spent so much time making sure everything is perfect for my twin, and I know she finally feels like she fits in with his family.

Which leaves me alone to suffer with the uncertainty and doubt.

Unless...

No.

I can't.

I swore I wouldn't.

Donato Cardarelli is a dominant force that I know would come at the drop of a hat if I were to ask. He hasn't hidden his infatuation with me. When he was here, he nearly consumed me. If he'd stayed longer, I think I would have left with him. Accepted everything he was offering me.

But I'm already committed to Lude, even if I can never love him.

Lude has made me promises. Family, stability, a life I never believed I could have when he first bought me, but I wish we could have love.

Donato wants to give me that and everything else my heart desires.

"Bella." My head pops up when I hear my name.

It sounds like...but it couldn't be.

"Bella." *Could it be?*

“Papa?” I whisper as I leave my room, my robe barely secure around my body. “Papa,” I repeat as I slowly tread down the long hallway towards the curved staircase.

“Yes, Bella.” Tears leak from the corners of my eyes.

“Papa, I’m here,” I sob, rushing down the stairs, tripping down the last three, and landing hard on my knees. “Don’t leave me,” I cry out.

Two of the maids come out of the den to stare. I can see the assessing eyes as they judge me. They think I’ve gone insane.

“Please don’t leave me, Papa.” Slamming my fists on the cool marble floor, I scream until my voice breaks and no sound flows.

Papa is dead.

Mama is dead.

Bria has moved on.

I’m left all alone. *Again.*

One Week Later.

Darkness surrounds me. My head is buried in my raised knees, my arms bracing them tight to my chest as I rock back and forth in the corner. I hear it all the time now, even when others are in the room with me. *Hello, darling,* follows me everywhere I go.

Into town.

To dinner. The shower.

And in my sleep.

I can never escape. I've tried putting in headphones, but I still hear it, leading me to believe I *am* crazy. Certifiable, institutionally-available, batshit crazy.

"Ssshhh. Do you hear that, Bella?" It's my sister's voice when we were eight and hunting for chameleons in Mama's garden, and instead, spotted a blue and purple hummingbird feeding from the honeysuckles.

The memory is so clear, like a looking glass into the past. The warm sun on our skin, the tickling of dirt between our toes, the brush of leaves on our hands. I'm transported back in time...to happier times.

Dinner as a family. Sundays in the park with a picnic. Bedtime stories about magical creatures and princes saving princesses, laughter filling a house bursting at the seams with love.

Nothing like I've known since they died. We went from sunshine and roses to black holes of despair and emotional pits of hell.

The voice begins again, never really stopping. Slamming my hands over my ears, I attempt to block it out, to stifle its sound, but nothing works. Not ever. But I must try because the alternative is to go insane.

"Father Cassio was right; you are a filthy sinner. You deserve to be in hell. This is your penance," *it* hisses, echoing

in all corners of my mind.

“No, no, no, no!” I scream. Father Cassio is dead. He was *the* evil man. He was *the* sinner. I’m an innocent in all these foolish games.

“Bella?” A familiar voice, but I can’t trust anything I hear. “Bella, what’s happening?” It’s closer now, deep, comforting, and warm. It sounds like Lude, but I won’t be tricked. Not again. Not after I heard Papa’s voice.

Hands on my shoulders cause me to jerk away, letting out a god-awful screech. “Bella!” he snaps, dragging my head up to look at him. “What has happened to you?”

He’s really here, right in front of me, concern etched on his handsome features. “Lude? Is it really you?”

His eyes search mine before he nods. “It’s me, Bella. What’s happened?” Swallowing roughly, I try to find my voice but can’t think straight. I realize I must look a mess to him, sitting in the corner of a darkened room, arguing with a voice no one else hears.

Throwing myself in his arms, I openly sob as he drops back onto the floor, cradling my shaking body in his embrace and allowing me a moment to get myself together.

“I’ll take care of you, darling.” I explode out of his arms at that word, running through the house and into the storm brewing outside, fear propelling my body forward until I’m unable to see or hear anything around me. Lost in the countryside and hidden by the rain, I wish I were free.

CHAPTER 2

DONATO

Anger pulses through my veins as harshly as the blood pumping through my heart while I stare down at the man on the floor at my feet. This man, this slimy piece of shit, thought he could take me out and get away with it.

“Who do you work for?” I ask again. I have many enemies, more so since coming home and helping clean up the streets of Palermo. When Domino took out the head of the police to save Nicola, he opened a can of worms that had the filthiest motherfuckers slinking out of the shadows, hoping to lay claim to my home.

“More blood,” Pace interjects, sounding bored. I’m certain he is. I haven’t allowed him to touch the man since we came out to the slaughter barn. Construction on the rest of the farm is going well in creating an oasis for the family, but the barn remains intact and will continue to do so.

“String him up,” I tell my brother.

The clanking of chains rings out through the structure as he pulls the man up from where he’s bound at the wrists and ties the end off. He hangs from the rafters like this, his toes barely touching the stained floor beneath. He has no traction,

no way out. His life will end here today. How long that takes is up to him.

“Let’s go with something easier, then. What’s your name?” Crossing my arms, my biceps bulge and flex with the movement. While my oldest brother, Maso, is the biggest of us, Pace and I can give him a run for his money.

The man gulps loudly, his eyes flicking back and forth between us. Fear etches every line of his face, piss stains run down his legs, darkening his pants, but still, he doesn’t talk.

“Toss me that emasculatome.” I nod behind Pace, and his grin becomes gleeful. Keeping my eyes on my victim, his paling face and whimpering noises send a thrill up my spine.

Until I’d tortured my first man a few years ago, I’d never known how cathartic it could feel. How much I’d enjoy it.

Pace snaps the tool open and closed a few times, the chains rattling with his fear, and with him unable to touch the ground, there’s no way for him to escape.

“What is that?” He swallows nervously, his Adam’s apple bobbing in his throat.

“He speaks.” Turning the tool over in my hand, I explain, “This used to be a slaughterhouse, then it became a castration site. And in recent years, it’s been used as a rustic torture house. Gives off those vibes, doesn’t it?” My gaze roams the walls, taking in all the archaic devices left behind. “This was how animals were castrated.” I hold the tool up for him to see. “I’m giving you until your pants hit the floor to tell me what I want to know, or your balls will literally be blue.”

Pace reaches around him from behind, a knife in his hand as he slices through the belt, then button, and slowly drags the zipper down. And just as he's about to drop the stranger's pants, the man screams, "Wait!" Pace lets the pants fall as his breathing intensifies. "I work for Peeta Ambrose." Alarm bells ring in my ears at the name I haven't heard since we moved back to Sicily from New York. Maso and I helped take down his human trafficking ring through Canada. He lost billions and is on trial now. But he's been in Rikers since his arrest.

"What does he want?" I ask, keeping a bored tone to my voice despite the coldness that's entered my heart. If he's initiating contact now, that means he's about to make a move against me. He was unaware of Maso's involvement, so I can only hope he'll leave my brother alone.

"I was supposed to deliver a message," he pants, unable to focus as I keep tossing the emasculatome from hand to hand, itching to cause him irreparable damage.

His knife nearly entered my back when he attacked me from behind. If Pace hadn't been with me, I'd be the one bleeding out right now.

"And that was...?" I roll my hand, waiting for him to spell it out.

"He's coming for you and everything you hold dear. Everyone you love will die by his hand." Pace's eyes meet mine, the only emotion present is rage because he's taking this as a threat against his heavily pregnant wife.

"You'll die first." I grin as I whip out my blade and plunge it into his belly, dragging it up until his guts spill out. His eyes

widen in shock and pain as they slowly travel down to find his entrails dropping on the floor. Blood spills in a river of red, covering the floor and my boots.

His mouth flounders like a fish as he tries to speak, his body slowly dying and draining until there's nothing left but his carcass.

Pace walks out, not a care in the world about what I've just done. Death doesn't frighten me; it's nothing new in my life, but taking a life isn't something I do lightly. This piece of scum deserved it, though. If he were working for a man like Peeta Ambrose, there would be no redemption for him, no saving his soul. His demise was the only option.

And I'll make peace with that.

Eventually.

"Yo', D, you better come see this!" Pace yells as I exit the barn, waving my phone in his hand. Jogging over, I take it from him. Seeing Bella's name on the screen, I unlock it as quickly as possible to read the message she sent.

Cara mia Bella: I need help.

The time stamp reads hours ago, but I try calling her anyway. If she's contacting me for help, then something is seriously wrong because after the wedding, after we shared that explosive kiss, she begged me to stay away.

Me: Answer the phone.

I try again. And again. And keep calling until it no longer rings and goes straight to voicemail.

“What’s going on?” Pace’s concern grows. The Marino twins were his wife’s childhood best friends, and if something happens to them, it affects her, and he doesn’t like his wife upset.

“She’s not answering,” I growl.

Me: Come on, cara mia, talk to me.

I wait a minute. Call again.

Nothing.

Me: Bella, if you don’t answer, I’m coming for you and nothing, nobody, will stop me from claiming you this time.

Bella Marino was always meant to be mine. She may have married Lude Vella based on promises of a future she’d always dreamed of having, but that doesn’t mean I can’t do everything in my power to convince her that I’m more worthy because I’ll give it all to her, as well, plus the love she so desperately craves.

Slamming a hand on the top of the car, I get behind the wheel and start it up. Pace is barely seated before I take off, back for Palermo. I need to speak to my brothers, warn them of the danger coming for us, and find out if Bria has heard from her sister.

“This Ambrose guy a valid threat?” Pace finally questions.

“He was one of the biggest human traffickers on the east coast of the U.S. Maso and I took him down. He always swore revenge.” I never imagined he’d live long enough to face his trial date once the inmates found out what he did. There’s a code on the inside, and there’s no way he’s been able to escape from it.

“Are my wife and unborn child in danger, D?” The full force of his glare is on me now. “Amalia, Bria, Nicola?” None of the women in our lives have had an easy go of it. We’d all protect them with our lives. “Mama?”

Slamming on the brakes, I need to steady my breathing. Imagining any of these women in danger enrages me to a point of absolute agony. “Yes,” I finally respond. “He’s a plausible threat, but until I speak to the Carmichaels or Sinclairs in New York, I won’t know how bad it is.” For a time, Natale Morello went to school with Malice Sinclair, and I know for a fact that his family will have the answers we seek.

“Then let’s get moving,” he growls, calling Isabel to check on her.

Rolling down the window to help temper my rage, I allow the cool breeze to brush across my flesh as my mind drifts to the one and only time I had Bella in my arms.

“I wish I could stay here forever,” Bella sighs as we dance on the beach. The sun is a golden hue on the horizon as it begins to set. We’re the only ones left over from the wedding.

“Why can’t you?” She doesn’t love Lude. There’s no way she could and still look at me like she does. When her gaze falls upon me, her desire for me is evident. Her body knows she belongs to me and not the man she married.

Attempting to pull away, Bella glances up at me with sadness in her eyes. “Because I’m married to Lude.” I notice she doesn’t say she loves him or that she’s committed to him. It’s transactional for them.

“You don’t love him,” I point out, not for the first time.

“Donato.” Her tone pleads for me to understand her quagmire. But I can’t, I won’t, not until she’s mine.

“Am I wrong?” We stop dancing, and I tilt her chin up so she’s forced to lie to my face.

“He’s promised me everything I’ve ever wanted.”

“So have I.” We’ve had this argument before. Before I left Malta.

Placing her hands on my chest, Bella drops her head, but not before I see the tears in her eyes. The last thing I want to do is make the woman I love, the woman I’m obsessed with, cry.

“Please, Donato, please stop...” She pauses to catch her breath. “Please stop tearing my heart in half.”

Fuck. Cupping her face in both hands, I bring her eyes to mine but don’t say anything. I take her lips in a kiss filled with every promise I’ve made so far and the wicked temptation of what could be. Sweeping my tongue into her mouth when she

gasps in surprise, I lick at her, taking her flavor into myself and claiming it as my own.

This woman is meant to be mine. There is nothing else to explain the obsession I've had with her since the first time I saw her picture before Maso and I flew to Malta.

Bella's body melts into me, and I take the advantage. Tilting her head for better access, I swallow her moan of delight, and a groan rumbles from my chest as I try to absorb this woman into my being. I need her more than air.

"Please, cara mia, don't leave." Sipping at her lips, I use her aroused state against her. Playing this way is dirty, but I don't care. I don't want her going home. "Let me put a baby in your belly. Let me love you like the goddess you are. Let me be the man who loves you until the end of time." I don't point out how Lude can never love her because it's a cruel remark that will only make her feel bad, and that's not what I want. "Let me worship you and this beautiful body until the end of my days."

Tears sting the corners of her eyes as she studies me. Her swollen lips, flushed cheeks, and peaked nipples behind her peasant top tell a story of a woman who wants what I'm offering. "I can't," she exhales before fleeing.

Two words. Torture in each syllable.

The only reason I don't go after her.

I can't pretend to understand why she stays in a loveless marriage, and while my patience is running thin, I'll give her more time. My love isn't going anywhere.

The rejection stings to this day. I haven't been near Bella in months and have only spoken to her once since the kiss that stole my sanity. Having her reach out now because she's in trouble is a step in the right direction, even if she's done it out of necessity instead of her need for me.

CHAPTER 3

BELLA

I'm twitching, starving, and I can't think straight.

It took all night, but Lude caught up with me. He demanded I tell him what had been happening, and when I did, he looked just like I figured he would.

He thought I was crazy.

And I am.

But I didn't need his visual affirmation of it.

Sometimes, I wonder if I'd have been better off staying in Sicily with Donato when he'd begged and promised me all sorts of wonderful things. I'd wanted to; I almost did. Until I remembered the loyalty I owed Lude. He may have purchased me for selfish reasons, but he's always taken care of me. He wants the things I do. But kissing him never came as easily as it did with Donato, and since then, I've slept in a separate room from him. I think that's why he's gone more often than not now.

He senses the distance I've put between us. He sees the walls I've been building, and still, I can't bring myself to ask him to leave. And now, I'll never be able to.

Because I'm nuts.

Hearing voices that don't belong.

“Bella?” The shrink calls my name again. “Can you tell me more about the voices?” His wrinkled face is passive. He doesn't care either way; he's still getting paid.

I lift a shoulder in a shrug. “I hear my papa.” *How I miss the man.* I assume they died, and that's why we were given to the church, but I don't remember much. It was too traumatizing at my young age.

“What does he say?” His head tilts curiously as he watches me while scribbling in his notebook.

“Nothing, really.” And that's the weirdest part. Everything I've read about has said the voices would make me paranoid and demand things from me; however, all I feel is tormented.

“Nothing...” he hums. “Be more specific.”

“My name, mostly.” Over and over until I feel like my ears will bleed.

“That's all?” He seems surprised. “What other voices do you hear?”

Chewing on my lip, I open my mouth to speak when I hear it again. *Hello, darling.* Slamming my hands over my ears, they ring, and I start humming as I rock back and forth in the corner of the sofa I'm sitting on. *He can't help you,* it says, spinning my panic out of control.

“Stop it,” I hiss. It laughs, but there's no humor. “Just stop!” I shout. “Stop it. Stop it. Stop it!” I scream, squeezing my eyes shut painfully.

“Bella?” the doctor’s voice penetrates, but I can’t focus on him. I need to get the voices to end. I can’t stand it anymore. My eyes open, searching until they land on the pencil in his hand. He shouts for help while trying to prevent me from taking it from him.

Kicking his shin, he lets go just as the door bursts open, and two men come rushing in, Lude on their heels. Before I get the chance to jam the pencil into my ear, I’m tackled to the ground and restrained as a stabbing pain registers in my arm and then a burning sensation before growing lightheaded.

The voice laughs on and on, mocking me as my weightless body is lifted and carried to another room where I’m strapped to a bed. Unable to move or fight, I’m now a prisoner in a new kind of hell.

Low-pitched buzzing irritates me from the forced sleep I was drugged into. My stomach roils from both hunger and whatever medication they injected me with. Staring at the stark-white ceiling, not a tile out of place, as the fluorescent light does its best impersonation of a bee by humming, I attempt to calm my erratic heart.

My life has admittedly been pretty crappy, but even this is new for me. First, I had assumed my parents were dead, then we were given to that disgusting church. My sister was assaulted, violated, and I was forced to witness her deterioration as she fought against the demons inside her head for years; then, we were sold and separated.

Those first few years were terrifying, never knowing if the Vella brothers planned to violate us further, despite their explanation to us so early in our relationships with them. In the end, I grew to trust Lude and, eventually, Natan; they proved themselves to be worth that, at least. I believed Lude when he told me on our wedding night that he would give me anything my heart desired and wait for me to be ready for him as a man.

I depended on his truthful word so much so that I committed myself to him wholly. It didn't matter that there was no love. I never believed love was the be-all and end-all to life and relationships. At that point, his word was enough.

Until I saw Bria with Maso.

Until I felt Donato's penetrating gaze light up my body like I belonged to him.

Even then, I didn't waver in my loyalty to Lude. Except for that kiss. And still, I ran from what my heart and body were screaming was meant for me.

Now, here I am, hearing voices. Drugged. Restrained to bed in a windowless white room, feeling crazier than I did before.

I've never given into regret in the past, but as my eyes burn and my throat constricts, it's all I feel now. I regret not taking Donato up on his offer the first time we spoke privately. I regret not listening to my body when he held me so lovingly as we danced on the beach. I regret not saying yes when he begged me to be his, to let him be the one to give me everything I've ever wanted.

I regret my loyalty and commitment to Lude Vella because I confided in him my worst nightmare, and now, I'm chained like an animal with no way to escape.

Closing my eyes, I turn my head away from the door when I hear voices and jangling keys, and whisper a prayer to my sister, "Please, Bria, find me," as silent tears leak down the sides of my face onto the crisp white sheets covering the bed.

Days blend. Hours mix and mingle. I count higher and higher with each second, and still, I don't know how long I've been here. Men come and talk about me but never *to* me. Nurses come to draw blood and run tests. Women come to feed me and allow me three minutes to brush my teeth and use the toilet three times a day.

I remain strapped to the bed. No walking. No freedom. No voice.

Is this what Bria felt like for so long? Unable to trust anyone with her thoughts, so she remained silent. I feel fresh heartbreak for the pain my sister was put through.

Hearing the greasy wheels of a cart rolling down the hallway, I know it's medicine time. Twice a day, I'm fed a cupful of pills. One cup makes me complacent and lethargic, the other knocks me out.

Because the last dose put me to sleep, I assume it's morning, but I don't know for sure. Everything blends together, and it's possible they could be tricking me by giving

me the sleeping pills in the morning, or maybe it's the evening. I wish I could tell. I'm tired of the concoctions, and I yearn to have just a little bit of information.

As the door opens, I keep my eyes on the female nurse coming in. She whistles a faint tune, and a smile crosses her face when she notices I'm awake.

"Good morning, Bella. How are you feeling?" I snort at the ridiculous question.

"How long have I been here?" My voice cracks from how dry it is.

She frowns and pours me some water in one of the paper cups. "Drink this." She helps by holding it to my lips as I bring my head up.

Swallowing greedily, the room-temperature liquid feels amazing sliding down my throat. Licking my parched lips, I ask again, "How long have I been here?" My voice is slightly more assertive this time.

I'm presented with a lie-filled smile. "A few days." It's been longer; I'm sure of it. I can't gauge how long after I arrived that they started giving me pills, but I do know I've taken the ones that make me fall asleep at least four times since I began counting.

"Where's Lude? Where's my husband?" I'm hoping he hasn't betrayed me like I've convinced myself. It's hard to know anymore.

"He had to leave," she tells me as she brings the cup of pills over. Snapping my jaw shut, I turn my head and refuse to

take them. “Come now, Bella, don’t be like that. You’ve been so well-behaved so far.”

Glaring at her, I say, “I want my sister or my husband. Now.” I know for sure that Bria would not allow this to happen to me. The love we have for each other goes beyond the bond of sisterhood. When I hurt, she hurts, and vice versa. This would kill her.

“Sister, hmmm?” She seems to be softening. Is it because she thinks my sister wouldn’t be a threat, whereas a husband would be? She has no idea about who my new family is then. “Well, alright.” She walks around the cart and unzips a phone from a bag. “What’s her name and number?” I give her Bria’s maiden name in hopes my twin understands the importance of not revealing who her husband is.

“Is this Bria Marino?” There’s a pause. “Oh, good. Miss Marino, my name is Marissa Silva, and I’m a nurse at Cortez Mental Health Institution on Pantelleria Island. I have Bella here. She’s quite unwell and has been uncooperative today. Since she’s been compliant so far, I decided to grant her wish to speak to you.” I hear my sister rapidly asking questions, and the nurse rolls her eyes. “Yes, here she is.”

“Bria?” I sob.

“Bella, oh my god. We’ve been searching frantically for you. Are you alright? Are you hurt? Why are you in a mental institution?” I sob as her voice washes over me. Quieter, Bria asks, “Is she listening?”

“No, no, I’m okay; I just needed to hear your voice.” I hope she understands.

“Donato is coming, and he’s bringing hell with him.” Her voice is fiercer than I’ve ever heard it before. “You stay strong, twin. I’ve heard you, I’ve heard your cries, and I will not let you down.” I’ve been calling out to her as often as I can, but I wasn’t sure. Our twin connection has always been so strong.

“I love you, Bria.” The nurse drags the phone away before she can reciprocate it.

“Better?” she grumbles, tucking the device into her pocket.

I nod but ask, “Is that really your name?”

“Yes.” She holds up the cup.

After swallowing the pills and more water, I ask one more question. “Am I really on Pantelleria Island?”

“You are,” she confirms, and I relax into the bed. If she’s not lying, then I can be sure Donato will come for me. And he won’t stop until I’m safe again. I smile as she leaves the room with a confused look on her face.

CHAPTER 4

DONATO

Maso and I enter the gates of the institution, and from the outside, it appears welcoming, inviting, even, with potted plants, stone statues, and a fountain in the driveway. Inside, however, is another story. From what we've heard over the years, it's where people from all over the world send those they want to disappear. Which leaves me to wonder what the fuck Bella is doing here. Because, for damn sure, as much as I dislike Lude Vella, he is fond of his wife. I know, in my gut, that he'd never do anything to purposely harm her.

Since we've been unable to reach Lude, and his brother, Natan, has no fucking clue where he is, I'm led to believe they're both here and in a shit-ton of trouble. I'm also now thinking he's the one who sent the message from Bella's phone.

"Bria swears she's been getting these feelings for days. Like echoes of Bella's voice calling out for help. She thought it was just because she missed her twin." Maso growls, more aggravated than I've ever seen him.

"We'll get her." There's no other option.

Considering the danger our family is in at home, Maso and I opted to come alone. Santi, Domino, and Pace were pissed, but the desire to keep the women and children safe overrode everything else.

So here we are, strapped to the nines, not willing to leave without Bella and information on Lude's whereabouts. Natan is on his way, as well, but we're not waiting on him. Not if we don't have to.

"Here we go," I mutter as we jog up the steps leading inside to what looks like a typical hospital—signs about mental health and warnings of the dangers of self-medicating line the walls. Windows are large and offer natural light.

The receptionist smiles behind the front desk as she greets us. "How can I help you?"

I hear Maso's teeth grinding as he stays back a few feet, so I put on a charming smile and lean against the counter. "I'm looking for Marissa Silva; she's a nurse here."

Her smile falters slightly as she looks between us. "Can I have your name, please?"

"Donato Cardarelli." She swallows, and I know she recognizes who I am.

"One moment." She's less welcoming now and more apprehensive as she picks up a phone and speaks quietly into it after a few moments. "The nurse is on her way." She waves over to a few chairs, but I don't bother. I'm not here to get comfortable.

Joining Maso, I notice his eyes are fixed down the hallway. “There are bars across the doors,” he comments.

Following his gaze, I see it further down the hall. If you weren’t looking for it, you’d miss it. The doors are barred shut from the outside. “There were no windows on that side of the building, either.” Which is an even scarier thought if Bella is locked in one of those rooms.

“Mr. Cardarelli,” a silky voice calls from behind. Turning, I see that the woman is tall, close to six feet, with long dark hair and narrowed eyes. “I’m Marissa Silva. How can I help you?”

I share a look with Maso, and he wanders around the room, pretending to read the posters on the walls. “I’m looking for my fiancée and was informed she’s being held here against her will.”

She gives a strained laugh. “We don’t hold patients against their will. It’s strictly voluntary.”

“That so?” She nods. “So, when she called her sister and said she wanted to leave, she should be free to go?”

“Of course.” Her eyes scrutinize me, her anger plain to see now.

“Great. Go get Bella Marino-Vella, and we’ll be out of your hair.” Her eyes widen in shock, and her jaw slackens before she can recover.

“I’m afraid I can’t do that.”

“That’s not voluntary then,” I interrupt, as Maso gets behind the desk and quietly grabs a key pass and a ring of

keys. The receptionist is too busy watching me and Marissa to notice him.

“Lude Vella is the one who checked her in. Only he can check her out.” Her arms cross defensively.

“That’s not what you said.” Her eyes roll, and her mouth opens to speak, but I don’t give her the chance. “You can give me Bella, or I can make your life hell.” I find the longer I’m prevented from seeing my woman, the more my conscience slacks on this torture and murder shit. The idea of killing Marissa isn’t as abhorrent as it would have been a month ago. “And while you’re at it, I’ll be taking Lude Vella as well.”

Her eyes flare minutely, and I know I’ve got her. They have Lude, but they’re going to deny it. “I don’t know what you’re talking about, but I’m afraid I will have to ask you to leave now.”

“Listen, Marissa.” I try to remain civil, but I’m growing irritated. “I don’t have time for these fucking games. You give me Bella and Lude, or I rip this place apart. You know my name, who my family is...do you really want to test me on this?”

Her jaw clenches, and anger narrows her eyes as her nails dig into her biceps. “I’ll have to get Dr. Aimes on the line.” She moves to reach for the phone, but Maso grabs her wrists and zip-ties them behind her back, same as the receptionist.

“Not happening, lady. My wife is distressed enough; she just wants her sister back,” he growls in her ear as he drags her behind the desk and fastens the women together.

“Where are they?” I shout as I lean over, grinning when I get a look at them. “It’s not nice when someone takes away your freedom, is it?” They both remain silent. “Alright, but don’t say I didn’t warn you.” I shrug as Maso takes the nurse’s badge and keys, and we split up in opposite directions.

Opening the first few doors, I find the rooms empty, but when I come upon the barred ones, I take a deep breath because instinct tells me nothing good will come from opening this door or any other after it. Unlocking the bar, I push it open and shove the door to find a young woman strapped to the bed.

“Jesus,” I hiss. She can’t be more than sixteen. I hear Maso echo some of the same sentiments in my Bluetooth as he does the same. “We’re going to need more help,” I tell him.

“Who are you?” Her voice is clear, and her eyes alert, so I don’t think she’s drugged.

“My name is Donato Cardarelli.”

“I wanna go home.” Her voice is watery.

“What’s your name?” I ask as I begin untying her restraints.

“Clara Todd.”

“I’m going to need your help, Clara. I’m looking for my woman. She was forced here in the last week or so, but there are a lot of people who don’t belong here.” She nods as she sits up in the bed, rubbing her wrists. “I’m going to be moving fast, opening doors, so I need you to unbind everyone you can and tell them to do the same. Can you do that?”

“I can.” She stands, and we begin to walk towards the door.

“Do you know what Dr. Aimes looks like?” She visibly shudders at the mention.

“He’s a vile man. We were on vacation in Spain, and my parents took me to him.” Sadness washes over her youthful features. “I was in a car accident with my friends a few months ago; my best friend died, and they said he’d help with my grief.” Her head shakes, and tears slip from her eyes. “I was drugged and woke up here.”

Swiping a hand down my face, I fucking wish I knew how Bella wound up here. Gripping Clara’s shoulder, I reassure her, “You’ll never be back here again.” She throws herself into my arms. I freeze for a minute before wrapping her in an embrace and giving the comfort she obviously needs. “Let’s get the fuck out of here.” Her head nods, and she wipes her face with the sleeve of her shirt.

Following me out of the room, I begin unlocking doors, finding much of the same as with Clara—young girls restrained to the bed. The stories I briefly catch all have a familiar ring to them. Whoever this fucking Aimes guy is, he’s not leaving this building with breath in his body. I don’t give a fuck what his reasons are for capturing and restraining these people; there’s no excuse for the fear in their eyes.

Half a dozen girls follow behind me as we reach the stairs to the second floor. Before I enter, I hear Maso say, “I’ve got Lude, and he is pissed.”

“He didn’t order this?” I need the confirmation.

“Nope. Bella’s got some shit going on; he tried to get her help. Everything else was executed by this Aimes guy.” *Good.* I’d hate to have to kill the husband of the woman I love.

“He hurt?”

There’s a pause before Maso answers. “He’ll live.”

Pushing through the door, my companions’ whispers echo throughout the space. Reaching the second floor, I peek through the hole in the door to find more staff up here. Glancing back at Clara, I tell her, “You all stay here. There are too many people on this floor. Got it?”

She bites her lip, looking like she wants to argue but, eventually, nods. “We’ll wait for you.”

Opening the door, I slip through unnoticed for a minute before someone stops and looks me up and down. “You aren’t supposed to be up here,” the man says.

Withdrawing my gun, I wave it in his face. “I’m wherever I’d like to be. Turn around.” Several others look our way. Some appear frightened and stand stone-still, while others, the ones who know what really goes on here, begin shouting.

Firing a single shot at the ground, I hear screaming before silence encompasses the floor. “I have six magazines with a dozen shots each. Who wants to tell me where Bella is?” Looks pass between a few before finally, a younger nurse comes forward, her hands shaking as she raises a hand.

“I’ll take you.”

“Clara!” I shout, and the door pops open behind me. Pulling the zip ties from my pants, I offer them to her. “Hands

behind their backs. Anyone fights you, call for me, and they'll find themselves with a new hole to contend with instead."

"Okay," she nods, passing them around to the other girls. I wait a minute to make sure they can figure it out before following the nurse.

"Lead the way." I wave the muzzle of my gun forward.

I'm taken to the end of the hall, the very last door with poor flickering lights and a loud buzzing. "Open it," I order, peering back to see Clara and the other girls working still.

Everything moves in slow motion as she unlocks the bar across the door and pushes the heavy metal open, the rusty hinges letting out a whine that grates on the nerves.

What I see, though...that fucking kills me.

Bella is restrained to the bed, her eyes glazed over and a blank look on her angelic face. Her wrists and ankles are red, raw, and have dried blood from the bindings. Her beautiful green eyes are lifeless, and the lush lips I've been dying to get another taste of are cracked and dry.

"What the fuck did you guys do to her?" I hiss to the nurse who is about to bear the brunt of my unfettered rage. "Find Dr. Aimes and bring him to me." She doesn't move. "Now!" I shout so loud it echoes around the walls.

As she scurries off, I communicate to Maso, "Second floor, west wing, the end of the hall." He responds, but I don't hear him as I enter the room, approaching Bella quietly so I don't startle her.

“*Cara mia*, what did they do to you?” Stroking a finger down her cheek, her unfocused gaze attempts to capture me as a lone tear slides down her temple.

“Are you real?” she whispers, and my legs give out. Dropping to the hard floor next to her bed, I cup her face, caressing the apples of her plump cheeks with my thumbs. I don’t know what the fuck to say to her. How can she think I’m anything but real? What the fuck have they done to my precious girl?

“Donato?” I hear Clara from behind. “Someone’s coming.”

Looking back, she’s hiding halfway in the door frame with her head peeking out. “It’s Dr. Aimes,” the nurse who brought me here says.

Unconstrained fury builds in my chest and flows through my veins like lava as I get to my feet. Kissing Bella on the cheek, I tell her, “I’ll be right back.” Storming to where the girls are, I pull out my Glock and the combat knife from my Army days. Staring at the nurse, I ask her, “Do you know what they’ve been giving Bella?” She is clearly drugged.

Reaching forward, she plucks a chart off the wall and flips through it. “It’s all here.” Her eyes widen as they roam down the list.

“Give it to Clara,” I instruct. “Maso, you there?” I’m about to murder this fool doctor, and I need to know he’ll be around to help with cleanup.

“Yup. Coming up to you now. Had some trouble with security,” he explains.

“You good now?” He affirms. “I have Dr. Aimes in my sights.”

There’s a pause before he answers. “What are you going to do?”

Red clouds my vision as I watch him backhand one of the teens Clara and I set free. Raising my gun, I take aim. “Kill him.” It’s what he deserves.

CHAPTER 5

BELLA

Stars float in and out of my vision, but not in the sky. Not the pretty ones you make a wish on and dream of, nor the ones you can purchase and name. No, these are the ones that let you know something is wrong. The world is not right when you see these stars.

The bright white tiny little dots are annoying when you try to bat them away. Pushing them out of your vision is not possible, and they play tricks on you, making you think they're something else when they're not.

No, these stars are not the ones I want to see. Because while I'm seeing them, I don't know if anything is real.

Like Donato.

I see him, feel him, hear him when he speaks to me. But the stars, they float around his head and make me believe something else is happening.

"Donato?" I say his name just as a loud bang reverberates around the room.

That was real, right? It was too startling not to be.

And if that was real, then the man standing in the doorway to my room must be, too. "Donato?" I cry out on a sob.

“Please be real.” My head might be fuzzy, and my body is lethargic, but I see him. I know I do.

Don't I?

“I'm here, *cara mia*,” he replies. His head turns back to me, but tears swim in my eyes, and he goes blurry. “Stay strong a little longer, *mia Bella*.”

Closing my eyes, I focus on my breathing, counting in and out. Exhaling slowly. Inhaling deeply. I need this to be real because if I open my eyes and he isn't here, I'll break.

Whimpering when a door slams, I cry out as hands touch me. “Open your eyes, *cara mia*. Show me those incredible green emeralds.” His voice is so close. So real. Biting my lip, I slowly blink my lids open. His smiling face is before me. I'm not alone. “There's Daddy's pretty girl.” I gasp, and my body jerks at his words. “You ready to go home now?” I don't do or say anything because the home I had no longer feels like one.

Donato gets to work on untying me. My entire body aches as I move, and I wince when I notice the bruising and dried blood on my raw wrists. Without looking, I know my ankles are in the same shape. Surprisingly, this man does not hesitate to pick me up when I bite back a cry of pain as I sit up and try to stand.

Lightheaded, the stars intensify. “I'm too heavy.” My protest comes out slurred.

Kissing my temple, he only tells me, “Daddy's got you.” Warmth floods my body with safety, and I relax in his hold.

As he makes his way out of the room, the harsh lights nearly blind my sensitive eyes. Burying my face in Donato's chest, I keep them closed until he stops moving.

"Bella." Lude's voice makes me flinch away. "Fuck," he curses.

"Don't make me," I whisper only loud enough for the man carrying me to hear.

"Never. You're mine now, *cara mia*. No more running. No more denying us." I can only nod. When he begins speaking again, I drown everything and everyone else out. I need the security he's giving me right now. I need the solace his strong arms provide by holding me so close to his heart. The thundering beat emits a comforting sound that helps relax the tension from my muscles.

Before I know it, I'm falling asleep in his arms, wondering if we're returning to Malta or if he meant *his* home. Sicily was so beautiful when I was there for Bria's wedding. I wouldn't mind going back. Staying. Creating a life there.

Gasping awake, my body jerks upright, and my pounding heart tries to break free from my chest as my eyes adjust to the inviting room. The walls are painted a toasty beige, and the hardwood floor is stained a rich dark brown. The furniture is a mix of vintage and modern pieces, all chosen for their comfort and style. The large windows let in plenty of natural light, and

the curtains are made of a soft, airy linen, moving ever so slightly from the breeze.

My head throbs and my body feels like it's simultaneously frozen and on fire. My heart still races, and I'm unsure if it's adrenaline from everything that happened or fear of the unknown because I have no idea where I am.

"You're awake." Donato's voice grabs my attention. I groan from the quick action as my head spins and my stomach revolts. "Easy." His calm voice contradicts the rippling muscles of his naked torso as he flexes and tenses.

"Where am I?" I croak. He begins to come forward, a bottle of water in his hand. Cracking the top open, he eases it towards my lips, not allowing me to do it myself. Carefully drinking down the cool liquid, I try to follow it when he pulls it away.

"Not too much, I don't want you getting sick." Twisting the top back on, he places it on the nightstand beside the bed. "How are you feeling?" He lifts a hand to my head, pressing the back of it to my flushed skin.

"Confused," I respond, searching his dark blue eyes. I wish I knew what he was thinking. "What happened?" Everything is so foggy. Bits and pieces flash in my mind, but I don't remember much.

"Lude said you were hearing voices, that you were terrified and ran away from him." Dropping my head, my long dark hair covers my face. Shame fills me from the inside out. I never wanted Donato to know about that.

“*Cara mia*, no, do not dare hide from me.” He sounds angry that I would think to try.

“I didn’t want you to know,” I confess, pressing the palms of my hand into my eyes, hoping to relieve the pressure.

“And if I want to know everything? The good and the bad? Would you really keep this all from me?” Tilting my chin up, he forces me to meet his burning stare. “Do you really want to hide from me, Bella?” My head shakes subtly. I don’t. I never did. But I don’t know how to be around him.

A man like Donato Cardarelli is virile and strong. Commanding. He doesn’t need someone like me dragging him down into the dirt. Especially after I’ve done nothing but push him away from the first time we met.

“Where are we?” I ask again, needing a reprieve from his probing.

“Palermo. In my home. Bria wanted you with her, but Maso and I convinced her that you would need your own space to recover.” As much as I want to be with my sister, he’s right. Regardless of what happened to me in that institution, there is something wrong with me, and I need to be able to figure out how to move forward with this illness without hiding from everyone.

Which brings me to a whole new set of problems. While I don’t have to withhold the agony from my sister, how can I let Donato see it? He’ll be so repulsed.

“Can I have a shower?” I ask, changing the subject again.

“Of course.” Offering a hand, he helps me to my feet and leads me to a closed door on the other side of the room. Pushing it open, I gasp at the beauty laid out before me.

Crossing the threshold, my senses are immediately immersed in a symphony of elegant textures and bright tones that give off a refined luxury vibe.

The cool floor beneath my feet is a canvas of Carrara marble, its white expanse punctuated by delicate veins that meander like whispers of ancient stories. “It’s beautiful,” I whisper, afraid to touch anything for fear of dirtying it.

The walls rise with an ethereal purity, covered in the same pristine marble adorned with subtle veining that seems to dance with the play of light.

At the heart of this sanctuary stands the centerpiece—a freestanding white clawfoot bathtub. Its curvaceous contours invite me to soak for hours with a book and a glass of wine.

Directly above, a chandelier resembling a cascade of crystal dewdrops hangs. Its iridescence illuminates the bathroom, casting a soft glow that dances upon the pristine surfaces.

“It’s ours,” Donato finally says, directing me towards the shower stall. Opening the transparent glass door, he turns the water on, holding his hand under the spray until it’s just right.

“Ours?” He grins as he begins to help me out of the oversized t-shirt I hadn’t realized I was wearing.

“Mmmm.” The sound comes from deep in his throat as my shirt exposes my naked body for his perusal. I should be

outraged and embarrassed. No man has ever seen me so vulnerable, but it feels...right.

For Donato to be the first man to see me nude, to rake his hungry eyes across my flesh, admire the dips and curves of my body, I want that. I've always struggled with my body image, but with the tight set to his jaw, the growing bulge in his pants, and the heat in his eyes, I don't think he's turned off by the roundness in my stomach, the extra flesh on my arms, or the way my thighs jiggle as I rub them together.

"Donato?" I whisper when he doesn't move or say a word.

"Just admiring the view," he growls out, making my breath hitch in my throat. "If I'd known-" He pauses and draws the corner of his lip into his mouth, chewing roughly. "You were hiding all this from me, I'd have fucking kidnapped you months ago."

I laugh a little until I realize he's serious. Being such a large man, I imagine he's intimidating to more petite women, but I feel like I was built this way just for him. "Are, uhm, are you..." His penetrating eyes move up my body until they ensnare mine. "Joining me?" I finish lamely.

His lips curve at the sides as he raises a hand to brush the loose hair away from my face. "Yeah, I am." There's something in his tone I don't recognize. "I'm never leaving you again, *cara mia*." I don't mind the sound of that.

Stepping into the shower, I allow the heat to soothe the ache in my muscles and wash away the dirt of the last...I don't even know how many days. Or was it weeks? Time moved differently while I was drugged.

Astonished, I spin around and clutch Donato's arms as he closes the shower door behind him. "The voices are gone." Fear springs forward as I wonder what that means. Was it the drugs that kept them at bay? Something else? Was it all temporary?

CHAPTER 6

DONATO

Pulling Bella into my arms, I hold her tightly as she cries silently. “I’ve got you, *cara mia*. I’ll take care of everything.” Lude and I have kept silent to the others about why she was stolen away to that facility. We’re unsure what they wanted with her, but I aim to find out. Just as soon as I can pull myself away from the lush beauty in my arms.

“Bella?” I say her name softly. She has to know I’ll never judge her. The feelings I harbor for her are unwavering. This woman is mine, and nothing will stop me. “Look at me.”

The anguish reflected on her face is nearly my undoing. “What if they come back?” Holding her tighter, I don’t let her fall when her body collapses at the thought.

“Don’t, don’t think like that. We’ll get you taken care of. Find out what’s really going on, and I swear on my life, nothing will happen to you again.” Her eyes swim in tears before she nods. “Good. Now let me take care of you, yeah?” Another bob.

Reaching for the shampoo Bria picked out for her, I lather it in my hands before brushing my fingers through her thick locks and massaging her scalp. Her gentle moan makes my

dick twitch and my heart hammer. Everything about this woman gets my blood boiling with desire.

“Tell me what your future looks like, Bella.” I know what she wants; what I don’t know is when and how many.

Her eyes slowly open as she gazes up at me, her lashes damp with water and her cheeks blushing, probably because my dick is leaking all over the soft skin of her belly. God, her curves, they make my mouth water. I want to kiss, lick, and bite my way across her round hips and the plushness of her stomach. Nibble on her thick thighs before gorging myself on her weeping pussy.

“I don’t know if I can have that anymore.” Her full lips pout.

Dipping down to kiss it away, I tell her, “You can have anything you want. I’ll give it to you.” The obsession I’ve had for this woman has lasted for months but feels like my entire life. Everything I’ve done in my thirty-two years has led me to this moment, to this woman. She wasn’t ready before, but now that she sees I’ll be her protector, her lover, her safe harbor, I’m determined to be everything she needs.

I suspect that’s a Daddy. The first time I heard Nicola call Domino that, I’d been struck with an instant longing. The first time I looked into Bella’s beautiful eyes, I knew exactly who and what I was meant to be.

“Tell Daddy everything you want,” I whisper, inserting a thread of dominance in my tone.

She reacts magnificently. Her eyes widen and soften, her body moves in closer to mine, and her breathing picks up. “Daddy.” She tries the word, licking her lips before sucking on one. “Will you tell me more about that after?” Her shy question makes my heart melt for her more.

“Anything you want, *cara mia*.” Rinsing her hair of the shampoo, my eyes trail the silky suds down her back and over the curve of her pronounced ass. My mouth waters with the need to taste her ripeness. I know Bella is a virgin in all ways, and I can’t wait to explore her body with her. Discover the things that make her beg for more and the ones that have her questioning her morals, but more than anything, I want to see her face lit up with ecstasy as I bring her pleasure.

“You want to know everything?” she asks hesitantly, her mouth pinched together.

“Every last detail.” The more I know, the easier it’ll be to provide it to her.

“I want a big house with many bedrooms, and I want to fill each room with children. Whether it’s four or ten, I don’t care. I want as many as my body will allow me to have.” This house has six rooms, not including ours, with space to build more in the basement. I nod for her to continue. “I want family holidays and big Sunday dinners after church.”

“What else?” I encourage because I can see there’s more brewing in her excited eyes as I begin to wash her body. Turning her around, I massage her shoulders and back before moving further down her spine. “Tell me more,” I whisper into her ear, licking the shell.

“I want...” She trails off as I slide one hand between her juicy ass cheeks. I could bury my face between these beauties and get lost for hours. Rubbing my finger across her puckered asshole, she tenses but pushes back into me.

Oh, she’s a dirty girl, is she? “I can’t wait to sink my dick into this tight hole,” I tell her, kissing across her shoulder as I push harder. The tip passes through the clenched muscle, and her entire body shudders. “Fucking your ass is something I’m going to take great pleasure in, *cara mia*. What do you think?”

Panting, she leans her head against the cool marble wall. Turning to see me, her legs spread, and my fingers sink deeper. We both groan.

“After,” she pants, “After you breed me?” *Oh, fuck yes.*

“Give me the word, *cara mia*, and I’ll fuck you until I’ve planted my seed.” This has taken a turn I hadn’t expected.

“Yes, Daddy.” *Fuck.* My dick squirts a string of pre-cum across her ass cheeks. Before I can ask if she means to breed her *now*, there’s a loud banging on the bathroom door, followed by Maso’s voice. I don’t hear what he says because my ears are still ringing from Bella calling me Daddy.

Pumping my finger in and out of her tight ass a few times, her eyes roll back, and I know this is something we’re going to love doing together.

But first, I have to deal with Maso’s hollering. “We’ll continue this later,” I say as I withdraw my finger and drop to my knees. I need a taste.

Spreading her cheeks as wide as they'll go, I bury my face in her ass, licking and biting across her pucker before moving down to grab a taste of her soaked pussy. Fuck, she's delicious and addicting. I'm going to enjoy unwrapping every delectable inch of her body to discover what she likes best.

Kissing my way up her back, her eyes watch me; they're not so clouded now, and I see the life returning to her. "Let me help you get dressed, then I'll see what that asshole wants." I already know Bria is likely downstairs waiting, wanting to see my Bella.

The haze of lust clears, and I hate to see the worried look in her eyes as she watches me shut off the shower and step out to grab a towel so I can dry her off.

"What are you thinking?" I finally ask while rubbing the towel through her hair to remove some of the dampness. Wrapping another towel around my waist, I guide her into our room. Sitting on the end of the bed, she watches me as I grab clothes for both of us.

"I'm married," Bella finally mutters. "Lude will be disappointed." I breathe through the anger simmering in my chest. This wouldn't have happened to her if it weren't for him.

Slipping into my sweats and donning a shirt, I toss the towel in the hamper before kneeling in front of her. Pulling the shirt I grabbed for her over her head, I take both of her hands in mine.

"Lude isn't your man," I speak frankly. I'm not giving her up. "I am. And it's my job to take care of you now and

forever.” I give her a second to adjust before demanding, “You understand me, *cara mia*?”

Her eyes lift to mine; they’re dull but pleading with me to make it true. “Yes, Daddy.”

Everything inside of me lights up at the name. Fuck, this, she’s going to be my entire goddamned world, and she has no idea just how obsessed I am with her.

CHAPTER 7

BELLA

Donato slipped out of the room a few minutes ago to speak with Maso and left me to choose if I wanted to wear the clothes he pulled out for me or the ones the hospital had taken from me. The only thing I wanted out of that bag was the earrings my sister gave to me as a wedding present.

Aside from that time I misplaced them at the hotel on the night of her wedding to Maso, and when they were taken off me at the institution, of course, I haven't gone without them for more than a few minutes. They feel like a part of me now, and I wouldn't change that for anything.

Once I'm dressed, I slowly head out of his room. The hall leading to the stairs is brightly lit with wall sconces. Framed pictures of what I know is his family are spread out evenly down the length. Light hardwood covers the floor, and the dark rugs somehow pull everything together. The masculine tone of their voices guides me down the stairs and into the kitchen, where I find Bria sitting with a steaming cup in her hands.

"Bria," I sigh, and her head pops up with a gasp as she rushes to her feet.

“Bella!” she cries as I envelop her in my arms. The brothers have stopped talking, and I feel their eyes on us, but I can’t look. I don’t want to.

I want to enjoy holding my twin in my arms, breathing in her fresh scent, and savoring the fact that she’s a completely different woman since meeting Maso. She’s happy and whole, and I love that for her so damn much.

“I was so scared,” she murmurs in my ear, pulling away only long enough to kiss my cheek. “Are you okay?” God, it feels so good to hear her voice—and with more than yes or no answers. Bria has never felt so confident to speak this freely, and I adore it.

“I’m...” I can’t say okay because I don’t think I am. “Here,” I conclude.

Her crest-fallen face indicates that’s not what she wanted to hear, but I can’t lie to Bria; I’ve never been able to. Pushing the loose hair off my face, she holds my cheeks in her hands and rests her forehead against mine.

I clasp her wrists to steady myself when she speaks. “I’m not leaving you again, Bella. No matter where you are, I’m going to be there too.” I hear a growl, and I suspect it’s from Maso because my sister wants to follow me.

Before I can respond, however, Donato says, “It’s a good thing she’s staying here then.” My eyes slide over to him, standing beside his brother, arms crossed and leaning against the counter, a smug smile on his face.

He’s staked his claim.

He's all but chained me to him.

This man wants to own every piece of me, and who am I to stop him? Especially when it's what I secretly want as well.

"You can't promise that," Bria retorts. "Her home, her husband are on another island. Her life isn't here." As the smile on Donato's face grows, I realize Bria is challenging him. She's forcing him to lay that claim on me.

"I'm her home. There is nothing and no one else but me." He's so confident as he swaggers over to me. Grabbing my hand, he pulls me into his side, and as I melt into him, I realize he's right. There's nowhere else I feel as safe as I do than when I'm with him.

"And you're staying here?" Bria asks carefully as Maso tugs her into his lap when he sits down where she was when I came in.

"Yes." I close my eyes and listen to Donato's heart beating as he reassures Bria that we won't be separated again.

Bella. My heart freezes when I hear the voice.

It can't be real. It has to be my imagination. Slipping out of Donato's hold, I feel his eyes on me as I grab a cup and pour myself some coffee. It's the last thing I need right now, but I have to get myself together. The voice was so soft, it must be a distant memory.

"Bella?" I look up to see everyone staring at me, and I know they probably called my name a few times.

"Yes?" How could I zone out like that?

“Donato was telling us you have an appointment with a great therapist in a few days to truly assess what happened to you and what led you to being at the facility.” I see the worry in my sister’s expressive eyes.

Eyes I see in the mirror every day. I wish I could bring myself to tell them all what they want to hear—that I’m fine. I’d give anything to smile and move on with my life, but there are so many unfinished issues yet to be tackled.

If the voice I’ve heard as real is genuinely in my head, how can I be with anyone, let alone start a family? “Excuse me,” I murmur, placing my cup in the sink and calmly walking out of the room before running to the powder room I passed this morning.

Locking myself in, I turn on the faucet, cupping the cold water in my hands and splashing it on my face once, twice, three times. “Get it together, Bella,” I hiss when I look in the mirror. My usually flawless, tanned skin is splotted with red at my cheeks, and dark circles surround my eyes from lack of sleep and exhaustion.

“Come on, Bella. You aren’t hearing voices again.” My voice cracks because I don’t know if that’s true.

Children of my own.

A loving husband.

My own family.

It’s what I’ve wanted my entire life. Disembodied voices will change all of that. I can’t risk passing off whatever disease this is to someone else. Someone who is a piece of me. I

certainly can't ask a man to stay by my side when I know I'm going crazy.

A soft knock on the door startles me as I contemplate my future. "Bella, let me in." *Donato*. I could love him. I do love him, I think. I've wanted to with my entire heart and soul since the first second our eyes met.

"Please, *cara mia*," he tries again.

Please, the voice mocks. My breath seizes.

"No, no, no, no," I mutter, hoping Donato doesn't hear me. "I'll be out in a minute," I say louder, hoping to cover the mumbling in case he did hear me.

No, you won't. You'll never be out, it says again. *You're going to be with me forever*.

Cupping more cool water in my hands, I submerge my face into the small pool of liquid, holding my breath and forcing my mind to quiet.

"Bella?" Donato's voice is louder as I hear the doorknob jiggle. "Open the door, or I'm coming in." I hate the worry he feels for me, but I don't know what else to do.

Opening my hands so the water swirls down the drain and I can take a fresh breath, I grab the small towel and pat my face dry after shutting the faucet off.

Inhaling deeply, I flip the lock and open the door tentatively. Eyes downcast, I step out of the powder room and wait for him to say something. When he doesn't, I slowly drag my eyes up to glimpse the look on his face. I can't stand the

thought that he might be disappointed in me, but it's inevitable.

"I'm fine," I whisper, clenching my jaw and fisting my hands at my side.

"You're lying." I freeze at the accusation but don't deny it. What's the point? We both know I'm not. "I can't help you if you don't tell me what's going on." He's giving me the opportunity to come clean.

"I'm just tired and not feeling well." It's true. But I also want to be alone.

He's going to leave you. My eyes narrow at the voice. "I know that," I hiss, not realizing my mess up until Donato's eyes narrow down at me.

"You know what?" He steps closer, bracing his arms on either side of my body against the wall.

"Nothing," I'm too quick to say. "Just thinking out loud," I try to recover. It doesn't work, but we're interrupted.

"We've got to go, D. Santi has an appointment with Amalia for the baby," Maso interrupts.

"Go? Go where?" I ask, suddenly terrified that Donato is leaving me already.

Slipping one hand around my back and the other around my neck, Donato pulls me into his body and kisses me so hard he steals the breath from my lungs. I can't breathe as my hands land on his chest, fisting his shirt.

My heart beats rapidly in my chest, and my body melts into him. It's always like this when he touches me. If only we could stay this way forever, I'd never have to worry again.

My lips are bruised when he pulls away, and I feel like he's taking my heart with him as he kisses my forehead and down the side of my face before whispering in my ear, "Be a good girl for Daddy, *cara mia*." I whimper but nod. He knows just how to make my body liquify for him. If only he could silence the voices in my head.

Disgusting. I hear it. *Daddy? What are you, two?* I bite my lip to hide the wince as he turns to leave with Maso, who is kissing the life out of my sister, too.

With a wave, they're gone, and Bria holds me in her arms after we lock the door with a promise to set the alarm and not go in or out until they return. I don't know where they're going or what they're doing, but Bria seems to have some idea as she guides me to the couch and turns a movie on.

He's making plans to leave you already. I hear, and I know...

I know the voice is right. Doesn't make it any easier, however.

CHAPTER 8

DONATO

“About damn time,” Santi jibes as Maso and I exit the car. Pushing off the barn door, my little brother drags me in for a hug before doing the same to our oldest brother. “Amalia is going to have my head if I miss this appointment,” he grins. I’ve never seen him so happy as he is with her.

“Everything alright with the baby?” I ask.

“Just a checkup, and Amalia wants to know how soon she can get pregnant again.” A wide smile spreads across his face as he gets in his vehicle and takes off.

“Damn,” Maso mutters as he shakes his head.

Entering the barn, warmth spreads through my chest, knowing my middle brother is so damn happy. Amalia is perfect for Santi in every way, and I love that they’ve found harmony together, but it makes me think of Bella and the way she shut down this morning.

I don’t know what’s happening with her, and it fucking terrifies me. The voices she was hearing that sent her to this asshole are what worries me the most because I can tell it’s eating at her. And if I had to guess, that’s what happened this morning.

“You can’t do this,” Dr. Aimes shouts as Maso shuts the door, blocking out the sunlight and fresh air. If he only knew what we’d done in this barn.

At the hospital, I wanted to kill this guy immediately, but the girls had already been subjected to so much already, I didn’t want that image to push them past the point of no return. Not to mention, he deserves more pain than just a shot to the head, so now, here we are.

“I wish Bella could be here for this,” I reply instead of rebutting his demand. “She deserves to see you suffer the way she did.” He swallows roughly. “See, I’m big on the whole free-will thing, and what you did to my Bella was not what she wanted or asked for. Nor did her husband.” Much as I hate saying it, I know Lude never would have put her in a situation where she would be in danger. He may not love Bella like a husband should, but he certainly cares for her. He’s proven it many times.

“She needed to be sedated, she was freaking out. A danger to herself and those around her,” Aimes tries to defend.

I shake my head, hands pressed into my hips as I blow out a breath. “She wasn’t. My Bella would never hurt a soul, but you”—I point at him as Maso drags over a chair and takes a relaxed seat to watch the show—“you made everything she was feeling worse.”

His head moves slowly back and forth as he attempts to pull on the chains dangling him from the roof. Everyone we’ve ever brought here does this. Grabbing another chair, I take a seat next to Maso, watching Aimes squirm under our scrutiny.

“Remember the guy Domino brought here the first time? Guted him like a pig, didn’t he? Intestines fell to the floor like slop.” I didn’t see it, but I was told what happened later.

“Was that Dom, or was it Santi?” Maso scratches his chin, thinking about it.

“What about Pace? Punched a hole right through that asshole’s chest when he took Isa.” That I’d have really liked to have seen.

“You guys are sick,” Aimes whines.

“Not really, we just don’t take kindly to men hurting our women. It’s an unwritten rule in organized crime that women and children are off limits,” I explain.

“Especially ours,” Maso adds. “You recognize the Cardarelli name, don’t you, doc?” Leaning forward, Maso drapes his arms over his knees as the doctor nods his head. “So then you knew Bella was associated with us. Hell, her twin sister is my wife.” There’s a growl in his tone now that makes me snicker. “Not knowing where her sister was or if she was safe, my Bria cried. A lot. More than I’d ever like to experience again.” Getting to his feet, Maso’s intimidating stance moves forward. “More than she ever should have, and it was all because of you.” The first fist lands in his right kidney, the second in his liver, and the third breaks his nose.

He sits back down, and I ask, “Feel better?”

“Not even fucking close.” I didn’t think so.

“You ever have something belong to you, doc? Something you treasure above all else in the world. Nothing would make

you ever give it up?” He doesn’t answer me, and that’s okay; I don’t need a response. “That’s what the women in our lives are to us. Precious little gems that deserve to be nurtured, treasured, held above all else in our world.”

His groan is my only response as he spits blood out of his mouth. Standing, I cock my head to the side and watch him for a few moments before silently stepping closer.

“You took what belongs to me, doc. I have four brothers; I never did learn to share too well.” His eyes slowly lift to mine, and whatever he sees makes his flare with terror. “Bella Marino is mine. She wanted help for what she sees as a problem, a character flaw if you please, but the thing none of you seem to understand is that my Bella is perfection, meant to be worshipped as she sits on the pedestal I put her on. You took the light from her eyes, and now, I’m going to take yours.”

My fist flies, hitting his temple in just the right spot so he goes out cold before the pain registers throughout his synapsis. “Shit, D, didn’t see that coming.”

“Neither did he.” Moving away, I search through one of the toolboxes for the scooper I saw a few months ago. “There you are.” Maso’s gaze focuses on me as I hold up the tool. The rusted handle is rough in my hand as I stride back to Aimes.

“Fuck me, you’re going to do it.” Maso comes up next to me, holding the doc’s head in his hands as I peel his eyelids open.

Digging around the edge of his eyeball, I feel the moment he begins to rouse. “Hold him steady,” I say as the scooper

clamps around the organ. With one quick yank, I've pulled it from the socket, long optic nerve and all dangling in front of his remaining wide-opened and stunned eye before I drop it to the ground and stomp on it.

His screaming takes a minute and lasts just as long before he passes out again. Crimson liquid leaks down his face as we step back, and I debate on taking the other eye now or waiting until he's awake again.

"That's disgusting." Maso is looking down at the orb I stepped on. The gooey mess isn't appealing, but it did what I needed and freaked the doc the fuck out.

"For what he did to Bella, to Clara, and all those other girls there, it's well deserved." Every person we found in the hospital went to Natale and Posy Morello's orphanage in Catania for the help they would need and for the underage girls, hopefully, to find a home they deserve. I have the feeling Clara wanted to stay with me, though, and once Bella is better, I might bring it up. I know the two of them bonded on the flight back to Sicily, but they each need help before making any important life decisions.

"What do you want to do now?" Maso asks as he rinses his hands in the basin sink against the wall.

"Bleed him fucking dry," I hiss. My thirst for his blood is unquenchable and a bit terrifying, but it's not going anywhere. Not any time soon.

Bella is... exceptional. To me, she's fucking perfection. Every smile, every sigh, every twinkle in her eye feeds my obsession for her. But she doesn't see herself the way I do. She

is convinced she's broken, unworthy of love, and I can't have that. Not when I've just gotten her in my home.

The plan was always to give her anything she wanted; whatever she asked for, I would make it happen. And the only thing I wanted in return was the ability to nurture my obsession with her.

"Maybe you should take a step back, D." Maso's concern is warranted. "I've never seen you like this. You don't go to these lengths."

Staring at the man in front of me, he is blood-covered, unconscious, and unable to protect himself. Maso is entirely correct. Pace, Domino, hell, even Santi are the ones with the need to create chaos and shed blood. I've always been more level-headed. Clearly, Bella being in danger has set me on edge.

I can't and don't want to deny this need to cause as much harm as possible to the person who held her captive. "Why'd they do it?" A thought occurs. Turning my head, I stare at Maso. "Why'd they steal her and hide her away? What was the endgame?"

"If you leave the doc here alive, you might get your answers," Maso suggests, and I agree. "I'll call Papa. He's always had more patience for the endgame than we have." The options aren't as endless as people might think.

There's human trafficking, for sex or slavery. Experimentation could be on the list, but it doesn't feel right. Revenge, which makes me think of Peeta Ambrose and the last man we had in here. But this isn't his style. He's slicker, less

obvious, and he doesn't hang onto the cargo for more than a day, two max. Except I already received word that Ambrose has been taken care of.

So what the fuck is happening?

CHAPTER 9

BELLA

My eyes squeezed firmly shut, I'm buried under the blanket in Donato's room. I don't want to come out. I can't face Bria after freaking out when Donato left. I wanted to tell him, I wanted to beg him to stay, but I can't be a burden on him. I won't bring myself down to that level. He needs a strong woman at his side.

Bella, I'm still here.

Gritting my teeth, I try to ignore the pestering voice. I've been trying all day. Every single time I think I've got a handle on it and it disappears for a while, I'm always right back where I started.

A knock on the door startles me, and my eyes pop open, but I don't come out of the cocoon I've built around myself. I don't want to see anyone.

"Bella?" Lude's voice brings fresh tears to my eyes. The bed dips as he sits next to me. A heavy hand lands on my hip. "Can I see your face, please?" Lude sounds remorseful. He's suffering from some guilt over what happened, but it wasn't his fault.

"I don't blame you," I mutter.

He tugs the blanket, and I let him, stopping when just my eyes appear. “But I do. You were so frightened when I found you that I wanted to get you help. I thought I was doing the right thing.”

“You were. You did. It wasn’t your fault the doctor was a psychopath.” Nobody could have predicted that.

“I know. But when I realized they were going to drug you when you broke into hysterics, I thought it was the right thing at the time.” His regret is plain on his face.

“I don’t blame you,” I reiterate. “What’s done is done, and we can’t do anything but find a way to move forward from it.” *I’m trying to, but the voice won’t let me.*

Dragging the blanket the rest of the way down, Lude cups my cheeks and brings his head down so I’m forced to look him in the eye. “I wish I could love you. I wish I could give you everything you deserve, Bella.”

It’s nothing he hasn’t said before. Lude and I have always been very honest with each other. Before we married, he told me he’d give me the world but could never love me. He could never love anyone. Given what happened to Bria and me as children, I was prepared for that because as long as *our* children would always be loved, I knew our life would be okay.

Since meeting Donato, doubts have surfaced, and I think Lude picked up on that months ago when he would find us talking for hours. Licking my lips as I close my eyes, I cup his cheeks the same way he is to me.

“One day, Lude, you’re going to find a woman you can love.” He scoffs but shuts up when I glare at him. “And I need you to promise me you won’t run from the feeling. She’s out there, she’s waiting. She just doesn’t know you exist yet.” I have faith in that. I know he’s meant to love. Same with Natan. We don’t have a clue as to why the Vella brothers are so against falling in love, only that they are. I look forward to the day when they’re both knocked on their asses by the powerful emotion.

“And what about you, little one? Are you going to allow Donato to love you as you deserve, or will you continue to hide here away from him?” It’s not a question and not exactly an accusation, either.

“Something is wrong with me, Lude.” I finally whisper it aloud. My eyes sting as my body trembles with the reality that I’m not a whole woman anymore. I’m broken...fractured in my mind.

Lifting the blankets, Lude crawls into bed with me before wrapping us up again. “He’s going to kill me if he comes home to find us like this.” His eyes laugh as he draws me into the circle of his arms. Facing each other, our eyes meet for minutes before he speaks again.

“Bella, you are a special woman for so many reasons. If this scares that brute off, then he doesn’t deserve you. However, I’ve noticed the way he looks at you. The way he worries over you. And what I’ve witnessed is a man obsessed with the woman he wants to claim.” *I wish I could believe that.*

“What if you’re wrong?” My fear can’t remain hidden.

Brushing loose hair back from my face, his smile reaches his eyes. “You always were so sensitive, Bella. A leaf would die, and you would grow sad. I know the look of a man possessed with desire for the one thing in the world he can’t live without. You belong to Donato. Which is why I brought these.” Reaching into his back pocket, he pulls out a sealed envelope.

I swallow nervously before he reveals what’s inside. I already know. “Divorce papers?”

“Annulment. It’ll be like we were never married.” *I don’t want that.*

“But...we were.” Legally, I’m his.

“Let me give this to you, Bella. You can start your life free and clear with Donato. I’ll be like the big brother you never had. I may not be in love with you, but I care for you so much. If I were to lose you, it’d be like losing a limb. Something I’m not willing to live without.”

“I love you too, Lude.” Moving closer, I embrace him, needing this, needing him. I have a family. One I didn’t realize had been right in front of my eyes this entire time.

“Good. So let’s get up, get dressed into something fresh, and start to put your life together.” He gives a playful grin this time, and I love seeing it on him.

“Are you saying I stink?” I had a shower early this morning with Donato, and he made sure every inch of me was clean.

“You said it.” He winks and jumps out of bed.

“Donato,” I squeal when I see him standing in the doorway. “It’s not, we weren’t...” I don’t know what to say. His face is an unreadable mask.

“I know, *cara mia*, I’ve been listening.” Lude claps his shoulder before leaving without saying a word.

“Listening?” I ask.

He nods. “For a few minutes.”

“Oh.” My hands fist, the crinkling papers drawing my attention. “I think I’m supposed to sign these.”

“I’d like it if you did.” I still can’t get a read on him.

“Are you angry?” His head tilts to the side. “About Lude...” I wave my hand to where we just were. I know how intimate it must have looked to see us like that.

Shaking his head, Donato walks over before lying across the end of the bed, propped up by his elbow. “Not even a little bit, my sweet Bella. You have someone in your corner who wants the best for you. How can that make me angry?”

He’s simmering with rage. The voice is back.

“No, he isn’t,” I hiss. I’ve gotten so used to talking back, I don’t always realize when I do it.

“Who isn’t what?” Donato’s brows furrow.

He hates you. Who wants a dirty whore like you?

“No,” I snap.

“Bella?”

Staring into his beseeching gaze, I recognize that it's now or never; he needs to be aware of the worst thing about me. My vision blurs, but I finally come clean. "The voice in my head. He says you hate me."

"Fuck no." His tone is pure venom. "What else does it tell you?"

Chewing my lip, I fight the words. "That you wouldn't want a dirty whore like me." This time, I can't stop the tears from trekking down my cheeks.

"Christ, Bella. You're not that or any other crude fucking name. Lude was right when he said you were special. I knew it from the second I saw your picture. I felt it deep inside my soul." He brushes a tear away with his thumb. "When I met you, heard you laugh at my stupid jokes, saw your stunning smile, I knew without a doubt that I was in love with you. There is nothing on the face of the planet that could ever change my mind."

"I don't understand why this is happening to me." I wish I knew if anyone else in our family had these kinds of issues. "Donato?" I flick my eyes up to find him waiting on me. "Do you think it's possible to find my parents?" I'd convinced myself they were dead. It was the only way to survive. But truthfully, we have no idea what happened to them or where they are.

"I will," he replies, and it sounds like a vow.

"Thank you." Crawling in closer, I curl up into his body and absorb his strength. I need him so badly right now.

Rolling on top of me, Donato covers my body with his, leaning down to brush his lips across mine as my legs wrap around his hips. “I want you.” I whisper the words I never thought I’d say.

“You have me,” he whispers back as his hands explore me, sliding slowly down my body, pushing the waist of my lounge pants past my hips and taking my panties with them. My breath hitches, and he pauses, meeting my eyes, waiting for my reaction.

“Please, Daddy.” A salacious grin crosses his face as desire darkens his eyes.

“Anything my Bella wants,” he vows.

Arching into him, I close my eyes and savor his lips on my neck, his calloused hands on my hips and thighs. I ignore the voice whispering in my ear, instead delighting in everything my Daddy is about to give me and praying I can hold onto him forever.

CHAPTER 10

DONATO

Fuck. Breed. Own.

The three words run on repeat in my head the more she touches me...allows me to touch her. There is nothing I want more than to tie Bella to me forever, and right now, she's giving me the opportunity.

One I'm not about to squander.

My hands are rough as they drift down her body, grabbing and squishing her velvety skin. Fuck, I love her curves. There are so many delicious dips and valleys for me to explore, and now that she's given me permission, I plan to spend the rest of my life discovering what it is she likes.

"Tell me, *cara mia*, what do you want from your Daddy?" My cock jerks every time one of us says that damn word. Kissing down her frame, I wait for her to respond as I nudge her thighs open. "Bella," I whisper against her belly, biting the flesh until her eyes open.

"You bit me," she accuses, staring at the red mark I left behind.

I do it again, and she gasps. "I'm going to keep doing it. There's just so damn much of you to touch and taste." A flush

tints her cheeks. I know what she will say, so I cut her off. “Don’t even fucking think it. You’re perfect exactly as you are.” Her eyes close again, and she takes a deep breath before nodding her head. “Now, tell me what you want from me.”

Her mouth opens and closes a few times before she finally sighs, “Everything.”

“I’ll give it to you,” I promise as I dip my head between her thighs, placing kisses along the inside, loving the heat flowing off her pussy in waves of need.

Already, I can see how wet she is for me, how much she wants everything I’m doing. I’ve always been a man of action, so pleasing her is entirely my pleasure.

Opening my mouth over her untried cunt, I run my tongue up her folds and flick at her clit. Her legs tense, and a loud moan escapes her parted lips. “Daddy.” Electric shivers race down my spine at her reaction.

Kissing her pussy tenderly, I enjoy teasing her by avoiding the one place she wants my tongue most. “You taste like ripe peaches. Sweet with a hint of tang.” I could become addicted. Hell, I already am.

“More, Daddy, please.” I love the way her voice catches as she begs. Shaking my head as her hips move up, searching for the friction she needs, I kiss her swollen pearl.

Her fingers brush through my hair, holding me closer while trying to pull me away, and I grin. She’s such a greedy girl for Daddy. Using my tongue, I shower her with pleasure,

showing her exactly how I feel about being her man, making her curious about the things I crave doing to her.

My mouth and face are soaked with her juices, and still, I somehow need more. Slipping a finger into her tight heat, she cries out again. Her head moves side to side as she pumps her hips into the air towards me, shaking in my hold.

When I feel her fingers clenching my hair, tugging on the strands, I know she's closer. Ecstasy rushes to the surface, and I'm dying to hear her scream out her need for me. Burying my face between her thighs, I hold her hips roughly, hoping she'll bruise, and suck on her little nub.

Her body responds, pulsing and shaking as she cries out in orgasm, the noises echoing around the room like our own little sexual symphony.

“Look at Daddy,” I demand. I need her eyes, I need to know she's with me. She gasps when I begin kissing my way back up her body. Pushing her shirt up and giving a suckle to each erect nipple, grazing the sensitive buds with my teeth before pulling away, taking her lips, and allowing her to taste herself. “You're fucking delicious, *cara mia*.”

Molding us to each other, I move down her neck, nibbling along the column, leaving love bites until I reach the sensitive spot behind her ear. And that's when I hear it.

Dirty fucking whore. He wants to vomit from your taste.

If it weren't for the way her body tensed and she whimpered, I'd think it was my own imagination.

Leaning up, I catch the tears in her eyes before she closes them and forces herself to relax under me. I couldn't have heard that right. *Right?* If the voices are in her head, then why the fuck did I just hear it? What the fuck is going on?

“You're fucking addictive, *cara mia*. I could eat your pussy for days, weeks, as long as you'll let me.” Her eyes flare with surprise, and I know I'm correct in what I heard—which raises my suspicions because that's not a voice in her head, it's a voice in her ear.

And that is something I can fix. *I will fix.*

“Donato?” I lift up to look into her soulful eyes. The tears still swim, the self-loathing ever present, but behind that, I see her. I see my sweet Bella, who is desperate to accept everything I'm telling her.

“Yeah, *cara mia?*” Kissing along her cheeks—the round little apples that look ripe as a baby's bottom when she smiles so big she can't contain it—I move to nip at her jaw and hover over her lips.

“Why did you say that?” She licks her lips, and I groan when I feel her tongue across mine, too.

“Because I mean it, and I need you to know that I find every curvy, lush inch of you desirable, and there isn't a damn thing in the world that will change my mind.” The vehemence in my voice is coated with menace because I suspect whoever bugged her earrings can also hear what she does. And I'm convinced it's the earrings. It's the only damn thing that makes a lick of sense.

“Y-you do?” Her stuttering is adorable.

“*Cara mia*, if you want me to prove it to you again, just ask Daddy. I’ll never deny you.” A haze of lust intensifies her emerald eyes, and I could drown in them.

“Could, uh...could, we...” She grows shy. Closing her eyes, the words rush out in one spurt of breath. “Could we do more than that?” Her hands move up and down my sides, unleashing a yearning to claim this woman in the most visceral way possible.

Nuzzling her neck again, I kiss up her throat and settle right behind her ear. “Tonight, I’m going to ravish you. I’m going to bring you to heights of pleasure you’ve never even dreamed of, and just when you don’t think you can take anymore, I’m going to have you begging for it.”

He’s lying. See how he’s not doing it right now when you’re begging like a slut? He wants nothing to do with you.

I’m going to find this asshole and fucking kill him. What I did to Aimes will be nothing compared to how this fucker suffers.

“We need to fucking talk,” I growl at Maso, Lude, and Santi as I enter the kitchen. “Where’s Pace?” I know for a fact he’s going to enjoy this one. “What?” I snap when Santi and Maso share a look.

“Isabel went into labor, and there’s a few complications. She needs him there,” Santi explains.

“Is she okay? The baby? What can we do?” Nothing will take the wind out of my sails faster than hearing that someone I love is hurting. Isabel wormed her way into my heart the minute I watched her standing up to marry my little brother.

“Nothing.” Maso shakes his head. “Domino and Nicola are with them. Amalia is going once Mama takes the baby. We’re here to help you and Bella, and it sounds like you’re about ready to go to war.” He raises a brow in question.

“Someone planted a device in her earrings. It’s why she’s hearing voices. None of it is in her head,” I spit out. I’m so fucking pissed.

“Are you fucking serious?” Lude explodes out of his chair. “When the hell would they have done that? Nobody has access to her.”

“She never takes them off.” Bria’s quiet voice from behind makes me turn. Her face shows distress as she pads over to her husband. Maso is quick to pull her into his arms and kiss her.

“Where is she?” Bria nods behind me, and I turn again. Bella stands in the entryway, swamped in one of my sweaters, a tight pair of black leggings, and thick socks. Holding out a hand for her, she reaches for me.

“What’s going on?” she asks, her trusting gaze staring up at me. I catch Santi writing a quick note on some paper as Maso takes Bria over to the kettle to turn it on and make some noise.

As Santi hands the paper to Bella, fear immediately distorts her face. “Sit,” I instruct her. “You need to eat.”

Her head shakes as she takes the earrings out. “I’m not hungry.”

“*Cara mia.*” I kneel in front of her as Santi collects the jewelry. “You need to eat for me. I need to take care of you.” Leaning forward, I whisper in her ear, “We’ll talk about everything later. For now, whoever that is has to believe we don’t know about what’s going on.”

Inhaling deeply, she finally nods and asks for some bread and olive oil. The tea kettle whistles, and Bria starts talking about the tea collection in my cupboard to find out which one Bella would like before diving into news about Isabel and the baby.

“Isa’s having the baby?” Bella’s excitement is uncontainable. “Can we go see her?” Her hopeful eyes land on me as I’m warming up the bread.

“In the morning, we will, but you have your appointment tomorrow afternoon, too.” The reminder is like a bucket of cold water being poured on her.

“Right.” I hate the dejected look on her face.

Bringing the comforting drink and bread to her, I lean down to kiss her cheek. “As soon as we’ve had breakfast, I’ll take you to see Isabel; hopefully, she’ll be ready for visitors by then.”

“Hopefully, Pace will,” Maso snorts, and Bria giggles, making Bella frown.

“Pace is more than obsessed with his young wife,” Bria explains to her. “If he doesn’t think she’s ready, he won’t

allow it, no matter what the doctors say.”

Silence falls around the room as Lude and I silently fume over the hell Bella has been under. Someone deliberately set out to torment her like this, and while I’m determined to get to the bottom of it, I don’t like that she’s currently hurting or what we’ll have to do in order to resolve this. Because the bottom line is, she might have to put the earrings back in, and that’s the last fucking thing I want for her.

CHAPTER 11

BELLA

I'm waiting for the other shoe to drop. That shoe being Donato asking me to put the earrings back in, to hear the voice again. To listen to it spew its hate towards me. I know he and his brothers stayed up most of the night trying to trace who is doing this to me.

A package was dropped off at Lude's home early this morning, and while I know the message was cryptic, nobody has told me what it is. I'm in the dark, and I can't stand it.

"Bella?" Dr. Rose looks at me with her kind smile and understanding eyes. I'm not convinced the voices I've been hearing aren't in my head. I worry that Donato was just looking for an excuse to make me believe I'm normal.

"What did you ask?" I was so lost in my own thoughts, I hadn't heard her.

"I asked how long you've been hearing the voices." I know Donato and Lude spoke with her before she came in. To explain their findings and what happened with the last therapist I saw.

"Shortly after my sister's wedding." My eyes slide to the window. "The second one to Maso. She's so in love with him."

The memory of the first time I saw them together flashes through my mind, and I can't help but smile. It was so heart-warming to see someone love Bria for who she is. To see the beauty under all the trauma.

“You're happy for her.” I nod. “You weren't jealous at the time?”

I frown deeply as I look at her again. “Why would I be jealous?”

“Because she found what you've been looking for.” Dr. Rose is blunt; I like that about her.

“I could have had that with Lude,” I defend. *I could have.* He was so patient with me. He'd have given me the world.

Just not love, my conscience points out.

“But you don't. You've been married for a while now, and you've admitted to never being intimate with each other. You said it felt more like a duty than a relationship.” I did say that.

To Lude.

“He told you?” I twist my hands together, staring back out the window.

“He and Donato told me a few things they didn't think you'd be upfront about. They were worried you would be embarrassed.” I see her lean forward from the corner of my eye. “Donato also told me you think the voices are real and not mechanically planted. Why do you think that?”

“I never told him that.” I was careful to keep it to myself, not wanting to burst his bubble.

“I have the sense he can read you like an open book.” She seems pleased by that. “The man is very much in love with you. Voices or not, he’s the real deal.”

“You know what happened to Bria?” She nods. “How we were brought to the church?” Another nod. “I don’t know if my parents are dead or alive. For years, I’d convinced myself they weren’t alive because it was easier than believing they sold us off. But what if they are, and one or both of them have a mental illness, and this is hereditary? What if it *is* real?”

“That’s a valid fear. But let me ask you this: what if it’s just what Donato has discovered? What if you’re trying to convince yourself it’s real because you’re afraid of how Donato makes you feel?” I fidget a bit at her theory. “You told me you’ve had strong feelings for him since your first encounter. Do you think it’s possible you’re afraid he’s going to abandon you like your parents might have?”

I stare silently at Dr. Rose for so long that tears begin sliding down my cheeks. In truth, I hadn’t thought of that. It never crossed my mind, but with the way my heart is pounding, I think it might be true.

“What if he does? Then I have nothing,” I murmur.

“I don’t believe that for a second. From the sounds of it, Lude Vella considers you family. He made it very clear earlier that he will always be in your life. And you have Bria and Isabel; I doubt either of them will let you go, not now that all three of you are free.” She sounds so convincing.

“My whole life, I’ve wanted a family of my own. I think I blocked out a lot of my past before the church, but I remember

my parents were in love. I've always wanted that."

"So take it. Grab it with both hands, and don't let go. Your happiness, your desired family are not dependent on a man, Bella. That's your choice, and there are so many options if things with Donato don't work out." She reaches out a hand to cover one of mine. "But Bella, that doesn't mean you should hide from your feelings for him. Don't run because of fear. Talk it out. Ask him straight out what it is he wants from you, what his expectations are in this relationship, and then tell him what you want as well. Honesty is so important."

Everything she's saying makes so much sense, but the fear simmers just below the surface that I'll never be good enough for love. How can I expect Donato to stick around when I always feel like I'm about to run?

Silence is...loud. I've never realized that before. When everything goes quiet, you tune into all the little sounds around you.

Wheels spinning on the pavement. Horns blaring. The wind as it whooshes through like waves. Talking, not the conversation, but the voices. Clanking of dishes as we pass cafes. And breathing.

How did I never register how loud breathing was before? I can hear every inhale and exhale from me, Donato, and Lude as we drive to the hospital to see Isabel and the new baby.

A baby.

I try not to let the jealousy eat at me, the envy settle in my belly.

I imagined that I would have one by now. I was so excited when Lude came to me to start planning our wedding. Anticipation fizzled the closer we got to our wedding night, however. By the time we said I do, I knew we'd never be intimate.

It never felt right with him, and I fooled myself into believing it could be.

Donato, on the other hand... Maybe Dr. Rose was correct. If I stop running from all that I fear, I genuinely could have the life I want. Marriage, babies, love, he could give me everything, and in return, I could give him the same.

I think.

I hope.

I feel ready.

After holding Amalia and Santi's sweet infant this morning, my body was primed to have it all for myself. However, as soon as he was out of my arms, the crippling fear and insecurity came rushing back.

"What do you want with me, Donato?" I blurt out.

"What?" He startles, swerving slightly before correcting and glancing at me in the mirror.

"In our life, if we have one...together...what do you expect?" I'm doing this wrong, but it's too late to stop now.

I notice him glance at Lude, who holds his hands up like he's saying don't ask me. "You sure you want to have this conversation now?" He turns his head to look at me as we're stopped at a light. I assure him that I do. Horns blare when the light turns green, and he doesn't move.

"Everything. I have every intention of fucking you so thoroughly tonight that you'll be bred with my baby by morning. Marrying you will happen as soon as the papers go through for the annulment. And if you think for a fucking second that I'm going to allow you to run because you've convinced yourself that you're not good enough for me or that I don't want you, don't even fucking try because I'll give chase like a rabid wolf until I've caught you, and then the only time I'll release you from our bed is to feed our children. Because, *cara mia*, Daddy is in this for the long haul, and nothing is going to fucking stop me from claiming you now.

"Oh," I gasp at the same time Lude says, "Daddy?" with a grin on his face.

"Not a fucking word," Donato snaps. I squirm in my seat at his tone. "You clear on what I want now?" His dark gaze slides back to me.

"Yes." I barely breathe.

"Yes, what, *cara mia*?"

Ohhh. "Yes, Daddy." As soon as the words leave my lips, his arms snap out, fingers around my throat, and he drags me forward so our lips meet, taking me in a possessive kiss that sears my soul.

A clearing throat has me trying to pull away, but Donato won't let me go; in fact, he tilts his head to take me deeper, pushing his tongue in and out of my mouth, mimicking sex, and I think I have a mini orgasm because I completely melt into his hold. I surrender everything I am to this man, and I finally feel settled.

“This is uncomfortable,” Lude groans.

Donato slows the kiss, nipping at my lips. We're both breathing heavily, and I want nothing more than to go back to his bedroom, where he can take all my doubts away. “We understand each other now, *cara mia*?” I can only nod and blush at his wicked grin as he licks his lips. “Good.”

“Can we go now?” Lude rolls his eyes. “That was way too intimate for my liking,” he grumbles. “Watching my wife get devoured by the love of her life. Would have gladly missed that.” I can tell he's teasing now, but Donato shoots him a warning glare.

Bria and Maso are waiting at the hospital entrance for us when we arrive. Excitement bubbles up inside me about seeing my friend get all the happiness she deserves. “She's sooooo cute!” Bria squeals as she pulls me in for a hug, dragging me behind her, much to the displeasure of the growling men behind us as we get farther away from them.

“Is Isa okay? The baby?” I ask. The worry I've felt has been festering since we were told we couldn't visit them first thing this morning.

“They are amazing. Pace is so protective. He wanted to make sure Isabel was rested enough. She didn't sleep well last

night,” Bria pouts.

As we get on the elevator, my emotions jump all over the place. The doors open with a soft ding, and I hear the crying of babies and the excited chatter from parents and visitors as Bria leads us down the corridor to our friend’s room.

The door opens, and the scene before me is so touching, so intimate, that it brings a tear to my eye. Isabel lies in bed, baby in her arms, wild hair toppled on her head with a bow, and Pace sits at her side, bent over, suckling from her breast.

Before we can excuse ourselves, he straightens up and massages her breast, helping the milk flow as he holds the baby’s head closer to latch onto her nipple.

“We’ll wait outside.” Maso clears his throat as my male companions step out of the room.

Isabel’s warm smile when she sees us welcomes me and Bria to come further into the room. “Breastfeeding is hard,” she laughs, her loving eyes returning to her husband. “Pace is always so helpful.” He strokes her cheek, love and possession in every touch.

Glancing back at us, he waves us over and says, “Ten minutes. She needs rest,” and walks out the door to be with his brothers.

“That was something else.” Bria grins with a wink.

“It’s the sweetest thing he’s ever done for me, and also the most erotic.” Isabel fans her face as we hear the baby gulping.

“Girl?” I ask, stroking the light tufts of hair on her head.

“Daphne.” She smiles. Bria and I share a look.

“Scooby Doo?” We all burst into giggles. We once caught the movie on an old T.V. in the church, and Isabel always loved Daphne’s sophistication and sense of style.

“It’s perfect,” I tell her.

We sit in silence, watching the infant for what feels like hours, when Isabel reaches out a hand for me. “How was your appointment today?” She squeezes my fingers reassuringly at my shocked expression. “Amalia told me.”

Sitting by her hip, I keep hold of her hand. “It was good. I’m going to keep going back. Dr. Rose has an understanding of me, of our lives, and what we’ve gone through. I think she’ll be good for me.”

“I’m so glad, Bella. When you came back to us, I saw the haunting in your eyes. I knew you were suffering.” My eyes drop; I thought I’d hidden it pretty well. “We know you, Bella, we know each other. Time doesn’t mean anything when we’ve survived what we did.”

Bria places her hands on my shoulders from behind. “We’re survivors, Bella. There’s no shame in feeling anything you do.”

“I know.” Wiping my face, I shake off the mood as Daphne releases Isabel’s breast. “She looks milk drunk.” We break out into a fit of laughter, causing everyone to rush into the room at the noise.

Pace comes immediately to Isabel’s side, taking the baby as she covers herself and burping the tiny infant before

handing her to me. It's instant love. Nothing is more precious than this little girl in my arms, and as I catch Donato's eyes, my body feels like it's bursting into flames when I catch the possessive look in his eyes.

CHAPTER 12

DONATO

I feel her eyes on me as I drive. They've not left the side of my face since I hustled her into the car. Watching Bella hold my brand-new niece stirred something inside of me...a desire, a need, a craving I hadn't recognized before.

Since meeting Bella, I've had one goal: to get her to fall in love with me. I've made her many significant promises, and I meant every single one, but now? Now, I'm realizing just how badly *I* also thirst for them.

The image of Bella swollen with my child has been imprinted in my eyes for months. I never thought about the aftermath of that adventure; now I can, and I know. I need a piece of Bella that no one else has, and the way to get that is for her to have babies. Lots and lots of babies. As many as I can put in her.

The sun sets as we pull into my driveway. My grip on the steering wheel borders on painful as my white knuckles flex. My control is slipping. I can smell Bella's desire, and every time she shifts in her seat, I get another whiff.

A growl rumbles in my chest when she whimpers. My eyes shoot to her to find she's sweating and fidgeting with her

seatbelt. “Get out,” I grunt as I do the same. Damn near body-checking the door panel before prowling around to her side.

When she doesn’t move fast enough, I tug the passenger door wide, scoop her over my shoulder, and take long strides up the stone path to the front entrance. Swinging the heavy wooden door open, I slam it shut before locking it and setting the alarm.

My thundering steps echo around the quiet house as I take the stairs two and three at a time. As soon as we’re in our bedroom, I whack that door closed, as well, before locking it and tossing Bella on our bed.

She lets out a squeak when she lands. I follow her down and imprison her between my arms, settling most of my body weight on hers so she can’t try to escape. Searching her mesmerizing green eyes, they sparkle with excitement and a hint of trepidation as her hands cup my biceps, where they lean beside her head.

“Daddy?” The innocent question has my head dropping into her neck to inhale deeply.

“I can fucking smell your desire, *cara mia*, and it’s driving me mad.” Sucking on her delicate flesh, I drag it between my teeth, gnawing on her like a wild animal with its next meal. “Seeing you holding that baby has me feeling all kinds of things I didn’t expect, and all I can think about is getting you pregnant. I fucking need it like my next breath.” Pulling back to study her face, a dreamy look takes hold, and I become addicted. “Tell Daddy it’s what you want, too.”

Her eyes pop open, and I get lost in their magical luster as I await her response. “I want you, Donato. I want everything with my sweet, loving, alpha Daddy.”

My control snaps. Tears to shreds inside my chest cavity.

I can’t control my actions as I do the only thing that makes sense.

Tearing her clothes from her body, I keep an eye on her face to ensure I’m not too rough, but she’s right there with me. Our humanity has been quashed, and our baser instincts take centerstage. Millions of years of evolution strip away as she lies there panting, writhing on the bed like a bitch in heat, and I’m stuck staring. Marveling at the beauty laid out bare before me.

“I’m going to worship you,” I growl as I drop onto her. Bella’s thighs fall open to accommodate my size. “This time is going to hurt. I need it hard and fast, and so do you, but next time, I’ll treat your perfect little cunt to the eating out it deserves. Okay?” She agrees, and a second later, I slam inside her tightness.

She screams.

I groan.

My dick pulses as I come deep inside her body from first contact.

Her pussy ripples around me, sucking me in deeper, devouring my seed like it was meant to be there.

“Fuck, *cara mia*, Bella, fuck.” I’m brought to my knees by the intensity of the coupling, and despite the fact I’ve come

already, my dick is not deflating. It's getting harder, ready to really fuck now. "Tell me you're okay, *cara mia*."

"Please, Daddy." Her voice is hoarse. "Don't stop." Her wish is my command.

Bella

Welcomed stars twinkle across my vision as Donato begins thrusting ruthlessly, changing angles every so often, and I can tell bliss is awaiting me. The pain of him breaching my untried body was nothing compared to the paradise lurking on the other side.

He's rough but gentle. Demanding but giving. I could never have imagined being intimate with anyone and feeling so cared for the way Donato does for me.

The muscles at my core feel like they're rippling with need. Coiled tight, waiting for him to strike the match to ignite an orgasm that I know will take me to another plane of existence. I can feel it in my bones.

Pandora's box has been opened, and he's the key to all pleasure inside of me. My thighs squeeze uncontrollably around his waist as I float high in the sky.

All too soon, it's there, the overwhelming, insatiable orgasm that changes my life forever erupts like a volcano. Bold, bright light illuminates behind my closed eyes as my nails rake down his biceps, where I haven't let go.

“Fuck, such a good girl for me, *cara mia*. Keep milking me. Take everything I have to offer,” he whispers in my ear, sucking on my neck as I feel his balls slapping against my ass. His huge erection remains deep inside me as he continues to thrust in short, sharp bursts.

Our bodies are covered in a sheen of sweat as his hands roam across my every surface, lighting me on fire with each touch, and I can feel his muscles rippling. I can sense him holding back. Emotions swirl through me like a raging river, and I hum in his ear as I kiss along his throat, biting him in the same way he’s done to me.

His fingers dig into my hips as he thrusts one final time with a primal shout that sounds like a deafening roar in my sensitive ears. “Oh god!” I scream when I feel the heat of his release coating my insides. It’s hotter than the first time. It’s more...consuming.

“I fucking love you, *cara mia*.” His gentle fingers cup my cheeks as he lays kisses all over my face. “I don’t think I’ve said the words, but from the moment I saw you, I knew you were mine.”

Speechless, I beam as he strums my skin, touching everywhere he can until his fingers brush through my hair. His lips lavish me with love along my throat, my jaw, before zeroing in on my breast.

Overly sensitive, I cry out when he captures a nipple between his teeth. “Donato!” He chuckles, flicking the bud with his tongue and drawing long sucks that appear to connect

straight to my clit. Pulsing around his still-stiff erection, I whimper when his hands move to secure mine.

“Just let me love you, Bella.” I’m helpless to tell him no. I wouldn’t even if I could.

He moves lower to my belly, biting the excess flesh I can never seem to get rid of but he apparently loves. “Love your fucking curves,” he grumbles, kissing from hip to hip until he’s lingering just inches above my clit.

I have the sensation of him leaking out of me, and I try to close my legs in embarrassment, but I should have known he wouldn’t let me. “Christ, this blood,” he rumbles. “I love seeing it mixed with our cum.” Mewls slip out as I squirm under his scrutiny.

Feeling his fingers stroking my pussy, I gasp when he pushes two inside, rubbing and massaging my walls. “What are you doing?” I moan when he hits a sensitive spot.

“Sticking my seed back inside this slick cunt.” He leans forward, and my eyes close when his lips wrap around my clit, sucking softly, lapping gently at it with his tongue.

“Daddy,” I keened on a soft moan. My body fires up for more of what he’s doing, but he doesn’t appear to be in any kind of hurry to go faster or further along. His pace is leisurely and exasperating. “Please,” I beg.

His devilish chuckle as our eyes meet has me growling in frustration. “You’re beautiful, *cara mia*,” Donato murmurs, nuzzling along my exposed flesh, lapping as if I’m a bowl of sweet cream and honey. “I could stay here forever and live off

your essence.” The whimper at his confession can’t be withheld because I’d let him, too.

CHAPTER 13

BELLA

Warmth floods my skin from the sun blazing through the open curtain as I roll over to find an empty bed. Cracking open my eyes, I glance around the room to see the bathroom door wide open and the room empty. Which means Donato must have gone downstairs. Or out. *I hope he's still here.*

After last night, I feel the need to be in his presence more than usual; I want him at my side. Being able to touch him whenever possible is quickly becoming an addiction. Rolling onto my back, the covers slip off, and any other morning, I'd have pulled them back on, needing to cover my excess skin... the places where I feel bigger than I should. The rolls on my stomach, the curve of my hips. The thickness of my thighs...I could go on.

But as I gaze down my body, I see the evidence of how much Donato enjoys everything I've hated about myself. Love bites, hickeys, bruising fingerprints, they tell a story of how much he desires me just as I am.

Slowly dragging myself out of bed, I decide against a shower and immediately seek out a pair of fresh panties, wincing when I shift to pull them up my legs. I was thoroughly

worked over last night, and muscles I didn't know existed burn deliciously today. After searching through his dresser, I toss on a long t-shirt and hit the bathroom to clean up and brush my teeth.

The house is quiet as I open the bedroom door and slip out into the hall. A woman's voice can be heard, and I know it must be Donato's mother. Nerves shiver up my spine as I debate on going back up to put pants on, but before I can make a move, the man comes around the corner.

A beaming smile lights his face when he spots me. "Ah, *cara mia*, perfect timing. I was just coming to retrieve you."

"I should put pants on," I whisper, trying to pull away when he grabs my hand and tugs me down into his waiting arms.

Quickly, I'm swept up in an embrace that turns my body into an inferno, makes me forget my name, and steals the breath from my lungs, all in one go. My heart pounds rapidly before he even pulls away, and I forget all about my need for more clothing.

"Come, I have some people I'd like for you to meet." I nod mutely as I follow along behind his long strides. We enter the kitchen, where everyone seems to congregate anytime they're here, and I find two older couples at the table with warm mugs of coffee in front of them and a basket of delicious-smelling pastries.

One couple stands as they see us, and I know instantly that these are Donato's parents. "Bella," his mother smiles

sincerely, and I'm promptly put at ease. "You are just as ravishing as Bria says."

"We are twins." I smile at her.

"Oh, darling, sure, but you each have your own beauty. It's an inner glow that can't be duplicated, and I love seeing you both shine." She winks as she pulls me in for a hug. "These boys of mine sure know how to love you precious girls."

"I agree," I whisper back as she pulls away.

"Come, come, wife, share my new daughter," her husband clucks as he scoots in to give me a brief hug filled with just as much affection as his wife. "It's a pleasure, Bella. Thank you for finally giving this lovesick puppy son of mine a reason to smile again."

"Papa," Donato growls while his father chuckles. The sound is deep and jovial, soothing in what could have been an awkward meeting.

"I only speak the truth." He grins while capturing his wife around the waist and kissing her cheek lovingly.

My eyes flick to the other couple at the table. I wait on Donato to say anything. As he pulls me into his side, handing me a cup of warm tea, he leans down to whisper, "Ignore the old man, he thinks he's funny."

My eyes light up. "I like the idea of you lovesick over me." My teasing is met with a nip on my neck and a low growl in his chest.

"You'll pay for that later," he grunts. Clearing his throat, Donato guides me to the table next to his mother. "Now that

you've met Santo and Evelina, I'd like to introduce you to Joseph and Clarise." He pauses. "Your parents." Silence blankets the room as I stare at the couple across from me, searching their faces for anything familiar. Green eyes like mine and Bria's, onyx hair similar to ours. A dimple in one of their cheeks.

Anything familiar.

Nothing stands out.

"Bella," Clarise leans forward, a hiccup in her tone as she reaches for my hands, but I pull away. I don't know her. She's a complete stranger to me. "Oh, sweetheart." Her cry is... different. Not quite right.

Turning to look at Donato, I ask, "Where's Bria? She should be here. I need her." Before he can answer, the front door opens, and the soft padding of feet running closer sounds before my twin appears in the entryway.

Staring at our parents, her eyes widen, stunned as she whispers, "Mama? Papa?" Tears fill her eyes as she steps forward, almost reaching out for one of them, but then something holds her back as well. "Bella?" Our eyes meet.

Standing up, I go to her, pulling her in for a hug, practically reading her mind. Something's strange. Something feels...off. I can't shake it. I should be elated; they're alive—something we've always wanted.

"Where have you been?" Bria finally asks, her voice stronger than mine would be. Maso stands behind us like a

guardian angel willing to strike down anyone who dares get too close.

“In Florence. We own a little baking shop there,” Clarise says, her eyes pinched together.

“Why did you sell us?” I speak up, my voice cracking like I knew it would. “Did you know what would happen when you did?”

Santo and Evelina get to their feet now, likely sensing the shift in the air, the same as us. They move closer to the patio doors, cutting off the exit, as Donato remains standing with his arms crossed just a few feet away from them.

“Sell you?” Her hands fly to her chest, the outrage in her voice sounding right, but the anger in her eyes is wrong. “We would never. We loved you girls. You were taken from us.”

“Lies,” I hiss, and everything seems to happen simultaneously.

Both Clarise and Joseph stand at the same time, anger igniting their eyes as Joseph booms out, “How dare you!”

My vision darkens, my body sways, and I feel my knees crumbling until strong arms scoop me up. “Bella, what is it?” Donato’s tortured look meets mine, and I blink rapidly to stave off going limp in his arms.

“That...voice...” I whisper, my words broken. “It’s the voice, Daddy.” I whimper, curling myself into his chest just as a loud crash echoes around the room, followed by a high-pitched scream.

“Here, put her here.” I hear Bria’s voice as I’m lowered onto a soft surface, Donato’s face my focal point.

“I’ll be right back, *cara mia*, stay with Bria and Mama.” Nodding is all I can do as I watch him retreat to where the cursing and stomping are coming from.

“Bella?” Bria’s voice slowly drags my attention away from the commotion. “Bella, what did you mean?” She stares at me in horror. I think she understands but is fighting it.

“It was him, Bria. It was his voice all along,” I cry, curling into myself and covering my ears with my hands as the two women rub up and down my back or over my hair. A roar of rage makes me curl into as compact of a ball as possible, even though I know it comes from Donato.

He hates the hell I’ve been put through. The way I’ve hidden away, trying to ensure the voices don’t return. I was so skeptical about it coming from a microchip in my earring, believing something was innately wrong with me. Now that I have the proof it wasn’t, I don’t know how to feel.

“How do you know they’re our parents?” I hear Bria ask Evelina.

“A DNA test. We never would have brought them here if we thought they would harm you.” She’s so angry. “They were nervous. I chalked it up to finally learning their children were safe and thriving, being loved by men who would do anything for them. I never imagined...” This is torturing her.

“It’s not your fault,” I finally reassure her, sitting up. I need to be stronger. I need to take back the control that has

been spinning out of my hands for most of my life. “You couldn’t have known they were heartless people.”

To learn that the human beings who gave us life, who were supposed to love and protect us forever, are evil breaks me into pieces that feel like they’ll be lost forever. I can’t imagine moving on from that kind of betrayal.

CHAPTER 14

DONATO

Death would be too easy.

Prison would be a vacation.

I'm finding there are no options good enough to exact the punishment these two pieces of shit deserve.

"How did you get access to her?" I ask. They've been silent for too long. Tied to chairs in the basement of my home while my parents took the twins to theirs, they've not said much so far.

"How could you sell them?" Maso asks.

Witnessing my Bella so broken that she couldn't look me in the eyes has only fueled my rage. My desire to torment them burns stronger with each passing second.

"I come with news!" Lude takes the stairs with measured steps, but he's not alone. Behind him is Natan, as well as Benito Torres. I raise a brow at seeing him here.

"Benny." I nod my head at the man. He lets out a fierce growl, hating anyone calling him that except his young stepsister. A woman that Isabel knew and was trapped with for years in that fucking church.

“She hears you call me that, and she’ll cry,” he spits out. Nothing makes him more pissed than upsetting the young woman.

“She here?” I ask. He shakes his head. “No need to worry then.” He snorts out his response as he wanders around the couple in the middle of the room, deciding whether they’re worth his time or not.

“I must say,” Lude speaks instead, “when we met, I never imagined you were the parents of my former wife.” I raise a brow at the phrasing, and he nods. Elation fills me. Bella is no longer married. “Had I known, I’d have had you killed. However, what my brother has been able to unearth is quite enlightening.” He hands over some papers that Maso and I read together.

“Pace is going to be fucking pissed,” I mutter. As it turns out, the Marinos were the ones who canvassed the girls that were stolen and sold by the church. They came off as friendly until they decided you were no longer worthy of caring for your children.

“Why didn’t you just keep having babies and sell them?” Benito asks as he leans against a wall and lights a cigarette, inhaling deeply before blowing the smoke out through his nostrils.

Clarise scoffs, “Because those brats ruined me.” I hide my surprise at her easy acknowledgment that she had planned on doing just that. Joseph glares at her confession.

“You know they’d convinced themselves you were dead,” I state. I’m through with asking questions; all I want is

information so I can decide how best to deal with them. My first instinct is to put a bullet in each of their brains and call it a day, but they've ruined the lives of too many people to get off so easily. Neither of them will even cut a look my way.

“How long?” Benito asks. “Twenty years? Thirty?” It couldn't be more than that; they'd have been children themselves. “Did your parents start this?” Joseph's jaw ticks, and no one misses it. “I presume they're likely dead now.” Another tick. He's giving himself away.

Crouching in front of the couple, my eyes move from one to the next, searching. “When Pace burned the churches to the ground, you had to find a new way to sell women.” Clarise's lips shift slightly, and I take that as a yes. “Was the institution the only place you had women trapped?” Her glare could cut through ice, but I have my answer. “We rescued them all. They're either returning to families or finding their way in life with help from the Morellos now.” I don't ask the question I'm burning to. I have a feeling that's the one answer they'll be able to hide from me.

“So”—Lude flips open a switchblade as he stares the couple down—“what do we do with them?” That's the sixty-five-million-dollar question, isn't it?

Crawling into the warm bed behind Bella, I pull her tight into my arms, kissing the side of her exposed neck as she sleeps softly. Brushing my hand up and down her side, I hope to

wake her peacefully. Mama complained with worry that nightmares plagued her the first hour she slept.

“*Cara mia*,” I whisper in her ear, nibbling on her silky soft flesh as she nudges back into me. “Wake up.” I kiss along her jaw. When she finally turns, giving me her beautiful green eyes, I see so much before she says a word. “You won’t like any answers I have to give you, so let me just reassure you that they can never hurt you again, and anyone they brought harm to has been saved.” I cross my fingers that she doesn’t press for details.

Lifting a hand, she traces my jaw with a finger, moving all over my face. Over the lines in my forehead, around my eyes, down my crooked nose, and across my lips until I suck the digit in my mouth.

“We’re safe?” she asks instead.

“Unequivocally.”

“I hate them.” Plump tears drop from her eyes as she sobs into my chest. Holding her close, I try to soothe her, but nothing will ever cure the heartache she and Bria must be feeling over their parents’ betrayal.

“Ah, *cara mia*, I hate it when you cry.” I drag the blankets over our bodies and wrap myself around her once again, surrounding her with my touch and scent. “Bella.” I pepper kisses along her forehead, down her cheeks, and over as much of her as I can reach until her breathing has evened out and she’s fallen asleep again.

For months—since Bria moved home with Maso—Bella has been suffering. Even before then. She blamed herself for the things Bria went through, and guilt has been her primary emotion for most of her life. How she still functions is beyond me because I know for damn sure I wouldn't be able to. No man would.

But women, they're built differently. Tougher. More resilient. We may have the muscle, but women are the backbone of every strong man in the universe, and I'm so fucking lucky I get to hold Bella up as my own.

I just need to convince her that she's free to live the life she wants now, so long as it also includes me. Because there is no way in hell I can ever be separated from her again. Not now that I know what she tastes like, what she feels like. How she sounds when she comes apart for me. No, as soon as I can convince her, I'm putting a ring on her finger, and I'll forever be her Daddy—the only man who will provide for her until my dying breath.

Bella

Sometime during the night, I woke up and stared at the ceiling for what felt like hours but might have been minutes. Donato is so attuned to me that I wasn't alone in my wakeful state for long. After we talked some more—not about my parents because I didn't want to think about them further, and I'd decided they were no longer a concern of mine—we made love until the morning birds began singing their love songs.

Today is a new day in a new home with the man I love. I'm not delusional enough to believe that just because I have some answers, I'm magically fixed. I haven't healed from the trauma of the church or the belief that I'm *not* losing my mind and hearing voices. But at least I feel an optimism I haven't in so long that I don't remember when I ever actually did.

"You're smiling," Dr. Rose points out. "It appears genuine. Might I dare say peaceful, even."

My eyes meet hers as I nod. "Today is a good day."

"One day at a time. I like that." Her approval shouldn't comfort me, but it helps me realize that I don't have to be reliant on the people around me, nice as it is; I have instincts, too, and it's okay to trust them. "What else have you been discovering about yourself?"

"If I didn't know better, I'd think you were a mind reader." I laugh, but she only gives me a half smile, making me really wonder. "My marriage to Lude was successfully annulled." I think that's the thing that makes me happiest.

"Congratulations. What does that mean for you and Donato?" I open my mouth to answer and realize I don't have one.

"I don't know yet." I try not to let it dampen my mood.

"What do you want it to mean?" she asks instead.

My answer is easy. "I want it to mean everything he promised me. Marriage, babies, the whole nine yards." Even as we speak, I know I could be carrying his child. Placing my hands over my stomach, my lips widen in a satisfied smile.

Donato has made promises since the day we met. Before I'd barely spoken five words to him, he was watching me like he owned me. If not for his obsession, I'm not sure I would be where I am right now.

"I think, Bella, you'll have a lot of that very soon." Dr. Rose had no idea how true her prediction would become.

Neither did I.

And I couldn't be happier for it.

EPILIQUE ONE

BELLA

Two Years Later.

“Clara, she’s coming!” I shout as I feel a strong set of arms wrap around me from behind. “She’s growing up too fast,” I whisper, hiding the tears in my eyes.

“Mmm, we could always make another.” I feel my husband’s grin against my neck as he kisses me. “Or two or three.” He’s always wanting more.

“We already have,” I confess to him. I’m just shy of three months along now. I’d found out just this morning before taking the girls for breakfast with Bria. My twin has been struggling with pregnancy, and to help ease her anxiety some, Maso is taking her back to the Indonesian islands she loves so much this evening.

Spinning me around to face him just as I hear our daughter squeal, likely because Clara has picked her up and spun her around, Donato lifts me into his arms. “Say that again, *cara mia*.” I love his demands.

“We’re pregnant.” I kiss him before he can say a word. He’s quick to take over the kiss and steal my breath, making me forget where we are and what we’re doing.

“I fucking love you, Bella. Perfection. I knew it from the day I laid eyes on you. Now, you’ll never convince me otherwise.” His lips brush mine again, softly at first, before picking up and becoming devouring. Possessive. Claiming me in the same way he has every day since the day he rescued me.

Our life, sometimes, feels like pure perfection, but never will I take it for granted. I know what it is to lose everything I love and hold dear, and I won’t allow that to happen again. I’ll hold onto my husband, our daughter, and Clara, and everyone else with both hands until the day I die.

“Papa!” We break apart when we hear the light squeals coming closer as Clara chases our sweet Penelope up the hill from the garden, right into the man’s waiting arms.

“And what is my princess up to today?” She babbles, mostly incoherently, to him about anything and everything, and Donato, the excellent father that he is, listens intently like he has any clue what she’s speaking about.

“Did you tell him?” Clara whispers in my ear as she leans her chin on my shoulder. I nod, and she hugs me.

After everything went down with my parents, it was weeks before I asked what happened to them. I’m still unsure of how I feel knowing they remain breathing, only behind the bars of a Turkish prison.

Clara moved in with us shortly after I felt confident enough that I wasn’t going crazy. We attend support meetings for survivors of abuse together now, and neither of us has stopped individual counseling with Dr. Rose either. I go less than I did in the beginning, but knowing she’s there when I

need her has helped me cope in ways I didn't realize would come along.

It took me a while to understand that I deserve to be happy. And I found it in the arms of Donato Cardarelli.

EPILOGUE TWO

DONATO

Ten Years Later.

Greyer, wiser, and no less volatile when it comes to my family, I watch over the beach with my brothers at my side as the many Cardarelli, Morello, Torres, and Vella children play on the private beach in Catania, as the women of our lives spend the day at the spa being pampered as they rightly deserve.

“Well, sons, did you ever imagine this happening?” Papa asks as he joins us to sit in one of the loungers near the drinks cooler.

“I’m certainly enjoying it.” Carlo Morello grins as he watches his youngest granddaughter build a sandcastle with my oldest son. The two are nearly inseparable when the families get together.

“No,” I finally respond before any of my brothers. “Never saw this day coming, but to get here again, I’d fight a thousand Spartan soldiers and come out victorious.” And I mean every damn word. The men around me respond in kind.

For nearly seven years now, the four families have been coming together during summer vacations because it’s not

only to keep in touch, it's a power move. To ensure we're still the strongest on the islands of Italy.

Too many weak men have tried to take it from us, and every time we annihilate one, another pops up. We will never stop fighting for our families. And that's what our stronghold has become. No longer about fear and who is on top but about preserving the sanctity of the lives of those we love and those who need protection around us.

Soft hands circle my waist, and a floral scent slides up to my nose, and I immediately know it's my Bella. "I missed you, Daddy," she whispers as she lays kisses on my bare back, biting into muscle that has hardened even more over time.

"Don't be bad, *cara mia*." I growl my warning as the other women appear at their husbands' sides.

"Or what?" she sighs with a teasing tone.

Spinning around, I tell Maso and Bria, "Watch the kids?" I don't wait for a response as I take my wife over my shoulder and haul her inside to our suite.

Her laughter indicates that this is precisely what she wanted. And so, we spend the rest of the evening until it's time for fireworks, working on creating that last little life we secretly hoped would happen. "God, I love you so much, Bella," I whisper into her hair as she comes apart for me again. Holding me inside the only safe place I've ever felt was my true home, as she murmurs her love for me.

The End!

Watch for the first Next Generation book in mid-2026.

Thank you for reading His Wicked Obsession. If you've enjoyed the Mafia Made series, I strongly recommend my [Odessa Organization](#) series next.

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WHAT TO READ NEXT?

If you've enjoyed the Mafia Made series, I strongly recommend my [Odessa Organization](#) series. Take a look inside [Anton](#) below.

Anton

The manager of Tear Drops Bordello, our largest whorehouse, continues talking about the week's finances and the girls, but I don't hear any of it as I stare at my hands on my desk.

Hands I swore would never harm an innocent.

Hands I swore would always protect those in my care.

But I marked her.

I bruised her porcelain skin. Besmirched her. And not in the way I want to. Sofiy Koval has been a constant distraction since Petro brought her home. We owed her family for her brother, Vlad's, sacrifice. He was my driver at the time, and we were ambushed on the way home from collecting Svetlana from the hospital after she and her mother were in an accident that killed the woman.

Vlad threw himself in front of Lana and me, and a bullet exploded through his skull, killing him instantly. Hiring Sofiy

as Lana's new au pair was the least I could do because their parents refused to take any money from me.

From the moment Sofiy walked into my home, I've wanted to bed her. I've wanted to do nothing more than occupy all her time, but Lana must be the priority. And now, I'm afraid the time for us has passed.

It infuriates me that she puts up with my behavior. This hostility towards her that she doesn't deserve. Sofiy should be loved, but I can't ever let her go so she *can* be.

If I can't have her, then nobody else can either.

Petro bursts back into the room as quickly as he left after the woman and slams a fist on my desk, leaning forward so only I can hear him. "You touch her like that again, and I'll ruin you, Anton."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KL Donn is a USA Today Bestselling Author of dark contemporary romance, a genre she has made her own with series such as the Adair Empire/Legacy, Mafia Made, Kings of the Underworld and more. As a Canadian author Krystal plans to write a brand-new series called Hello! Summer, based in the beautiful Rocky Mountains of her home province, Alberta.

Unafraid of a new challenge, Krystal loves bringing you stories that will break your heart and heal it all in one breath. With over 70 published titles since 2015, she has many more books planned for the future and intends on continuing with some next generation spin-offs for current series as well as brand new characters in new series such as, Kings of the Underworld, The Good & The Bad Things, and Bad Men Possessing Good Girls.

On her off time, she's bingeing Supernatural, Grey's Anatomy, raising 4 amazing children, and carting children from Soccer, Football, and Ball Hockey 6 days a week. Married for more than half her life, she experienced her own happily ever after with husband Steve, at just 17. You'll find them both at book signings once or twice a year, she's the shy one, he's there to tell you all about the books his wife writes and how proud he is of her.

Krystal loves connecting with readers so please feel free to get in touch with her at any of the platforms below:

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TELL ME MORE...

Am I missing books? So glad you asked! Yes, there are three series missing from my list of other works. The Protectors Series, The Possessed Series, & The Hogan Brothers. Why? Extra glad you asked again!

Because I will be rewriting all 3 series and making significant changes to them. Like what? Great question! These are my only series that are written in 3rd person point of view. While I love writing in 3rd and 1st POV, I feel like now is the time to make the changes and do a ton of rewriting on all 3 series. December 31st, 2023 will be the last day you'll be able to purchase these series until they come back.

What's going to change in them? Aside from going from 3rd to 1st person POV, I'll be doing a complete rewrite, keeping key elements and storylines, but there will be tons of changes, including new titles, new series name, new covers, and anything else I can think of. While I hope to begin re-releasing them once again in mid-late 2025, I'm not giving any dates just yet, which is why you should totally signup for my newsletter to get all the details in the future.

Once the re-writing process has been finished, I'll be looking for beta readers to make sure these books come back

better than ever, so there's more incentive to join my
newsletter too! [KL's Confessions – Newsletter](#)

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