

Connie and Matteo

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RESENTMENT



Aria Devon

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Connie and Matteo

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*For all the cliterati who see the pretty pink swirls in  
those bright red flags... meet the Romano brothers.*

*You're welcome.*

*P.S. Mum - please don't read this one.*

*P.P.S. Or take copies of it to the nursing home.*

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*Also by Aria Devon*

# Foreword

Remember red flags are only pretty in fiction! Protect your mental health and read the triggers below. These brothers are delicious but rough. You've been warned! Don't miss out on the extra scenes in the Facebook group [Aria Devon Author Reader Group](#).

This book includes the following:

Anal (forced), Blindfolded (during sexual assault/rape), Bondage, Breath Play, Child abuse (not sexual, in the past, not described but referred to), Choking, Degradation, Domestic abuse (not on page), Domination, Drugging, Erotophonophilia (lust murder), Forced pegging, Insta love, Kidnap, Murder, Obsession, Partial cliffhanger, Primal Play, Public Play, Pussy Stretching, Sodomy (forced MM oral), Rape (on page both M and F), Sexual abuse (on page), Somnophilia, Slapping, Stalking, Step sibling.

Plus English spelling!



*Oak Brook Road*



One

## Connie



Connie Quinn wrenched the door of her bedroom open with such force that it slammed against the wall, the sound reverberating throughout the manor with a sickening crack.

She stumbled across the elegant bedroom into the en suite, twisting on the cold tap with shaky hands and dousing her sweaty face in the cool water. She took a deep breath to steady her rapid heartbeat and caught sight of herself in the mirror above the sink. Her usually tanned skin was waxen white, and her dark hair lay in dishevelled strands across her shoulders.

But what made her freeze was the crimson splatter of Johnny's blood on her new cream T-shirt. It was the one Johnny had bought for her last week. Bile rose in her throat, and she pitched forward, retching into the toilet bowl. The pain in her heart was unbearable, knowing that he had died because of her, and in such a horrible way.

She pulled the shirt off and threw it into the furthest corner of the bathroom. Nothing would be the same again after today. She felt it in her soul. Her family was destroyed from this moment onward. Dad had gone too

far this time and there was no going back. She had to leave London, with or without Bree. She could survive without her big sister if she had to. Bree and the boys would disagree, of course, but they were wrong.

She ran back into the bedroom, passing the beautiful white piano to reach the enormous walk-in closet on the other side of the room. Luckily, the housekeeper, kept the closet organised; otherwise, Connie would never find anything she needed. Inside were multiple rails separated into areas such as shoes, formal wear, and seasonal clothes. Unfortunately, there was no section for clothes required for a quick getaway.

From the corner of the closet, she pulled out a pristine suitcase; with a golden lock that reflected the light like an ingot. It scraped along the wooden floor as she dragged it over to the 'casual' section of the closet. She pulled on a blue t-shirt from the rail, and threw a bunch of the closest pants, jeans, and summer dresses into the suitcase, ignoring the rows of expensive formal clothes and designer heels.

The gym shoes on her feet would do—better for running. She grabbed a handful of the gold jewellery from a table in the centre of the room and threw it in, hoping it would survive in the suitcase unprotected. It might be worth some money, and god knows she'd need to work to survive once she'd drained her current account and maxed out her credit cards.

Both anticipation and fear coursed through her as she closed the suitcase. She pulled it back into the bedroom and let it fall next to the piano as she sat on the edge of the super king bed. She took a breath and tried to clear her mind to focus on what she had to do and where she could go.

Muffled voices rising from the floor below alerted her to the fact that Dad and her brothers were in a heated discussion. The walls in the house were so

bloody thin for such a huge building. Dad probably built it that way on purpose so he could hear everything going on.

“You need to tell her!”

“She saw what we did. Give her time.”

“Where’s Bree? She should go to her.”

She had to act quickly, before anyone came to her. There was no time for second thoughts. She’d never get away, otherwise.

An orange flicker at the window caught her eye, and she walked over to investigate. She cast her eyes over the enormous expanse of grass that made up the rear gardens of the manor, outlined by a dense forest. Her stomach churned as she watched her youngest stepbrother, Antonio, throw wood onto a small fire. No doubt that’s where they would lay poor Johnny’s body.

Someone had cracked the bedroom window open—probably one of the maids. The smell of fresh grass and smoke seeping through the gap brought a sudden memory to her. A small town in the countryside that she and Johnny had talked about visiting last bonfire night. His mum grew up there, and she’d died when he was small, so he wanted to visit it together. It was at least a two-hour drive from London, but it seemed like the perfect place to start fresh. Oak Brook. Even the name was pretty.

Connie grabbed her phone and searched for trains to the town. Thank god it was a non-stop train journey from London. She just had to get to the train station.

She booked a ticket and texted Bree to tell her she was going away for a bit. It would be perfect if Bree would come too, but she was out on a job. Plus, Bree wouldn’t come to Oak Brook with her. She was far too cautious and would never leave Dad.

But if Connie made a normal life in Oak Brook and showed Bree how

things could be different, how they were *supposed* to be, Bree might change her mind. She'd see how easy life could be without the others' constant interference.

Plan made, Connie's heart pounded as she stuffed some smaller items into a backpack and slung it onto her shoulders. This was real. She was actually leaving the manor. The sound of her stepbrothers' footsteps echoed through the downstairs halls as they prepared the cleanup job for Johnny's body. They usually had other people do the cleanup, but then again the killing didn't often happen in the manor.

She had to escape before any of them came to see her. They'd never hurt her, Bree would destroy them, but how far would Dad go to keep her from running? She had no idea. He'd locked her in her bedroom as a teenager for a month for threatening to run away with a boy, and she didn't dare try twice. That boy left town anyway, never to be seen again.

Unless they killed him too.

Things were different now, though. Turning thirty and still living here should have been a sign it was time to get away. If only she had, Johnny might still be alive. Instead, she was too busy enjoying Daddy's allowance and procrastinating about a career.

Gripping the smooth handle of the suitcase as if it were a weapon, Connie crept down the hallway. The manor's back stairs were old and creepy, only used for staff in the past. But they offered a route to the kitchen and the side door—a way out of this nightmare with no more confrontation.

She desperately prayed they wouldn't catch up to her before she could make it outside. With her heart pounding, she pushed open the door as quietly as possible into Ricci's bedroom; he would be with Dad taking care of Johnny's body, so it should be safe. She dragged the suitcase noisily behind

her as she sprinted across the large bedroom and threw open the other door to reveal the back staircase.

She raced through the door, but smashed into something hard and almost toppled backward. Her throat tightened as she peered up at what she'd run into. Ricci's chest.

Great.

The smile which played on her eldest brother's lips said it all. He'd known exactly where she'd go to run away. The damn idiot knew her too well. He was the only stepbrother older than her and Bree. It made him possessive, like everything was going to be his one day so he needed to act like Dad. She stepped back and glared defiantly up at him despite only reaching his chest, which was surprisingly strong for a skinny guy. What he lacked in width, he made up for in muscle.

"Ricci, get out of my way. He's gone too far this time. I'm not staying in this house any longer." She held his glare, taunting him to push her.

His rough face hardened as he looked down at her suitcase. "Where do you think you're going?" he asked, his menacing voice barely above a whisper.

"I can't stay here anymore, Ricci. You know what he did to Johnny. It's not right and I want out. I'm done."

Ricci sighed, his eyes flickering with annoyance. "He had his reasons, but he shouldn't have done it right in front of you. You don't understand, Connie. Johnny wasn't good enough for you. Where would you even go?"

"London. It's not far, but it's big enough to hide in."

She hoped her confidence would make it past his lie detecting. There was no way she was going to tell him about Oak Brook. She went to push past him. But he put one arm out to stop her, pushing her gently against the wall.

“It isn’t safe to be out there alone, Connie. You’ve been sheltered here all your life. Who will protect you?”

“I’m thirty years old, Ricci. It’s time to be independent. I need to get away. I will kill myself if I stay here.”

“You are always so dramatic.” He chuckled in a patronising way, which made her skin prickle with anger. He was always such an ass. “Fine. Go. We never spoke. Text me when you get there, though. Let me know you are safe.”

Her eyes widened. *Did he actually say that?*

“You’re letting me go? Just like that?”

He put his arm back down and nodded curtly. “You deserve to live freely if that’s what you want. Go quickly or I might change my mind.”

She nodded and rushed past him, stopping halfway down the stairs to look back at him.

“Thank you,” she whispered, and turned to run down the rest of the stairs with the case bouncing down each step behind her.

At least one person was on her side, even if it was someone she least expected. Ricci barely allowed her to date without interfering. He’d hated every man she’d ever brought home, almost as much as Dad did.

As she reached the kitchen, noisy footsteps came from behind her, but she didn’t hesitate. Pushing open the side door, she raced across the front garden. Fear tried to grab hold of her chest, but she propelled herself forward before she lost her nerve. It would’ve been so much easier with Bree. The boys wouldn’t dare to stop her.

The front garden was another perfectly manicured green space, bordered by a high hedge and the wall that enclosed the manor. Weeds, flowers, and ivy crept over the stone walls. Dad called it a wild garden. But each item was

meticulously planted to look like an overgrown wilderness. It was all fake. Like him. Like all of her family sitting in their posh manor while the body count piled up.

When she finally reached the six-foot high gate to leave, she growled in frustration and slammed her suitcase on the floor. Dad had locked it. It was probably the first thing he did when she ran away from the body. But she wasn't giving up that easily. She searched the perimeter, knowing the only other way out of the garden was by climbing the wall.

Between the wild white roses, a rusted ladder leaned against the wall where the gardener had abandoned it. It didn't look like the safest thing in the world, but it would have to do.

She climbed up the ladder as fast as she could while dragging the suitcase up with her in sweaty hands, trying to ignore the pounding terror in her chest. But as she reached the top the ladder shook violently beneath her.

She squealed and looked down to see Grayson, Ricci's younger brother, staring up at her.

"Where are you going, Connie? You're being ridiculous! Didn't you hear what Johnny did?" he yelled up to her.

"I've told you it doesn't matter what he did," she shouted back as she cocked a leg over the wall and threw her case to the ground below. It crashed harshly, but didn't break. "He didn't deserve to be cut like an animal going to slaughter."

"No, wait! Dad told me what he did. You're not safe, Connie. Wait up. Come back and listen, please."

"No," Connie screeched and jumped off the other side—too close to freedom to stop and listen now.

"But he was signed up to a sexual fantasy website," Grayson yelled from

behind the wall.

She stopped for a moment, suitcase back in her hands. There was no way Johnny had cheated on her. He was obsessed with her. He spent every waking moment with her other than when he had to work. Even then, he worked from home as much as possible to spend more time with her. He never wanted her to leave. A sad smile crossed her lips as she remembered him promising to take her away and put her in her own manor where he'd do whatever she wanted.

“No, he didn't. And if you agree cheating is a good enough reason to cut someone's throat then all the more reason to go,” she yelled back.

She ignored Grayson's further shouts as she picked up her case and ran as fast as she could to the main road, which led to the train station.

Twenty minutes later, she reached Ealing's inner terminal; her lungs burned in pain. The station was busy, as usual, and she weaved in and out through the crowds to hide at the end of the platform. A few people glanced at her; she must have looked like a red, sweaty mess. But most people were caught up in their own commotion.

She took a position near the end of the station line to watch the big clock tick down and tried not to stare at her phone. But even that wasn't enough to distract her from everything she'd seen as the noise of Johnny's strangled last breath replayed in her head. Images of the knife in his stomach made her feel sick. The crack as Dad snapped his neck after gutting him would live with her forever.

Ten minutes until the train arrived, and then she'd be free. She chewed her lip and watched her phone. There was no signal in the station, but an idea came to her. Five minutes before her train arrived, one to Edinburgh, Scotland, appeared.



Maybe that would be a good place to go if Oak Brook didn't work out.

When the Scotland train arrived, she waited for the doors to open, walked in through one door, dropped her phone in the baggage area and walked off through another door. Dad would follow the phone, unless he'd injected some sort of tracker into her while she slept, which wouldn't surprise her.

As she stepped back onto the platform, her heart skipped a beat when she saw a familiar face at the far end of the station. Vince Blackstone, a towering and bald man who was one of her father's deadliest men. Although he had never made any threatening moves toward her, his eyes unnerved her. They were cold and grey like those of a dead man, and she had always felt uneasy around him. Her father had insisted that she take self-defence classes with Vince when she was younger, but even now, as an adult, she could not shake off her unease around him.

Could be the fact he's a murderer of course.

She shivered at the memory of their spars together and shrank back into the wall. Others in the station glanced at him as he walked by and stepped away whenever he got too close. If the scarring on his face wasn't bad enough, his entire presence gave off a menacing aura. You didn't need to know he'd killed people. You'd just be surprised if he hadn't. He was looking at his phone and up at the train. He ran in, and through the train windows she saw him stalking down the train looking for her.

*Please, pull off while he's stuck there.*

Someone answered her prayers as a high-pitched whistle blew throughout the station. The doors to the train slammed shut, and it carried Vince away. She closed her eyes and leant back against the wall with a grin. She was safe.

Her train arrived two minutes later, and she jumped on happily—feeling far more relaxed. The train to Oak Brook was an older, slower train than

most, but it was peaceful, and she was grateful for the chance to catch her breath. She sat in her window seat, staring out as the world blurred past her. No one bothered her. No one sat next to her. And she allowed a temporary feeling of peace to wash over her.

As the train pulled into Oak Brook station two hours later, Connie gathered her things and stepped out onto the small platform. Only one other person got off at the same stop, and that was an older woman who potted away without so much as a glance at Connie. So no one had followed her there. She really was free.

She swallowed down an excited scream that was threatening to escape. She forced herself to look around and find out where to go before becoming too excited. A sign at the platform pointed the way to the town centre, and she wandered in the direction it pointed to for all of five minutes before a hill appeared before her lined with a pretty blend of old and new buildings. She smiled as she looked up at the view, a sense of relief washing over her. This was exactly what she had been looking for. A pretty place where she could start fresh and forget about her past. She just had to hope it wouldn't come back to haunt her.

## Two

# Matteo



In the depths of Oak Brook's premier nightclub, Lounge 23, Matteo Romano took one last look at the sight in front of him. A young, naked woman writhed on the floor of the makeshift cell. Well, as much writhing as the ropes that bound her body would allow, which wasn't much at all.

There were many rooms in the basement of his club. Some stylish and luxurious and used for pleasure. They were mainly used by the footballers of the Oak Brook Town FC. It was important to keep a team happy when they were one of the best in the EFL Championship League and fighting for promotion. Especially his star players like the striker, Zane Lewis.

Other rooms had a much darker purpose. They were used for pain. Sometimes at his father's request, but not this time. This woman was all for Matteo's pleasure. The room he'd brought her to was his favourite. It was the quietest. The most soundproofed. And the raw concrete floor was making her skin beautifully red and sore.

She let out a sob as he watched her chest move up and down rapidly. She was panicking. He loved the way her jet black hair fanned out around her

face, and the contrast of its dark strands next to her porcelain skin. A rush of excitement ran through him as he watched her struggle against the rope, and he allowed himself a small smile.

The blindfold made sure she couldn't see a thing. She hadn't been able to see since he grabbed her in the woods and bundled her into the back of the van. She was disoriented, scared, and desperate. He was in complete control of her. As he always was when completing a job. Nothing else would do.

He knelt down and gently laid his fingertips at her soft neck, slowly running his hand down her frail body. She was skinnier than he liked, with fake breasts that stuck out nicely but were no fun to torture. A burst breast wasn't something he needed. He ran his other hand through her hair gently before grabbing a handful of it and pulling her head back. He leaned in close and licked her neck before sinking his teeth in. The woman screamed, but it only made his semi harder. He pulled his mouth away and chuckled.

"Shh, princess. This will be over soon," he told her. He bent down to lick the tears off her cheek. "As long as you're a good girl for me."

"Please, don't," she begged, sending another wave of blood rushing to his dick.

He pulled the O-ring gag from his jacket pocket and shoved it into her mouth. She spluttered as he forced it around her head and tied the clasp quickly. He studied the way it forced open her mouth, taking away the last part of her control so he could take her in every hole and rendering her helpless against him. He moved up to kneel closer to her face and unzipped his jeans. He was already throbbing at the thought of claiming her.

He stroked himself in front of her first, building up the tension and ensuring his hand collided with her face each time so she let out little moans of fear and pain and more tears. She took it well, so he leaned over and

pushed his tip through the O-ring gag. But the woman had the audacity to turn her fucking head away.

“Stupid bitch,” he growled as he removed the tip of his dick. “You will take me like a good girl or else I’ll leave you here by yourself for another 12 hours in the dark. Understand?”

More tears fell as she sobbed and nodded as much as she could in response.

“Good. Keep your fucking head still and take it. Then I might let you go.”

She turned her head toward him, and he placed his dick straight back in her mouth, this time not bothering to go slow. She didn’t deserve his mercy.

He rammed his dick to the back of her throat, loving the warm, wet sensation. Holding himself there, he didn’t allow her to breathe and yanked her hair back, feeling her body and chest buck underneath him as she tried desperately to get some air. He laughed as he pulled back out. She gagged, and spit ran down her chin.

“You look fucking disgusting. Absolutely useless. Here.” He grabbed her ripped underwear from the floor. “You can chew on these while I use a different hole.”

He forced the balled up underwear into her mouth as she coughed, and he slapped each breast hard with his other hand. Implants be damned. They weren’t his problem. He watched as the skin turned red before pushing up her knees and revealing her sweet little pussy. She hadn’t shaved, but he didn’t care. It was another way to cause her pain.

“Look at this, couldn’t even be bothered to shave for me.” He pulled her pubes taut and watched her body tense as she screamed. He let go and grabbed each nipple, pulling them up high so her tits were stretched until she screamed and bucked again.

“Mmm. The more you scream, the harder I get, princess.” More tears ran down her face. She was a mess. “I don’t think your pussy deserves it, though.”

Her body bucked again, pushing her pussy toward him. He pushed one finger inside roughly. There was no need to be careful with her. She was dripping wet.

“You love being at my mercy, don’t you? You dirty bitch. Look how wet you are for me and all I’ve done is hurt you.” He let his finger trail down toward her ass, and he pushed against it. It was so tight, it would take ages to prepare. He checked his watch. Only fifteen minutes left. “If you can take your punishment without pulling away from me, I’ll think about fucking your soft pussy.”

He slapped her ass cheek, then the other one. He slapped each one again in unison and then again. His palm hit her ass over and over until her cheeks turned red and her screams were unintelligible. Her body shook with pain. Pre-cum covered the tip of his dick as he watched her writhe.

“Good girl,” he murmured as he stroked himself again. He pushed her legs up forcefully and sat the tip of his cock inside her soaking wet hole. “You’ll need to beg before I put it in.”

She made a noise that sounded like “no” through the gag and underwear.

“I can’t hear you. Did you say no? Don’t you want it?” He pushed in the tip a little more, making her buck away from him again. Her grunts increased as she desperately tried to tell him no. “That’s better. I heard ‘please’ then. Good girl. Keep being so well behaved and I’ll keep you forever. We could do this every day.”

He pushed her legs right back to her shoulders and forced himself deep into her. Her warmth felt amazing around his cock. She might have said no

but she was desperate for him and he knew it. He pulled a tag on one rope. Her hand flew free and reached up to push him away. It may as well have been a fly swatting against his chest, she was so tiny compared to him. He laughed darkly.

“You’re not getting away that easily, slut. In fact,” he stopped pumping and pulled off her blindfold. She blinked heavily against the light. He pushed back, getting to his feet. “Run, if you dare. I haven’t even locked the door.”

She jumped up, wobbling against the wall as she tried to get used to using her legs again. It had been twelve hours since he’d brought her here, and he’d kept her tied for most of that. She wouldn’t be here much longer, though. Her time was almost up.

She lurched forward to the open door. Matteo grabbed her as she passed. “Only kidding. Why would I let you run when we are having such a nice time?”

She couldn’t answer with the gag on. But she hit out at him, thrashing him with both hands and trying to pull free from his grip. He grabbed her wrists and forced them behind her back, and then grabbed a fist full of hair to push her face down onto the hard floor. The room was little more than a cave, and the rocky ground would make a mess of her face as he fucked her from behind.

He leant his weight against her as he pushed his cock back inside and her warmth enveloped him once again. He checked his watch. Seven minutes to go. He pushed into her hard, letting go of her hair and grabbing onto her sore ass cheeks. She ripped the pants from her mouth and screamed for help as he laughed. He’d soundproofed the room long ago. No one would hear her. He’d made sure of it. But after only a minute, her screams turned to moans of pleasure. As he knew they would.

“Are you coming? You dirty fucking bitch. That’s it. Show me what a mess you are and come hard for me, you nasty girl.”

As soon as he finished speaking, she threw back her head in ecstasy and her pussy contracted against his dick. The feeling made him release immediately; women coming on his cock was fucking irresistible. Their moans of pleasure, the contractions of their tight little pussies, throwing back their bodies underneath him. It was the stuff heaven was made from.

The woman collapsed on the floor, rolling over onto her side, and he sat back himself, panting heavily. The floor had scratched her pretty, tear-streaked face all over.

“Come here,” he demanded, and she pulled herself weakly to her knees.

“Time’s up. Are you okay?”

She gave him a bewildered look, and he chuckled. She was a mess. He reached out and dragged her toward him, holding her tight in a bear hug. The poor thing needed some serious aftercare, and he didn’t blame her.

“Was it everything you needed?” he asked.

“Uh huh,” she mumbled.

“In the request on the website, you stated you wanted to be thrown out after. Is that still the case? Because you look like you need to lie down and be washed and fed before going anywhere.”

She mumbled something incoherent. A lot of the women who requested experiences through the Obsidian Passions website changed their mind about aftercare. They didn’t realise how hard he liked to put them through their paces, not stopping until they were an incoherent, babbling mess. It was too delightful to watch them crumble at his hands. The best part being that they *begged* for his abuse. He picked up the woman and placed her gently over his shoulder, carrying her through to the other room beyond the cave-like room.



Through there was a nicer bedroom that was more like a hotel room. It also had an en suite with a full, hot bath he'd already run for her. He lowered her into the tub. She let out a long, grateful moan and relaxed into the water. He reached over and pulled out the bath tray, which sat across her stomach; laid upon it was a new sponge and some luxurious amber and fig body wash. There was also a tall glass of white wine and a box of locally made chocolates from a nearby bakery.

“Take as long as you need in here. I’m going to wait outside, okay? Shout to me if you need me.”

His phone beeped as he walked into the bedroom to wait for her. Another message from the Obsidian Passions website. He went to hit Decline, not wanting to accept another job so soon. He was busy with his father’s jobs, the football club, *and* Lounge 23. One girl a month was enough, and they had to have the right look.

A picture of this new target caught his eye, and he whistled in appreciation. The woman was...angelic. It was the only word to describe her. She was small but curvy, with thick brown hair that he wanted to reach out and curl around his fingers, and a beautiful set of tits that looked fully natural. He wanted to hear those pouty little lips whimper as he pulled her hair and fucked her from behind. *Fuck*. He was getting hard again just looking at her. Maybe twice in one month would be okay after all. His eyes flicked over to the request.

*Kidnappers wanted for fantasy rape experience. Must be multiple men involved. Restraint required at all times. Gag required at all times. Don't take it easy. I need to be hurt to enjoy it. Would prefer kidnappers to decide in what way. I want to be raped before you take me too. Make it so I don't feel safe in my own home. Orgasm torture is required, either not allowed or*

*so many it hurts, kidnappers to decide again. I don't want to make any decisions. Absolutely no aftercare. I am to be thrown in the middle of nowhere after. I don't want to be able to identify anybody and would prefer my face to be hidden so no one can recognise me. Will allow for one person to place the gags etc on and see me fully. I have one man in mind to be brought in who I know so I know it's safe, and you can choose any others. My fingerprint has been added to this message.*

Wow. This woman was serious. There was no hesitation in her message at all. No politeness or lack of candour. A man she knew? That wouldn't usually be allowed. But looking at her picture again, he knew he'd give this angel anything she wanted. He checked out the name and location. Connie Quinn, and she was right here in Oak Brook.

## Three

# Connie



Connie beamed as she entered Dawn of the Bread bakery at the bottom of Oak Brook Hill—the hub of the small town where she’d lived her first month as a free, adult woman. The tarantula-shaped bell that sat above the front door announced her arrival. The bakery was unusually dark inside, with deep red walls and a black counter at the far end, but the delicious aroma of freshly baked pastries wafting into her nostrils made it feel homely. She stood back from the counter patiently as she waited for a suited elderly man in front of her to be served by the owner, Harlow Miller. He took his time counting his coins as Harlow smiled and waited patiently.

Harlow was the closest thing to a friend in the blissful month she’d lived in Oak Brook. Though she’d had to tell Harlow a few lies so her lack of family wasn’t suspicious. A buzz in her pocket alerted Connie to a text message. She pulled out the phone to check it as she waited for Harlow to be free. It was the first message in a week from Bree.

*I know you need space but I miss you. Maybe we can meet soon? Love you.*

Her heart elated at the thought of seeing her sister, and she fired back a text asking when she wanted to meet. It would have to be in London, of course, seeing as that's where Bree thought she was living.

Though the flat she'd landed from a private landlord was a much better deal than anything she could've found in London, and she even signed up to take a literature class at the town's prestigious but small university. The London universities would've been a nightmare to get in to for a thirty-year-old without much work experience. In Oak Brook, she'd be in the lecture hall an hour from now starting her first class, and the nerves were strong.

The man eventually paid for his breakfast and turned to leave, nodding to her politely as he passed. She walked up to the counter, grinning at the curvy beauty behind it. Harlow looked every bit as unique as the pastries, with her ripped jeans, oversized skull T-shirt and matching skull-covered chiffon scarf.

"Morning, stunner," Harlow called as Connie reached the counter, dressed completely the opposite in a midi dress covered in flowers. "What do you fancy today?"

"Morning, Harlow. Hmm. I think I'll have something different to mark my first day as a mature university student," she replied excitedly, browsing the glass counter for something other than her usual mummy-shaped sausage rolls.

"Oh, is it your first day today? How are you feeling?" Harlow beamed at her. The woman had teeth like a movie star. Maybe it was her tanned complexion that made them stand out so much.

"I'm terrified." Connie chuckled softly as her stomach twisted again with nerves, and she placed a hand there to settle it. She probably shouldn't even

have breakfast. She jumped as Harlow's warm hand reached over and squeezed her own.

"You'll be okay, babe. Everyone will love you and you'll do great. Here." She handed Connie a bagel. "These are amazing if I say so myself, and it's on the house to celebrate your first day."

"Oh no, Harlow, I co—"

"Shush now and take it like a good girl. I'll be offended if you don't accept it." Harlow winked at her. "What books do you like reading anyway if you're studying literature?"

Connie's cheeks flushed as she thought about the steamy romance novel she'd been reading the night before, complete with a fifteen inch, blue alien dick. This one even had spikes. She cleared her throat to cover the awkward pause.

"Oh, you know. Love and romance and drama." She took the bagel from Harlow.

"Is that why your cheeks are so pink?" Harlow was grinning from ear to ear in a knowing way.

"I don't know what you mean, Harlow. Thank you so much for this." She shook the bagel and smiled and then turned to leave.

"No problem. Come back later and let me know how you get on, won't you?"

"Of course," Connie turned back to nod as she walked out of the bakery. And straight into someone's chest.

"Oof. Sorry!" She gasped as she looked up to see who she'd walked into this time, ignoring the panic that came from a flashback of bumping into Ricci as she escaped the manor.

But this man was nothing like skinny, pale Ricci. He was a goddamn

giant and had beautiful, tanned skin and thick black hair. His ice-blue eyes that made her feel like he knew every thought in her brain. The same brain that had stopped working the second she looked at him. She was frozen to the spot.

Her eyes were drawn to a ragged scar on his left cheek. She was pretty sure her mouth had dropped open, because he narrowed his eyes at her as if she was the strangest thing he'd ever seen. Without saying a word, he looked away and pushed past her into the bakery, knocking her a few steps sideways.

*Rude.*

Why were the good looking ones always such assholes? She took a deep breath of the crisp morning air and looked up at the clear blue sky. Never mind Mr Sex Eyes Ice God. Today was going to be the start of a new phase in her life, and she was excited for what it could bring. Perhaps she could even find someone special. Someone who could match the passion and heat that she found in those romance novels—without the red flags or drama.

Someone like *Mr Sex Eyes Ice God*?

No! Forget him.

She grew more nervous once she reached the expansive grounds of the university and trotted across the grass, suddenly feeling small and out of place amongst all the other faces laughing and joking with each other. Everyone else seemed so...confident. They looked like they belonged here, while she felt anything but belonging. Bree would make her feel better. She pulled out her phone to call her.

“Hey, sis,” Bree answered warmly. “How’s your exploring going?”

“Hey, it’s going good,” Connie replied. “You know what I’m going to say, don’t you?”

“It’s so good that I need to come too?”

Connie laughed. “Yep. I’m walking into my first day as a mature student here.”

“Aw, I’m so proud of you, Con. But you know Dad has this big job on. I can’t leave yet.”

Sadness tugged at Connie’s heart. “Yes, I know. I just thought I’d give you a quick call anyway. I’m at the uni now, so I need to go.”

“Okay. Good luck. Not that you need it. You’ll do great. Let me know how it goes.”

She hung up, already feeling better after hearing her sister’s voice. The university loomed ahead, an old structure in the middle surrounded by more modern buildings, apparently funded mostly by a rich, local family that Harlow had warned her about. The Romanos. They were wannabe gangsters according to Harlow. She had to laugh at the thought. They were probably nothing compared to her own family of cold-blooded killers.

She looked up at the university. One thing she loved about Oak Brook was the mixture of old and new architecture. It reminded her a little of London, with brand-new offices squished next to buildings that were easily more than one hundred years old.

As she approached the building where her class was to be held, she spotted a group of students chatting excitedly outside the entrance, forming a queue. Her nerves spiked again, but she took a deep breath and joined the back of the line, introducing herself to a few friendly faces in front of her. They smiled and said hello warmly, and as they filed into the grand entrance hall of the university she felt more of a sense of that belonging.

The hall was filled with people, and their noise echoed around the space. A sweet but woody scent filled the air—like old books combined with a spritz of air freshener. A high, domed ceiling with an enormous chandelier in the

centre hung from above. It sparkled and glimmered in the sunlight that streamed in from the large, arched windows running the entire length of the ceiling. The floor was marble and polished to a mirror sheen. A staircase spiralled up into the air and overlooked the landing in the middle of the hall.

A smaller group of students stood in a corner, chatting quietly and laughing. One of them was a younger blonde girl who looked to be in her early twenties. The other blonde was more Bree's age—so early thirties. She looked nothing like Bree, but it would be nice to be friends with someone else her own age rather than the teeny boppers who were floating all over. The man looked to be in his forties. He'd tied his brown hair back in a ponytail and had a luscious long beard to match. Her gaze trailed over his biker boots and the black helmet sitting next to him. He wasn't too bad to look at.

Not that eye candy would be necessary, but it didn't hurt to look. She wandered over to them casually.

"Hi," she said as she reached them, raising her hand nervously.

"Hi, is this your first day?" the pretty woman asked with a welcoming smile.

"Yep. I'm Connie. I'm studying literature."

"Oh, I nearly chose that," the younger girl exclaimed. "But I'm doing psychology now instead. "I'm Charlie, by the way."

"Don't tell me you actually read books?" the man said dryly to Charlie with a wide grin on his face. She playfully slapped his shoulder, and he turned toward Connie. "I'm Finn."

"I'm Amelia," the woman closer to Bree's age said with a smile, and it pulled on Connie's heart to think of Bree again. "Finn and I are doing



nursing, but we all know each other from an access course we did together last year.”

Connie went to reply, but in the poster’s reflection behind Charlie, she saw a flash of icy blue eyes and dark hair. She whipped her head around looking for the man she’d bumped into at the bakery earlier. There were many heads of black hair, but no piercing blue eyes staring at her.

*What the hell?*

There’s no way he could be here. He wasn’t a student. He just gave off... a different vibe.

But then what did it matter if he was here?

It didn’t. He was probably harmless. At least compared to the men she knew back home.

Who were no longer here to protect her.

“Are you okay?” Amelia’s soft voice made her spin back around to face them.

“Yes. Yes, sorry. Thought I saw someone I knew. So, you were saying you attended this place last year? What’s it like?”

She changed the subject, glancing at the reflection as often as she dared, but he didn’t appear again. She focused on what her new friends were telling her, and after some time chatting, gave them her new phone number, trying hard not to squeal in excitement at making new friends in Oak Brook already. It was the best decision of her life to move here, and there was no way her family or rude Mr Blue Eyes were going to ruin it.

## Four

# Matteo



**M**atteo took a sip from the steaming coffee cup that was slowly burning his hand. The warmth felt good as it trickled down his throat. He'd concealed his identity beneath the shroud of his black hoodie as he hunkered down in the car; ready to drive off at a moment's notice. Now that Connie had seen his face at the bakery, he had to be extra careful. It didn't help that the scar on his cheek stood out and made him recognisable pretty quickly. Not that it was a problem. It was usually pretty helpful for drawing women.

Getting so near to her at the bakery had been a stupid move. A rookie error. But as he'd watched her from the car a feeling he couldn't resist came over him. He'd been too eager to get closer to her. There was something magnetic about her that he couldn't stay away from.

He'd wanted to see her up close, to know what she smelled like, to look into those beautiful brown eyes that he now knew were flecked with a lighter colour. She took his breath away up close and made his entire vocabulary disappear like some love-struck teenager.

Chatting up women was his thing. He'd always been able to charm anyone he wanted. Yet he hadn't even been able to respond to her apology. Though the whole thing was his fault. He wanted to tell her he was sorry. He saw her coming straight through the door and froze. He couldn't have moved out of her way even if he wanted to. Her walking right into him woke him up. Her body actually touched his and caused a static shock throughout his entire being. He'd had to push past her to stop himself from kidnapping her right then and there.

Now he waited for her in his car outside the university. He'd snuck inside once, but it was too much to be so close and yet not be able to touch her. She'd whipped around at one point and almost caught him staring. Maybe it was because she felt the same draw to him as he felt for her. Surely it was impossible for her not to feel it too. So he'd left and stayed put in his car.

She'd given him the strangest look at the bakery as well. As if she knew why he was there. Maybe she did. She knew what she'd asked for. But the requests went to the website; no one knew he was behind it. The women certainly didn't go around telling people. They weren't usually from Oak Brook anyway, so they didn't know his name or face. He'd usually grab them from nearby cities and bring them to Lounge 23.

He couldn't wait any longer to kidnap her. It had to be today. Let her have her day at university and then he'd make her fantasy come true. It would be the best day of her life. He had the men lined up to take her one after the other, including the man whose details she'd given in the request. That request was a bit unusual, being so blunt. What was more unusual, was that this time Matteo didn't like the idea of other men touching the target. But what the lady wanted and all that. He was only there to make her dirty girl fantasies come true.

He slunk down in his seat as Connie emerged from the university gates with a blue backpack slung over her shoulder. She looked around, scanning the area before crossing the road, and Matteo ducked farther despite everything in his body aching to get out and go to her.

Her day had clearly gone well. She beamed from ear to ear. She crossed the road and walked the opposite way down the street. The flowery dress she wore skimmed every curve as she walked, ending an inch above the knee. He swallowed hard as he thought about pinning her down and lifting that little dress up, baring her naked ass purely for him to play with. She'd cry at first, then beg him for more.

He waited a few minutes before starting up his car and following her. He kept a safe distance, making sure not to attract any attention to himself. It quickly became obvious she was heading toward her apartment, so he didn't need to follow her too closely. Though it was hard to tear his eyes away from the way her shapely hips moved when she walked.

He couldn't help but imagine what she would look like when they finally got back to Lounge 23. Would she be eager and willing, or would she resist him? The thought made him ache with desire. He had always enjoyed the hunt, and Connie was already proving to be a worthy prey.

He pulled up to the curb and watched as Connie made her way up the steps to her apartment building. She didn't look back; he guessed she didn't sense that she was being followed. He'd left her a surprise in her kitchen when she was out earlier. It would be a hint, which he wouldn't usually allow. But he wanted her to know about him. She needed to be scared like she'd requested.

*Make it so I don't feel safe in my own home.*

He glanced at the space in the back of his car. He could've done with the

van, ideally. It was far easier to bundle people into. But his youngest brother, Hilton, needed it for some idiot who'd dared to grass on a dodgy deal of their father's in the next town over. Connie was small enough to fit in the boot, though. And now that he'd seen her up close, he wasn't going to wait to give her what she needed. His dick strained against his boxers at the thought. Connie Quinn needed to be tamed, and waiting wasn't an option.

## Five

# Connie



Connie was still beaming when she entered the studio flat, ignoring the strange vinegary smell that contaminated every area—she was finally getting used to it. The day couldn't have gone better. Learning about literature was going to be amazing. They'd already covered different forms of literature and spent time exploring the definition, as well as how relevant the study was to understanding human experiences and society.

And she'd given her number to two more people who'd invited her out for drinks the same night. There were freshers events happening in the university club called Bonko's, a nightclub called Lounge 23, and in a few smaller pubs in Oak Brook. For a small town with a limited amount of drinking venues they sure knew how to have a party.

She kicked off her nude sandals in the tiny kitchen and plonked her backpack on the floor next to them, too high on excitement to care where they landed. Her stomach growled at her, reminding her to eat before she got ready to go for drinks. Drinking on an empty stomach would not make a good first impression. She'd be back at home and throwing up within an hour. She

shivered at the memory of doing just that a year previous. Urgh. No. She did not need a repeat of it.

The flat was tiny. It contained a small sitting area next to the brown kitchen, which was supposed to be the living room, and a little corridor that led to the bedroom. The furniture had already been in place before Connie moved in; including a bed, a grey sofa and a desk in the living room. It wasn't Connie's, the landlord rented it as 'furnished', but would come in particularly useful now that she had something to study. She had to read a short story called "The Necklace" as homework.

The flat would do. Plus, she had plenty of food in the cupboards to feed one person for an entire week if needed. Best of all, this whole place was hers with no worries about Dad or the boys turning up to ruin anything.

The beat of music and laughter came through the ceiling. It was from a party raging in one of the other flats—they were playing different styles of that dance music which didn't even have words. Something she could at least sing along to would be better. It wasn't unbearably loud, though. She could still hear the inaudible murmur of conversation and the clink of glasses over the base. It was the same every weekend, but it didn't matter. This space was hers, and she'd get something better in time.

Moving to the slither of a kitchen counter, she grabbed the cold cup of tea that she'd run out of time to drink that morning and poured it down the sink. After flicking on the kettle, she looked through the cupboard to find something easy to eat. The thought of cooking after such a long day was too much, so she grabbed a tin of tuna and some mayo from the fridge to make a sandwich. She never cooked at the manor. Dad had two chefs, and they were both amazing. It was nice to do something for herself, though she'd be lying if she said she never missed the delicious meals they made.

As she turned to place the ingredients on the small dining table in the other corner of the room, she paused. A letter lay on the table, one she didn't remember seeing that morning. She had been in a tizz, though; it was possible she had grabbed it and put it there without really paying attention. She clumsily placed the bottle of mayo and tin of tuna on the table and picked up the letter. On the back were the words "To Connie" with no address.

Okay. Creepy.

It must be from a neighbour. Maybe the one currently having a party had invited her. They seemed very young, though. Would she even want to go? She ripped open the envelope and pulled out a folded piece of white paper. This was getting stranger by the second. She unfolded the note; the sender had typed four words onto the middle of the page.

"I'm coming for you."

She dropped the note back on to the table as if it was on fire, her skin prickling. Trust fucking Dad to ruin her day. It must be Dad. Who else would it be? One of his men, or her brothers, but it was still him pulling the strings.

Though the note wasn't his usual style. Dad wouldn't try to scare her. He might have written it in a rush, she supposed. Or he'd sent Vince to get her. That bastard enjoyed scaring people. She shivered at the thought of him being anywhere near her. Was he watching her right now?

She ran over to the window and pulled the curtains closed. She then peeked through the edge, trying to spot Vince. There was no Vince, but there was a very expensive-looking red car sitting outside. And the students who lived around here did not own expensive cars.

The sun reflected off the car, so it looked shiny and brand-new. It wasn't one she'd noticed before from Dad's garage, but then who paid that much attention to bloody cars. He already droned on about them for hours and



bored her senseless. She paid attention to this car now, though, and someone was sitting in the front seat. Only their long legs were visible, but it definitely appeared to be a man.

The man moved, and she flinched, dropping back behind the curtain and letting it close again fully. This was ridiculous. Even if it was one of her dad's men, he wouldn't allow them to cause her any harm. They'd have strict instructions not to hurt her at any cost. Plus, if they came anywhere near the flat, she'd scream so loud the neighbours would be over in an instant, and her dad hated witnesses. He wasn't evil. He didn't enjoy killing anyone unless he had to. So it was one of his rules to make sure no one was around to prevent innocent people from being killed. He'd be more likely to kill one of his own men than an innocent witness.

Her phone rang out from her backpack, making her jump. She took a breath to steady her beating heart as she walked over to grab it from the depths of the bag. It was a text from Finn, the guy from uni.

*Hey Con, it was nice to meet you today. Are you coming to the uni bar later? We'll be there about eight if you fancy it?*

She chewed on her bottom lip, annoyed that half an hour ago she was loving life and now she was back to being scared and nervous to do things.

Fuck whoever was watching her. She was going to go for a drink with Finn and whoever else was around. This was the start of her new life, and she planned to live it exactly as she pleased.

## Six

# Matteo



**M**atteo felt the familiar increase to his heart rate as his hand rested on the handle to Connie's flat. A surge of exhilaration pulsed within him, fuelled by the pursuit. It was now or never, and she'd clearly seen his note. She had peeked out of the curtain earlier with a frightened look on her face. If he didn't move quickly, she might chicken out.

The door to her flat was flimsy, and it would take next to no effort to break. The music blasting from some idiots upstairs would help cover any noise he made. This really wasn't a good enough place for an angel like her. His pre-job research had made him aware that the only flat next to hers was actually still empty, so he didn't have to worry about someone calling the police thinking he was kidnapping her. He'd knock her out and be quick getting her to the car.

His anticipation built as he remembered the layout of her flat from his earlier visit, planning what moves to make depending on where she stood. He steadied his breathing gently and pulled a balaclava over his face before

pushing on the handle and slamming into it. The move shattered the lock completely. The door easily swung open, revealing the grotty kitchen.

But the room was empty. No one screamed at the noise of him breaking down the door. Connie had gone.

*What the fuck?*

Where was she? Had she chickened out? No. She wouldn't do that. The mere thought was inconceivable to him. Not only had her note conveyed a sense of desperation, but their brief encounter earlier had revealed a glimpse of something concealed in her eyes—a flicker of enigma that drew him in. In that moment, he understood why she held such allure for him. It was a shared darkness, resonating with his own.

He swiftly searched the rest of the flat but found nothing. The final room was the bathroom, also empty, but she'd discarded the dress he'd watched hug her hips on the way home. It now lay on the floor in a crumpled heap.

He picked it up and held it close to his face, breathing in her sweet, flowery scent. There was a musky scent to the dress too. *Fuck*. Even her sweat smelled good. What was this woman doing to him?

Underneath the dress lay a crumpled pair of pretty pink underwear. He picked them up and stuffed them into his pocket for later. If he couldn't have Connie tonight, these would have to do.

The bathroom was still wet with condensation. She'd clearly recently showered, switched her dress, and swiftly left the building. Somehow without him seeing. He turned to leave the room, but a sight on the mirror stopped him dead. She'd written something in the drops of the water on the mirror before she left.

*You lose.*

Well, well, well. Spunky little brat. He grinned. She'd pay dearly for this

cheek, and he'd enjoy teaching her a lesson. He wondered how much she'd pretend to fight him. A lot, hopefully.

Outside the bathroom, he noticed a curtain at the back of the flat he hadn't looked behind on his flying visit earlier. He pulled it across, and cursed himself. A back door to the fire escape. How had he not noticed? Connie was already putting him off his game. He wasn't thinking properly around her. Not even when she wasn't anywhere near him.

He reached the kitchen again and huffed as he leaned against the counter. It was time to think straight if he wanted to take Connie tonight and do all the filthy things she dreamed of—and some she'd never even dare think about.

He scanned the kitchen for a clue to her whereabouts, but it was pretty bare. She kept it clean and simple with not many personal possessions. It crossed his mind that she'd only rented the flat for the fantasy and she didn't actually live here. It would make sense that she didn't want him to have her real address. It's not like she knew or trusted him yet. Clever girl.

Why else would there be no photos or trinkets? Well, there was one photo on the counter of Connie with her arm slung happily around another woman. They both had the same thick hair, wide smile and heart-shaped faces. Though the other woman's hair was much darker, and her eyes narrower. She must be a sister. She was pretty, like Connie, but her smile didn't seem as genuine.

His finger trailed along the kitchen counter. It should feel weird to be in someone else's space without them present. But this was her space, and something made him feel right at home here. Despite the lack of trinkets, it smelled like her. Though he couldn't deny the slight acidic undertone that ran through the whole building. If this wasn't a temporary place, he'd need to upgrade her to somewhere a bit nicer. Maybe his own bedroom.

For now, he'd have to search the main haunts of Oak Brook. As he went to leave, a low vibration noise made him stop. He turned to scan the kitchen again. A light came from underneath the table.

*Connie's phone. Perfect.*

He bent down to grab the device. It was cheap. Which was strange considering how much the fantasy website requests cost. Connie couldn't be poor; or even on an average income. Another security measure was making sure a lot of money was sent over with the request so no joke requests were sent in—at least a six-figure sum depending on the request. The most expensive request he had was to hide on a yacht for a week while “stalking” each of the six women and doing horrific things to one of them each night. That job cost someone over seven figures. Though group jobs were pretty rare.

*Unfortunately.*

The phone was still vibrating as he picked it up. The name “Finn” flashed up and immediately made Matteo want to kill him. Who the fuck was Finn?

“Yes?” Matteo snapped angrily into the phone.

“Er... I was looking for Connie. Sorry. Do I have the wrong number?” The idiot sounded nervous.

*Good.*

“No. You have the right number. What do you want?”

“Okay. Well, Connie said she'd meet us at Bonko's tonight. I just wanted to tell her we'll wait inside near the entrance.”

“I'll let her know.” Matteo hung up and shoved the phone into his pocket.

Finn might be a jackass, maybe even a soon-to-be-dead jackass depending on what he wanted with Connie. But he'd just made Matteo's night a whole lot easier. Grinning, he left the flat and made his way back to

the car. She'd be his by the end of the night. Now all he had to do was plan her extra punishment for running away.

## Seven

# Connie



Connie's feet started to ache as she turned left onto the road that led to Bonko's. She'd lived in comfy trainers and flat sandals for too long; now even the pretty nude wedges hurt her feet. Though she had run pretty quickly when getting away from the flat.

She was getting too old for this shit. Bree would've laughed and agreed. Bree never was a huge fan of going out drinking. She didn't like the loss of control. Or the hangovers. A sick Bree was a dangerous thing.

That was another reason they differed. Connie loved the loss of control after too many drinks. Consequences be damned. It was freeing—like she was a different person who didn't need to worry about Dad's rules. Though there were some nights she regretted it. There were a couple of nights in particular when she'd woken up in bloody clothes. And her family wasn't here to help if things went wrong this time.

That wouldn't happen tonight, though. There'd be no getting slaughtered on Jager bombs. Her wits were needed. She'd have one drink, maybe two. No more than that. She opened up the miniscule bag that she'd slung over the

cloaked sleeves of her black dress. The dress skimmed her thighs and cleavage nicely, enough to keep everything covered up and safely tucked in.

She stopped dead as she realised her phone wasn't in her bag. She groaned and slapped her forehead. Turning around, she eyed the path back home. It was roughly a twenty-minute walk back. She chewed on her bottom lip. Was it worth it?

*Not in these shoes.*

Sighing, she forced herself back around and continued the walk to Bonko's. It only took a few more minutes to reach the pub. Bonko's was in one of the more modern buildings stuck on the edge of the university grounds and manned by students who wanted to earn a bit of cash. You needed a student card to get served, and luckily Connie had been given a temporary one as a new student. It was a single storey building, though it was pretty wide, and a big white sign with peeling letters above it proudly proclaimed the name. Two huge bouncers stood at the door with their arms folded.

She could feel the beat of the music as she waited her turn to get inside. Excitement coursed through her in turn with the beat. It had been so long since she felt the anticipation of a good night out. Especially a last minute one. The unplanned nights were always the best. The queue wasn't huge and moved quickly. The bouncer didn't bother to check her ID and waved her on through, which was mildly insulting, but screw him. Tonight was going to be great. She could feel it in her bones.

The chatter was deafening as she walked in. The bar was straight in front of her with a path down the right-hand side that led to more tables and a dance floor that was already packed with people. She pushed through a group of lads who were chugging down beers and chanting, nerves starting to get



the better of her. Maybe this wasn't the place to be after all. Especially not alone.

Luckily, she spotted Amelia, Finn, and Charlie standing near the bar as soon as she walked in, but she immediately felt overdressed. Charlie looked amazing in jeans, a crop top, and trainers in that infuriating way young people look great in anything. Amelia wore a figure-hugging maxi dress that showed off her serene curves perfectly, and Finn was in jeans and a polo shirt with his hair in a loose ponytail.

*Oh well. Too late to change now.*

Amelia and Charlie waved her over with big smiles, but Finn looked away nervously. He'd been the chattiest of the lot earlier, so that was strange. Maybe she'd done something to upset him. Was she late? Or was it because she was way overdressed and looked like she was trying to show off?

"Hi, guys! Sorry. I'm not late, am I? I left my phone at home like a klutz." She gave them a broad smile.

"Not at all," Charlie replied. She handed Connie a glass. "I just got wine. Is that okay? We're sharing a couple of bottles to keep costs down."

Charlie slurred her words a little and pointed at Amelia, whose smile was definitely a bit lopsided. They'd obviously been pre-drinking. Connie had some catching up to do. Finn stayed quiet. Maybe he was drunk too. Some people were much quieter when they drank. Especially the loud ones.

"Wine would be great, but it looks like I need a couple of shots to catch up with you guys!"

Charlie snorted just as she went to take a sip of wine, spilling it down her chin and making Amelia and Finn laugh hysterically.

"See!" Charlie cried. "I told you Connie was one of us. Go get your shots, Connie!"

Connie laughed and squished in next to Charlie to get a space at the bar. Sure, she needed to be careful tonight. But she had all night. She'd get a bunch of shots now, get tipsy, then sober up with water. The atmosphere was amazing. Where was the harm in joining in for one small hour? She hadn't let her hair down in such a long time.

"Three shots of tequila, please," she yelled to the barman, who didn't look old enough to drink tequila, never mind serve it.

"Salt and lime?" he yelled back over the music.

She nodded, mouth watering in anticipation. Bree would be moaning if she was here. She smiled to herself at the thought of Bree's disapproving narrow eyes, and her heart ached a touch. She even missed those.

She paid for her shots and downed them one by one as Charlie and Amelia cheered. Even Finn got involved in cheering her on for the final shot and stopped giving those nervous glances. The sharp alcohol ran through her veins, melting away the stress and worry of the day. Tonight she was going to have a good night. Never mind Mr Blue Eyes. Never mind Dad's men or her brothers. And never mind classes tomorrow. She was free and normal, like her friends, and tonight she was going to enjoy that.

## Eight

# Matteo



**M**atteo arrived at Bonko's and walked straight past the bouncers, not bothering to queue. They said nothing as he walked by. Every bouncer in Oak Brook was employed by the Romanos. They would usually greet him at least, but the look on his face must have put them off.

Because he was furious that he had to come here. It was the worst bloody bar in Oak Brook. The students weren't often allowed in Lounge 23. They were drunken idiots, and most of them were a complete liability. He didn't want them anywhere near his club. And now Connie was making him go right into the middle of a sea of these noisy assholes just to find her.

Oh, it was going to be fun to teach her a lesson.

He spotted her not long after entering, and he quickly shrank back into the crowd. It was easy to spot her. Even in the hundreds of faces, her beauty stood out a mile. She was far too good for this place and its clientele. He struggled not to go to her immediately and drag her ass outta there.

But she was with her friends. She stood with a couple of women and one guy, who he assumed must be that idiot who'd called her phone back in the

flat.

What did he call himself? Finn?

Matteo checked him out and viewed his ripped jeans and dishevelled long hair in distaste. He was older than Matteo, maybe ten years older. So god knows what he was doing hanging around in the student bar with a bunch of drunk women. But he was no threat to Matteo when it came to Connie. One look told him Finn wasn't capable of giving Connie the treatment she so desperately craved.

Connie was laughing and dancing with a younger woman. Well, it wasn't exactly dancing. Her body jerked at all different angles, not entirely in time with the beat. She'd clearly managed to down quite a bit of alcohol in the time it took him to reach her. He smiled as he watched her, enthralled with the way her face lit up when she laughed. She was having fun.

Even though she knew she should be taking a punishment right now.

He didn't bother to get his own drink. A clear head was needed. It wasn't fair to Connie to play these games with any kind of lack of control. Plus, it could easily be dangerous. It was imperative that he was alert to anything she might need. Or to the safe word or safe action.

At least an hour passed as he watched Connie. She bought two rounds of shots in that time, and the girls got through another couple bottles of wine between them. All four had moved to the dance floor, and he slunk into the background to monitor from there. She was stumbling around now, and his anger rose as he observed her. She wasn't even watching her glass of wine carefully. It sloshed around as she danced, making it easy for anyone to slip something in it.

Someone really needed to take her home. *He* needed to take her home. It would be ideal to take her from here. Hell, he could drug her himself. But

that wasn't what she asked for. She did need a punishment for running off, though. He thought back to her request.

*'Make it so I don't feel safe in my own home.'*

So he needed to kidnap her from home. Not here. Until then he'd have to keep her safe. He settled into a chair near the dance floor and continued the observation. It wasn't just Connie who was drunk. Her friends were just as smashed. Finn was getting far too close to her for Matteo's liking. He bumped into Connie and sent her flying into a guy next to them, making Matteo get to his feet.

The man she bumped into turned to face her, his eyes flashing with anger. She raised her hands, and Matteo could see from her lips that she was apologising. Finn laughed and turned away to continue dancing. But the stranger was having none of it. He was a short, thick-set kid who probably wasn't older than twenty. Fuelled by alcohol and seething with anger, his face grew crimson while he vehemently shouted at Connie, his voice escalating in fury until eventually he raised his arm back and formed a fist. Matteo's feet moved before he could stop himself. If this guy hit Connie, he was going to have to die.

But before he could reach her, the drunk guy was on the floor and Connie was laughing above him. She'd dropped her glass of wine and grabbed the guy's wrist, twisting it with her own body and flinging him over her shoulder as she bent down. He'd actually landed on the glass and was writhing in pain on the floor. His mates laughed and pointed at him.

Matteo stopped dead only a few steps away from her. Connie didn't need his protection at all. Where the hell had she learned to do that? He could hear her laugh properly now he was closer, and it filled him with joy. Her friends cheered and she high-fived each of them in turn before they continued to

dance. Two bouncers ran over to pick the guy up off the floor. They grabbed an arm each as they dragged him out of the club.

“I need more wine,” Connie yelled to her friends and then turned to walk back to the bar.

*The fuck you do.*

Matteo snapped back to his senses and followed her. She might not need his protection, but she sure as hell needed an intervention. She walked into the bar, banging her hip on the wood and wincing as she rubbed at it. He sidled in next to her. When she turned to him, her mouth fell open.

“You!” she said accusingly, pointing a wobbly finger at him.

“Me?” he replied in surprise. Had his little victim seen him watching her?

“You were outside the bakery earlier! And you were very rude.” She put her finger down and glared at him. He couldn’t help but laugh.

“It was you who bumped into me, if you recall.”

“Wow, your voice is sexy. How did you get that scar? Are you a student?” She jumped from one question to the next, her words slurred and eyes changing from angry to curious. “I’m a student. What do you do?”

“I—”

“Why are your eyes so blue?” she interrupted and pointed at his face. She stared heavily at him. This was not going as he planned. She wasn’t the tiniest bit scared of him.

“You need some water,” he said.

She laughed. “Yes! Yes, I do. There’s someone after me, you see.” She winked at him. “I need my wits about me!”

Okay. That was enough.

“Come on. I have bottles of water in my car.” He grabbed her arm and pulled her away from the bar.

“Wait,” she cried, suddenly angry again. “Do you work for my dad?”

“What? No. Why? Who’s your dad?”

“Oh never mind, then. Yes, please, to the water, sir. Whatever you say, Mr Blue Eyes, sir.”

He pulled her out of the bar and led her to the car park. In the trunk of the car was a multipack of water bottles, and he leaned her against the passenger side while he pulled one out.

“Here. Drink.” He uncapped the lid and passed her the bottle. “Then get in the car.”

“Ooh, you’re sexy when you’re bossy,” she replied with a giggle as she stumbled into the passenger seat.

He could scare her right now and show her just how sexy he could be. But being so wasted during these incidents was a terrible idea. Water, then food, then he’d see how she was. She made a small squeak as he leaned over her and pushed in the seat belt. Smelling her this close up was too much. Her soft hair tickled his chin. He closed his eyes, forcing himself to remember the brief from the website.

“You’re massive!” she exclaimed, tipping her head back to look up at him.

Her lips brushed the skin under his face lightly, and he swallowed hard and forced himself to step away. He didn’t answer her, not trusting himself not to pull her out and fuck her right there on the ground. He walked awkwardly around to the driver’s seat and strapped himself in.

“Home, then?” he grunted without looking at her, but she didn’t respond.

He turned to see her head lolled to one side, eyes closed. Good. She was less tempting that way. Although, she wouldn’t even know if his hand slid up her thigh. He put the car into gear and drove off at speed before he did

something he regretted. It wouldn't take long to get her home. Her flat was barely a ten-minute drive away from the bar.

There was barely any traffic and by the time they arrived, Connie was snoring lightly. He turned off the engine and watched her for a moment. She didn't stir as the engine died or as his fingers grazed her thigh. Her skin was soft and smooth. It would be so easy to move his fingers higher. But first he had to check her fingerprint. Easier to do it now than in the moment.

He removed his hand from her thigh with great difficulty and pulled a square device out of his pocket. It resembled a small calculator with no numbers, just a place to press Connie's forefinger against. It took a reading of her print and matched it with the one saved to her website request. The match was confirmed, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

She stirred as he placed her hand back onto her lap, briefly opening her eyes. They were glassy as she tried to focus her vision on him.

"Mr Blue Eyes?" she said sleepily.

"Yes?" He couldn't help but smile.

"Kiss me," she whispered.

*Damn it.* He wanted nothing more than to kiss her—and not just her lips. He dragged himself out of the car and walked around to her side, pulling her out and letting her lean against him. Music still blasted from the flats above. He pressed all the flat bells, and after a few seconds someone buzzed them in. At least he wouldn't need to find her key to the internal door. The lock was already broken. He made a mental note to have someone fix it by the morning.

Once in the flat, he lay her down on the sofa and raised another bottle of water to her lips.

"Drink, beautiful."



She giggled. “You think I’m beautiful?” Her cheeks turned a cute shade of pink.

“You look like an angel, pretty girl.”

She giggled again and dribbled water on her chin. The urge to lick it off was so strong. What was it about this damn woman? He pulled away and let her lay down. She snuggled up like a ball against the cushions and dozed off once more as he watched her from the floor. Even her snores were delicious. He admired his angel as she slept. She would be a dark angel by the time he’d finished with her.

He watched Connie sleep for two hours before she stirred, groggy and groaning in pain. Her hand flew to her head. He quickly rolled away and hid in the doorway of the corridor, watching her silently from the shadows. She pulled herself unsteadily to her feet and over to the kitchen, rubbing her eyes as she went and causing streaks of mascara to darken her eyes. Her black dress had ridden up her thighs as she slept, showing off her perfect thighs. After downing a glass of water, she pulled out a loaf of bread from the cupboard and butter and turkey from the fridge, whipping herself up a quick sandwich. He let her eat one half and drink more water. She was more steady on her feet now and yawned sleepily.

Moving stealthily, he made it to the other side of the kitchen. She stood a couple of feet away, the second half of the sandwich raised almost to her mouth. Before he could reach her, she turned abruptly. Her brown eyes widened in fear. Startled, she took a step backward, colliding with the kitchen table.

“What the f—”

“Shut up, bitch,” he growled.

It only took a couple of steps across the tiled floor to reach her. He

grabbed her by the hair and yanked her head back. She tried to scream, but he expertly shoved her own pink panties in her mouth as soon as she opened her lips and clamped his hand over it. Her hands flew at him, mostly hitting him in the chest and stomach. A few of the smacks actually came keen. But that was expected. She was clearly trained in self-defence and how to hit someone properly. Good. Not enough women knew how to fight back.

It certainly made things more interesting.

“You really do like it rough, don’t you? That’s fine with me, sweet. I’ll give you rough if that’s how you want to play.”

Her knee instantly flew up and knocked him hard in the stomach. He growled and forced her to the floor on her back, keeping his hand over her mouth to hold her head down as he pinned her legs to the floor with his knees on her thighs. Letting go of her hair, he pulled the duct tape out of his pocket and ripped a piece off with his mouth. He tried to focus on pushing it over her mouth, but her wriggling and mewling had him hard as hell. He’d waited all day to hear those noises, and now he couldn’t resist them.

He let go of her jaw as soon as the tape was secure, grabbed her arms, and taped them together at the wrists too. She continued to throw her arms at him with her hands stuck together, but he batted them away easily as he sat back to straddle her.

“I like it when you fight,” he mused. “It makes it more fun for me, pretty angel.”

She glared at him and her arms fell to her stomach, mewling stopped in a clear act of defiance. But that was okay. He had plenty of time to make her scream.

Starting at her shoulder, he stroked a finger along the outline of her curves as she wriggled in an attempt to turn her body away from him. She

had real, soft curves that he couldn't wait to see properly. He pulled out a pocket knife. Flicking it open, he placed the cold blade against her stomach.

“Stop moving,” he commanded.

She whimpered, but did as she was told and stayed still as he tugged the black dress up over her hips. He whistled at the curve of her hip; her black thong didn't leave much to the imagination. He placed the blade in between the thin line of her pants and sliced it open. She sobbed, and he groaned at the noise.

“That's it, lovely girl. Cry for me.”

The sight of her bare pussy, hairless and begging to be fucked, almost made him come on the spot. She was such a good girl, making sure she was ready for them, needing to please the men who she wanted to hurt her. Thank god her fingerprint was a match. If it hadn't been, there was a genuine concern he would've struggled to stop.

She wriggled again and baulked her body back with surprising strength, but it was nowhere near a match for his own. He put the knife on the floor next to his foot, well out of her reach. She screamed louder, and his dick pulsed with need. He grabbed her delicate hands in his and held them still on her stomach.

“You will enjoy this, angel. It's going to make sure you stay nice and wet for us,” he growled, then grabbed the brand-new ten-inch dildo from his front hoodie pocket.

“See?”

He held it up to show her, laughing as her face paled. He put it to one side and stroked her clit gently, listening to her cute whimpers before pinching it hard. She yelped through her stuffed mouth.

“This pussy is mine now, and what I want to happen to it happens. Do

you understand?”

She continued her attempt to scream, pulling wildly against him despite his pinch and hurting herself even more. Maybe that’s what she wanted. Though she was probably the best little actress he’d seen do the kidnapping role play. Usually they were already moaning in pleasure and dripping wet, no matter their pretend protests. His cock was rock hard as he watched her cry.

“I said, do you understand?” he repeated, forcing the dildo straight inside her with no preparation. She screamed—not yet wet enough to enjoy it. But she would be soon. He was going to make sure she woke up dripping wet and desperate for more.

He let go of her hands and wrapped his fingers around her throat instead; she pushed against his chest, bucking wildly as she tried to breathe. He gently circulated the dildo inside her as he choked her more and more. She struggled less as she lost her strength. As her eyes rolled in the back of her head, he felt her pussy contracting against the dildo, and a warm wetness covered his hand. Did she really—?

“Did you fucking squirt on me? You dare to come without permission while I choke you, princess?”

But it was too late; she’d passed out as she came and now lay motionless in front of him. He let go of her throat. This crazy, feisty, beautiful woman would be the death of him, and he didn’t mind one bit.

## Nine

# Connie



Connie groaned as her eyes flickered open. Something was rubbing against them. The duvet, maybe? Or a pillow? She tried to move a hand to rub it away, but her arm was stuck somehow. She swallowed; her throat was sore and dry. The room was pitch black. Jeez. What happened last night?

She attempted to free her other hand only to find that it was stuck too. Panic surged through her as the realisation set in—she was completely paralyzed. Encased in darkness, she opened her mouth to scream for help, but a gag stifled any sound, reducing her to quiet grunts. Her breaths grew rapid, tears welled up, and her nose started to feel congested.

*Stay calm or you won't be able to breathe.*

Flashes of the night before came to her. Dancing in the bar. Speaking to the man with piercing blue eyes. And the terror she felt when that same man pinned her down. She held her breath and squeezed her eyes tight, trying to remember any of Dad's or Vince's training, but it had failed her in the kitchen when that scumbag came to get her.

She'd feared Vince's dead, grey eyes, but it was the man with eyes like the main character in a damn romance novel who she should have been wary of. This wasn't one of Dad's men. They'd never tie her up like this.

Wherever she was, an icy chill pervaded the air, mingled with the scent of damp earth. She trembled uncontrollably, and her panic magnified as she became aware of a chill between her legs. Goose bumps erupted across her body as it hit her that he'd stripped her of her clothing and exposed her on her back, legs splayed on some sort of table or bench. She was naked and spread open for him, unable to move. This man was fucking sick. A muffled whimper escaped her gagged throat.

*Who the hell was this guy? What did he want?*

"Are you awake, sweet girl?"

His deep voice struck her with fear and something else she couldn't put her finger on. Gripped by terror, she pulled against the restraints, desperate to break free. Frantic, she attempted to shake her head and push the gag downward so she could cry for help. Anything that would get her away from him faster, but her efforts were futile. Never mind romance novels. She was trapped in a horror movie as the main character.

"Hey, pretty lady."

She felt a rough hand touch her cheek gently. Her gagged screaming intensified as she tried to yank her head away, but the hand followed. She was helpless.

"We're going to show you a good time, don't worry. You already came once, remember? All over my damn jeans. You didn't say you were a squirter."

*We? It wasn't just him to worry about?*

Bile rose in her throat as she shamefully remembered the release that

came when he choked her. It was so strong that everything went black. She passed out afterward in a state of near bliss.

*Who the hell does that when being kidnapped? Was that normal?*

No. It was forced. It wasn't normal. Whatever her body did right now there was nothing she could do about it.

She swallowed down the bile, terrified of being sick with the gag around her mouth. If she didn't stay calm now, she'd choke to death. And she needed to live long enough to kill this bastard. Slowly. She'd ring Bree and they could do it together. Bree was always up for violence, and this would fucking incense her.

"In fact," Mr Blue Eyes continued. "I might even allow you to come again after your first visitor. As long as you behave of course."

*Visitor? What the fuck did he have planned?*

He needed help if he thought she was going to do anything other than kill him. His hand trailed down from her cheek to her exposed breasts. She held her breath again. It made it easier not to throw up or cry. He gently stroked her nipple as she tried to imagine all the ways she might kill him. Not with her bare hands. No matter how mad she was, he was simply too huge to take on alone. Stabbing was a good possibility, but that would be too quick. He needed more pain than that. Ricci could get her a gun, but she'd have to learn how to use the damn thing.

"Wow, these are rock hard for me, good girl," he murmured.

*That's because I'm cold, asshole.*

She couldn't deny his voice caused a strange shiver, a sensation unlike anything she had ever experienced. But that must be due to extreme fear. Never had she been so scared and so far away from family.

Where did he get off thinking this turned her on? Obviously it didn't. Not

even the slightest bit. No matter what her body did when he'd forced the dildo inside her.

She'd met her fair share of creeps in her lifetime, but this guy was in a league of his own. Despite her inability to see him, the vivid memories of his overpowering presence when he pinned her down remained etched in her mind. Flashes of speaking to him at Bonko's haunted her. The image of his serious eyes was burned into her brain; she already knew she'd never forget them as long as she lived. The sight of his bulging muscles as he restrained her in her own kitchen, leaving her utterly defenceless against his ridiculous size and strength, confirmed that he was the embodiment of her worst nightmares.

*And the best dreams.*

"And I bet here is desperate for my touch too." His hand strolled farther down her body until it reached the tip of her clit.

She could no longer hold her breath or deny her fear. Fuelled by desperation, she struggled again to break free, but found herself entirely at his mercy, unable to escape. Suppressing the urge to cry, she swallowed hard, determined not to give him the satisfaction of witnessing her tears. With one hand caressing her and the other pulling her lower lips apart, her entire body remained taut with tension.

"Relax, angel." He quickened his pace against her clit.

She stopped pulling away and returned to laying motionless instead. If he realised she wasn't getting off on it, that his actions held no power over her this time, maybe he'd stop and leave her alone. He would get bored.

He might even release her.

A fleeting sense of victory washed over her as he ceased rubbing her clit and removed his hand. But it was short-lived. His finger slipped inside her



instead, causing a sharp gasp to escape her lips despite the impediment of the gag that silenced her.

“Wow, you are dripping wet for me. I told you we’d have fun. I can’t wait for you to see what we have in store for you, baby girl. You’re going to love it.”

*Wet? No chance. And why does he keep saying “we”?*

But any thought that he must be lying about how wet she was disappeared when his finger slipped inside her so easily and gently that a small moan squeaked out.

*Fear.*

That’s all it was. This wasn’t enjoyable. She didn’t enjoy the dildo earlier. She *would* survive this.

Then kill him.

Daddy issues be damned. No matter what he did, she would not enjoy it.

## Ten

# Matteo



**M**atteo stroked his dick as he pushed one finger deep inside Connie's sweet, shaved entrance. He couldn't help it. She was even more beautiful naked, and he couldn't wait to play with her and make her feel like a goddess. *His* goddess. Because the more he saw and heard of her, the more he wanted to keep her for himself. Right here, in his own makeshift cave with all the toys they could ever need to keep her happy.

But first the other four men were waiting their turn. In her request, she wanted it one by one—a steady stream of men fucking her. So he was going to watch her get used like a good little slut. Just like she begged for, and then he'd fill her up himself when she really couldn't take anymore. She'd scream by then, but surely she knew to be careful what she wished for.

"I need to get you ready for your first visitor, angel," he told her. "I hope you're excited to please him."

She'd stopped writhing and was now deathly still as she listened to him. Her nipples were like bullets, and goose bumps covered her pretty skin. A

part of him wanted to get her a blanket to cover her up. A bigger part wanted to fetch ice cubes. He wondered which one she'd prefer.

Definitely the ice cubes.

“First, we need a fresh gag on you,” he explained, wanting her to know what was happening so she didn't panic. Because if Connie Quinn did the safe word action agreed in the request, it would devastate him. His dick would never get over it. He pulled out the O-ring gag and quick as a flash pulled off the one from her mouth and slipped the O-ring on, strapping it in place before she had time to scream. It would be so good to hear her voice properly. Sadly she'd been very specific about being gagged at all times.

“Second, we need your head to face this way.” He pulled her down the table and pushed her cheek so she was facing the wall as if laying on her side. She tried to yank her head out of his hand. God knows why; it was clearly fruitless. But it was fun to feel her try.

He pulled a strap up from underneath the specially designed table and pulled it over her scalp and across her chin so she couldn't move her head at all. Easy access with no biting risk was important to the guys. The women might have consented, but you had to be careful when playing these games. You didn't want an overstimulated woman to panic when she had your dick between her teeth. It wasn't pretty.

“Next, we need to sort your legs out.” One at a time, he unstrapped her legs and pushed them up so the heels of her feet were touching her ass cheeks and bound them tightly by pulling the straps around her calf and thigh. She kicked out each time, her moans turning to tears and making him groan with need.

“That's it. You're such a good girl crying for me,” he whispered as he gently trailed a finger down her the back of her thigh. She wriggled at his

touch as much as she could. “Let’s make sure you’re on full view for your visitors.”

He seized a metal bar and inserted it beneath her lower back, forcing her to arch her torso and expose every inch of herself to his scrutinising gaze. The heels of her feet were now at the end of the table, giving easy access to any hole. He paced deliberately around her, absorbing every detail, until he stopped directly in front of her splayed legs. Witnessing her complete vulnerability sent tremours surging through his entire being. There was an inexplicable allure about this woman that made him want to destroy her and protect her all at once.

“Only one thing left to do, baby girl. Before I do it, though, there’s one thing to remember. I’ll let go only when I’ve tasted your cum. So the quicker you come, the less painful it will be.”

He lay his head on the inside of her thigh and stuck out his tongue to taste her—gently at first, running it along the length of her pussy. She tasted so sweet. He almost succumbed to a desperate need to untie her so she could suffocate him by sitting on his face. He closed his eyes and felt her tense under his tongue as he found the right spot.

Then he grabbed on to the inside of her thighs and squeezed and twisted the flesh in a way he knew would bruise quickly. She was his now, even if only temporarily, and she needed to be marked as such.

Her pain was obvious in the muffled screams that swiftly filled the air and bounced off the rocky walls of the room. The acoustics were fucking amazing. As much as he enjoyed hearing her scream, he buried his tongue in her clit. He repeatedly pushed against her sweet spot, desperately lapping up her juices and needy for more.

Her muffled screams turned to moans and grew louder when he groaned

against her clit, unable to contain his own pleasure at hearing her make such wild noises. She was completely uninhibited, entirely at his will, and her body and soul loved every second no matter the display of defiance. The darkness he'd seen in her eyes outside the bakery was revealing itself slowly, and it was a beautiful fucking sight to behold. Her thighs jerked and her pussy contracted in his mouth as she released all over his tongue.

But he didn't stop.

He couldn't. He needed to devour her. Every inch of her body shook as he continued to lick at her swollen bud. She couldn't get away, and he couldn't pull away. He let go of her thighs and spread her lips wider with his fingers, pushing on her mound with his other hand to get even better access. Her thighs jerked and her guttural screams were music to his ears as she squirted all over his face.

Only then could he force himself to pull away.

*Fuuuck. That was amazing.*

He released his grip on her trembling thighs, and her body gradually eased its tension. Shaking, tears streamed down her cheeks, and her faint whimpers stirred something within him, igniting a desire to do it all over again.

“Wow, you came and then squirted? Even though I've kidnapped you and we're all about to rape you one by one? You are a dirty girl, Connie Quinn. A filthy, amazing angel.”

He slapped her extra sensitive clit, and she clenched and squealed again. He forced his legs to move away. It was time for this angel to get fucked by a stranger like she wanted. Even though everything in his being wanted to cancel and keep her all to himself.

## Eleven

# Connie



Connie shut her eyes tightly, suppressing the welling tears. Confusion addled her thoughts and muddled her perception of reality. In the midst of Mr. Blue Eyes' touch, the agony of his forceful grip on her thighs intertwined with the ecstasy of his gentle, warm tongue caused her to momentarily lose herself. In that powerful moment, she had briefly forgotten that he was her captor—and the pleasure took over her soul.

“I’m going to leave you to think about what just happened,” he said, his deep voice rumbling against her sensitive clit and his head resting against her thigh as if he didn’t want to leave it.

*What was he even still doing down there? Staring at the most private part of her as if he owned it.*

“And what you did. Think about how much you loved it. Okay, angel? See you soon.”

He planted one last, slow kiss against her sensitive clit, which her body balked at unsuccessfully. Fear rose in her throat and threatened to choke her it was so strong. The thought of being here alone was worse than being with

him, no matter what he did. She heard a door close and the tears came again. She tried to quell them, terrified of being unable to breathe.

It felt like hours, but it must have only been a few minutes in reality when the door opened again. She actually sighed a breath of relief. No matter what he did to her, it was better than being alone and unable to move or speak. Alone, there was no chance of escape. She needed him to untie her. To trust her. She needed to pretend to enjoy it. He already halfway believed that she did at least.

But terror struck again as the footsteps came closer. They sounded different somehow. Not the slow, controlled steps of Blue Eyes.

“Wow! You’ve outdone yourself this time, Matteo.” An unfamiliar male voice rang through the room, loud and boisterous, with a thick southern accent. This one gave her a sense of repulsion, which made her clit shrivel up in disgust—unlike Mr Blue Eyes and his deep, weirdly sensual voice. However, this new stranger had unwittingly provided her with a valuable piece of ammunition. Matteo was the name of the bastard who took her.

She thought about his dark looks. An Italian name suited him. It matched his insanely amazing physique, and she instantly wished he had come to visit her rather than this creepy-sounding prick. Was it conceivable to have that damn Stockholm Syndrome already?

No. This feeling wasn’t anything to do with Matteo being so ridiculously sexy. Yes, he happened to be big and powerful. He was commanding and confident. But she didn’t *want* him. The only reason she craved him right now was a weak sense of familiarity. Her poor soul was clinging on to the only thing she knew in this awful situation.

“Oh, she’s a beauty,” the man continued, and she felt a gnarled hand roughly grasping and pulling one of her breasts. A wave of fear washed over

her, causing her heart to skip a beat and her breath to catch in her chest. Tendrils of anxiety wrapped tightly around her lungs, suffusing every fibre of her being with a chilling sense of trepidation. This man didn't have Matteo's gentle touch. She was in serious danger.

"She is," she heard Matteo say, but it sounded far away. A sense of sadness mixed with her fear as she realised he wasn't near her with this creep. Something about Matteo seemed to want her to be happy. He wanted her to have a good time and to enjoy this. It almost came across as caring, albeit in a seriously creepy way. But leaving her with this man? That wasn't the action of a man who cared.

"Does our little fuck doll have any limits?" the stranger shouted back. He pinched a nipple and pulled until she yelped. Sadistic fuck. He hadn't even said one word to her. She may as well be a blow-up doll to him. And limits? Yes, being tied up and kept in the dark for one.

"She said no anal," Matteo's voice floated across the room. "I laid the toys out on the table as usual."

*I didn't say a fucking thing, you lying prick. And what toys? No, please, Matteo. Come back and make this man go away.*

"Lovely. Let's check out the product first. Then we'll see what toys it deserves."

The next thing she felt was the new man's hand grasping her hair hard enough to make her wince, and the sound of a zip in front of her face. Her heart pumped hard. If she didn't calm down, it might stop beating altogether. She screamed and balled her hands into fists in protest, but she had no choice other than to lie still and allow him to do what he wanted with her forced-open mouth. He stuck the tip of his dick in and she gasped and resisted to no avail. He laughed at her fear; the noise made her determined to kill him too.



Precum already covered his tip. She'd never even seen this man and now his disgusting dick and precum was in her mouth.

“You're a dirty bitch asking for this. Aren't you? I'm going to make sure I fuck you so hard that you never forget me. But first, you're going to gag for me.”

He pushed his dick into her mouth slowly, thrusting his hips so it hit the back of her throat. But she did not want to give him the satisfaction of gagging. She opened her throat as fully as she could and took his damn dick. It wasn't completely hard yet. The hair of his balls tickled her chin, and she thanked the heavens he wasn't that big. She could take him easily without gagging.

“Oh wow. Look at how well you take a dick.” He tightened his hold of her hair, pulling it even more and making her squeak involuntarily with pain. “But it won't stay that easy with how hard you're making me.”

She felt his cock harden in her mouth, and a nauseating wave surged through her core. He took it out and thrust it back in again, going deeper than before now that he'd grown and almost triggering her gag reflex.

“Well done, slut. But if you don't gag for me, you'll be punished.”

Another wave of terror hit her. She was taking him too well and making him mad. His thrusts became quicker, and his dick was rock hard against her tongue. He started to hold it in her throat for longer when he pushed it in deep, grunting as he did so. Eventually, he pushed it so far into her throat that she could no longer resist, and she gagged hard all over his cock.

“Oh, yes. Finally. That's the noise I want,” he said as he pulled it out and pushed it in harder to make her gag more. “Make it nice and wet. You know you want to be a mess for me, you dirty bitch.”

His words made her even more nauseous. She felt a wetness on her

cheeks and realised she was crying again. Damn it. That was the last thing she wanted him to see. When would this be over?

“Are you crying? You’re a mess. Look at all the spit.” He laughed and finally removed his dick from her mouth. “You are a dirty little pig, aren’t you? So pretty for a piggy. I bet men falling at your feet has spoiled you all your life. Well, you won’t get that treatment from me, missy. You’re nothing but a worthless little fuck doll to me. You didn’t gag for me when I told you what you needed to do. I think you need to be punished for that.”

He stepped away, and she froze. She didn’t dare breathe as she tried to listen to where he was going to go next. Every sense was heightened by her lack of vision. She heard him clatter with something that sounded like a metal tray, and then he stepped back to her.

“This will do, little slut. Don’t worry. You’re going to get fucked. I’m sure you’ll love it. Let’s have a naughty little session, shall we?”

To her utter horror, he spread the cheeks of her ass apart. The metal bar under her back was really digging in, and it meant her ass was also raised. Now every hole was on display, and no jerking of her legs was going to hide her. He pushed one freezing cold, lubed up finger against her asshole.

“What Matteo doesn’t know won’t hurt, will it?” he said as he wiggled his finger against her. She clenched in fear and tried to moan her discomfort.

“You need to loosen up or it will be far more painful, little slut. It’s not like you can stop me. So relax, okay? Make it easy for yourself.”

She tried to pull away, jerk, scream, but all of it was pointless. She couldn’t relax. Was he stupid? Her hole was clenched as tightly as possible. She heard him open some sort of lid, and suddenly his fingers were back at her asshole with more freezing cold liquid all over them.

“A bit of lube and I can do what I want. It’s up to you how painful you

want to make it for yourself. You shouldn't be such a whore now, should you?"

She desperately gasped for air, her lungs craving oxygen, but panic surged within her, spiralling into an uncontrollable frenzy. Each breath eluded her, as if a suffocating grip constricted her chest, leaving her breathless and trapped.

"I need your hole to be nice and wide so it doesn't hurt me when I fuck it. So I'm going to be nice and help you relax. You better appreciate the time I'm taking here. Do you understand?"

She cried out as his lubed dick pushed into her pussy with no warning and no warm up. It felt like her insides were being punched over and over. She longed for Matteo to return. There was something about him that made her certain he would not allow this to happen if he was here.

"Oh god, yeah. You're so tight for me. Oh, yeah. Well done. Take it, you dirty fucking bitch. You know you deserve it."

His strokes became harder and deeper as he thrust inside her; it hurt more with every push, but he fucked her so hard she had to stop clenching. The sound of his balls slapping her ass each time he entered her filled the room.

"Oh yes, good girl. I can feel you relaxing. That's it. Your little ass is preparing itself for me. You want me to fuck it, don't you?"

She tried to tell him no through her gag, but all that came out was a squeal.

"That's enough of spoiling your dirty pussy with my dick. Time to teach you a lesson," he mumbled as he spread her ass cheeks apart once more.

The noises from her throat were horrific as his finger slipped inside her ass. She attempted to breathe through it. He wiggled his finger around for a few seconds and then forced in a second finger.

With his other hand, he slapped her tits hard repeatedly, switching from one to the other. Pain seared through them. It stung so much she could barely concentrate on what he was doing to her ass as she dreaded each slap.

When he finally removed his fingers, he replaced them with the tip of his dick and pushed it in. She squealed in pain as he forced himself inside her.

“That’s a lovely noise, little birdy. Let’s make you do it a little louder, eh? You want to make me happy, don’t you? You know you need to pay for being such a dirty bitch.”

A piercing scream tore from her lips, an agonised cry that echoed through the air as he ruthlessly pushed himself farther inside. Her senses reeled and her mind became disoriented as an overwhelming feeling of horror rushed through her. She couldn’t take this. Anything but this.

“What the fuck are you doing?”

She jumped at the voice that came from nowhere. But never did she think she’d be so happy to hear Matteo’s deep voice shouting so angrily. He was here. She clung to the hope that he would be her saviour. He’d save her from this. He had to.

## Twelve

# Matteo



**M**atteo slowed his step as Bill Neve pulled his ugly penis out of Connie's ass and tucked it away in his jeans. Bill's bald head was barely three feet away from him. He was stocky, but short. Matteo could easily reach out and quell the burning rage in his chest by snapping the man's neck. But this was his dad's friend. A man he'd known all his life and trusted until this moment. There were rules to follow in the Romano family. Rules that extended to all employees and associates, and they were rules Bill Neve knew well by now. So the head of the family would probably want the chance to kill Bill first. Alessandro Romano didn't take women being hurt too kindly.

"What do you mean what am I doing?" Bill replied jovially. "The dirty bitch has a rape fantasy, and I'm making her dreams come true."

Connie's muffled cries echoed in the room from her seat, unable to speak because of the O-ring gag in her mouth. Lipstick stained the edges of her mouth. Saliva dripped over her chin, and tears streaked her pale cheeks. She was magnificent. If only he could see her eyes.

“No. There’s a difference between consenting to give up your body for certain things and actual rape, Bill.” He placed one hand protectively on Connie’s thigh, and her cries calmed. It felt like she was straining to listen to him; and silently begging him to protect her. “This is your third time working with me. You read the disclaimer, right? You agreed to follow all soft and hard limits. They aren’t there for show. It clearly states what will happen if you don’t follow them. It isn’t pretty.”

“You say that,” Bill replied through nicotine stained, gritted teeth. He tucked his bits away properly and zipped up his jeans. “But the last two didn’t have any limits. If she wants to be raped, then why allow her limits? It’s not rape then, is it. Doesn’t that miss the point?”

“She doesn’t want to be raped, you fucking incel. She wants to trust someone enough to *consent* to give up her body. She wants to be teased, fucked, used. To be degraded and praised. To be tested and to see how much she can take. For a strong alpha male to be in control to do the decision-making and to take care of her afterwards. And you, Bill, are no strong alpha male. You don’t deserve to take care of her, never mind fuck her. You’re a little weed who needs to be removed.”

Bill’s chubby cheeks flushed a deep shade of crimson, his anger visibly escalating with each passing second, while Matteo struggled to contain the rage brewing within his own chest. The feeling was so strong it was like a physical being was going to escape any second and unleash havoc. But he had been raised with the principle of maintaining composure in the presence of women, particularly those who found themselves bound and gripped by fear.

“You’re a fucking pussy, mate,” Bill found his words, though his rage was clearly mixed with panic. Matteo could see it simmering in his eyes. Bill

wasn't stupid. He knew by now how the Romanos dealt with people who went against their rules. But he couldn't seem to stop himself from digging deeper. "You don't know how to give a woman what she really needs. They need to know who's the boss. I should be fucking your mouth rather than hers. You need to get on *your* fucking knees."

Bill jabbed his finger toward Matteo's chest, but instead of invoking fear, it elicited a deep, rumbling chuckle that reverberated through the confines of the cave. The audacity of this small, bald man entertaining the notion of overpowering Matteo in such a manner was comical. It would be fun to see him try. Sensing the futility of his actions, Bill glanced around, seemingly searching for an exit strategy.

"All right, you do what you have to," Matteo replied in a voice laced with a dangerous edge, goading Bill to carry out his threat. "Fuck my mouth, Bill."

As expected, Bill lunged clumsily forward, his fist hurtling toward Matteo's face in a desperate attempt to hit him. Connie's trembling thigh tensed under his hand and she made a scared gasp, clearly sensing what was about to happen. He squeezed it reassuringly and swiftly reacted by striking Bill hard with his free hand, delivering a forceful blow that rendered the idiot unconscious. A sickening thud sounded through the air as Bill's body collided with the unforgiving ground. Matteo nudged him with his toe, but Bill didn't move.

"Don't worry, angel. He's gone now. He won't bother you again. Sorry you had to hear that."

He stroked his hand along her shivering thigh and turned to study her naked body. She looked glorious spread out for him, and his dick ached again. He wanted to lick every part of her. Needed to fuck every hole, every day. If only all of his days could be consumed by nothing but Connie Quinn's

naked body. But it had to wait. He would have his way with her when it was his turn. When she was used and battered and couldn't take anymore, he'd finish her off and make sure she loved every second. It was him she'd remember and his dick she would dream of long after she'd taken it. He looked at her hands. She'd balled them into tight fists. The skin on her knuckles had turned white.

“You haven't done the safe action, so I assume you're okay. Good girl.” He kissed the inside of her thigh. “I will be watching even closer next time so nothing happens. You can trust me.”

He lowered his kiss closer to the inside of her thigh and then breathed against her pussy slowly. He let the tickle of his breath settle against her skin as her thighs tensed, and she released a scared squeak. He stroked a finger gently down the opposite thigh, making her buck gently at his teasing.

“You like that?” He kissed her clit and pushed the tip of his finger slowly inside her. She wasn't as wet now thanks to that sad excuse of a man pushing her too far. He focused on finding the right spot with his tongue and kept going until he felt her relax against his mouth. Her moans were different now, more needy. She was letting him know how much she wanted it. She even pushed against him, finally unable to hide how much she loved it. His dick ached more than he thought was possible as she writhed against his tongue as much as she could under the restraints. Her soft groans were like fucking music to his ears. She tasted amazing, and smelled divine. As soon as this was done he would drag her on to his mouth, not caring if she suffocated him. He'd die a happy man.

“You're going to come soon, aren't you?” he whispered against her clit, making her buck even more. His tongue circled around her bud, and he pushed another finger inside her, curling them to reach what she needed. He



massaged her leg and moved up to caress her breast, prompting a long moan from her. He wanted to watch her come, but he couldn't bring himself to stop devouring her. She was the most delicious thing he'd ever tasted.

“You want to come, angel?” he asked. “Tell me.”

“Uh huh.” It was the first discernible noise he'd heard. Her moans were so beautiful. So full of raw desire and need for release. He did that for her. He made her feel that way, and he wanted to do it every day for the rest of his life.

He groaned against her clit as he felt her shake. She let go with a piercing scream, and he felt every little squeeze of her orgasm against his fingers, licking up every drop of wetness until her screams made it clear she couldn't take his tongue anymore. Only then did he lift his head away and look down at the mess he'd made of her.

“Well, that's loosened you up for your next visitor.” Her thigh tensed once again, and he squeezed it. “Hey, you can take another cock for me, can't you, angel? I'll be watching, don't worry.”

He checked her hands again; still no safe action. He wished she'd do it. Then he could have her all to himself, sitting on his face and suffocating him with her pussy. But alas, she clearly wanted more cock, and the next guy was here at her own request. So he'd better give the lady what she'd asked for.

## Thirteen

# Connie



Connie took deep breaths as she lay back on the table. Her stretched jaw ached, as did her knees and thighs from being stuck in one position. The straps dug into her face, legs, and arms. She couldn't move an inch. The metal bar under her back was so uncomfortable that she couldn't relax her muscles at all.

Yet she'd experienced the best orgasm of her life.

Which made her brain hurt. Matteo was a very dangerous man. The terror in Bill's voice was obvious when he realised he'd been caught. Matteo had shut him up with only one hand because the other was on her thigh. She'd heard him dragging something heavy away after he'd made her scream in pleasure; god knows if Bill was even alive.

Matteo was her kidnapper, her tormentor, yet her protector and her lovmaker. As his steps retreated again, she was desperate to shout for him to come back. He apparently thought she'd asked for this. Had someone asked for this? His speech about consent sounded so honest. Yet she hadn't

consented to any of this. Was he simply crazy? Some sort of split personality?

She shivered in the icy room, her body covered in goose pimples as she waited for her fate alone, praying the next visitor would be nothing like Bill, whose touch made her skin crawl.

The footsteps came shortly after Matteo left. She held her breath again, trying to steady her heart rate. If Matteo didn't allow him near her ass, then she could take it. She waited for the new stranger to speak. She'd name him Ron. It made him seem less scary as he approached her.

But Ron said nothing. For a moment the silence was the loudest thing in the room. Was he watching her? Staring at her? Planning his next move? The feeling of being watched when she could hear and see nothing was worse than anything.

She couldn't stop her breathing from quickening. Her chest moved rapidly with her breaths, and a hand that felt like it was gloved in latex suddenly reached out and pressed against her cheek. Two fingers were in her mouth, pushing against each cheek like a dentist. He pinched her tongue, and forced her to stick it out. He slid a finger down her throat until she gagged.

The hand moved down to her chest and he wiped his wet fingers on her breast, then gently caressed her bare nipples. Despite herself, she felt her nipples harden further. She gulped. Her stupid body was not supposed to be turned on by these men, and yet here it was again betraying her.

Ron gently caressed both breasts simultaneously until a whimper escaped her throat. It wasn't clear if it was from pleasure or fear—even in her own mind the boundaries were mixed up. Then he stopped and moved his hand lower down. She cringed deeply at the thought of him staring at her exposed pussy.

She'd given up trying to close her legs and instead tried to think of anything else. The last book she read or the last thing she ate. The last film she watched. What was it?

But it was useless. Because her scared brain was desperate to know what he was going to do next. She felt fingers against her ass cheeks as he pulled them apart painfully.

*No. Not again.*

But then he released her ass cheeks. Still with his latex gloves on, as if he believed her too dirty to touch, Ron placed a finger on either side of her pussy and spread her lips apart. She felt his breath tickle her clit. His face was right there. Another fearful moan escaped her mouth as she awaited his next move.

But he didn't stick out his tongue like Matteo. He was inspecting her. Every inch of her like she was a prized fucking cow. She moved herself the tiny amount that was possible with all the ties and gasped at the sharp sting between her legs as the man slapped her. Instinctively, she moved again—her body's daft attempt to get away—and he slapped her a second time, still holding her wide open with one hand. She cried out, tears stinging her eyes.

And he slapped it again.

She bit back her scream. The tears fell this time, but she was able to keep still. He didn't slap again. She tensed every muscle and balled her fists, desperate to keep still for him no matter what he did.

He trailed his fingers down, and with what felt like a hand on either side of her entrance, he spread her open until it stung. She couldn't help but gasp at the pain. She felt his breath inside her; his face was so close as he inspected her. Hopefully, whatever he was looking for, she didn't have and he'd go away.

Finally, he let go and gave her pussy two final, quick taps as if patting a damn dog on the head. *Fuck*. She must meet his approval. His footsteps moved to the side of the table, and he seemed to look for something. She heard some quiet clattering as he searched.

Then two fingers were suddenly inside her, and she gasped at the intrusion. As he shoved them in and spread them apart, stretching her pussy from the inside, she winced. His fingers widened and he strapped something else around her thigh. He pushed something hard and cold against her labia, and she screamed as what felt like a peg clamped down on her outer lips, keeping her spread apart. He removed his fingers and repeated this three times, with two clamps on either side of her pussy so it spread her wide open. Tears streaked her cheeks from the pain, but it died down after a few seconds if she stayed deathly still. He forced something cold and rubbery inside her pussy, which spread her entrance too as she cried out. It felt like either a stretching toy, or a dildo bigger than any she'd ever seen.

Shame ran through her at being even more exposed, but she didn't have a chance to consider it. He removed his fingers, his footsteps coming back round to her face. Without warning, he shoved his enormous cock down her throat. He didn't bother to be careful or ease it in, and he was so much bigger than Bill. She gagged as soon as it hit the back of her throat, but he was relentless, forcing it back in over and over.

Bile rose from her stomach, and she wretched, but still he didn't stop until she gagged so hard the bile came out. Her chest burned, but he finally removed his dick and she heaved in lungfuls of air, so grateful to breathe that she didn't even care if he fucked her ass next.

He pulled out of her mouth and lay two fingers on her neck. Gentle at first as he stroked down toward her nipples, one hand on each, but she

screamed again as he twisted the flesh on her breasts between his fingers. Her tears flowed freely now, unchecked and uncontrolled, constricting her throat and causing her sobs to become even more suffocating.

“Mmm,” the man finally made a noise. Her tears were turning him on. She tried to steady them, determined to give him as little pleasure as she could despite the pain of the twisted flesh.

But as he pushed his cock inside her against her clamped lips, she couldn't stop the tears. It couldn't be a dildo inside of her, he wouldn't fit. It was a stretcher. The pain of the clamps against her was too much. Yet the rubber stretcher was positioned so it rubbed against her clit.

The sensation of pain intertwined with pleasure elicited moans, groans, and cries, intermingled with choking as she surrendered to the overwhelming sensations coursing through her. Her brain wanted him to stop, but her body wanted to come again. She felt dirty and depraved and it was making her want to come even more. She needed to let go. To release.

And as his dick hit her g-spot once more, she did. She came all over him and heard him laugh as she contracted around him. The laugh was strangely familiar, though her brain was too much of a mess to place it. The sting of the clamps made it even more concentrated, and she almost blacked out, lost in the feeling of an amazing, disgusting release.

Until he pulled out of her, and in a flash his moist cock was back in her mouth. He rammed it down her throat, and she felt him contract as she choked on his cum. He stroked her neck until she swallowed it all down, and only then did he remove himself and let her breathe.

She took heavy gasps to get her breath back. Thank god he didn't come inside of her at least. She'd rather choke to death than have that bastard's baby. She suddenly felt his breath next to her ear. He placed a gentle kiss on

her cheek, and his fingers into her mouth. He pushed something into her throat. A pill? Her panic rose again. He pulled off the gag and covered her mouth with his hand. Her jaw ached so much that his hand crushing it was almost unbearable. He squeezed her nose with his other hand and forced her to swallow the pill down.

“I’m the reason you’re here,” he whispered in a voice so quiet she could barely hear.

*What the fuck was he talking about?*

“What are you doing?” A sharp voice came from the corner.

*Oh, Matteo. Thank fuck.*

The man released her face and walked away. He spoke quietly to Matteo. She stretched her jaw, excitement running through her as she realised she could speak. She could tell Matteo she wasn’t supposed to be here. She hadn’t consented to any of this.

“Matteo.” She tried to whisper, but her poor throat was so sore it couldn’t form more than a groan, and her aching jaw couldn’t form the word.

“Your time is up now anyway.” Matteo’s voice was closer now. He was making his way over to her as another set of footsteps walked away. Relief flooded through her as he got closer and she could smell his woody scent. She’d never needed one person to be close by so badly. Matteo. Her abductor and protector in this messed up reality.

## Fourteen

# Matteo



**M**atteo walked over to Connie. She'd made a mess on the floor with her gagging, but that was okay. It was worth it to see her like that. He pulled off the strap, which had kept her head stuck to one side, and she breathed a sigh of relief as her head popped straight again. She mumbled something unintelligible, her lips not quite able to form words. He laughed softly.

“Did you enjoy that, angel? Can't even talk, eh?”

She made another attempt to utter the words, causing a momentary pause in his heart as he registered the sound of his own name escaping her lips. None of the girls were ever meant to learn his name; that was part of the fun. But when his sweet angel said it, he knew he needed to hear it every day for the rest of his life. This extraordinary woman was going nowhere. He retrieved his phone from his pocket and texted the two remaining men he had arranged to take possession of her.

*Sorry mate, she said the safe word. Your dick won't be getting wet today.*



“Matteo, no,” she whispered again, and he flicked his gaze back to her as he clicked Send.

“No what, angel? You don’t want to be untied? Oh, you asked for a gag at all times, didn’t you?”

He quickly grabbed a thick roll of grey duct tape from the metal table where the toys were laid out and ripped off a long enough piece to cover her pretty mouth. At the sound of the tape being ripped off, she found her voice, pushed her head up, and screamed, “No!”

His eyes flicked to her hands and saw no safe word action. So he played along and gave a cold smile.

“You know you want it, really,” he replied as he shoved the tape over her mouth; she shook her head trying to get away from his fingers, but he easily overpowered her.

Her head dropped back in defeat, and soft muffled cries came from her throat. In the corner of the room was a metal basin with one working faucet and a pile of clean washcloths. He grabbed a black one from the pile and ran it under the cold water from the tap, squeezing out the excess liquid. In between the clamps, her pussy was spread open enough to easily clean and prepare it for him to make her dreams come true. Or her nightmares. Either way, no other guy would touch this body again. It was his now.

He wiped her face first, washing away the saliva and cum from her chin. Then he laid one hand softly on her stomach as he cleaned between her legs gently. He tried to be careful. But she didn’t even wince when the cloth knocked against the clamps. It impressed him how much pain she could take. Much more than most women who had paid to be in this room.

“Time to take these clamps off, baby girl. Brace yourself.”

He quickly and expertly unclipped each clamp, which usually made a girl

scream to high heaven. But weirdly, Connie didn't make a noise. She didn't even flinch.

“Wow, you are a good girl. I wonder what it takes to make you scream,” he said as he eased out the silicone spreader from inside her.

It came out with a pop as the suction released. What a brilliant fucking noise. Especially in their cave-like surroundings. He pulled off the taut straps that were holding her calf and thigh together, laying each perfect leg back on the table gently. A scar on her thigh caught his attention. It was a perfectly circular burn mark. Someone had been stupid enough to burn his angel with a cigarette. It wasn't recent, but he vowed to make sure that person paid dearly for their stupidity. Despite her legs being free, she didn't fight this time, which was unexpected when compared to her earlier feistiness. Her legs were a dead weight in his hands.

“Has your own man fucked you completely numb, babe?” Matteo said, his voice cold in an attempt to goad her. “And after only two guys. Maybe you can't take it like you thought you could, eh?”

His eyes flicked once again to her hands, but her fingers were splayed out as if completely relaxed. He left her legs free, seeing as she wasn't fighting anymore, and contemplated the table of toys. His eyes landed on a bejewelled, purple collar. One he'd brought a while ago but never met a girl good enough to actually wear it. He picked it up, fingering the thick leather gently. She'd look beautiful in it. He lifted her head in one hand and placed the collar around her neck.

“It's my turn now, babe. Whatever he did to you, I will make sure I do it a million times better. So your body better wake the fuck up for me.” He stroked her cheek as he studied her in his collar, and a searing need for this to be more than a fantasy ran through him. “I might keep you here, you know. I

didn't enjoy giving you to other men. Neither deserved an angel like you. I don't think we'll do that again. You might have to stay as mine."

Again, she didn't react. She was so still he wondered if she'd fallen asleep. What if she was numb from being tied up? A flicker of panic ran through him that his bonds had somehow hurt her.

"Let's get you into a new position, sweet girl."

He untied the rope that held her arms to the table and slid his hands under her thighs and shoulders to pick her up. Her head lolled to one side. *Weird.*

"You're not asleep, are you, sweet?"

Instead of the stocks he'd originally planned to lock her in, he placed her carefully on the old bed in the corner of the room. She flopped down like a rag doll, and worry now churned in his stomach.

*What had her friend been doing when he was holding her nose?*

"You're awake...but you're not fighting me off? That's no fun. I thought you liked a struggle. Even though you're no match for me."

He spread her legs and arms into a starfish position on the bed, manipulating each limb one at a time. She let him without protest. He lifted one arm and allowed it to fall. No reflexes. No safe word action either. Was she faking? Was this part of her fantasy? He looked at the table for something that would help, and his eyes fell on a metal electro rod.

"This ought to wake you up, babe." He placed the freezing cold rod on her neck and traced it down her body slowly until it reached her breast. He positioned it perfectly onto the tip of her hard nipple and zapped. Her beautiful body jumped, but there was no response from Connie other than a low groan.

*Fuck.*

The rules needed to be broken to make sure she was okay. He pulled off

the duct tape from her lips, and her face flinched. Then he removed her blindfold. Her eyes were glazed, but they flickered lazily toward him.

And for a weird moment, he froze. Her dazzling brown eyes gripped him in a vice. They glowed with flecks of amber, radiating a soft but formidable light. This woman could break a man. She held a darkness within her that would either tear him to pieces or make him whole.

But right now those eyes were pleading with him. She still didn't speak or scream. He remembered that bastard's hand forced over her mouth and nose. Had he roofied her?

Though being roofied wasn't on her list of hard limits. The only thing on there was anal. He'd drugged one or two women before who'd asked him to as part of living their fantasies in his safe environment, but it was always discussed at length beforehand. Safety came first. Connie had never mentioned it to him.

Was this something she wanted? Were her eyes pleading with him to touch her, to break her, or to fuck her? She clearly could not move, was completely at his whim, and had already given consent to do anything he wanted to her body other than anal.

*Would it be so bad if he fucked her and then helped her?*

His dick didn't think so. It stood to attention uncomfortably against the thin band of his boxers. He sat on the edge of the bed next to Connie, her scared eyes following him as he moved. He trailed his hand around hers.

"Can you move your fingers? I can't carry on if you can't do the safe action from the agreement. Remember? Cross your fingers? Show me you can do it. Don't worry if you want to continue, we still can. I won't stop unless you do cross your fingers twice."

Her hand was limp in his. His cock ached, desperate to take full

advantage of this beautiful angel. He closed his eyes tightly and released a deep breath.

“I’m sorry, babe. The second guy, Dan, said he knew you. Dan Mattis? You requested him to be present, so possibly it was agreed between you both that this would happen. But we can’t carry on if you can’t do the safe action. This is the kind of thing you need to discuss in your request beforehand. We’re going to have to stop for now.”

A tear escaped from one of her eyes. Still, she said nothing. He reached up to wipe it away and then removed her collar gently.

“I’m sorry if you’re crying because we can’t carry on. But I’m gonna be honest, I will kidnap you any time. I might do it next week for fun.” He trailed his hand along her body. Her skin was so soft. So irresistibly smooth. “It’s taking a hell of a lot of self control not to fuck your brains out in every hole. I might never let you go.”

Her eyes flickered with fear, and his dick strained harder. He stood and scooped her up in his arms once more, loving the feel of her soft body laying against his.

“Let’s at least clean you up, beautiful. Then I’ll decide whether or not you can go home.”

## Fifteen

# Connie



**T**he fear within Connie was palpable. She couldn't move an inch from whatever that bastard had forced down her throat. What did Matteo call him? Dan? And he had the cheek to say he knew her. Whatever he'd given her, it had paralysed her whole body and left her naked at Matteo's mercy. Though Matteo was confusing as hell. He'd taken her from her home violently, but now kept talking about consent and safe actions.

She could see her captor properly now. Being unable to move meant she had no choice but to study him. The tall, dark man with ice-blue eyes she'd bumped into outside Dawn of the Bread. The same one who'd made her shiver simply from a glare. And the one she'd fallen into the car with when drunk because she felt so safe around him. What an idiot.

He put two large hands under her back and legs, scooping her up into his arms and making her feel safe again. Which was ridiculous, considering it was his fault she was here. Her body was tiny against his huge torso, and her head lolled awkwardly against his hard muscles. The desire to reach out and

stroke his chest was strong. Probably a good thing her limbs were useless at that moment.

When he moved, the room spun as if she was drunk. She tried to look around where he'd held her captive, but her head was so dizzy she couldn't focus. It was dark, though, with one small glow coming from the corner. She spotted a metal table in the middle of the room that she had to suppress a giggle at. It was full of all the sex toys one could imagine. There were the usual dildos, butt plugs, whips, gags, and chains. But also some items she'd never seen before.

Adjacent to that sat another table, its shape resembling a strange cross, which elicited a visceral reaction within her, even in her state of drowsiness. It was upon that table that Matteo had bound her. Immediately, images of faceless men subjecting her to their relentless desires, exploiting her body as they pleased, came to her.

The image of that table would forever be etched in her mind, a dark mark upon her consciousness.

Another tear wet her cheek as it cascaded over her skin. A host of emotions battled inside her as he carried her through the room. She wanted to hate Matteo for bringing her here and leading her to so much pain and suffering. The experience had stolen a part of her soul.

But whatever this *Dan* person had drugged her with, confusion must be high on the list of symptoms. Because at that moment she was so exhausted and grateful that Matteo was taking her away, she never wanted his large hands to let her go.

With careful precision, he manoeuvred through an open doorway at the distant end of the room, acting mindful of the doorframe so as not to jostle her sore body. Only a fraction of the room was within her line of sight, but it

appeared to be another chamber, similar to a nice hotel suite. Through yet another doorway, they eventually came to a piercingly white bathroom, the glare of which made her head throb.

“Hmm. I might have to get in with you, sweet. Otherwise, you risk falling under the water. I hope you don’t mind.”

*I certainly don’t.*

A strangled giggle escaped her at her own thoughts, and she felt her cheeks flush red, which made her giggle even more.

“Is that a laugh, angel? Are you coming around already?”

Her lips still couldn’t form words, so she clamped them shut. She might say something stupid anyway.

*Like “please fuck me.”*

Gently, he lowered her down, and she found herself reclining on what felt like a soft towel spread across the floor—an unexpectedly comfortable surface. Fatigue enveloped her, urging her to succumb to the allure of slumber. Her eyelids weighed heavy, threatening to close completely.

However, even in her drowsy state she could still feel Matteo’s towering presence before her, causing her throat to tighten. The view from this vantage point only served to magnify his imposing figure, captivating her attention. The man had a commanding presence that could scare anyone. Women likely fell under his spell effortlessly throughout the day. In an instant, he shed his T-shirt and swiftly lowered his jeans, revealing a physique that seemed almost godlike.

Although, “devil” might be more fitting in his case.

He turned toward the bathtub, drawing her gaze to the mesmerising sight of his muscles tensing and flexing as he reached behind to remove his black boxers. Intricate artwork adorned his back, an enigmatic tapestry that she



couldn't deny piqued her curiosity despite her attempt to be indifferent toward him. Unfortunately, her current perspective didn't give her a clear view of the intricate designs before he spun around to face her once again.

And she choked hard on her own spit. His beautiful dick was so huge it expanded to his belly button. He crouched down before her, extending a hand to gently lift her into a sitting position.

“Woah, don't choke, sweet. My dick isn't anywhere near your mouth yet.”

Her choking turned into another strangled giggle. What the hell was wrong with her? She must look like a fool.

She still felt fear. But this time it was an excited fear, which sent ripples through her lower abdomen. The man before her was undeniably stunning, and his mere presence had a transformative effect on her. Just the sound of his voice evoked more pleasure than she had experienced with most of her exes' dicks. What the hell would Bree say if she knew what was happening?

*He kidnapped you!* A little voice in the back of her head screamed.

But it was clear now he thought she'd asked for it.

*He raped you with a dildo!*

But she'd squirted *and* he knocked a man unconscious for touching her ass.

*He allowed a stranger to fuck and drug you!*

But he'd stopped when he realised she couldn't consent and was unsure what she wanted.

*You can't get any more red flags, Connie!*

But they were looking pink now that he was naked and sexy as fuck. She stopped caring about what Dan drugged her with. Did it matter? Nothing

mattered in Matteo's presence. He took care of everything and made it all okay again. It was so simple.

He picked her up off the floor and cradled her against his chest. He could handle her like she weighed nothing, and his hot skin against her cold flesh flared something inside of her. Maybe she was desperate to be looked after following what she'd been through. Maybe it was the drugs Dan had forced her to swallow.

Or maybe it was Matteo who made her feel like this.

He eased himself into the bath, carefully guiding them both as they descended into the warm water. Before sitting down, he repositioned her so that she faced the opposite direction. When he finally settled, she found her back nestled against his chest, her body supported by his warmth. As she reclined against him, the water covered only a portion of her form, leaving her breasts fully exposed and vulnerable to his every whim. His dick dug into her back as his hand lazily trailed her exposed breasts and stomach. She snorted like a naughty schoolgirl at the thought of his dick touching her, and his low chuckle in response vibrated her back. He leant forward so his lips were right next to her ear.

“Oh, Connie. I don't know if I can keep my promise not to touch you now that we're naked together.”

Another jolt of excited fear ran through her, causing her nipples to tingle and harden in response. His voice evoked a cascade of goose bumps along the delicate skin of her neck.

“Are you cold or horny, sweet girl?”

She made a noise as she tried to speak, but it came out as nothing more than a groan. If she could've talked properly, she would've told him she was cold. But the truth was, reclining against this divine being's exquisite form

unleashed a unique form of torment, and her body was crying out for more of his touch.

His hand trailed lower still, teasing and driving her crazy inside. She secretly willed him to spread her legs. There was something nice about being unable to make decisions now that she was more relaxed. Matteo's earlier speech to the man who began to fuck her ass ran through her mind.

*“For a strong alpha male to be in control to do the decision-making, and to take care of her afterwards.”*

She'd thought he was full of shit back then. But now, as she lay at his mercy? She understood. The stress of decision-making was gone. Her breathing quickened as his fingers grazed the tip of her clit. Another moan escaped her lips.

“Do you like that, angel? You lying on me, naked and exposed. You can't move. You're completely at my whim. I could do anything I want right now.”

His soft lips kissed her cheek. Her chest ached with need. She should want to get away. This was dangerous. He was dangerous.

*So why was she so fucking desperate for him?*

He could never know how much she was enjoying lying here. It was too wrong to admit. His finger slid further still, grazing past her clit and feeling for her entrance, testing how wet she was.

Finding out her secret.

“Oh, you are enjoying this, aren't you?” His stubble grazed her neck as she spoke, and she wished he'd kiss her hard right there.

She gasped as his finger slipped inside her. Yet again without permission. She wondered if she could form the word “no” yet.

*But did she really want him to stop?*

“You like being at my mercy. Don't you? Listen to how wet you are.

Taste it.” He took his finger out and rubbed it softly around her lips, tickling them before forcing his finger inside her mouth and making her taste herself. She tried to move her lips around his finger, not sure if she was trying to take more of it or push him away.

Then he removed it from her mouth and his finger thrust again into her wetness. Deeper this time as he curled his fingers to pleasure that special spot. Another finger joined it, and she whimpered. He grabbed her hair and pulled her head back, kissing her neck again. His kiss was harder now as he pushed his tongue onto her skin.

“Sorry, baby girl. But you gave your consent, and I’m going to take you right now.”

A stronger moan came out this time as she enjoyed his fingers inside her. His thumb rubbed off her clit perfectly.

The drug was wearing off. She didn’t want it to.

She needed this man to ruin her first, to make her as broken as he was. There was a darkness in her fighting to come out. She didn’t want to be a good girl anymore.

Unless it was Matteo’s good girl.

With his fingers still inside her, he let go of her hair and clamped his fingers around her throat instead. He squeezed so tight she couldn’t breathe or make a sound. She couldn’t explain to him she’d never given consent for any of this.

And she was glad for it.

Being at his mercy was the most mind-blowing feeling she’d ever experienced. He released her throat, and her clit pulsed as she came again all over his hand in an explosion she’d never felt anything close to until meeting him. This man was going to destroy her. But that was okay. Because at that

moment she didn't want to be rescued. She didn't want to go back to her new life. She wanted to stay here forever as his little rag doll. But that was something she would never admit to anyone.

Especially not to Matteo.

## Sixteen

# Matteo



**M**atteo sat back in the winged armchair, his gaze fixed upon Connie. She lay peacefully in the bed. He'd made sure she was clean after her release in the bath, comfortably wrapped up in the soft bedsheets, and closed her eyes. Small snores came from her as she slept, occasionally accompanied by endearing grunts that might have made him laugh under different circumstances. Had he not had a white fiery rage burning slowly inside of him.

It had been three hours since he'd felt her exquisite body against his in the bath. He hadn't been able to resist feeling her orgasm at his touch once more. But if that bastard had drugged her without consent, and right under his nose, he was going to pay. He'd already ordered one guy to go get him and bring him to the club. He'd usually do it himself, but he wasn't leaving Connie until he knew she was okay.

There was something sweet about Connie that brought out a feral protective instinct in him. A need to keep her safe at all costs. Role play was fun, but really it was all about the woman giving up her body and her mind.

There was something so hot about a woman wanting to please him so badly that she allowed him complete control of her mind, body, and soul. Now that Connie had given permission once, he had to make sure she never took it away.

He hadn't wanted to let that smarmy arsehole, Dan Mattis, touch her anyway. There was something wrong about his shitty little eyes. If he hadn't been included in her request, Matteo wouldn't have allowed him anywhere near her. She hadn't said in her request why she wanted Dan there. The initial assumption was that it was her boyfriend, but he clearly wasn't or he'd have stuck around to check on her. He arrived exactly at the allotted time, took her second as requested, and disappeared straight after as quickly as he could.

Connie groaned, and he watched as she stirred in the bed. She was able to move on to her side, so he knew some control over her body was back. He stood up from the chair and tensed nervously, unsure how she was going to react. Her eyes flicked open then closed. She smiled, and he dared to hope everything was okay and that she'd asked to be drugged. Then she sat bolt upright and screamed in a way he knew he would never forget.

"Woah, hey." He stepped over to her quickly, placing one hand on her arm. But she pushed him away, pulling up the duvet and screaming again. The terror in her eyes made him want to hold her and never let go.

"Hey, it's me, Matteo. I'm not going to hurt you, angel. Did you have a nightmare?"

She stopped screaming, but her breath came in rapid gasps.

"No! Get away from me!"

"What's wrong?" he asked, bewildered by her reaction. Was it the drugs?

Her eyes raced around the room looking for an escape. She was on the verge of a full-blown panic attack. She looked back at him with those wide

brown eyes.

“If you co- come near me again, I’ll kill you,” she stammered.

“Connie. The request is over. Are you still playing? It’s time to stop.”

She burst into tears, sobbing so hard he moved again to comfort her. But she threw off the cover and jumped out of the opposite side of the bed to get away from him. She looked down at herself, panicking further when she realised she was still naked. She threw her arms around her breasts and thighs.

His heart dropped, and a sick feeling started in his stomach as it slowly dawned on him that this woman might not have consented to anything at all.

But he’d checked her fingerprint. It was a match.

“It’s okay, princess. I won’t hurt you,” Matteo cooed in a low voice. Thoughts raced through his mind as he desperately tried to think of the best way to calm her. No way could he let her go anywhere in this state.

“You took me.” She sobbed and stepped backward until she was stuck against the wall. When she realised there was nowhere else to go, she collapsed into the corner crying.

Matteo grabbed one of his T-shirts from the chair, knowing it would cover her completely. He stepped toward her as if she were an easily startled deer who would balk at any second. When he was close enough for her to reach, he held out the T-shirt at arm’s length. She was in no state to let him dress her. She shrank away from him, hiding her face in her hands.

“It’s all right, baby girl. I’m only passing you the T-shirt so you feel more comfortable. I know you’re scared, but I won’t come near you. It’s me. I’ll make sure no one hurts you. Remember?”

She peeked out from behind her hands, and he could make out those pretty amber flecks in her tearful eyes. He knew he’d do anything to make



this better for her.

Except letting her go.

She reached out a hand slowly and snatched the T-shirt out of his palm. He instantly took a step back as she pulled the T-shirt over her head. He sat back down in the armchair. If she needed some space, fine, but she wasn't going anywhere until she calmed down.

"It's okay that you're scared, but I will not hurt you," he repeated as she sniffed back her tears. She simply shook her head and looked at the floor.

"Are you going to tell me what's wrong?" he asked, though he knew the answer. It was written all over her face. He needed her to say it. To confirm his worst fear that none of this was consensual. "Did we take it too far?"

She pulled the T-shirt tighter around her small body and looked up at him. Her face was wet with tears, but she was calmer than she had been now that she was no longer naked. The mix of sadness and terror in her face was tearing his heart out.

"Why are you so scared of me, angel?" he asked.

"You kidnapped me and raped me," she snapped as she sniffed and swallowed down more tears. "You let those men—"

His insides froze. This was it. The moment she confirmed it was true.

"You didn't send me that request on the website, did you? It wasn't you who requested me to take them."

She looked at him bewildered. "Who the hell requests to be kidnapped like that?"

He let out a low chuckle. "Lots of women. It's what I do. I make their darkest desires come true, and yours was the filthiest I've ever read."

"I didn't ask for it!" She grabbed her knees and rocked back and forth. "I didn't want it."

“Princess, look at me. If it’s true that you didn’t ask for it to happen, then I’m going to need to find out who did this and make sure they never do it to anyone ever again.”

“What do you mean?” She did as he asked and looked up at him. Still being a good girl for him despite her distress.

“Two things. One, I will spend the rest of our lives making this up to you. It was never my intention to upset you. Two, I will kill who did this to you. Who did this to *us*. Consent is important. That’s why I checked your fingerprint when I first took you. I couldn’t risk taking the wrong person.”

“You took my fingerprint?”

She’d ignored the *rest of our lives* part of his statement, but that was okay. She’d be unable to ignore it as time went on.

“Every request comes with a fingerprint so I can confirm a match to the request. Your fingerprint was on the request. Someone did this to you, but it wasn’t me.”

“You’re going to kill them? Is that what you did to Bill?”

“Bill?” He grinned. “I’ve done nothing to Bill yet. He went against your limits, not mine. I wanted to know what you wanted me to do.”

It surprised him to see the sad look in her eyes darken vastly. Her eyebrows narrowed as she stared straight ahead, no longer looking at him.

“I want them both dead.”

## Seventeen

# Connie



**T**he rage burning through Connie's lungs was unlike anything she'd ever felt before. She'd never thought she was anything like the man she considered her father. He wasn't blood related to her or Bree anyway.

But in that moment she knew she was as capable of murder as he was.

She'd just never needed to be that angry because he was always watching over her. She shivered as she remembered his knife going into Johnny.

"That can be arranged. Are you cold?" Matteo asked.

She jerked her head back at him, having almost forgotten he was there. His icy eyes suddenly seemed much warmer, like they could easily see straight through her.

She wanted to tell him to go kill himself, to die with the others. But the messed up part of her panicked at the thought of him no longer being around. Not until she was out of here. She shivered again, and he pulled off his hoodie and threw it to her. She snatched it off the floor and angrily pulled it over her shoulders, desperate to be covered up completely.

“This is all your fault,” she snapped. Dear god, the woody scent of his hoodie smelled amazing. She forgot what she was saying as she glared at him.

“Yes,” he replied with one sexy, dark eyebrow raised.

“You took me.” She gathered her thoughts once again. “You didn’t check who I was. How did you know the fingerprint was mine? I want to see the request.”

“I told you, I matched your fingerprint to the fingerprint on the request. The request includes a picture of you, and it definitely is your face, with a newspaper dated the same day.”

“But I didn’t make a request, so the fingerprint or face clearly wasn’t mine.”

The anger was burning too brightly. She needed to get away from him to think, needed her own bed and her sister. She’d kill Matteo right now if it meant having Bree close by. If Bree had been here, she probably would have killed him already. She wasn’t the type of idiot to get herself kidnapped.

“You can’t go around bloody kidnapping people and now threatening to kill multiple men, Matteo.”

“Do me one favour and I’ll show you a surprise I have,” he said.

“What? Me do you a favour? Are you serious right now? What happened to ‘I’m gonna make it up to you for the rest of our lives,’ huh?”

“Oh, so you heard that part. That’s still true, and it’s going to happen. Now, say my name.”

“What?”

“Say my name and I’ll show you something.”

This guy had severe issues. He looked so serious that there was no way he was joking.

“For fuck’s sake, Matteo.”

His eyes closed, and he groaned in a way that made her swallow hard. “I’m going to make you scream that some day, angel. But for now, wait here.”

She clamped her lips shut, not trusting herself to respond and suddenly very aware she had no underwear on. He disappeared out of the bedroom door, leaving it open.

There was darkness beyond, and fear hit her as she realised she wasn’t free yet. He hadn’t actually said whether he was going to let her go. And this was no ordinary bedroom she could simply walk out of.

She scanned the room quickly for a weapon and remembered the table in the other room full of many toys. She stood and ran through the door, silent in her bare feet though her legs were still trembling. Matteo had mainly covered the table in sex toys, but the electric prod sat there too. She grabbed it and ran back to cowering in the corner with the prod hidden behind her back.

Matteo returned, bent over and dragging something across the floor behind him. She froze when she saw what it was. A person who was bound and tied, struggling and whimpering to get free. Matteo turned back to stare at her.

“Here’s Bill,” he told her proudly. “You thought I was joking, didn’t you? Someone thought it was okay to tell me you had a kidnap fantasy and get all my hopes up. They thought it was okay, fun even, for you to be raped. And they didn’t even have the balls to do it all themselves.”

He took slow steps toward her as he spoke. The fire and fierceness of his eyes was suddenly terrifying. She looked at the man. He was chubby with a

bald head and sweat ran down his cheeks. This was the man who'd forced his dick into her mouth, and then her ass.

She heaved, clasping a hand around her lips.

“Connie. Look at me. Not him.”

Matteo's gravelly voice cut through her nausea. She looked up at him.

“I fell for you the second I saw you. I decided then and there that you will be mine. We were meant to be, and I know you feel it too. I will kill for you because of that.”

He pulled a gun out of his back pocket and shot Bill in the head, barely even looking where he was shooting. He had perfect aim, though.

It clearly wasn't his first murder.

The noise made her jump, and her ears rang as the bang echoed off the empty walls. She didn't dare say another word but lost her breath completely as blood trailed from Bill's forehead.

“Hey,” Matteo's voice brought her back to the room, and now he was kneeling right in front of her.

She snapped her eyes back to him, the murderer. Fear froze her to the spot as he laid both hands on the wall behind her, preventing her from moving. One hand was still behind her back, gripping the stolen prod. He put his lips to her ear. She was cheek to cheek with him, his breath tickling her lobe. She swallowed as his woody aroma overpowered her brain.

“Don't fear me,” he whispered. “I only want to pleasure you and take care of you. I felt you shiver as you lay on me in the bath. You squirted as I kidnapped you and I fucked you with a dildo. I know you liked what I did to you. I know what you crave.”

Her breathing was so erratic that no words would come out. But he was wrong. He had to be. She would not crave the man who kidnapped her.

“I will kill the man who did this to you too. He’ll die slower than Bill. But I need you to understand that you and I will be together, pretty girl. Because I will make sure we are. I *will* make this up to you for the rest of your life. Understand?”

She nodded and kept the prod firmly behind her back. He was fucking crazy after all.

“Now, tell me who Dan Mattis is,” he demanded.

She wrinkled her nose. “Who?”

“Dan Mattis was the second guy who...visited...you. He drugged you. He was included in the request as your partner. So I can only assume he was the one who wrote the request. He knows you somehow.”

“He whispered something to me.” She stared at a spot on the floor as she tried to remember what he said. “Something about he’s the reason I’m here.”

“Who is he?”

She shrugged. “I’ve never heard that name before.”

“Well, we need to find out who he is and make him pay.”

“I want to go home,” she whispered, too exhausted to have any further conversation about Dan Mattis. The cattle prod was no match for a damn gun. She needed a new approach. “If you care for me, then show it. Take me home.”

“Of course. You can go wherever you like now that you’re calm.”

Relief flooded her as she dared to hope he might let her go. He stood and reached out his hand. She looked at it, wanting to take it, but still hiding the damn prod behind her back. She chewed her lip nervously.

“You can put the prod down now,” Matteo said with a grin as he put his hand down.

“You knew,” she whimpered.

“Of course. I can see the damn thing sticking out, Connie. I’m sad you didn’t poke me with it, if I’m honest. It’s quite fun. Don’t you think so?”

She let the prod drop to the floor. He raised his hand again, and she took it gingerly. She tried not to think about how small her hand was in his. He pulled her to her feet, letting her remove her hand from his grip. She nervously played with the hem of the hoodie he had given her. Luckily it fell almost to her knees, which somehow made her feel more secure.

She barely grazed his chest at her full height, but when she looked up at him, her legs buckled from underneath her.

“Woah.” Matteo caught her easily as she fell forward.

She shivered again. His touch made her skin crawl, but not in the same way it had with Bill and Dan. It was a weird tingly feeling that was strangely enticing.

“Do you need to eat first?” Matteo asked.

She shook her head; the thought of eating made her nauseous even though she felt so weak. Those damn drugs. She almost hurled anyway as Matteo picked her up and threw her over his shoulder without warning.

“Matteo!” she snapped. “What are you doing? Haven’t you embarrassed me enough?”

“Shush, little lady. I’m taking you home like you asked.”

He carried her effortlessly, and although she pouted, she was glad of it. Her body was still weak, and she wasn’t sure if she’d be able to stand on her own two feet. She closed her eyes as they passed Bill’s lifeless body. She wasn’t sad that he was dead, but she didn’t need the imagery haunting her sleep. There would be enough of that in the nights to come.

Matteo carried her out of the room and down a dark corridor, where flashing lights and loud music hit her. They were in some sort of club. A



bloody sex club? Ugh. How disgusting.

“Evening, Matteo,” a gruff voice said. She pulled the hood over her face, not wanting anyone to see her.

“Evening,” Matteo replied, not bothering to explain why he had a woman thrown over his shoulder.

After passing through some more dark corridors, he walked through a double door, and the harsh daylight bore into her skull. Those damn drugs had left her with a serious comedown.

“There’s a fresh bottle of water in the car,” Matteo responded to her groan as if he knew what she was thinking. “It will make you feel better.”

They reached a sleek, red car that was parked behind the club. She had no idea what make it was, but it was impressive and clearly some sort of luxury sports car. The guy had money. Maybe even more money than her own family.

“Is this what you drove me here in?” she asked as he placed her delicately on the ground like she was made of glass. She felt like she was glass now that the comedown had kicked in.

“Yes. I usually have a van for...jobs.” He glanced at her. “But with you I couldn’t wait.”

“Of course you have a kidnapping van.” She rolled her eyes.

He helped her into the car, awkwardly lowering her down into the passenger seat. She hated leaning on him for help, but her legs were still like jelly.

“You’re getting cheeky now that we’re away from the dungeon, eh?” He grinned at her, and she swallowed as she remembered she was dealing with a murderer. “Don’t worry. I like that side of you. But so you know, cheekiness will be punished, and it might not be as fun as the bath.”

“I didn’t enjoy that bath. I was paralysed,” she snapped as he got into the driver’s seat and clicked the seat belt into place.

“You can tell me that all you like, angel. But we both know the truth.” He took off, putting his foot to the pedal so quickly that her head stuck to the chair.

“Slow down,” she ordered with a gasp.

“No.” He grinned. “You’re safe with me. I used to drive rally cars.”

“Impressive,” she mumbled sarcastically as her hands gripped the sides of the seat. A voice in her head tried telling her to stop baiting the murdering kidnapper, but it was hard when he was such an asshole.

Though he had such a beautiful ass.

She forced herself to stare out the window and think of anything else. Only she could fancy her own bloody kidnapper. Maybe that perfectly sculpted body was only in her head. It must have been the drugs.

They arrived at her building a few minutes later thanks to how fast he was driving. Relief flooded her as she saw her dingy flat. Home. She’d never take it for granted again. She placed a hand on the car door handle; she was so close to freedom.

“Wait,” Matteo commanded.

“What?” she replied, letting go of the handle, desperate to get away but scared to annoy him in case he changed his mind. She’d pushed her luck enough. But he was already climbing out of the car.

She remembered rightly. He did have a beautiful ass.

She gulped as she watched him walk around to her door and open it for her, holding out his hand to help her out of the car. For god’s sake. He was the most chivalrous kidnapper she’d ever met.

“Thanks but no need.” She threw him an annoyed look, not accepting his

hand and folding her arms stubbornly across her chest.

“Someone has put you on at least one website to be kidnapped, Connie Quinn. There could be more. Your next kidnapper might not be as friendly as me.”

Her knees felt weak again as she realised he was right. Someone had a grudge against her. She needed to protect herself somehow.

“Come on.” He pulled his hand away and scooped her up instead, not giving her a chance to argue. She had no choice but to fling her arms around his neck as he lifted her out of the car and carried her all the way to the front door. She groaned as a realisation hit her.

“I don’t have my key! Did you happen to steal my handbag?” She looked at him half accusingly, half hopeful. But Matteo placed her back on her feet, and pulled a shiny key out of his pocket. He opened up the building. She held out her palm expectantly, waiting for him to give the key back.

“This one is mine, princess. I had a copy made. Yours is in your bag.” He walked inside and she followed on shaky legs, trying to make sense of his words.

“You had a copy made of my key? Without my permission?”

“Well, you were unconscious.” He shrugged and continued to her flat.

“That doesn’t mean I give you consent! Did you rape me while I was unconscious too?” she yelled.

In an instant, he turned and grabbed her by the throat.

Great job of annoying the murderer, Connie.

He pushed her up hard against the wall as she failed to swat him away.

“Did you want me to, angel?” he growled, his hand crept up under the hoodie and tickled the back of her thigh.

“Get off me,” she choked. “There’s a camera right there!”

He chuckled before letting go of her. She quickly pulled down her clothes, shaking at the speed at which he'd changed his entire demeanour.

"I know there is. I'm going to watch the feed later."

The feed? As in he had access to her building's camera feed?

"What do you mean?"

"I have access to the cameras here. My company installed them. They also installed some extra ones inside your flat earlier.

"What!"

He'd already walked off to her flat, pulling out another key. Great. He had keys to both doors. She'd have to get the locks changed after destroying the cameras. Or go home to Dad.

"Here you go, princess." He smiled at her as he pushed her flat door open. "I've already had the mess we made cleaned up."

"The mess we made?" she replied stonily as she stepped inside.

"Okay. Me. No need to be pedantic." Matteo followed her in and closed the door behind them.

She narrowed her eyes. "Thanks for the lift. You can go now."

"Here." He handed her a small, rectangular card. "My phone number. You need me, you call me."

"A kidnapper with a business card? I won't need the person who stole and assaulted me, Matteo. I never want to see you again."

"Sure, angel," he replied with an infuriating smirk.

She held her breath as he opened the door to leave, daring to dream that she'd be free of him any second. He stepped through the threshold.

"See you soon." He winked at her and walked away.

She slammed the door behind him and collapsed against it, panting. She looked at the floor where he'd first taken her.

*The same place you squirted all over him.*

Her stomach lurched, and she pulled herself up and ran to the bathroom, making it in time to reach the toilet before she was sick all over his clothes. She pulled herself back up on shaky legs and yanked off his hoodie and T-shirt. She threw them outside into the corridor and turned on the shower, not even waiting for the water to warm up as she climbed inside.

She scrubbed every inch of her body, determined to get the smell of Matteo off her. Nausea hit her again as she thought about the stranger who did this to her. Well, he wasn't a stranger. Dan Mattis. He must know her. He knew how to get her fingerprint onto the request. Grayson's words as she climbed over the fence during her escape from home rang in her head.

"No, wait! Dad told me what he did. You're not safe, Connie. Wait up. Come back and listen, please."

"No!"

"But he was signed up to a sexual fantasy website!"

Maybe she'd heard Grayson wrong. She'd assumed he meant a dating website and he was cheating. Not a rape fantasy site. But Johnny was dead.

If that was the reason Dad killed Johnny, then he'd died for no reason. Dan Mattis was the one responsible for her kidnapping and Johnny's death, and she had to figure out who the hell he was before he did it again to her or some other poor woman.

Plus, he needed to pay.

Slowly.

Just like Matteo said.

## Eighteen

# Matteo



**M**atteo got comfy in the sleek confines of his Lamborghini stationed just outside Connie's drab building.

*Their building now.*

The opulent vehicle wasn't his usual first choice of covert vehicle for stalking. Its striking presence drew attention wherever it went. But that served a purpose when it came to watching over Connie. He wanted her to notice. She needed to know he wasn't going anywhere. It was his fault she'd been hurt, and he meant it when he said he would make it up to her every day for the rest of her life.

And if that asshole was watching her, he'd soon realise Matteo was present too.

Matteo had made a conscious effort to suppress his seething rage from Connie, not wanting to scare her more than he already had. The decision to involve Bill had been a grave misjudgement on his part.

He had intended to give Connie the opportunity to exact her own justice, to confront and perhaps even eliminate her tormentor. But he resorted to

shooting Bill before fully considering the consequences. Bill's death revealed something interesting, though. When Connie had passed by his lifeless body, her reaction showed a flicker of vulnerability rather than the untamed ferocity he had glimpsed before and expected to see again when he presented Bill.

Perhaps she needed someone to bring out that fiery spirit within her, and to unleash the strength he knew she possessed.

He'd have to tell his father what he'd done to Bill, one of his oldest associates. That would be a fun conversation. He pulled out his phone. There was no point delaying the inevitable conversation. His finger hovered over the call button. On second thought, maybe a text would do. Dad wasn't even in Oak Brook at the moment. He was in London trying to continue his ambition to get a good grasp in the city and fighting with the current big bad: Jett Jones.

*I have some bad news. Someone shot Bill. He's dead. He deserved it, though. PS it was me. I need a clean-up crew in Lounge 23.*

He couldn't help but grin as he imagined his dad's face turning red when he processed the text. Best that it happens when they were not face to face. It would give him a bit of time to calm down. Alessandro Romano was not a man you wanted to piss off. But he also hated rapists with a fierce passion. He'd be fine when he knew that was the reason for the murder.

There were more pressing matters to attend to, foremost among them being the identification of the man who deserved a far graver punishment than Bill received. Uncovering Dan Mattis's true identity was a paramount objective considering Matteo's man had been unable to find him to bring him back to Lounge 23.

Connie appeared to be oblivious to his real name at the moment, but as the effects of the drugs subsided, her memory would likely improve. Unless

she knew more than she was letting on. Maybe once Matteo had earned her trust, she'd share more details.

Granting Connie the space she needed, Matteo retrieved his tablet from beneath the front seat to start an initial investigation into Dan Mattis. His fist curled as he thought about what this man had done to Connie. *His* Connie.

He firstly examined the photo ID provided by Mattis to the security team, but it was evidently a counterfeit. Despite its remarkable quality—something Matteo, who was well-versed in the art of forgery, could appreciate—it was a fake nonetheless. The security team clearly needed further training on how to spot a fake.

He considered the wording of the request. It was more blunt than most requests he received. There was no nervousness or embarrassment. But other than that it was pretty standard stuff. It wasn't too unusual for a request to include a particular man; it was usually a boyfriend. The added hard limit of anal made it seem like a completely realistic request, and it included Connie's picture, the newspaper and her fingerprint.

Her picture must have been Photoshopped, but the fingerprint? That had to come from someone close to her, surely. It was clear that Mattis wasn't some random dude to Connie. Matteo needed to dig deeper to find out who this man really was and what his intentions were now.

He pulled up the recent CCTV footage at the club. There were no cameras in the basement for obvious reasons. But there were cameras throughout most of the corridors leading down and beyond. He watched his receptionist, Lacey, lead Mattis through the club from the front doors and down several corridors before the cameras disappeared, and he noticed two things.

Number one, the bastard already knew where each camera was. He wore a baseball cap and hid his face every time there was one near by coughing or



yawning or quickly looking down to the floor.

Number two, Lacey's beautiful ass in her tight trousers usually made him hard on sight, but today it did nothing. She didn't compare to Connie one bit.

Matteo's hands clenched tightly as the realisation dawned on him—Mattis must have been inside his club before. It was the only plausible explanation for Mattis's knowledge of the camera locations. There was no way this bastard had hacked into his system. That was Matteo's own area of expertise, and he knew it was highly secure. Only the finest hackers in the country stood a chance at breaching his security measures.

His father had a special private investigator to help with such situations. His name was Hugh Jones, and he was reminiscent of a seven foot heavyweight boxer. He even had cauliflower ears.

Though thanks to recently immensely pissing his father off, Matteo wasn't ready to involve Alessandro directly yet. Especially not to ask for help. So, for the time being, he would have to handle things on his own with Hugh, potentially without his father's knowledge despite Hugh's loyalty to Alessandro. But it was worth the risk to help Connie. Retrieving his phone once again, he dialled Hugh's number, who promptly answered on the second ring.

"Hey, Hugh, it's Matteo Romano," Matteo greeted as soon as the call connected.

"What do you need?" Hugh's voice held a no-nonsense tone, as usual.

"I need you to dig into someone for me. I want you to find out everything about him, but here's the catch: Don't mention it to Alessandro."

There was a brief moment of silence before Hugh replied, his curiosity evident. "Why not?"

"We had a little disagreement recently. Nothing major. He'll get over it

soon.”

Another pause followed by Hugh’s next question. “What did you do?”

“I ... took care of someone he had an attachment to.”

A low rumble escaped Hugh, a sound that could almost pass for a chuckle. “Why?”

Ah, the never-ending stream of questions from this man. No wonder he was a private investigator.

“He needed to be eliminated. I just haven’t explained the reasons to Alessandro yet. Once he knows why, he’ll understand.”

“Ah, he’s away negotiating issues with Jett Jones, isn’t he? Why not tell him now?”

Matteo let out a snort. “When do I ever get a chance to stir up the great Alessandro Romano with something like this? So, are you going to help me or not?”

“Send me the details,” Hugh replied, cutting straight to the point.

The line went silent, and Matteo shook his head, familiar with Hugh’s lack of social finesse. He grabbed his tablet and quickly forwarded all the information he had on Mattis. Perhaps Hugh could uncover something incriminating or shed light on why Mattis was so fixated on Connie.

As he placed his tablet back under the passenger seat, he glanced up at Connie’s dilapidating building. The place was old, and the bowing red bricks showed it. He saw the bathroom light was on in her apartment. His mind was instantly awash with memories of her in the bath laying against his hard dick. He sighed and leaned back in his seat. He needed to be patient. But patience was never his strong point.

He couldn’t rush this. Connie needed time to heal, and he needed time to figure out how to help her do that. He had already placed an order for flowers

—a small gesture to begin building a foundation of trust with her and show her he wasn't a bad guy to be around. He'd always treated women well in the past, until they asked him not to.

It pleased him to see a flower delivery truck turn up a few minutes later. The delivery driver held an enormous bunch of bright flowers in his hands as he climbed carefully out of his van. Matteo quickly hopped out of the Lamborghini, hoping Connie wasn't looking out of her window at that exact moment.

“Excuse me, mate. They're my flowers,” he called out to the skinny, young driver, who looked him up and down with wide eyes. The guy was half Matteo's height and build. Probably half his age, too.

“Uh, sure, buddy. Here you go. Enjoy,” he replied without hesitation and scurried back to his van.

*Wimp.* Matteo used his new key to grant himself access to Connie's flat once again. She wasn't in the kitchen, but he heard the shower running. At least the flowers would help mask the scent of dampness. He left them right in the middle of the table.

She might not want him to touch her right now, which was okay for the day. But she needed to know he was here.

She belonged to him now, and he had no intention of disappearing.

## Nineteen

# Connie



Connie turned off the shower, her legs trembling as she stepped out onto the tiled floor. Throughout the morning, tears had welled up inside her, but now, in the solitude of the bathroom, a numbing sensation took over.

No tears escaped as she tenderly wrapped a soft towel around her damp body. The pain coursing through her limbs from the various bruises and scrapes didn't make her flinch. Standing before the misted mirror, she felt like an entirely different person.

A fleeting thought of calling the police passed her mind. But they had always been the enemy in her family. They'd do anything to have something to hold over Dad. He'd blackmailed too many of them over the years.

Before, she would've reached out to him. He would sort any problem the same day. Taking care of her and ensuring she was safe. But the Connie who relied on others, the helpless daughter and sister, was no more.

Now, there was too much fury in her heart to ever be that person again. The attack had unleashed something she didn't realise she could feel. A dark

side she'd always known was hiding under the surface. It was a side she'd tried to ignore her whole life.

She wiped the mist off the centre of the mirror, trying to get a peek at this new version of herself. Her skin appeared pale, and loose strands of hair clung to her shoulders. Despite the numbing sensation in her limbs, the seething rage simmered just below her calm exterior, and it was evident in the intensity of her eyes. She knew in her bones that this Connie would stop at nothing to get her revenge.

But for now, she needed wine and a plan. Clutching the towel tightly around her, she made her way across the room to where her bed and chest of drawers stood, still not feeling entirely alone. Surely there were no cameras in the bathroom. Would the sense of being watched always linger? Perhaps that feeling would remain indefinitely.

From the top drawer, she retrieved her softest pyjamas, her fingers grazing over the baby blue fabric. Keeping the towel draped around her, she slipped the top over her head and pulled on the trousers beneath the towel. Even when alone, being naked was no longer safe.

Especially not with the cameras around. That was an issue for tomorrow. She wrapped herself in a thick, grey dressing gown for extra security, pulling it snugly around herself.

She walked through to the kitchen to retrieve a bottle of Chilean sauvignon blanc from the fridge, and the sight of an enormous bunch of colourful flowers meticulously arranged on the tabletop filled her with sickness. Their vibrant hue mocked the darkness she felt within her.

But Matteo wasn't inside.

Had he snuck in while she was in the shower?

*What a fucking creep.*

She walked toward the flowers cautiously. The sweet fragrance grew more potent with each step, exacerbating the nausea. She delicately ran her fingers over a single purple carnation. They were extravagant. Like something Dad would have sent. Balanced atop one pretty bud was a small piece of white cardboard.

*I'm here for you.*

*M xxx*

Letting out a scream of frustration, she seized the entire bouquet, ruthlessly tearing apart each blossom, obliterating the gift. Flinging open the bay window, she caught sight of Matteo leaning against his obnoxious car, dressed in a dark hoodie and gazing up at her.

She hurled the decimated petals onto the road below, not caring if it pissed him off. She glared at him, and it occurred to her that this was the first time she'd truly looked at him in daylight. The early afternoon sun illuminated his icy blue eyes and scarred cheek, and her stomach flip-flopped.

From nerves. Nothing else.

He didn't spare a glance at the flowers on the ground. He merely grinned and raised a hand to wave at her. She slammed the window shut and pulled all the curtains in the flat closed. How was she supposed to feel safe with him standing right outside?

Forgetting about the wine, she searched the kitchen wildly for something to help her feel safe. Her eyes landed on a kitchen chair, and she dragged it over to the front door to wedge it between the handle and floor. She grabbed the biggest carving knife she could find and crawled into the bed. Dad had made sure she was handy with a knife, particularly as she was useless with her fists. Unlike Bree.

Her heart longed for her big sister to be here right now. She pulled out her

phone, fingering the call button over Bree's number. If she called, she'd have to admit she'd failed. Bree would drag her back home before killing Matteo. Brutally, probably. And she'd never let Connie out of her sight again.

Sobbing, she threw the phone back down on the bed and wrapped the blanket tightly around her aching body with one hand sticking out to grip the knife. She cried until her eyes stung, and somehow she drifted off into a fitful sleep.

\* \* \*

The sun streamed into the flat the next morning through the weak curtains. She peeked at her phone. It was almost ten o'clock in the morning. She'd slept for almost twenty four hours, and her body hurt even more than yesterday.

She didn't dare look at the bruises on her thighs. The pain served as too strong a reminder of what she'd been through; she didn't need to look at it too. She'd peeked outside as soon as she reached the bathroom, and Matteo was still there, though he was sitting inside his car.

She sat on the bathroom floor for a while. The knife lay on the tiles next to her, and she spun her phone around in her hand as she considered her next steps. Her mind was feeling less fragile after such a long sleep, despite the nightmares of a faceless monster still after her.

She couldn't call Dad or the boys. She'd not even lasted a month away from them. The thought of going back home with her tail between her legs was too much. She needed Bree. But if Matteo was constantly watching her,

she couldn't call Bree either. If he saw Bree, who knows what might happen to her. She might be handy with her fists, but Matteo was a ruthless psychopath who was almost three times Bree's size. No way was she putting her sister in danger like that. She bit her bottom lip to stave off the tears.

*Think, Connie.*

She couldn't afford to let Matteo witness her returning home. If he saw her leave her flat, he would undoubtedly follow her, whether it be the next day or the day after. He was like a persistent shit stain. He evidently wanted to do more than merely watch her too. The very thought made her stomach churn in revulsion. She couldn't. She didn't want a sexual relationship with anyone, but especially not with him.

She had no desire for intimacy with any man. Ever.

Perhaps she should book a hotel room and distance herself from the flat. That way, he would understand that she had no intention of being with him. It would be best if he believed she had gone permanently, but for that to happen, he needed to disappear first so she could slip away without his notice.

*Fuck this. You're Connie fucking Quinn, not a goddamn wallflower.*

Fuelled by a new level of determination, she dragged her ass up from the cold tiles and marched down the hall into the kitchen, the knife back in her other hand. She needed to make it clear to him who he was messing with, and she wouldn't allow him to disrupt her newfound life. He needed to fuck off and stay the hell away from her.

But the knife slipped from her grasp and clattered onto the floor the moment she entered the kitchen. There, calmly sitting at the table, was Matteo, leisurely enjoying a piece of toast. A smile played upon his lips as he looked up at her.



“What the fuck are you doing?” she spluttered, taking a step backward.

“Good morning, beautiful,” he replied through a mouthful of toast. “I made you some toast too. Do you like toast?”

“Why are you in my kitchen?” she snapped.

He looked confused. “Because I wanted some toast.”

“But this isn’t your flat!”

He chuckled, inflaming her desire to punch him. She clenched her fists, trying to maintain her composure.

“Yes, it is, angel,” he replied. His eyes glinted with mischief.

“You’re off your head. This is my place, Matteo. Get the fuck out immediately or I’m calling the police.” She pointed at the door, emphasising her point.

“No. This is mine, sweet. Well, I bought it for us, really. It’s ours now.”

Her throat tightened as she struggled to process his words. “You—you bought the flat?”

“No. I bought the building.” He pushed the last piece of toast into his mouth and stood, unfazed by the look of horror that must be on her face. She took another step back as she tried to comprehend what he’d just admitted.

“You bought the entire building?” Her mouth was as dry as sandpaper as it sunk in.

“Yes. I’ve also evicted everyone else. I gave them a week’s notice, though. We can’t have you living around strangers now, can we? Not after what you’ve been through. We need you to feel safe again.”

“Matteo!”

“Yes?” He unhooked his jacket from the chair, completely untroubled by her yell.

“What is wrong with you? I’m obviously not going to stay in a building

you own and I don't need this shit. I've had a stalker before, but you're even worse!"

His face darkened. She wished she still had a grip on the damn knife.

"What stalker?" he demanded.

"Some boy back in Ealing, but it doesn't matter about him. You're my problem now." She threw her arms in his direction.

"You tell me about him right now, princess." His voice took on a tone so dark that she took another step away from him.

"It was nothing! Not compared to this. A boy called Benny I went to school with who wouldn't leave me alone. My brothers sorted him out years ago and scared him away."

"You have brothers?"

"Yes. I have three brothers. They're murderous gangsters, so you know. They'll kill you when they find out about this."

"Good. I'm glad you've got more than me looking out for you. But so we're clear, I'm the one you come to with any problems first. Understand?"

"You are fucking deranged, Matteo."

His grin returned. Showing off those perfect teeth. Memories of that mouth between her legs came to her, and she swallowed them down quickly.

"Thank you, angel. It will grow on you."

"Like a wart?"

"Like a pretty flower, and you'll learn to love it as much as I know you loved the flowers yesterday. See you later."

He marched out the door as if they'd finished a completely normal conversation and left her staring at him in stunned silence.

This guy was unhinged, and she needed to escape from him today. Unluckily for Matteo, a plan had come to mind while they spoke. And what

better time to put it into action?

## Twenty

# Matteo



**M**atteo pushed away the heavy feeling in his chest as he sunk into the driver's seat. The feeling of walking away from Connie was almost too much to bear. He hated to leave her, but she needed more space to appreciate their feelings for each other too. She needed time to dwell, and then she needed help to get over what happened. That bit would be okay. He'd make her forget Bill and Mattis ever existed. Once Mattis was also dead of course.

Then he could sleep in her bed. He stretched out his sore muscles—Lamborghinis were not made for sleeping in—then pulled out his tablet. Connie didn't seem to realise she'd slipped up this morning. Now he knew she was originally from Ealing, or at least attended school there. Though Ealing wasn't exactly a small place. A quick internet search brought back ninety-one schools in the area. He sighed heavily. It was going to be a pain to pin down which school she attended. But it would be worth it to know her better.

He narrowed his search to secondary schools, and thirty more appeared. Eight of them were private. He considered the soft way she spoke and the way she pouted when she didn't get her way. Then there was the Louis Vuitton handbag casually thrown into the corner of the entry. The shoes next to it looked expensive too. She was definitely more likely to have gone to a private school.

He looked up the Quinn family name. There were a few Quinns in each school, but only one Connie Quinn, and she went to Burton Prep School. Along with a sister, Bree Quinn. Hmm. She didn't mention a sister. Only brothers. Bree must be the woman that Connie had her arm thrown around in the photo placed in her kitchen.

He checked for brothers too, but no boys went to the school under the name Quinn. Strange. He'd have to tease more information on the boys from her later because he needed to know everything about where his angel had grown up.

And whether her brothers were going to be a problem for them. Not that he was worried about them hurting him, but she probably wouldn't like it if he killed them. The situation might require more careful handling.

He hacked into the database to view her school record. His Connie was a naughty girl in her private school, and they'd almost expelled her once for being drunk on school grounds. He chuckled to himself. The notes stated her father had disciplined her thoroughly, and he did not expect it to happen again. There was no mention of his name nor were there any notes about her mother. Even in the main information section, no parents were named for Connie or Bree Quinn. She got curiouser and curiouser.

Maybe he should bring her sister here to help Connie through her healing. Could that be what she needed? One of his brothers could have Bree. He'd

need to know if she and Connie got along first, though. He brought his attention back to the school records. During the time Connie attended Burton Prep School, only one Benny attended with her. Benjamin Brown. Time to call Hugh again. He pulled up the investigator's number. Maybe he already had something on Dan Mattis.

“Matteo?” Hugh snapped. “It’s not even been twenty-four hours.”

“Hugh, nice to speak to you too,” Matteo quipped.

“Is it about Dan? I haven’t found him yet, but I’m close.”

“No. This is about someone else. I need a background check on two people. One Benjamin Brown from Ealing, sometimes called Benny Brown. He’s about thirty years old, and went to Burton Prep School. And one Connie Quinn. Also the same age and school.”

“Sounds easy enough if they have a record. Give me half an hour.”

Hugh hung up without so much as a goodbye. True to his word, he emailed fifteen minutes later with a brief background check on Benny Brown.

Benny Brown had a record which made Matteo’s fist curl hard around the steering wheel. Stalking, harassment, and assault against one Connie Quinn. Plus two similar charges against other women. In one of his mugshots his eye was swollen and bruised, and his lip was busted. Was that from Connie’s brothers? If so, they didn’t do a good enough job.

Hugh didn’t yet have a current address, but luckily Benny was easy to find on social media. He was an oversharer with a beautiful, blonde wife and two small kids. Benny was tall and thick with a protruding beer belly and a balding head. Unluckily for him, he liked to show off his “perfect” life on social media.

Matteo studied Benny’s wife. What kind of woman could love a man like

Benny? He was certainly punching well above his weight with her. She was thin with thick hair that spiralled down her shoulders and perfect delicate features. He zoomed in on one of the pictures he found online. They were barely visible unless someone was specifically looking, but light bruises lined both of her arms, and they looked just like finger marks.

He clearly wasn't Mattis. But it was time to pay Benny a visit so Connie knew he was serious about protecting her.

Social media confirmed the guy still lived in Ealing, as his oldest kid went to Buckfield Primary School. The badge on his school uniform was clear to read in more than one picture. In a photo of the whole family taken from a front garden, a small shop stood behind them named Pab's Corner. In another, Benny showed off a new purchase of a blue BMW with the registration in full display. Of course an idiot like him drove a BMW. After a quick map search, it didn't take long to track down where they lived.

It would take two hours to drive there, though, so Matteo pulled up the camera stream on his phone that would allow him to watch Connie as he drove. He wanted to know immediately if she left her flat. He texted the family's loyal driver, Bert, to be on standby to follow Connie if needed. As he was about to drive off, another message came through from Hugh.

*"Your girl Connie is clean, but she has something hidden I can't get access to yet. She must know someone who was able to hide it. Give me a few more hours."*

Interesting. He filed it away to review later. Right now he needed to focus on Benny. So he drove the boring motorway route to Ealing, eventually landing on the M25. A furious rage burned inside him as he thought about Benny and the charges against multiple women. He couldn't believe anyone would ever dare to lay a hand on his Connie. She had to know he would

protect her. He had to show her he was her safety blanket, no matter what he had done to her, and not her kidnapper. Benny was his ticket to proving that to her, and he was going to pay dearly for his past.

As he pulled up outside the same Pab's Corner shop from the image on social media, he glared across the road at the driveway that looked like the one from Benny's picture. A gleaming, blue BMW sat on the drive. Matteo allowed the darkness within him to take over as he made his way toward the front door.

He knocked so hard it sounded as if the door might fall through. It only took a moment for the tall, thick man from the photos to answer the door. Matteo scrutinised him in one quick glance. Benny Brown. He looked worse up close. There were no filters in real life. His skin was sallow, and his eyes were bloodshot as though he'd been drinking despite the early hour. Clearly his life wasn't as perfect as he liked to make out online. He narrowed his eyes at Matteo.

"What are you ... what's going on?"

"You know exactly what's going on," Matteo growled, pushing past Benny and into the pristine white hallway behind him with ease. "You thought it was okay to hurt my girl?"

Benny tried to back away out of the front door, but Matteo was on him in a flash, pinning him to the wall and slamming the front door closed.

"I'm sorry, man. I didn't mean t-to."

A ripple of satisfaction ran through Matteo as Benny flinched. He hadn't even started yet and already the guy was about to wet himself. He was a typical bully, taking out his weakness on the women around him but too scared to face a real man.

"Where are the kids?" Matteo asked.



“School. Why?”

“Do you know who my girl is, Benny?”

“I assume it’s the chick with the bite mark from last week? But she asked for it, man. Then went crazy saying she was calling the police, so I had to calm her down, you know? I didn’t mean to break her nose. I had to shut her up.”

Matteo’s jaw clenched. His words barely more than a growl.

“What about the bruises on your wife?”

“Hey! She’s mine. I can do what I like to—”

Matteo pulled a knife out of his jacket pocket and dug it into Benny’s stomach. It was a simple decision. Some people talked their way into a bigger hole. Men like Benny had no value on this earth. His kids were better off without him.

Benny gasped and clutched Matteo’s shoulder, his mouth opening and closing like a fish out of water. Matteo savoured the sight of terror etched across his face as his eyes pleaded for mercy. With a deliberate motion, he withdrew the knife, leaving Benny gasping for breath as he collapsed onto the ground.

As he prepared to leave the house, the front door swung open. He stepped back, knife still in hand. His adrenaline surged, ready for a confrontation. A woman entered, dressed impeccably in a crisp baby blue suit. Her blonde hair was neatly pinned back, and dark sunglasses shielded most of her attractive face.

She closed the door gently behind her before looking up at Matteo. Her lips parted, but she said nothing. She took off her sunglasses and revealed a dark eye almost as black as Benny’s had been in the mugshot. Only then did her eyes fall to the floor behind Matteo.

“Benny!” she gasped, one hand flying to her chest.

Benny struggled to breathe amidst his own blood. Why was that fucker still breathing?

“Ma’am,” Matteo addressed her pointedly, capturing her attention. “When a man does that to your eye, he deserves no tears. This is what he deserves.”

Matteo gestured toward the bleeding figure of Benny on the floor.

“You have children, don’t you? Children who you don’t want this fucking scumbag around?”

The woman nodded, her eyes firmly on Matteo.

“Now, you have no cameras, correct?”

She nodded again.

“Did anyone see you come inside?”

“I ... I don’t think so.”

“So please turn around quickly and go to the shop as if you forgot something. Take an hour. He’ll be gone when you get back. I will take care of that. You will be free.”

A tear streaked the woman’s cheek as she glanced at Benny. Muffled gurgles emanated from his throat, but he couldn’t properly respond. Slowly, she put her sunglasses back on, turned around, and left without a word.

“That’s my cue to leave, Benny. My friends will be here soon to clean you up. Try to be nicer in your next life, okay? No one likes a woman beater.”

He pulled up his hood and left Benny to die. The others would finish him if needed. He checked the live feed on his phone to catch a glimpse of Connie. His poor girl was bundled under the duvet in her bedroom. She needed some cheering up. Perhaps another gift would do the trick. He knew

just the thing. She would be happy and carefree once more. He would kill anyone who got in the way.

## Twenty One

# Connie



Connie shifted in the plush velvet dining chair. She was calmer in the warm atmosphere of the cosy restaurant. It was cute, but elegant. Dark walls adorned with tasteful artificial plants gave the space a real charming feel. Delicate lights scattered throughout the foliage made it sparkle. Despite the comforting aura, goose bumps prickled on Connie's skin, lingering beneath the dark blue jumper that she hastily grabbed before leaving. Her choice of jeans and casual attire allowed her to blend in with the crowd, she was like any other woman going about her day in town.

Matteo thought he was so clever installing cameras ridiculously quickly. How had he even done that? Or were they there before he took her and she hadn't even noticed? He must have been watching her beforehand. But she knew as soon as he drove away it was her chance to escape. Though her plans were quickly scuppered when a man in a limousine appeared and parked outside, watching her the same as Matteo had.

So she had to get clever.

She'd waited patiently, laying in bed and gradually getting dressed under the covers. She strategically placed pillows to create the illusion of her presence and silently manoeuvred out of the bedroom, crawling on all fours toward the rear fire escape army style. Her original plan was to get a hotel somewhere, but as soon as she was out of the flat, her empty stomach growled and weakness washed over her. She needed food to regain her focus. Dawn of the Bread, her initial choice, was unexpectedly closed. So she hurried to The View, one of the few available eateries in town, where she now waited for her intriguingly named "blade of beef" dish. She was very curious about what it entailed.

The View was an elegant addition to the grand Romano Towers, which dominated Oak Brook Road. Its expansive floor-to-ceiling windows offered breathtaking vistas of the surrounding greenery. During her one previous visit, the evening ambiance had captivated her as moonlight cast an ethereal glow upon the branches of the trees, making them shimmer with beauty. The chic establishment was owned by one of the infamous Romano brothers, Hilton. She had been warned repeatedly to steer clear of the Romano brothers by various people, particularly Harlow, who seemed to hold a personal vendetta against them. Though she never admitted to it or said anything other than they were dangerous.

But the warnings simply made her laugh considering the family she'd run away from. People spoke of her own family in the same vein, and they were right. Her family was dangerous. The Romanos probably knew her dad well. They were likely mates. Or enemies.

Hilton was reportedly the quietest and youngest of three brothers, and the most ominous. He was the only one she'd seen before, which was during her previous visit to The View. It hadn't escaped her attention then that he was an

absolute Adonis with his tanned skin, thick black hair, and sexy stubble. Very like Matteo, actually. They could be brothers.

Not that Matteo was sexy. Obviously. He was repulsive.

*Wait.*

A chill ran through her stomach as a stark realisation hit her. The server approached and presented her plate of beef, accompanied by a side of parsley risotto and chorizo jam, with an elegant flourish. The tantalising smell of the beef with caramelised onion would usually send her stomach into a needy meltdown, but at that moment, a wave of nausea washed over her instead.

*Matteo Romano.*

How had she not realised? The Romano family, the most powerful in Oak Brook, known for their ruthless nature and readiness to resort to murder when things didn't align with their wants. They were wealthy as hell, possibly even surpassing that of her own family.

*Well done, Connie. Trust you to get mixed up with them.*

She was like a damn danger magnet. Bree never got into this much trouble. Bree was the epitome of a good girl, obediently following every command their dad issued. Maybe that's why Connie was kidnapped when she tried to break free. She deserved it. It was the karma for attempting to get away from her own family. Was that how she ended up on that awful website? A tear fell from her eye onto the untouched risotto before her.

But her thoughts were abruptly interrupted as two strong hands gripped her shoulders, causing her to gasp.

“Come with me, miss,” a gruff voice said.

*Matteo.*

Panic surged through her, causing her to push the hands away and scramble backward off the chair. Yet, when she raised her gaze, it was not

Matteo's piercing blue eyes she found herself locked with. Instead, it was Hilton Romano, whose soft brown eyes peered into hers.

"I can't let a pretty lady like you cry here alone," he said with a touch of concern, though his expression was devoid of a smile.

Speechless, she found herself unable to form coherent words in her state of panic. Though she was vaguely aware she was staring at him like a deer in headlights. Did Matteo put Hilton up to this? Did he know she was here?

"Fine. Don't come with me. I'll sit here instead then, shall I? Then at least you're not alone," Hilton declared. He took a seat and rested his forearms on the table in front of him. He really did bear a striking resemblance to Matteo, with his tanned complexion and thick black hair, though a scar on his forehead disrupted the smooth flow of his hair. She scowled at him.

"Did he put you up to this?" she questioned.

"Did who put me up to this?"

Anger replaced her panic. He could at least be honest. Although in Hilton's defence, he looked genuinely confused at her question.

"Matteo, of course," she replied, crossing her arms protectively across her chest.

"Oh. I should've known he'd have spotted you first." Hilton leaned back in his chair, an air of defeat clouding his features. "No, he had nothing to do with this. What's your name?"

"Connie," she spat, too annoyed to be careful about her identity.

"Well, Connie, if my brother's upset you, please take the food on the house. I know what he's like with his women."

"I'm not his woman! And why are you being so nice to me anyway? I thought you were all arseholes."

Hilton chuckled in much the same way Matteo did, sending another ripple

of rage through her body.

“Would you prefer it if I wasn’t nice? Fine.” He shrugged. “I’m not here because I’m nice. I’m here because a lady crying alone in my restaurant is not a good look.”

“Well, at least I’m managing to annoy one of you bloody Romanos,” she snapped, aware of her childish tone.

Hilton’s laughter filled the air once more. “You’re not annoying me, darling. In fact, you’ve brightened up my day considerably. I’m going to personally make you a dessert—also on the house. Get that beef down you, it’s too good to waste, and I’ll be back soon.” He stood and sauntered away as if he owned the place.

Well, he did own the place, but that wasn’t the point.

He was as cocky as Matteo, and it grated on her nerves. Ugh. Fuck this. She didn’t want to be near any of the damn Romano family. It was time to get out of here before the final brother popped up out of nowhere to wind her up somehow. What was his name? Something beginning with E?

She angrily shoved some beef into her mouth whilst he walked away. He was right. It was too good to waste, but needs must. She waited until Hilton had disappeared into the kitchen and then stood to sneak out of the restaurant. She walked slowly, and tried not to draw any attention to herself. The other guests paid her no heed.

But as soon as she stepped outside onto the pavement, it felt as if her feet were glued in place.

Oak trees, which lent their name to the restaurant, stood across the road and covered the path that led to Lounge 23. The same place Matteo had taken her. Where those men had touched her as she was unable to move. Her breath caught, and she placed a trembling hand on her throat, attempting to steady



herself and take in a choked breath. Not only were her feet cemented to the pavement, but her entire body refused to budge. Panic welled up within her, urging her to escape, but she remained frozen in place. Just like when she had been trapped and bound in Lounge 23.

Strong hands gripped her waist and still she couldn't move. The hands yanked her backward into the very restaurant she'd fled from. Once she was away from the view of oak trees, her breathing gradually returned and her senses slowly came back to her. She looked around in a dazed state, realising that she was now in a small office. Hilton stood before her. He was messy if this place was anything to go by. Papers and boxes were scattered haphazardly throughout the room.

“You left without having dessert,” he remarked, extending a bowl with a slice of what appeared to be a decadent chocolate cake. “The sugar will help ease whatever caused your panic outside.”

Embarrassment crept through her as she realised he saw her break down outside. The last thing she wanted was cake, but her fried brain was still incapable of producing words. So she gingerly accepted the bowl from him and took a hesitant bite. Despite her reluctance, it was absolutely delicious—light, fluffy, and perfectly sweet.

“Mmm,” she involuntarily moaned, unable to resist the taste. Hilton grinned, displaying a captivating smile that once again made him Matteo's twin.

“I should be the only one making you moan like that, princess.”

She almost choked on the cake as Matteo's voice came out of nowhere. She flung the bowl on its side and turned around to face him, with every bone in her body ready to fight.

## Twenty Two

# Connie



“**Y**ou,” she exclaimed, her voice tinged with anger as Matteo’s imposing figure filled the doorway. She felt minuscule, like a helpless mouse trapped between these two towering and murderous giants.

“Yes, me,” he said, sporting the same infuriating smile that Hilton had just displayed. Though it was decidedly more infuriating when Matteo did it. “Thanks, Hilton. I’ll take it from here.”

“No. I want him to stay,” she snapped, throwing one defiant hand on her hip.

Hilton’s grin widened. “Do we have a competition, Matty? Lady chooses?”

“No.” Matteo’s smile vanished, replaced by a cold and unwavering stare directed at his brother. Hilton responded with a snort but raised both hands in a gesture of peace.

“Fine. You can have the pretty lady even though she clearly prefers me.”

Connie’s heart sank. Hilton turned toward her and placed a hand on her chin, forcing her to meet his gaze.

“You’ll be in excellent hands with my brother, darling. Whatever he’s done, he won’t hurt you. He knows I’ll kill him if he does.”

He winked, then turned to walk away, and Matteo stepped aside to let him pass. Connie’s legs urged her to follow Hilton, desperate to avoid being alone with Matteo. But Matteo stepped into her path, blocking her escape. She let out an audible tut of frustration.

“Why are you even here?” she demanded, irritation evident in her tone.

“I came here to get you, angel,” he replied with that unnerving calmness that only fuelled her desire to slap him.

“I’m not your angel.” Her jaw clenched with such force that it ached.

“Yes, you are my angel. A fallen one, maybe,” he teased, winking. “But mine nonetheless. What you don’t understand yet, angel, is that you’re the woman I’ve been waiting for. You’re the air I breathe and the blood that courses through my veins.”

With each word, he advanced toward her, closing the distance she tried to create with her backward steps. He took hold of her hand, pressing it against his chest, allowing her to feel the steady rhythm of his heartbeat beneath her palm.

“Feel that? It beats for you. It was dormant for much of my life, and then you came along like a damn wildfire, reigniting its flame.”

She swallowed hard, feeling the pressure of Hilton’s desk against her back. There was no escape from Matteo’s commanding presence. He took up the entire room. Her own heartbeat raced, contrasting with his calm pulse. He let go of her hand and pushed into her with his whole body, her head level with the lower part of his chest. His woody scent made her mouth water. His hand found its way between her legs, gently applying pressure against her and forcing a gasp from her lips.

“I know you’re not ready, and that’s okay. But this is what I need to eat every day to keep me alive. You’re my everything, Connie Quinn. I knew it from the second you walked in to me outside that weird bakery.”

She wanted to respond with an insult, to remind him of the absurdity of his declarations. But all she could do was stare in disbelief. Words failed her. This man barely knew her and now he felt like this?

Red flag, Connie!

But as quickly as he had cornered her, he was gone. He walked away, leaving her yearning for his warmth. Her hand reached out to pull him back, but she snatched it back before he could see it.

“Come. I will take you home,” he said.

“I’ll walk,” she mustered, finally finding her voice.

In an instant, he invaded her space again and effortlessly lifted her onto his shoulder, disregarding her protests.

“Matteo! Let me go,” she yelled, pounding her fists on his back.

“Never. Didn’t you hear what I said? I need you. You’re mine.”

He carried her out of the office and into the corridor, his grip unyielding. He was actually going to carry her through the restaurant like this?

“Okay. I’ll let you take me home, but put me down, please.”

“Fine, but if you run, I’ll catch you,” he warned, setting her gently against the wall and then leaning into her, his hands braced on either side of her head.

“If I catch you, baby girl, there will be consequences. Understand?”

Fear pumped through her veins, urging her to act quickly. If she ran now, would she even make it out of the restaurant? Probably not. The thought lingered, but the odds were stacked against her. So she nodded her compliance and stayed close behind him as they made their way through the restaurant. Hilton was sitting at a table close to the exit. He waved as they

walked by and winked at her, the brothers' resemblance still striking. Only the differences in their eyes and tattoos set them apart.

Matteo had arrogantly parked his stupid car in front of The View, blatantly disregarding the double yellow lines. Typical for people like the Romanos, who felt rules and regulations were things they could afford to ignore. Just like her own brothers. He stopped to get his keys from his pocket.

This was it.

This was the only chance she'd have to escape.

Seizing the moment, she turned and sprinted up the hill with every ounce of strength in her legs, propelling herself away from her home and deeper into unfamiliar territory. She had no idea where to go, but she didn't dare glance over her shoulder.

"I'm coming." Matteo's voice echoed in the distance, but she refused to let it deter her. With each step, her determination grew. She'd never been more grateful that she had chosen to wear trainers.

Her feet pounded against the grassy path, her desperation driving her forward. She needed to find a sanctuary, a place to hide. The entrance to the dilapidated Oak Manor loomed before her like a warning sign. She had peeked at its overgrown gardens weeks prior, and found the whole place stunning. But now an ominous feeling crept up her spine as she raced through the gate, the noise of it clashing against her ears as it swung back and sending her pulse pounding in her ears.

The front garden of the manor was wild with greenery. Tall plants reached for the sky, entangling themselves around the imposing fences, while overgrown bushes sprawled freely. She hurried to a thick bush, seeking safety behind its dense foliage, her hand pressed against her chest in an attempt to quiet her rapid breathing.

Through the small opening in the bush, she strained her eyes to catch a glimpse of the gate, hoping against hope that Matteo would pass by without noticing her. Minutes ticked by in agonising silence, and with each passing second, her anxiety lessened, allowing her to gradually regain control of her racing heart. She cautiously settled on the grass, seeking solace in its familiar touch as she attempted to calm her nerves.

“Got you.”

Her scream pierced the air as Matteo picked her up and threw her over his shoulder.

“For god’s sake, put me down!”

“It’s not god’s name you’re going to scream, angel.”

He carried her toward the manor, his strides determined and purposeful. With one swift kick, he shattered the dilapidated door, revealing a dark interior masked by boarded-up windows. The scent of mustiness hung heavy in the air, enveloping them with an unsettling embrace.

“Why are you bringing me in here?” she asked, hating to hear how small her voice was.

“Don’t worry, princess, I got you. Don’t be scared. I’m going to make sure you embrace the beauty of the dark.”

He placed her gently on a dusty chair positioned in the centre of an abandoned lounge. Once-elegant furnishings were now covered in dirty white sheets, their previous grandeur hidden beneath layers of neglect. Cobwebs clung to every nook and cranny, casting a haunting atmosphere upon the room.

Ugh. How utterly romantic.

“What the hell is this place?” Connie wondered aloud.

“It’s owned by a widower whose too sad to do anything with it.” Matteo

shrugged as he glanced around.

“How do you know?”

“I know everything. Now, strip,” Matteo demanded, his voice carried a sinister edge.

Defiance surged through Connie, and she sprang to her feet, her determination overshadowing her petite stature.

“What? Absolutely not. Is this how you’re going to make what happened to me better? By subjecting me to it again?”

“Oh no. I’m going to remind you how fucking incredible it felt when I made you experience such immense pleasure,” he said with a dark tone, his eyes shining. She swallowed hard, feeling his gaze pierce through her and search her soul. In an attempt to create distance, she took a large step back.

“I don’t want you to touch me,” she said, her voice trembling.

“We both know that’s a lie, baby girl,” he replied, his confidence unwavering. “Now, it’s time for you to strip.”

“You fucking strip.” She took another step backward, trying to tear her eyes away from his so she could plan an escape.

To her surprise, he shrugged and pulled off his dark T-shirt. She couldn’t tear her eyes away from him. The dim light filtered through the gaps in the wood, casting delicate rays across his chiselled chest and accentuating every muscle like a masterpiece in marble. With swift movements, he discarded his trainers and jeans. She could not stop looking at him as he stood before her in all his glory—dick standing at attention again.

“Now, it’s your turn. That is, if you can manage to compose yourself,” he said, smirking at her.

She snapped her mouth closed. “No.”

He sauntered over to her as he stroked himself with one hand. She took

yet another step back, her legs growing weak, which caused her to stumble into a nearby chair. He towered above her, his erection at eye level as he reached the chair. In response, she quickly jerked her head back.

“No, Matteo.” She mustered the strength to speak. She forced herself back onto her feet. “If you bring that thing near me, I’ll bite it off.”

“I don’t want you to do anything to me, princess,” he replied, his voice dripping with playfulness and desire. “You were the one who wanted to see me naked again. I only want to play with you. This is *all* about you. I will make sure you feel pleasure again in every part of your body. You won’t think about what happened ever again. You will give your body only to me. I will make sure your thoughts will be consumed with me. If another man even looks at you, they die. Understand? You are mine and when you think of the dark, you will think of me and feel safe. Now, strip.”

His words sent a jolt through her brain, overwhelming her with a desperate longing to escape the torment of her thoughts and return to a sense of normalcy. She was incapable of coherent thinking, driven solely by a keen desire to feel nothing, rather than pain, sorrow and guilt. Drawing closer, he stood mere inches away, and he smelled so good it made her want to do anything he said.

His gaze held her captive, and with a mixture of his burning stare and her desperate need to escape the memories of Lounge 23, she pulled her top over her head. Encouraged by his ferocious gaze, she kicked off her trainers and slid off her jeans and underwear. The cool air of the old manor made her shiver.

His dick was dangerously close to her stomach. As he leaned in to lift her, she felt his hardness press against her skin. The warmth of his hands against her cool body felt exhilarating, prompting her to wrap her legs around him



when he picked her up, anticipating his penetration. However, to her surprise, he carried her to the edge of the room and gently placed her back against the wall.

“Face the wall, and put both hands on it. Do not take your hands off the wall or I’ll stop,” he commanded.

Obedying his instruction, she pressed her palms against the wall, her excitement heightened by the anticipation of his touch. As her vision was obscured, a small voice echoed in the depths of her mind.

*You shouldn’t be enjoying this.*

But despite the doubts, pleasure surged through her body. Her hardened nipples strained against her skin, and she was acutely aware of her own arousal. She knew without checking that she was dripping wet. She had no time to dwell on her confusion as Matteo’s stubble rubbed against the sweet spot on her neck. His warm breath tickled her skin.

“Good girl,” he growled into her ear, causing her legs to weaken. “Whenever you think about what happened, you’re going to remember this more. This is what you will think about whenever you think of the dark or whenever you get scared. Think of me and the pleasure I can give you.”

His dick rubbed against her ass as his fingers traced a path along her back, exploring her curves until he reached her stomach and eventually descended to her swollen clit. Eager for his touch, she arched her back, offering him unhindered access.

Slowly, he inserted a finger, tender and deliberate. A soft moan escaped her lips as she focused solely on the sensation, willing the negative memories to fade away. There was no blindfold, and no ties. This wasn’t the same.

A second finger followed, and her whimpers grew louder as he rhythmically moved them in and out of her wet entrance, his fingers expertly

curled to enhance her pleasure. His rock-hard cock brushed against her ass with each motion. His rough lips still kissing her neck right at that spot.

“Are you going to come for me, baby girl?”

“Yes,” she moaned, feeling the familiar pressure building inside her.

“Good.”

He pressed his lips fervently against her neck, strengthening their connection, until her moans grew louder. Her release was within reach, she was almost there.

But Matteo withdrew his fingers and stepped back. She whipped around and glared at him.

“What the hell, Matteo?”

“I’m not allowing you to come. You’re not ready. I’m going to tease you until you can’t take it anymore, baby. Until you are consumed with the same desire for me as I have for you. Put your clothes back on.”

“No,” she snapped. “I want to come. You said you were going to make me.”

“I said I would make you forget about everything and focus solely on me. And it’s working, isn’t it?”

She looked away furiously.

To hell with this.

To hell with him.

She needed to teach him a lesson.

## Twenty Three

# Matteo



**M**atteo stared as Connie stormed back to the chair, her perfect ass jiggling as she walked. The ache in his groin was unbearable. The desire to bend her over and thrust into her until she cried out in pleasure was almost impossible to resist.

He was taken aback by how readily she did as she was told. She wasn't being as feisty as he expected. It was a little disappointing, really. He'd have to try harder to make sure she became as obsessed with him as he was with her. He needed to invade her mind and consume her thoughts in the same way she'd destroyed his own.

She reached the spot where her clothes had dropped to the floor, but instead of putting them back on, she placed one foot on the chair and spread her legs wide, fixing him with a defiant glare. Her hand found its way between her thighs, and she parted herself. With her other hand, she gently stroked her swollen clit, closing her eyes and moaning with pleasure.

There was the feisty Connie he was expecting.

His need for her intensified beyond his imagination as he watched her pleasure herself. Her head arched back, blissful moans filling the room. Nothing else mattered to him in that moment; the goddess before him consumed his entire being. His body and mind no longer belonged to him. He stroked himself as he closed the distance between them.

“Baby girl, I’m warning you, if you keep doing that I will fuck you right here, right now, and I won’t be gentle.”

Her head returned to its forward position, her breath heavy as she continued to stimulate her throbbing clit. He couldn’t tear his eyes away from her hand, his longing to seize her growing stronger by the second.

“You have five seconds to stop or I will claim you.” He locked eyes with her, the energy was palpable. “Five. Four. Three.”

He counted rapidly, but her head rolled back, her moans growing louder as her legs trembled. He ceased counting. His dirty girl had just experienced a mind-shattering orgasm before him, her hand drenched in her own pleasure. This was the real Connie. She knew exactly what she wanted, and she wasn’t afraid to take it. How was it possible that witnessing her release had only heightened his arousal?

“Done.” She smiled at him breathlessly, looking pleased with herself. She relished so much in her perceived cleverness that it was kind of sweet. For now, he would let her have that. “How does it feel to be teased, huh?”

He matched her smile and took a step closer, his gaze fixated on her delicate neck. He could see the wariness in her expression as she swallowed nervously. Reaching out, he gently took her hand, pleased to see that she didn’t recoil from his touch despite her obvious uncertainty about his intentions. Curiosity was starting to overcome her fear of him. It was a good

start. He brought her wet hand to his mouth, sensually placing her wet fingers between his lips.

“Mmm,” he moaned, savouring the taste as he slowly licked each finger. She remained silent, her eyes locked on him. He released her hand. “That was cheeky. You will make that up to me soon, and you’d better be ready.”

He briefly considered making her pay for her audacity right then and there, but she wasn’t ready yet. She needed to come to him willingly first, and she would soon enough. She was already intrigued. No one could ignore the magnetic pull between them. Even when they were apart, she overwhelmed his thoughts. With a little more persuasion on his part, it would become undeniable for her as well.

Bending down, he retrieved his scattered clothes from the floor and dusted them off. He slipped on his boxers first, loving that she was watching him intently. When he looked up, her disappointment was evident.

“What’s wrong? Do you want me to stay naked, angel?” he asked.

“No.” She pulled her gaze away and got dressed herself, much to his disappointment. He forced himself to turn away and ignore the urge to grab her.

“Okay. Fine. Now, will you behave? Or do I need to carry you back to the car? Because if you attempt to escape again, I won’t let you off so easily.”

He turned back toward her and leaned in close. She gasped as he firmly gripped a handful of her luscious dark hair and wound it tightly around his fingers. Inhaling her sweet scent, he whispered in her ear.

“If you run, I will fuck you wherever I catch you. Whether it’s here or in the middle of the street, where everyone will witness your punishment as you take it like the good girl you are. Consider this your final warning. This is the last time I’ll hold back.”

Her breath trembled, but she mustered a sharp whisper. “Fine. Let’s go.”

He released her and walked out of the front door, brushing off more dust from his shirt as he went. This manor was a revolting mess.

“I love it here,” Connie whispered from behind him.

“You do?” he asked incredulously.

Was she joking? He spun around to face her, and to his surprise, she seemed genuinely serious.

“Yes!” She folded her arms defiantly. “It’s beautiful if you look beyond the cobwebs. Look at the high ceilings and the detail on the floor. It’s not my fault if you’re a miserable oaf who can’t see it.”

He shrugged and pulled open the heavy front door, which was now clinging perilously to its hinges after he booted through it. “I prefer to buy things brand-new. It’s easier.”

“And far more boring,” she replied as she followed him outside. “Where’s the effort? Or the reward?”

He strode through the overgrown front garden and down the street to his car, a bit disappointed to see Connie sticking to her word and following close behind. She was quiet as they walked, lost in her thoughts. There was much for her to process. Like where they would live once she realised they were meant to be together. She paused when he opened the passenger door of his car and looked at him curiously.

“What are you thinking?” he asked.

“I’m wondering why. Why are you really refusing to leave me alone?”

“Two reasons. One, what happened to you was partly my fault—”

“Partly?” she replied with a furrowed her brow.

“Yes. And I want to make sure you recover from it and stay safe. Two, you and I are meant to be together. You can’t see it yet but you will. You are

mine, Connie Quinn.”

“So you keep saying. You’re fucking crazy,” she muttered as she pushed past him and got into the passenger seat of the car.

He spent the eight-minute drive back to her flat breathing in her scent and stealing glances at her perfect pouty lips. She said nothing, staring out of the windscreen determinedly. When they arrived, she didn’t wait for him to open the car door.

“Are you staying down here?” she asked, standing on the pavement with one hand on her hip.

“Yes,” he replied.

“Good.” She slammed the car door shut and stormed inside the building. The sway of her hips when she was angry was captivating. Maybe he should provoke her more often.

He took out his tablet and accessed the camera feed of the old building. It was such a shithole. His shithole now. He’d get her something better soon. Maybe the manor. She’d enjoy doing it up. He watched as she stormed into the kitchen and threw her handbag to the floor, but she froze when she turned to face the table.

There was a small gift box in the centre of the table. It was black with a silver bow tied around it. She angrily swatted it away and then pulled out a bottle of wine from the fridge and poured herself a large measure into a sparkly wine glass with the cutest annoyed expression on her face.

It was understandable that she didn’t like his gift yet. The message behind it was something she wasn’t ready for, but she would be. And it didn’t take long for her curiosity to get the better of her. After a few sips of wine, her fingers trailed across the table, drawn to the pretty bow.

He studied her face as she opened the box. Her expression was curious

but she was also disgusted. She fingered the pretty necklace inside. It was a heart-shaped locket adorned with tiny diamonds that shimmered even under the camera's view.

She stood and threw it in the bin in the corner of the kitchen, but that was okay. Expected, even, at this early stage. He pulled out his phone.

*You didn't like your collar, princess? Check out the inscription. You can choose your own if you prefer.*

Her face darkened as she read his message. She typed something furiously and his phone vibrated.

*Forever yours? There's something wrong with you!*

But he didn't have time to respond. Something else had caught his eye.

He'd been so busy watching her, that he hadn't actually been watching out for her.

And now, every fibre of his being went on high alert as he noticed the man standing behind Connie and the flash of something sharp in his fist.



## Twenty Four

# Connie



Connie flung her phone onto the table. She could get rid of Matteo quickly if she wanted to. Her dad would snap his neck in an instant, or her brothers could kill him just as easily. She wouldn't put murder past Bree if she told her about the kidnapping. That woman was far too handy with her fists.

However, succumbing to that option would require her to return home and accept defeat. It would mean acknowledging her own inability to exist independently in a normal world. It would prove her family right, and Johnny's death would be meaningless. Her independence was the only good thing to come out of his loss, and that had been snatched away by Matteo and whoever put her name on that sick website.

She'd been so determined that she could thrive on her own. Perhaps she wasn't destined for a normal life.

A sudden jolt from behind startled her, causing her head to whip around. What on earth was that idiot up to now?

"Matteo?" She squinted her eyes, searching for him.

He surely couldn't get in without walking in the front door. He wasn't a damn magician no matter how highly he thought of himself. Unless he'd somehow climbed up the fire escape and slipped in through a window. Sneaking around didn't exactly align with his usual style of breaking through doors, mind. No response greeted her, but a commotion from the living room echoed through the apartment as if someone was frantically rummaging around. She stood up from the kitchen chair.

“Matteo? This isn't funny!”

Her scream pierced the air as the front door burst open, and fell to the ground. Matteo stormed into the apartment, paying no heed to her, and made a beeline for the living room.

“Matteo? What the fuck are you doing? Breaking down one door wasn't enough for you today?”

“Where is he? Did you see him?”

His voice was low. Dangerous. It made her skin crawl with fear and inexplicable desire.

“Who? I heard a noise, but I didn't see anyone,” she stammered, her heart pounding in her chest.

“For fuck's sake, Connie! He was right behind you, wielding a goddamn knife,” Matteo snapped.

Her stomach plummeted as she spun around, her eyes widening in shock.

“A knife?”

“Yes! I saw him standing right behind you on the camera. You didn't even react until he slipped away,” he growled.

How had she missed the danger lurking so close? Despite her heightened alertness, her thoughts had been scattered by Matteo's presence, leaving her

vulnerable. She had probably come close to being attacked once again, and it would have been all Matteo's fault.

"There!" Matteo said urgently as he pointed out the window. "That bastard is getting away."

It was a somewhat absurd sight to watch Matteo's colossal form struggle to fit through the narrow window opening. It reminded her of a determined mouse she had once witnessed contorting its body to squeeze into a tiny crevice of one of the outbuildings back home. But unlike the flexible mouse, Matteo couldn't mould his solid muscles to fit. The man was all muscle and rock hard, as she'd found out earlier when she leaned against his naked form.

He uttered a colourful array of curses as he turned away from the window and scanned the room. She pulled her thoughts away from his naked body, and looked to see what had caught his attention. It soon became clear he grabbed a chair from the kitchen table.

"Don't you fucking dare, Matteo," she warned, fully aware that her words would likely not be heard.

Ignoring her plea, he flung the chair toward the window with such force that the glass shattered upon impact.

"Jesus Christ! Can't you use the door like a normal bloody human? There are stairs right there that lead to the back," she exclaimed in frustration.

He offered no response as he climbed out through the broken window, deftly manoeuvring around the sharp shards that protruded at dangerous angles. She half expected him to hesitate or to consider the foolishness of his actions.

But he vanished without a trace.

She gasped and ran over to the window, panic taking over at the thought of him lying dead on the ground—or at least with a broken leg. When she

reached the window, he was already a blur in the distance. He moved with surprising agility and speed, considering his thickness. She still couldn't see anyone else.

Was Matteo bat shit crazy? Or was there actually another man in her damn flat?

Fuck it all.

Fuck the stranger.

Fuck Matteo and the way her heart had clenched at the mere thought of him being harmed.

Fuck the Stockholm Syndrome taking over. She needed to get away. She stormed into the bedroom and grabbed the first dress she laid eyes on—a vibrant red midi with a sexy off-the-shoulder design and a dainty bow sewed onto the chest. If there was one thing that always made her feel better it was a pretty dress and some vodka. The only thing missing was her partner-in-crime, Bree. She'd have to make do with her own company. She scooped her hair into a bun and had the quickest shave and shower of her life.

She threw on the dress, added a touch of light makeup, and skillfully pinned up her hair. She opted for a new pair of nude wedges instead of delicate heels, because fuck walking in thin heels when she needed to have fun. Plus, this was the first time she'd had a chance to wear the wedges. It took less than fifteen minutes but she looked presentable enough. The tight, red dress looked good any time.

God knows where people went in this town for actual fun other than that horrible Lounge 23 or the university scene, but she needed to get away from the flat. From Matteo. From the stranger with a damn knife. Yet again, she needed to get away from everything and everyone and every goddamn horrible memory that surrounded her.

She searched online for local taxi companies with a trembling hand. Downing the remainder of her wine, as if it would somehow provide peace, she dialled the first company that appeared on the search results page: HEM Cabs.

“Taxi to the closest city centre, please,” she told the operator.

“Be with you in five minutes, love,” came the droll reply from the other end of the line.

She ran down the steps that led to the front of the building, her heart pounding as if she was doing something wrong. But she wasn't. She was an adult woman going for a damn drink because that's what she felt like she needed. Matteo's haunting words rang in her ear as she looked at his empty car.

*I will fuck you wherever I catch you.*

But he wouldn't catch her, because he wasn't here. He'd have no idea where she was while he was engrossed in chasing a supposed madman. Luckily, the taxi didn't mess about and appeared within five minutes as promised. As she hopped into the back seat, a flicker of concern crossed her mind about getting into a vehicle with a stranger, but her worries eased upon seeing the driver was a woman—a pleasant blonde in her fifties wearing a warm and friendly smile. The name Billie was displayed on the headrest cover.

“Where are you going, love?” Billie inquired as soon as the door was closed.

Connie pondered for a moment before asking, “Where's a good spot for dancing and drinks?”

The woman's smile widened, accompanied by a nod. “I know just the place. Leave it to me.”

Connie remained mostly silent during the drive, while Billie happily hummed along to the tunes on the radio. The hammering in her chest calmed as they drove further away from the flat, and a dull excitement replaced her fear. After nearly half an hour, they arrived outside a bustling club. There was already a substantial queue forming at the entrance, despite the early hour.

“You’ll have a blast here, my dear,” Billie remarked.

“Thanks,” Connie replied and tossed two twenty-pound notes in Billie’s direction. She swiftly exited the vehicle, not bothering to wait for any change and heard Billie’s grateful shout before slamming the door shut.

She joined the back of the queue, keeping her head low as if someone might recognise her. When a guy in front of her attempted to smile, she averted her gaze. Tonight’s agenda: drink first, dancing second, and maybe exclude the third D—dick. Just for tonight, at least.

It didn’t take long to get inside and past the bouncers. She barely paid any attention to the surroundings as she raced to the bar. It was dark, and the music was so loud she could barely think. Exactly how she liked it.

“Gin and lemonade, please,” she called to the child bartender over the beat. No way could he be eighteen yet with his little bum fluff around his mouth.

“I’ll take care of that,” a man’s voice came from her left side. She spun around and saw the same guy from the queue standing beside her. He was tall and had tousled blond hair and warm brown eyes. Cute enough. He looked harmless. He would suffice if the third D was required.

“Thanks,” she said with a smile. Maybe dancing could wait.

## Twenty Five

# Matteo



**M**atteo stood in Oak Field, which was close to Lounge 23. The blade-wielding stranger was here, hiding behind a tree and breathing so heavily it was impossible for Matteo not to notice him. He could eliminate him right now, but then he wouldn't be able to find out more about him. His face wasn't fully recognisable on the camera feed, and he couldn't tell if it was Mattis.

There were things he needed to know before the man died. Why did this stranger have an interest in Connie? And why was he in her flat? Maybe it was someone surveilling her on Mattis's behalf. Unless there was someone else watching her for some reason. The thought made his skin crawl. He needed someone else to tail this guy so he could get back to Connie. Hilton would be at the restaurant. He pulled out his phone and texted Enzo instead.

*Where are you? I need an urgent tail?*

Knowing Enzo, he would be in his office at Romano Towers doing something boring and property related. He was so serious all the time, anyone would assume he was the eldest over Matteo, rather than the middle child. He

pretended to keep looking around and fought the urge to grab the idiot behind the tree. It didn't take long for the expected reply.

*Sorry bro, I'm with a client.*

He'd have to try Bert. The driver was never far away.

Bert replied within a few seconds, confirming he was en route from Lounge 23. Maintaining his act of searching for the man, Matteo moved to the left, allowing the stranger to believe he had successfully evaded detection. From the corner of his eye, he spotted Bert approaching, but averted his gaze. Bert walked past Matteo without uttering a word, keeping a careful distance between them. A few moments later, Matteo received another text message.

*I have eyes on him.*

*Good. Follow him for now. I want to know where he goes.*

Matteo cursed and stormed off to keep up the pretence. He kept a close eye on the live stream of Connie through his phone as he walked, but she was nowhere to be seen. His jaw tightened, his knuckles whitening as his fist curled tightly. Regret hit him like a surge of electricity as the realisation struck him—he had abandoned her, leaving her vulnerable and unprotected. The possibility that the blade-wielding stranger could have been a mere diversion made him feel sick. Images of potential harm befalling Connie flooded his mind, each one intensifying his anguish.

He hurried back to the flat and fear surged through him when he found it empty. His heart raced, and he quickly rewound the surveillance footage and watched as she took a shower. Though he was almost captivated by her beauty as water cascaded over her naked curves, he fast-forwarded so he could observe her as she got ready and dolled herself up. His cock stirred as he witnessed her preparing herself, enhancing her appearance for him. He



grew increasingly hard as he watched her, overcome with desire and a fierce possessiveness.

He swiftly entered his car, his eyes fixed on the live image of Connie as she left her flat. She disappeared from view, so he flicked onto the street view camera. She stood outside for a few minutes, scanning her surroundings with a hint of anticipation in her eyes. A smirk tugged at the corners of his lips. She was looking for him and hoping he'd catch her, knowing she would be in trouble when he did.

He fast-forwarded again, his gaze fixated on Connie's interactions with the taxi. She hopped into the back seat without even so much as a glance at who was driving. They would have to discuss that later. But it pleased him to see the name on the top of the taxi. HEM Cabs. The very company owned by his dear father, Matteo had never been so glad of that fact. He swiftly dialled the direct number for Ernie Biggs, the stubborn asshole of a manager that Alessandro had chosen for the taxi firm. God knows why. Matteo had always hated the guy.

"What?" Ernie's brusque voice greeted him on the other end.

"Is that anyway to talk to me, Ernie?"

"Matteo?" Ernie's voice immediately perked up. "I didn't recognise the number, matey. How can I help?"

"I don't keep the same number for long. One of your drivers picked up a woman from Breedon Street flats. Where did they go?"

Ernie paused before letting out a nervous chuckle. "That's not really the kind of inform—"

"Ernie. Tell me where they went. You have one minute to provide me with an answer."

"Su-sure. Of course I can get that for you, Matteo. My friend. Hang on."

Matteo impatiently listened to the sound of typing on the other end of the phone. He gripped the steering wheel with one hand, his knuckles turning white from the pressure.

“Billie picked her up. She went to Bling nightclub, matey,” Ernie’s voice came through.

Matteo abruptly hung up without a response and raced off the curb, the roaring sound of his exhaust reverberating off the surrounding buildings. The traffic was minimal in the evening, and it only took fifteen minutes to reach Bling. He tried to recall the last time he had a drink there. It must have been at least five years ago. The club was a sprawling dive known for its sticky floors that required wiping your feet on the way out rather than the way in. But great for pulling one-night stands.

He’d never need another one-night stand thanks to Connie.

Parking his car discreetly around the corner, hidden from the view of those exiting the club, Matteo swiftly walked back around and approached the entrance. The three towering bouncers turned their heads away as they saw him approach, and said nothing as he walked straight past them.

Inside, the atmosphere was thick with darkness and a haze created by smoke machines. The pulsating music vibrated through the floor, its rhythm vaguely familiar. Women screeched and swarmed around him, while partially inebriated men eyed them from the sidelines, preparing to make their moves.

Instinctively, Matteo’s gaze was drawn to a spot on the right side of the dance floor, and there she was—swaying and stumbling her way onto the crowded space. She was so intoxicated that her movements zigzagged. There was only one reason she would get that drunk—to provoke him. And if she wanted to see his anger, he would show her just how furious he could become.

Following closely behind her was a man, his sinister grin fixed upon her. Matteo had encountered countless men like him before—users and abusers, seeking only their own desires and willing to do anything to a woman to get it.

Then the idiot dared to put his hands on Connie's hips.

So he had to die.

Matteo moved forward, pushing bodies out of his way and ready to kill the son of a bitch right there on the dance floor. He reached into his pocket and retrieved his knife. As he was about to close in on his target, a group of screaming women ran onto the dance floor with a giant inflatable penis, blocking his view of Connie. Matteo attempted to move through the crowd, but the women surrounded him, their laughter and elbows impeding his progress.

“All right, darling? I wouldn't mind you for dessert,” one brunette jeered. “Here, Rosie. What about this guy for your last shag as a single woman?”

“Ooh, bloody hell. He'll do,” shouted a dark-haired woman. Presumably Rosie.

He ignored them and tried to shove his way past, continuing his mission to find Connie and the asshat again, but the women moved with him, persistent and relentless. One of them boldly pinched his behind. He gritted his teeth. Bloody hen parties.

“What d'ya reckon, babe? Do you fancy our Rosie?” the brunette asked as she provocatively positioned herself in front of him, the giant inflatable phallus in hand.

“I'm taken.” He forcefully thrust his knife into the inflatable shaft. “I think some idiot stabbed your dick.”

“Oh, no. Look, girls.” She flipped the deflating member around. “Colin's

ruined.”

Distracted by the unfortunate demise of Colin, the group of women forgot about Matteo. He blasted through them to reach the spot where Connie had been.

Except now she was nowhere to be seen.

## Twenty Six

# Connie



Connie staggered over to a nearby table, stumbling into its edge and causing the metal bottle of beer to clang against the surface. She placed the bottle onto the table. Her head felt heavy, as if it were weighed down by boulders, each thump of the music like a hammer chipping away at her skull.

Yet, amidst the pounding bass and the boisterous cacophony of drunken voices that enveloped her, there was a sense of solace in the filthy club. Here she could forget the worries that filled her day, if only for a little while at least. In this fleeting moment, nothing else mattered except the music resonating within her, and the alcohol coursing through her veins.

“You all right there, love?” the guy who’d brought her drinks asked. His name was Dillon or Killian or something like that. His hands encircled her waist, offering stability as she swayed.

“Yes, I’ve never been better,” she whispered, her voice laced with a tipsy giggle, before tilting her head back to plant a hard kiss on his lips.

His mouth was wet. Weirdly so. And kind of cold. Not like Matteo’s warmth. All Matteo had to do was breathe near her and her body was as hot

as an Egyptian summer. She pulled back and stared at Dillon, it was probably Dillon. He looked like a Dillon. She blinked hard. His pretty face was all blurry.

“I think I need my glasses,” she moaned, her voice punctuated by a hiccup.

“You don’t look like you need glasses. Here, finish your drink.” He picked up the bottle of beer and pushed the drink into her mouth.

“I don’t wear glasses,” she said and then laughed hysterically as she tried to swallow the beer he poured into her mouth. Her legs felt shaky, and she leaned into Dillon to rest against his soft chest. He didn’t have Matteo’s smooth muscles either. He was all cuddly.

Not that it mattered.

“Fuck Matteo,” she mumbled.

Dillon laughed. “Yes, fuck Matteo, darling.”

She leaned into him, her eyelids growing heavy.

“I think it’s time for us to go, babe,” he said. “Come on, I got you. You can come home with me.”

“I don’t feel too good,” she moaned. “Where’s Matteo?”

“Fuck Matteo. Remember? I’ll look after you. Don’t worry. I’ll put you straight to bed. How does that sound?”

“Okay,” she mumbled. Bed had never sounded so good.

She slumped against him as he half carried, half dragged her toward the exit doors. As they reached the street outside, he turned left and took her down the adjacent side street. It was narrow and dark, and a sudden wave of unease washed over her. She tried to ask where they were going, but her words came out slurred and unintelligible.

“My car’s down there, babe. Sit here for a minute.”

He lowered her onto the chilled ground. Her brain was so fuzzy it took her a moment to realise that he'd propped her against a brick wall on the dirty pavement. Small stones dug painfully into the bare flesh on the back of her legs, yet she couldn't move herself to ease the discomfort.

She gazed to her left. Her eyes were unfocused, but she could make out a large, industrial bin that smelled so bad it churned her stomach. Although muffled, the music of the club still thundered in her ears. Suddenly, the bin inched away, and she realised a hand was pressing down on her forehead, guiding her head toward the ground.

"That's it, babe. Have a lie down for a minute." Dillon's voice sounded distant and hazy.

As her head touched the ground, the sharp stones dug into the back of her neck and head, causing a pained groan. Didn't he realise how horrible lying on the ground was? She shivered from the coldness. Why wasn't he helping her get up?

"Shh. It's okay. You'll be home soon," he soothed in a voice that caused a chill to creep into her bones.

She fought to keep her eyes open, refusing to succumb to the overwhelming heaviness weighing down her chest and making it difficult to breathe. Something pressed upon her and straddled her trembling body. She attempted to push it away, but her arms were weak and unresponsive.

"Matteo," she murmured, desperately searching for his presence. He would protect her, he would save her from this torment.

*You left him, you dummy.*

"Sure, I'll be Matteo, babe," Dillon responded, his voice dripping with amusement. "Now, let's get this underwear off. Put your arms down. That's it. You know you've been giving me the eye since you saw me in the queue."

Rough fingers scraped against her thigh as a hand forcefully made its way up her dress. Fingers she didn't want to be anywhere near her. Nausea hit her.

“No. Matteo,” she mumbled again, her voice strained and desperate. “I need Matteo.”

She reached down to push the hand away from her thigh. He was now roughly pulling her underwear down her legs, but she couldn't reach his hand. Everything was blurry, her chest was still heavy, and the music from the club continued to invade her brain. She moved her arms up to push the weight from her chest away instead, desperate to breathe properly, but something was now holding her arms down. Something pinned them and she could no longer move.

“Be a good girl now for me. Then I'll find you a cab and you can go home, okay? You won't remember this. Don't panic. It's not like I'm asking for much. I bet you open your legs for any man. That's why you're here alone in that pretty red dress, isn't it? You wanted attention.”

“No. I need Matteo,” she muttered, her words slurred and distorted.

Why wasn't her body working right? The unwelcome hand reappeared at her thigh, forcefully spreading her legs open wide. She recoiled as he spat and rubbed his hand harshly against her, reviving haunting memories. Frozen with fear, she was powerless to stop him. Her legs were suddenly on top of his shoulders, and he leaned over her, pinning her thighs to her stomach. In an instant, something warm and hard was sliding inside her. She wasn't ready to take him, and the pain made her cry out.

“It's okay, love. You can take it deep for me. It's all right if you need to cry. I don't mind,” Dillon groaned in her ear. The overwhelming sensations threatened to make her sick as he started to thrust into her relentlessly. The noise of his body slapping against hers echoed off the empty brick walls of



the alleyway. Dillon continued his grunts. “That’s it. Well done. It won’t take long. You’re doing so well for me. Good job.”

“No,” she shouted, her voice more clear. Surely he’d listen now? Couldn’t he see how upset she was? Tears now wet her cheeks.

And it worked. The weight disappeared off her chest and the invasion between her legs disappeared, turning into a chilly breeze as she realised he’d hiked her dress up to her hips. She heard a thud and tried to focus her vision. Someone was in front of her.

“Matteo?” she whispered, hoping he was somewhere close by.

“Yes, angel. I’m here to take you home.”

A surge of relief washed over her. It really was him. Matteo was here, and Dillon had stopped. She relaxed her body, no longer caring about the ground digging into her. Matteo would fix it.

“Don’t worry about anything.” Matteo’s voice was soothing.

Two massive hands gently pulled down her dress, enveloping her in a shield of warmth. Those same hands scooped her up and cradled her fragile form. His comforting embrace devoured her, and she breathed in the familiar scent of wood and safety. She finally felt truly safe.

“I said no,” she whispered as her eyes closed and she rested her head against his sturdy chest. The best chest. The one that fit perfectly. Not like Dillon’s.

“I know you did, baby. You don’t need to worry about him anymore. He won’t be hurting anyone ever again.”

“Don’t leave me again,” she pleaded, her voice tinged with a hint of fear and desperation.

“I don’t plan to,” he vowed, his chest rumbling with a soft chuckle. It was the last sound she heard before drifting off with the feeling of security and

the warmth of his arms surrounding her. She'd found a peace at last that was nothing to do with alcohol, and it was actually kind of nice.

## Twenty Seven

# Matteo



**M**atteo leaned down and placed Connie gently in the passenger seat of his car. She mumbled incoherently as he pulled the seat belt taught across her body and clicked it into place. Her eyes rolled into her forehead, and anger pulsed through him at the thought of that fuck drugging her.

Well, he was a dead fuck now.

“It’s okay, baby. You’re safe. We’re going home now,” he reassured her softly, sliding into the driver’s seat and starting the engine. Before driving off, he swiftly sent a text message to Bert.

*Cleanup. Alley behind Bling nightclub. Dumpster.*

Within seconds, Bert was calling his phone.

“Yes?” Matteo snapped, not in the mood for a conversation.

“I followed the target, sir. He was working for Mattis. I have them both.”

“Kill the target. Save Mattis for me.”

He hung up without another word. He chose the back country roads for their journey to the flat in Perthouse Grove to take advantage of the absence of speed cameras. There was no time to be messing about at her shitty little

place, and there was the issue of the broken door and smashed window. He'd better send someone to fix it tonight.

In just fifteen minutes, Matteo pulled into the car park. He turned toward her and saw she was fast asleep. He gazed at her, captivated for a few minutes. Her dark waves cascaded messily over the left side of her beautiful face, and drool leaked from the corner of her mouth. One hand rested near the gear stick. He noticed the smallest finger spasm, and he took her hand and squeezed it firmly. She didn't wake, but her fingers wound tightly around his and returned his squeeze. If only there was a way to stay in that moment forever, he'd gratefully do it.

There wouldn't even need to be any sex. Just this, holding her, watching over her, and keeping her safe. It was almost as good as the sex. Although his dick twitched at the thought of being inside her.

Fuck this. She needed to wake up.

He exited the car and made his way to Connie's side, effortlessly hoisting her onto his shoulders in one swift motion. Leaving the car behind without a second thought, he carried her toward his secure and gated apartment building. With only five other residents, all known to the family business, there was no concern about prying eyes or unauthorised access. No one would dare glance at his car, let alone touch it.

The evening air was mild, infused with the smell of an impending rainfall. At least a downpour would serve as a convenient aid for the cleanup crew at the nightclub by washing away any lingering evidence. He strolled across the concrete path that connected the car park to the entrance of the building. The structure itself was imposing, appearing much larger than its six-unit count. His apartment occupied the entire top floor, which extended to the length of the building.

The remaining five units, one of which belonged to Bert, made up the two floors beneath his. The three on the bottom floor were smaller than the two on the middle floor, but still nicer than most places. Bert lived on the middle floor, though his limo was absent from the car park. He must be sorting the clean up crew.

Through the front door was an airy entrance hall with stairs straight ahead and a compact lift to the right. He eyed the stairs but thought better of it, opting for the lift instead. As the doors closed behind them with a whoosh, Connie let out a groan and squirmed slightly in his arms. With the way he'd swung her over his shoulder, she was wiggling her round ass right in his face. He ignored the temptation to smack it hard and watch it jiggle, and stroked it soothingly instead.

“Nearly in your new home, babe,” he said as the lift rumbled into motion.

A few seconds later, the doors chimed open, revealing his apartment. He should really spend more time there. Lounge 23 had a bedroom and an office at the upper level, and that plus the dungeons below allowed him to spend most of his time there. But he knew Connie would find happiness in this place, especially after the recent events that unfolded.

She wouldn't immediately appreciate being brought here when she woke up, but eventually, she would see that being here was the best way forward.

He unlocked the door and pushed it open, stepping into the foyer of the opulent penthouse. The floors were all hardwood, and the walls boasted a collection of modern art. Not that the artwork was of his own choosing, but rather the preference of his father's designer who had crafted the building. The aesthetics aligned more with Alessandro's taste, but the spaciousness, privacy, and immaculate cleanliness maintained by the resident house cleaner—a cute young woman named Cat Parker—made it more than satisfactory.

Moving through the foyer, he entered the central area of the apartment—the lounge. It was dominated by a long leather couch, wide-screen TV, and a coffee table stacked with his beloved car magazines. A giant fish tank lined the right-hand side wall.

He carried Connie through the lounge and went through another door that led to his bedroom. The apartment had three bedrooms, though one had been transformed into a combined office and computer room that served as a storage space for his extensive tech collection.

He trudged across the thick, dark carpet of the bedroom, which was clinical with its bare white walls. Nothing was left out of place thanks to Cat. Connie might make it more homely. She seemed like she had that creative streak in her.

He gently laid Connie down on the expansive four-poster bed and adjusted her head on the soft pillow. The bed occupied the centre of the room, its back against the wall. He ran a finger along her body. The red dress she'd chosen to wear for him was silky and short. It easily slipped off her soft body as he pulled it down from the shoulders. She didn't move, and the sight of her in nothing but a sexy black bra was almost too much for his dick to take.

He pushed her onto her side and unhooked her bra. She didn't protest. Instead, she curled up into a little ball in the foetal position, allowing him easy access. He pulled her onto her back to get the bra off all the way. He admired her for a moment, naked and adorable, then spread each of her limbs out like a starfish.

He loved looking at her in that position, naked and spread open purely for him. He pulled his dick out of his grey sweatpants as he took in every curve and wondered if she'd orgasm in her sleep. Her chest moved up and down

deeply. He could fuck her senseless and she'd never know. But that would be no fun.

*Would it?*

He wasn't like the bastard at the club. Connie was his. She was safe with him. They'd be together now forever, so he could make her orgasm every day of their fucking lives together. She'd be the mother of his children once he'd put his seed in her.

He became even harder at the thought of filling her with his cum and pulled at his dick as he leaned over her. For a moment, he stared at her sleeping peacefully. She had no idea what was happening. She was completely exposed. Completely at his mercy. Not only her body, but her soul itself. She was his, and he was hers. They were intertwined forever.

He wanted her to wake up in the throes of sex. To see her face when she opened her eyes and all she saw was him pleasuring her. He needed her to be loving it so much she wouldn't even try to stop him this time.

He leaned over her body and allowed his hand to trail down the curve of her soft stomach. She didn't stir, not even at the sensitive dip that made most women gasp and suck their stomachs in. So he trailed further until he reached her clit and gently rubbed it. She still made no noise. He slipped a finger inside her and was surprised to feel how wet she was. He hadn't even gotten started yet, and her beautiful body was already preparing itself for him. His finger slid inside easily, and he curved it gently to reach the right spot. Connie didn't make a noise.

He sat back, disappointed. But his curiosity built more and more as he watched her. He put the finger that was wet with her juices to her lips and parted them gently. Her mouth fell open. He rubbed his finger along her

tongue. Like an automatic reflex, she gently sucked his finger. Her soft warmth made him shiver with need as a thought popped into his head.

*How far could he go without waking her?*

He climbed down to the foot of the bed in between her starfished legs. He bent down so his face was right in front of her clit and used two fingers to spread her lips apart. He kept his other hand still firmly around his dick.

He flicked his tongue gently across her clit, moaning in satisfaction as he did. She tasted like heaven, and he couldn't help but stick his tongue into every crevice, lapping up every bit of juice. He moved his fingers to push them deep inside her instead as he continued to stroke himself.

She groaned now, her body finally writhing gently against him. He kept going, unable to stop and not caring if she woke. Her moans grew louder and louder as he expertly sucked her most sensitive spot. He couldn't look up to see if she was awake, but as long as she wasn't pushing him away he'd keep going.

Even if she pushed him away, he'd hold on for dear life.

With one final moan, he felt her contract around his fingers as she came so hard her moans were guttural. Her body jerked backward away from his tongue, the pleasure too much. But when he finally looked up, her eyes were still closed.

Seeing her still sleeping, he couldn't hold back anymore. His own release was too close. He quickly moved from the foot of the bed and stood just above her head as he jerked off furiously and came all over her beautiful face.

Now she'd know what he'd done when she woke.

Which was far more fun than her knowing nothing.



## Twenty Eight

### Connie



Connie groaned as a blinding light seeped into the room and threatened to burn through her retina if she opened her eyes. She must have forgotten to close the damn blinds. The pain in her head was unbelievable. She rolled over to face away from the window, hoping it would help. But as she sunk back into the pillow, the light actually felt stronger. The pillow felt strangely soft too.

“Morning, beautiful,” chirped a deep voice, making her stomach baulk and her eyes fly open as she sat up.

She winced as the sunlight made her eyes crinkle, but she could still see a blurry Matteo through her squint. He sat, calm as ever, in a white armchair she didn’t recognise. His legs were spread wide apart, and he leaned forward to watch her with an arm resting loosely on each knee. He wore grey joggers and a plain black tee and had a wicked glint in those blue eyes. Despite herself, her pussy clenched as if to protect itself from this damn sex god. It was those joggers giving her dark thoughts. What was it with men in grey joggers?

Not that she wanted anything to do with him. He was a stalker, a rapist, a freak. Exhibit A: his audacity to bring his own armchair into her room.

His gaze wasn't focused on her face but rather fixated on her chest. She glanced down and quickly understood why. The cover had fallen when she sat up so abruptly and exposed her breasts.

*Fucking pervert.*

“What the hell, Matteo?” she snapped as she pulled the cover up over her chest. She rubbed her aching head. “Why were you watching me sleep?”

The room was unusually bright, as if it were bathed in a bloody heavenly glow. Even the walls were glowing. She wasn't in the mood for anything heavenly after last night.

Wait.

She looked down at the cover she'd adjusted over her breasts. It was also unusually soft, just like the pillows. It wasn't her usual cheap cotton one. It was a silky white bedsheet. One she didn't recognise because she didn't own any silky white bedsheets. She sucked in a whimper as her fear grew. This bedroom was not hers.

“Where am I, Matteo?” she asked, raising a hand to scratch her itchy face.

“You're in my place, baby. You're in my bed where you belong,” he replied.

Her hand recoiled as she discovered something crusty and dry on her face. Horror filled her as she questioned him. “What the hell is on my face? It's all dry.”

“Me,” he said in a voice so serious there was no doubt in her mind he wasn't joking. *He* was on her face.

What had he done while she slept?

“You ... did what exactly while I was asleep? Jerked off and came on my

face?” Her voice trembled in disbelief. Had she really slept through that?

“Yes, partly.” He shrugged and leaned back in the armchair as if it was no big deal.

“Partly? What do you mean ‘partly’?”

“I also fingered your sweet hole and kissed and licked your clit until you came all over my face,” he said with a hint of satisfaction.

Her mind screamed for her to reject him, to sever any ties with this vile man. But as she opened her mouth to voice her disgust and rejection, her words betrayed her. Instead of defiance, a strangled yelp escaped her lips, and an undeniable heat spread through her core at the thought of his intimate touch. Without warning, Matteo was suddenly next the bed, his presence overwhelming.

“Do you like being covered in me, baby?” he taunted, his voice laced with seduction.

“That’s it.” She found her resolve, summoning every ounce of strength to stand up to this devil incarnate. She threw off the bedsheets and pushed past him bravely to stand proud. She vaguely wished she wasn’t completely naked, but there was no hiding now.

“I’ve had enough of you. I’m going back to my flat and you’re going to leave me alone,” she declared firmly.

“You might want to shower first, sweet.” He pointed at her crusty face.

The asshole was right. She stomped her foot on the ground and squealed in frustration, instantly regretting the action as Matteo’s cocky smile grew.

“Where’s the damn bathroom?” she growled, her teeth clenched.

He pointed to a doorway behind her and she stormed toward it, not caring anymore about hiding her body. He’d seen every nook and cranny anyway. So what was the point in trying to hide?

The en suite bathroom was small and modern. The air was filled with the scent of raspberry and lime. Soft beige tiles adorned the walls, while a striking charcoal sink stood out. There was no bathtub, only a shower in the corner with a black-framed window in place of a shower curtain.

Of course it was like a viewing area, as if her every move was on display.

She marched into the shower cubicle, paying no mind to Matteo's presence. If he wanted to watch, let him. Soon she would be gone, and all he would have left were fading memories of her.

Inside the shower, a stand filled with an array of bath products caught her attention. Various shower gels lined the shelf. Without much thought, she grabbed the first one she saw, noticing that it had been partially used. She turned her gaze to the shower dial and tried to figure out the settings. Left or right? She attempted one direction, then the other, but to no avail. She groaned in frustration just as she felt a large arm reach over her shoulder, causing her to jump in surprise.

"Matteo!" she scolded.

"I'm helping you, angel," he responded, his voice calm and collected.

"I don't need help," she mumbled.

He adjusted a dial, and the water instantly began flowing, its temperature perfect and far superior to the meagre shower in her own flat. Matteo didn't move, practically squashing her into the corner.

"Really? I can't even wash now without you watching me?" she retorted, her voice dripping with sarcasm as she scrubbed her face under the amazing cascade.

"A lot worse would have happened last night if I wasn't around to watch you," he replied.

She chose to ignore his remark, focusing instead on rubbing the shower

gel over her arms. As the water streamed down her body, fragmented memories of the previous night began to resurface. Flashes of being forcefully pulled out of the club, the discomfort of the cold ground beneath her, and the intrusion of an unwanted hand up her dress flickered through her mind.

Thank god Matteo was there to save her.

“I suppose you think I owe you a thank you,” she snapped as she rubbed the soap into her stomach.

He swiftly spun her around, his firm grip securing her body against the cool shower wall. She shivered as the tiles pressed against her skin. He didn’t even flinch when the water soaked his clothes.

“You owe me nothing,” he said firmly. “Not now. Not ever.”

She looked into his eyes, and something in her chest stirred. It felt like he could see right through her, like he could unravel all her secrets. But she swallowed hard, willing away the feelings that were clouding her mind, and stared defiantly back at him. If there was one thing she was sure of, it was that never again would this man control her.

“Where did that man from last night go?” she asked.

He released his hold on her shoulders and shrugged, his gaze lingering on her wet body with a hint of mischief. Despite the warmth of the water streaming down her back, a chill ran through her, and she wrapped her arms around herself, though it did little to conceal her nakedness.

“Where?” she pressed, refusing to back down.

“He’s where he belonged,” he admitted.

“Which is where, Matteo?”

He took a few steps back, his eyes still fixed on her form. A glimmer danced in his gaze as he observed her, causing her to shudder involuntarily.

She lowered her eyes, feeling vulnerable, and tightened her arms around herself even more.

“Where? Tell me,” she tried again.

“In the dumpster,” he replied.

“Pass me a towel.” She turned the water off and took the large towel from Matteo’s hand. “Is he alive?”

“After what he did? Of course not.”

A heavy silence hung between them. She let his words sink in, grappling with conflicting emotions.

“Good,” she finally uttered, her voice barely audible.

“Good girl,” he said, catching her off guard.

Her head shot back up, surprised at his words. “Good girl?”

“For agreeing he should be dead. Most women would freak out. But there’s a darkness in you that hit me the moment I saw you. You’ve seen death. You’re not scared of it.”

“No.” She shook her head vehemently.

“It’s okay to feel that way. It doesn’t make you bad. I see you. It makes you perfect for me. I see the parts you’re trying to hide from the world, but you don’t need to do that with me. We’re perfect together, baby.”

“I don’t want the darkness in me. I don’t want to be like him.” She sniffed away the tears that were threatening to fall over her lids and never stop.

“You don’t want to be like who?”

“My father.”

“Need me to kill him too? We could do it together,” he offered.

She laughed bitterly, the noise echoing in the small bathroom. “He’s already dead. My dad killed him.”

Matteo’s eyebrow shot up. “Care to explain?”

“My real father was an abusive asshole. I don’t remember much. He took it out on my sister usually. My only scar from him is a cigarette burn on my leg. But my adoptive dad rescued us, right after he killed my real father.”

Matteo whistled. “Impressive. I like your dad.”

“He’s a dangerous man too. This darkness in me, it scares me. Sometimes it’s so strong I think I’m capable of terrible things. That’s why I had to get away from Dad. I want to be good. Anyway, I was stupid last night. I should have watched my drink more closely.”

In a second, Matteo was in front of her once more. His weight pressed against her, pinning her to the wall as if he could keep her there forever. The towel tumbled from her hands and landed softly on the ground.

“No, Connie. I shouldn’t have let him hurt you like he did. Last night wasn’t your fault, and as for what happened in my basement ... I take full responsibility for that. It was mine, and I will stay right next to you every day for the rest of your life to make it up to you. You can never get rid of me, baby. Don’t be afraid of the darkness inside you—allow yourself to feel it so we can burn together—and tell me what I need to do in order for you to forgive me.”

The fire within her grew hotter with each word he spoke, but she mustered all the strength she had left not to give into the temptation of him. She had gone through too much already, risking her freedom to escape from one controlling murderer only to fall for another. It couldn’t happen. She would never willingly be his.

## Twenty Nine

### Connie



“**R**am you up the arse with something thick and ten inches long?” she joked.

“Done.”

She couldn’t help but laugh. He let go of her, and she instantly missed his presence. She snapped up the fallen towel from the floor and wrapped it tightly around her body as he walked out of the bathroom.

“Don’t be stupid. I wasn’t serious,” she yelled as she ran into the bedroom after him.

“My body is yours in the same way your body is mine, baby girl. We’re going to explore all our desires together. So if that’s what you want to do, then fine. I’ll never say no to you.”

“But I don’t actually want to fuck you up the ass. You’re a fucking cree —.”

Her voice caught in her throat and her eyes widened as she took in the sight of Matteo standing before her completely nude. The sunlight accentuated every chiselled contour of his sculpted physique and cast a



golden glow over his skin. He had a confidence and raw masculinity that left her speechless. How did he even get naked so quickly?

“I see you’re speechless,” he remarked. “But don’t worry, I won’t hold it against you. You’re not the first to be speechless by my presence.”

She rolled her eyes, trying to regain her composure. “Please, Matteo. Spare me the ego trip. You’re not all that.”

But dear god he *was* all that. He was all that and then some. He was everything she could wish for. More than she’d ever dreamed of.

He took a step closer, the heat of his body radiating toward her. “Oh, but you can’t deny the effect I have on you, can you? The way your gaze lingers on my naked body says it all. You can’t think straight around me, in the same way I can’t around you. You can’t take your eyes off me.”

Her cheeks flushed with embarrassment and frustration. “Don’t be ridiculous. You’re completely insufferable, you know that? That’s why I can’t think straight around you.”

He leaned in, his lips barely grazing her ear. “And yet, you can’t resist me.”

She pushed him away, refusing to succumb to his seductive charm. “I can resist you just fine. I have no interest in being another conquest on your long list.”

Matteo chuckled, his voice husky. “You think I see you as just another conquest? You’re mistaken, my dear. You’re different. Special. I told you this already.”

He stepped closer and pressed her against the wall, his commanding presence engulfing her. Despite the weakness in her knees, she stayed resolute, refusing to let him break her. She felt the chill of the wall against

her back as he closed the distance between them. His hand cupped her chin, and he gently tugged the towel away, exposing her nakedness.

“I belong to no one, Matteo,” she retorted, her voice trembling with uncertainty despite her defiance.

“But I’m yours, baby, and I have a surprise for you. If the dildo up my ass won’t cut it, this will.”

The earnestness in his voice made her skin prickle. Words failed to escape her lips. He snapped his fingers, and she gasped as someone opened up the bedroom door. Her hands flew to her breasts and legs, trying to hide herself, but Matteo pulled them away and pinned her arms against the wall so she was fully exposed.

“This is your manor, princess. Do not hide yourself here. Everyone else is a slave for you and they will avert their fucking eyes because they aren’t good enough to look at you.”

He let go and her arms dropped lifelessly to her sides. The shock was too much to process. Two huge men dressed head to toe in black appeared. Between them they dragged some sort of gigantic box with a black sheet over it into the room. What the hell had he bought? True to Matteo’s word, they kept their heads down, gaze firmly locked to the carpet.

“What is in that box, Matteo?”

“Shh, baby. You have no patience. It’s a gift.”

The two men silently exited the room, closing the door as they left and leaving behind an eerie stillness. A muffled noise emanated from the box—a strained and frightened murmur.

“Is there someone inside that box?” Her eyes shifted from the mysterious box to Matteo, a sense of horror coursing through her veins.

“Yes,” he replied simply, his expression gave nothing away.

“Who the hell is it, Matteo? What the fuck have you done?” Her voice quivered softly.

“This is going to help us come together, angel. Pull off the sheet and see for yourself.”

“You pull it off,” she demanded, crossing her arms defiantly. She wanted nothing to do with whatever this was.

“Nope. Off you go.” He mirrored her stance, arms folded firmly across his chest.

*Stubborn asshole.*

She stared at him for a moment, and refused to look at the box. She considered leaving, or trying to at least, but curiosity won. She huffed loudly, and inched closer to the shrouded box, her throat constricting. She pulled off the dark sheet and staggered back in revulsion.

It was a small metal cage with a pale, bald man inside. His limbs were shackled to the bars in a way which forced him into a submissive hunch on all fours. He wore a large black collar with a lead which was tied to the top of the bars, forcing his head up so his lips touched the bars at the front. The cage reminded her of a doggy training crate, but the gaps in between the bars were quite wide. Not wide enough for him to escape, but wide enough for his nose and mouth to be squished uncomfortably through a gap at the front. His ass stuck through the rear bars of the cage. The man’s vision was blocked by a cloth blindfold and he was kept quiet by the same barbaric steel O-ring gag she was forced to wear when Matteo took her.

“Ricci?” she whispered in terror, her voice barely audible. Her own stepbrother was before her, trembling in agony and fear. A chill ran through her as she stared at him, the horror almost more than she could bear.

“So you do know him, sweet?” Matteo’s voice remained calm, devoid of

surprise.

“He’s my stepbrother! Why do you have him in a fucking cage? Is this your twisted idea of making it up to me? Are you threatening my family now if I don’t stay with you?”

A darkness fell over Matteo’s face, causing her to take a step back, her breath caught in her chest. How had she allowed herself to even begin to fall for this man, oblivious to the black depths of his love? A cloud of regret pulled at her, she should’ve called Dad the second she could.

“This man is your family?” he asked. “This is Dan Mattis. He’s the person who pretended to be you on the website. He stole your fingerprint. He’s the reason you were kidnapped and raped. He’s the one who fucked you and drugged you right in front of me.”

Bile surged in her throat as Ricci thrashed and muffled through his gag. It couldn’t be true. Ricci was an ass but he wouldn’t do that. His limbs banged gently against the bars as he tried to break free, but he’d been tied so tightly he could barely move more than a couple of inches.

“I was going to kill him myself, but I thought giving him to you would be more fun. There are lots of toys in that other box. You can do whatever you like to him. You can release that darkness I see in you.”

“You’re sick! I don’t want to do anything to him,” she screamed, still unable to process that *Ricci* had done this to her. He was the one who had touched her when she was tied and blindfolded. It was him who violated her most private parts and forced himself inside her. He’d always been possessive of her, but this? Dad would kill him. He’d be devastated. Bree would kill him even more. Her heartbeat was rapid, and each breath felt like a weight on her chest.

“Hmm. That’s a shame. If you can’t, then I will. I already had the boys

warming up his scared little asshole for us to play with.”

It was then she noticed that through the gaps on the rear of the cage, Ricci’s ass protruded so it could easily be played with, or fucked. There was no room in the cage for Ricci to move or get away, even if he wasn’t tied to the bars. This was sick.

“How do you know it was definitely him?” she asked. Surely he was wrong. It just couldn’t be true.

“Ricci confessed everything when the boys were playing with him. I’ll tell you what he said and you can tell me what you think. Deal?”

She shook her head, still in shock. “It couldn’t have been him. No way. You need to let him go. He wouldn’t go this far.”

“Ricci told my boys that he didn’t sign you up or add your fingerprint, your ex, Johnny, did.” Matteo made a face that suggested he was unhappy with the idea of any man being her ex. “So your dad killed Johnny, which I approve of. I like the sound of your dad very much. Ricci said you were unaware of the reason for Johnny’s death, and ran away on your own, which I do not approve of, Connie. That was stupid.”

Connie glared at him. “No one sai-”

“Hang on. Ricci said he simply pretended to be the person mentioned in the draft request Johnny made, and amended the address once he knew where you’d run off too. Your dad sent a couple of guys to Oak Brook to get you, Ricci killed them. Then he offered to come and look for you. He thought he’d take advantage of his sick, secret desires and drug you to make sure you didn’t tell anyone it wasn’t you who asked for it. Just to make extra sure you would continue to be raped.”

Ricci gave a muffled scream as Matteo walked over to him. Matteo looked glorious, his chiselled muscles on full display. He stroked his dick as

he walked, which stood proudly against his lower stomach. When he was in front of Ricci's face, he stopped and put a hand through the bars to grab Ricci's hair. He tilted his face upward so Matteo could easily place the tip of his rigid shaft onto Ricci's tongue. Ricci gagged instantly.

"And now he's going to pay for being a sick little asshole—with his own asshole. There's a good boy, Ricci. Make Daddy nice and wet for your ass."

Connie's eyes watched intently as Ricci cowered before Matteo, his despair echoing in the air. Matteo forced himself deeper into Ricci's mouth. The sight of Ricci trembling beneath him sent a surge of exhilaration through Connie. A sensation that was unfamiliar yet intoxicating. No longer did she feel the fear and anguish that had overtaken her throughout this ordeal. Matteo was right. Years of repression had stirred something dark and powerful inside of her—and she wanted it out.

"He really did this to me?"

"He did. He did this to *us*," Matteo replied.

"You want to kill him. Dad would kill him. Bree would kill him," she thought aloud.

"But you're the one who deserves to kill him, angel."

Matteo was right. Why couldn't she kill him? Why did she need to be so damn well behaved all the time? Why did she rely on everyone else to look after her?

"Then fuck him harder," she commanded, her voice betraying the thrill of revenge she'd been unaware she needed.

"Yes, princess." At her command, Matteo thrust his hips forward and Ricci groaned in horror.

"Hold it in his mouth. Don't let him breathe," she demanded, relishing the chance to watch Ricci suffer for his actions and remembering what he did to

her own mouth. Each motion brought more pleasure and vengeance to her heart and with it a sense of peace she had never felt. A feeling she needed more of.

“I know why he did it.” Her voice came out in a growl she’d never heard before. “This wasn’t even about sex. This was about control. You wanted me to come home, didn’t you? You wanted to punish me for running away. You expected weak little Connie to come running back because she’d been hurt. But you’ve gone too far, Ricci. If Dad was here, he’d kill you himself. You know he would.”

She walked over to the box of toys, barely able to tear her mesmerised eyes off Ricci’s choking face. His red eyes bulged as he choked on Matteo. An ugly vein popped in his forehead. She forced herself to look away so she could see what was in the box.

A huge red strap-on.

The perfect revenge.

She pulled it out from the box and tied it around her naked hips. She got on her knees and took position behind Ricci. Matteo was right. He’d already had some torture tonight. Someone had widened his asshole enough to be force fucked by a strap-on. She hoped they’d tied and blindfolded him while they hurt him.

“Take your dick out. I want to hear him cry when I fuck him,” she ordered.

Matteo did as she asked, and his hand carried on stroking his dick. His eyes were burning with desire, egging her on silently. Drool fell from Ricci’s mouth as he gagged and tried to catch his breath.

She thrust the strap-on mercilessly inside him, her eyes flicking to Matteo as he stroked himself ferociously. The room filled with the noise of screams

as Ricci howled in pain. His face contorted in a mangle of agony and terror, while sweat poured off his pale body.

Her nipples hardened at the sight, and Matteo's hungry gaze fed her desire. With a smile, she commanded him, "Choke him again with your dick." He obeyed without hesitation. "Don't let him breathe again."

Ricci's desperate attempts to inhale were futile. He writhed around and banged off the bars of the cage, but they each held on tight as they continued to ravage his body. They stared right into each other's eyes as Ricci kept struggling for air. His body jerked violently, but they barely noticed him as their love for each other was cemented forever through resentment for Ricci Jones.



## Thirty

# Matteo



**M**atteo's gaze was glued to Connie's figure. She looked the same as she did when he first saw her—a potent combination of danger and beauty. His heart raced. Ricci's body jerked between them in their intertwined embrace and then stilled. But Connie kept moving.

“Fuck me from behind, Matteo.”

Her voice was so raw with need that it caused his body to clench with desire. He released Ricci and stepped around to take her from behind, grabbing onto her hips with a passion he hadn't felt before with anyone. He carefully entered her depths, savouring the sensation of his body finally being one with hers. Her warmth embraced him as she moved in sync with his thrusts, their movements becoming faster and more passionate with each passing second.

“I need you to fuck me harder than I'm fucking him,” she gasped between moans. “Make it so I can't think and I can't carry on.”

He obliged, holding her tight against the bars of the cage and commanding her body into the submission she craved with each stroke. She

moaned louder and louder until she was screaming with pleasure and he was close behind her, finally allowing himself to succumb to the passion that held them both captive.

“Harder,” she screamed.

He plunged deep inside her until they both reached a crescendo of pleasure. His body trembled in bliss as he released into her and she fell in a heap over the bars, still quivering from her own climax. He pulled her up toward him and spun her around, pulling off the strap-on.

He embraced her tightly, his hand cradling the back of her head while the other gently stroked her hair. He felt the rhythm of her heart against his own as he observed the delicate flush on her cheeks and the darkness in the flecks of amber that shone in her eyes. He pressed a sweet kiss to the top of her head before meeting her gaze.

“Now do you believe we’re meant to be together, angel?” he asked, mesmerised by the raw beauty in front of him.

Her voice, barely above a whisper, tickled his chest as she responded. “You truly see me.” Tremors ran through her as she nestled closer against his chest. “Don’t I repulse you? There’s a darkness in me that I can’t get rid of. It will never go away.”

“I see every bit of you, Connie Quinn. You’re not your father. He was abusive. You’re anything but. What he did to you gave you a desire to protect yourself. That’s all. Hide no part of yourself from me. You’re amazing.” His voice was low and full of conviction.

“I’m not.” She sniffed and shook her head, and it tore at his heart more than anything he’d ever felt. He ached for the pain she’d endured. He loosened his hold on her but kept her safe in his arms.

“You can only say those words once—next time there will be

consequences. But tell me why you think that way about yourself so I can explain why you're wrong."

She inhaled deeply before responding, her voice shaky from emotion. "Sometimes I think there's something wrong with me. Something I inherited from my real blood father. The darkness gets too much. I wasn't joking when I said my brothers and dad would kill you. The man who saved me and my sister is not always a good man. It scared me that being around him was turning me into my sorry excuse of a father."

"You are nothing like him. Your darkness is beautiful, and it's safe with me. You need to harness it," he reassured her. She snorted and pulled back, shivering slightly.

"Like how?" she asked, her voice filled with scepticism.

"We will discover that together. But first, here," he said. As much as he wanted her to stay naked, he passed her one of his grey T-shirts to keep her warm.

She pulled the shirt over her head, her expression thoughtful. "Is that what you do when you take these women who want to be taken? Fulfil your own dark desires?"

"Kind of. It's not about hurting women. It's the thrill of someone willingly giving up their body and soul to be challenged. Getting someone in a position where they're willing to do anything for you, even the most degrading things, is a powerful feeling. It's a damn privilege." He pulled on his own T-shirt. "But I won't do that anymore."

"Why not?"

"I have you now. You're the only one I need, and I am the only person you need."

She closed her eyes and yawned as he finished getting dressed.

“Am I keeping you awake?” he asked with a grin.

“Sorry. I know it’s wrong after what we did. But I feel relaxed for the first time since ... well ...since ...”

“Since I kidnapped you and changed your life forever?” he finished for her, a twinge of guilt running through him. But also pride because Connie looked born again.

“Yes. That.” She rolled her eyes and then suddenly whipped around as if only just remembering Ricci was there. “Is he dead?”

He looked pretty dead, but to make sure, Matteo reached through the bars to check Ricci’s pulse. His skin felt cold and clammy, and there was no pulse.

“Yep. We killed him,” he announced, removing his hand from Ricci’s lifeless body.

“Good,” Connie spat, though she bit her lip nervously.

“I’m actually surprised at you. He’s your first. No guilt at all?”

“I have a confession.” She looked up at him with those amber flecked eyes that he could get lost in forever.

“Do I need to sit down for this?” he asked, theatrically waving to the armchair.

“Be serious, Matteo. It’s important,” she insisted.

“Okay. Come.” He took her soft hand in his, their size difference noticeable, and led her to the bay window area at the back of the bedroom. The grey blinds were closed, creating a private space. Two plush velvet armchairs in a beautiful dark blue colour were placed in front of the window. He guided Connie to the chair on the left, and she perched nervously on the edge. How could she be nervous after what just happened?

“This is your home now. Sit back comfortably,” he ordered as he took the adjacent seat.

She crossed her arms as if she was about to argue, but then sighed and sat back into the chair.

“Good girl,” he praised, unable to suppress a playful smirk at her exasperated expression. She let out a heavy breath, and her cute lip quivered.

“Do you like it when I call you a good girl?” he teased, barely able to contain himself from chuckling at the exasperated look on her face.

“Matteo,” she cried out dramatically as she threw her arms up in defeat.. “I ... just ... no! I don’t. So shush. I’m trying to tell you something. It might ruin everything.”

He roughly grabbed hold of her chin with his thumb and forefinger and turned her face toward him. He leaned in until their noses were almost touching. Her eyes were captivating—if only he could kiss her right then and there, nothing else would matter.

“Uh, huh. Sure you don’t like it,” he whispered, finally breaking away from her gaze. “Carry on, then. Tell me your thing that definitely will not ruin us.”

He grinned smugly as Connie groaned and rolled her eyes, but he could see a glimmer of happiness in them that had been missing the last couple of days. He held back the deep laugh that was threatening to come out any second. It would be fun to wind her up for the rest of their lives.

“I’m serious!” she scolded.

“You keep saying that.”

“I’m nobody’s good girl.”

“Then why does it make you so wet when I say it?” he countered seductively.

She inhaled sharply, and he wanted to tear off that T-shirt all over again. Damn it. He should’ve made her stay naked.

“It doesn’t,” she lied, crossing her legs defensively. He chuckled deeply.

“If I came over there and held you down, forcing those pretty thighs wide open, I’d know whether or not you like being my good girl, wouldn’t I? I think my fingers would enter easily like a waterslide.”

She gulped but shook her head adamantly.

“Well, lucky for you I need to hear what you have to tell me. So I’ll save that exploration for another time. Go ahead.”

“Go ahead with what?” she asked, looking confused.

“The super important thing you had to tell me? Or is thinking about me forcing your thighs open putting you off?”

“Oh, right. Yes.” Her cheeks flushed pink as she cleared her throat. “It’s about my family. My dad, the one who saved us.”

“What about him?” Matteo asked, his curiosity piqued.

“He isn’t a nice man, Matteo,” she replied, visibly holding her breath.

“You said that already. Neither is mine, baby,” he said. “The notorious Alessandro Romano is probably taking over London as we speak.”

“London?”

“Yes. Some issue with someone else over there.”

“Crap. Okay. I don’t know how Dad will react about Ricci. He’s his stepson, but my stepmum died years ago. Dad kept all three of her boys and tried to sort them out. The other two are younger than me and Bree. They’re quite sweet, really. Deep down, anyway. But Ricci was always too much like his own father. He was possessive. He was always going to turn out like that. Dad won’t care that I killed someone. He’s been trying to train me and my sister to kill for a long time. My sister got it. She’s truly extraordinary.”

“You’re extraordinary,” he declared with a sincere admiration in his voice.

To his surprise, she didn't argue or deflect his compliment. Instead, she chuckled softly, a beautiful sound.

"You're relentless, aren't you?" She glanced up from beneath sultry lashes, causing his arousal to surge. She might need to finish her story later.

"For you? I'm whatever you need me to be," he said, his voice dark with desire.

"I never excelled at fighting, unlike my sister. I was too afraid to let go of control, too scared of the darkness within me. I didn't want to be like my real father. I saw Ricci turning into his, and I didn't want that," she confessed.

"Why fight when you can use my cock and a strap-on to kill someone?" he suggested with a wicked grin, completely nonplussed about her story. No matter who her dad was, he'd still fight him to keep Connie.

"Ricci isn't my first. I did kill someone. Once." She spoke quickly.

"Who?" he asked, his interest piqued,

"A girl at school. She kept bullying me, and goading me. Every day she'd say something or pinch me when no one was looking. I was scared my sister would kill her if she knew, and I didn't want her to get in trouble. So I kept my mouth shut. Until one day I lost it. I beat her so badly she died."

A tear slipped down her cheek, and he reached out to place a hand on her knee. So that was what the closed record was then that Hugh had revealed.

"She pushed you into it, baby girl. I'm proud of you."

"Since then I've been scared it would happen again."

"And now it has. Yet, everything is okay. Nothing bad is going to happen to you. Do you feel bad about what happened?"

She shook her head, nibbling firmly on her bottom lip.

"Good. Nor should you. So how is your mighty family going to react to what's happened here? Should I be more scared of your sister or your dad?"

She raised a delicate shoulder in a half shrug, her expression suddenly solemn. “I really don’t know. But don’t think things are completely even between us.” Her gaze lifted to his.

“They never will be. How about breakfast?” he proposed, hoping to lighten the mood. “All this work made me hungry.”

She burst into laughter, and at last, he felt like he had truly won her over.

“Yes, breakfast sounds good,” she agreed, a smile playing on her lips.



## Thirty One

# Connie



**T**hat evening, Connie nervously smoothed the hem of her black dress as she stepped out of Bert's limousine. Matteo stood before her, his hand extended toward her. His electric gaze was a reminder of the bond they now shared. They were tied forever now through the death of Ricci Jones. It was a bond she couldn't resist no matter how hard she tried to fight it.

After Matteo had disappeared for most of the day and left her relaxing in his apartment, Bert had chauffeured them to The View for an early evening dinner. It looked beautiful bathed in the glow of the spring sunlight. The lights lining the front of the establishment sparkled in the glow. Matteo closed the car door behind her, and their hands naturally found each other as if they were meant to be together. It didn't even feel strange to hold his hand. It was actually kinda nice.

Ricci deserved every ounce of pain they had dished out to him, but Connie couldn't help wondering how her family would take the news—not that it mattered anymore; the deed was done. She couldn't change it.

Matteo abruptly halted just before the entrance, causing Connie to almost collide into him. He let go of her hand, and she immediately missed his warmth. Tilting her chin upward, he locked eyes with her, the world around them fading into insignificance.

“What’s wrong?” he asked, concern etched into every crease of his handsome face. She managed to smile back at him.

“Are you taking me here because you get a discount?” she teased, trying to inject some lightness into the moment, but with her family on her mind, her words lacked conviction.

“Yep. Why else?” he replied with a nonchalant shrug. “But when we sit down, you are going to tell me what’s wrong.”

He took her hand again and led her into The View, not bothering to stop by the front desk, where other customers waited to be allocated their table. They headed straight for a secluded table near the back of the restaurant, nestled in a cosy alcove against the rear wall. It was a perfect spot for a romantic evening. The small, round table was adorned with flickering candlelight, and dove-shaped napkins sat in each place setting. A beautiful red tablecloth cascaded down to the floor. Matteo pulled out a chair for her, always the gentleman. Well, he was in public, at least. She sat down gracefully. His expression hardened as he took his seat across from her.

“Now, are you going to tell me what’s wrong? Who do I have to kill this time, huh?” His tone was serious, but there was a touch of playfulness in his eyes.

She chuckled softly. “No one. There’s nothing wrong.”

“Maybe I need to loosen you up first, then you’ll tell me.” He had a sly glint in those beautiful eyes, which made her laugh even more.

“Let’s start by looking at the menu,” she deflected, trying to divert his

attention. She could still feel his gaze on her, even as she hid behind the menu. But she wasn't ready to confront the reality of her emotions just yet. It was too difficult to face head-on.

The menu offered a small selection of dishes, each with its own unique twist. Moroccan fish and chips. Cherry cheese pasta. Squash and feta frittata. But her mouth watered when a server walked by with a tantalising plate of beef.

"I'll have whatever that is." She nodded her head toward the server.

"Good choice," Matteo remarked.

As if he had sensed their readiness, a young server approached their table, his nerves palpable. He cleared his throat and addressed Matteo.

"Good evening, Mr Matteo Sir," the server began, stumbling over his words. "Can I get you some drinks?"

"I'll have water please, Simon," he said and turned to Connie. "Would you like wine?"

"What do you mean water?" Connie asked, annoyed at being the only one to have alcohol. "We'll have a beer and a white wine please, sauvignon blanc, but I'm not picky which one."

Simon glanced nervously at Matteo to seek his approval.

"Don't worry about him, sweetheart. You get us the wine and beer and I'll make sure he doesn't moan," Connie replied with a sly grin directed at Matteo.

Simon seemed relieved and hurriedly noted down their drink order.

"And ... er ... what about food?" he stammered. "Are you ready to order yet?"

"I'll have my usual, Simon." Matteo answered. "Connie here will have the beef wellington with all extra trimmings and potatoes."

She huffed playfully, though there was something kind of nice about him ordering for her. Simon smiled and quickly retreated, as if eager to escape them.

“I think Simon’s a bit scared of you,” Connie commented with amusement.

Matteo raised an eyebrow. “So he should be. I notice you aren’t as scared of me now. Your mouth is getting quite bold.”

“I’ve never been scared of you,” she lied, her heart thundering beneath her ribcage as she felt the power of his eyes upon her.

“We can rectify that,” he replied, his smile oozing with menace.

She couldn’t deny the electric thrill that surged through her when he spoke. His hand disappeared under the table, and her eyes widened as she felt something brush against her leg.

“This table isn’t very wide now, is it?” he said in a mischievous tone. “Look how easily I can reach you.”

His fingertips trailed lightly along her thigh, igniting a fiery sensation against her skin. Each touch sent a jolt of heat through her, but she swiftly pulled back, a smile masking the excitement and desire pulsating within her.

“It’s wide enough for me to move my leg away,” she retorted playfully.

“Connie Quinn, you give me your leg back right now or I will bend you over and fuck you in front of everybody at this restaurant.” He spoke firmly but softly so that only she could hear. His voice sent a flutter of electricity through her core.

“Yeah, right!” She laughed nervously. He wasn’t *that* crazy. Not in his own brother’s restaurant.

But in a flash he’d risen from his seat and circled around to her side of the table. He had her cornered in the intimate space of their secluded table. There

was no escape.

“Er, yes?” she asked tentatively, fluttering her eyelashes innocently up at him.

But his expression was unyielding and dark—challenging her to be defiant. He moved closer, towering above her with a dangerous look in his eyes. He leaned forward until his lips brushed against her earlobe and Connie couldn’t help but tremble beneath his touch.

“Stand,” he demanded.

Her breath caught in her throat as she slowly turned to face him, meeting his smouldering gaze with playful defiance.

“No,” she replied. Though deep inside she knew that if Matteo wanted to do something—anything—he would do it whether she wanted him to or not.

“Well, then. Shall I take you right here or would you prefer me to take you to the middle of the restaurant?” he challenged.

“Your brother might not appreciate it if you scare away the other diners,” she replied calmly, though she felt anything but.

Without warning, he gripped her throat tightly, pulling her up to her feet. She reached out to push against his powerful arms, but it was useless. He loomed over her, and she stood no chance against him. Thanks to their romantic cove and the sheer size of Matteo, no one in the restaurant could see her unless they walked right over to the table. The View felt far away, as if they were encased in their own little cocoon of possibility. And young Simon was not going to say anything to Matteo Romano to get him off her.

“Got you now, angel,” he whispered into her ear like a seductive promise as he dragged her to her feet by her throat.

And her body responded as she knew it would. As she gasped for air, waves of anticipation, panic, and lust ran through her core.

“Seems like you’ve forgotten how to behave for me,” he remarked. “I believe you need a reminder of how to be a good girl after letting your darkness out today.”

His spare hand slid up the hem of her dress, his fingers caressing the soft fabric of her underwear with a deliberate slowness, imprinting the moment in her memory. In one swift motion, he yanked her underwear down to her ankles. She tried to reach his hand to stop him but he was too quick and too powerful. The blood was pounding in her ears now from his firm grip on her throat.

“Leave them where they land,” he insisted firmly. “Are you ready for a breath, princess?”

A momentary release of his hand allowed her to gasp for air and fill her lungs with a desperate gulp of oxygen. But before she could fully recover, he clamped his hand around her throat once more. His other hand delicately stroked her clit, sending waves of pleasure coursing through her body. The pleasure built inside of her until it was almost unbearable, but right when it seemed like he had finally given in to the urge to make her come, he stopped. He removed his hand from her clit and pinched at her nipple hard, then pulled down the top of the dress to expose her bra.

Panic took over. This was going on for too long. Someone was going to see. Was he really going to fuck her right here? But there was something incredible about the way he commanded control over her that made all caution fly out the window.

“I should make you sit like this so everyone can see what a dirty girl you are,” he taunted, his fingers deftly pulling down her bra and setting her breast free. The cool air made her nipples harden instantly.

Amidst the low hum of conversations and laughter from the other diners,

who were oblivious to the scene unfolding in the secluded corner, Simon timidly approached with their drinks. His eyes widened as he caught a glimpse of the intimate display, quickly averting his eyes, though Connie noticed his lingering curiosity. She could only watch as he snuck another glance at her exposed breast.

“Sorry, sorry. Here’s your drink, Sir Matteo Sir,” he stammered, hastily placing the beverages on the table.

A flush spread across Connie’s cheeks, a mix of embarrassment and arousal. Surely Matteo would release her? But he didn’t even flinch or look at Simon.

“Thank you, Simon,” Matteo responded, his voice filled with an air of authority that sent shivers down Connie’s spine. The poor server practically sprinted away as if his life depended on it. “I meant it when I said I would fuck you right here. Care to apologise yet, princess?”

His grip on her neck loosened slightly and she gasped in gulps of air. His thumb tenderly traced over the sensitive skin, a stark reminder of the control he had. In an instant, he could tighten his grip again if she made the wrong choice.

“Fuck me,” she whispered, her voice hoarse with need, her inhibitions shattered. The thought of the other diners catching a glimpse of their illicit encounter no longer fazed her.

“That’s better.” He chuckled, the sound vibrating against her ear and imprinting itself deep within her being like a searing brand.

But instead of following through with his threat, he returned to his seat, leaving her standing there, panting and drenched, with her breast exposed and her panties discarded on the floor. Hurriedly, she pulled up her dress, covering her breasts in an attempt to salvage some semblance of modesty.

She leaned down to grab the underwear but Matteo's voice stopped her midway.

"Leave them where they fell."

"Really? Right there? People will see when they walk by."

"Sit." He motioned toward her chair. Weary and filled with annoyance, she complied and settled back into the seat.

"I can't believe you." She gave him a fierce glare across the table.

"Here." He passed her something small and hard.

"What's this?" she snapped.

"A bullet vibrator," he replied simply as if it was the most normal thing in the world for him to be giving her. "Put it in you."

"What do you mean?" she asked, stunned.

"Put it inside yourself. Now." His blue eyes were fierce across the table as his words sunk in.

"Or else what?" she asked cautiously as goose bumps spread on her skin, her body caught between trepidation and undeniable arousal.

"Or else I'll come over there and insert it into your ass," he responded without a hint of hesitation.

"No anal, remember?"

"There are no limits between you and I, princess."

Their eyes locked fiercely across the table, engaged in a power play that neither of them was willing to back down from. She knew if she let him do it his way and he put it in her ass, he would get more pleasure out of it than she would, but the thought of him grabbing onto her again did something to her core and caused an uncontrollable heat to course through her veins like liquid fire.

"Fine," she spat. Taking the bullet, she spread her legs under the



tablecloth. Matteo casually flicked his left hand, intentionally knocking a butter knife off the table.

“Oops,” he said as he bent down to retrieve it from the floor, his gaze clearly fixated on what was happening beneath the table.

Embarrassment flooded her, yet a simultaneous thrill coursed through her, fuelling her every action and thought. Succumbing to the electrifying atmosphere, she widened her legs further, ensuring he had an unobstructed view. Biting her lip, she pushed the cold bullet inside, the smoothness aided by Matteo’s earlier teasing. She was dripping wet. Just as abruptly as he had disappeared, Matteo reappeared in his seat. He extended his hand toward her, and she leaned forward, allowing his finger to trail along her chin.

“You’re incredibly sexy when you bite your lip like that,” he murmured.

“I know,” she replied with a cheeky wink, her expression quickly transforming into a gasp of pleasure as the bullet vibrated, sending waves of ecstasy radiating through her core. “What the hell?”

Matteo opened his fist and revealed a small remote. “The strength is in my hands, princess. So be a good girl and you’ll get what you want.”

Simon appeared with two plates of delicious food as the vibrations increased yet again, causing her to gasp out loud. The server’s rosy cheeks gave away his embarrassment, but he stayed focused on the ground the entire time. She cringed inside as she realised he could see her underwear on the floor.

“Here you go, madam,” he said as he placed a generously sized plate of food in front of her. She mustered an awkward smile, holding her breath in anticipation and fearing that any sound escaping her lips might give away the pleasure moving through her. Simon placed a plate of steak and thick cut chips in front of Matteo. “And for you, sir.”

“Thank you, Simon,” Matteo acknowledged with a nod.

Once again Simon ran off. The poor guy deserved an extra big tip tonight. Across the flickering candlelight, Matteo smirked, the shadows cast upon his face enhancing the sensations of the vibrating bullet inside her. He speared a chip with his fork and took a bite.

“Enjoying yourself?” he asked in between bites.

“Clearly you are,” she retorted, followed by an involuntary whimper as the vibrations magnified once more.

“Eat up.” He nodded at her food.

She cursed under her breath, much to Matteo’s obvious amusement. Despite her annoyance, she reluctantly picked up her fork, her gaze still darting around the restaurant as the pleasure intensified.

“What’s wrong? Don’t you want to come right here in front of everyone?” Matteo asked.

She looked around the restaurant, her breath now in short, quick gasps from the increased pleasure. She couldn’t answer. Did she want to come? Would she be able to keep quiet?

“Eat your food. If it’s too much, say the word and I’ll turn it off.”

Silent and overwhelmed, she struggled to form a coherent response as the vibrations became even stronger, causing a moan to escape her lips. Her desire grew stronger, reaching an almost unbearable level.

“I want to come,” she whispered, her voice filled with desperation.

“So demanding,” Matteo teased, a wickedness in his eyes. “Where’s my ‘please’? Be quick or I’ll turn it off.”

“Please.”

“Not enough. Beg harder.”

This man was pushing her to the brink of insanity, but she couldn’t focus

on that now. The ambient noise of the restaurant and the presence of other diners became a distant murmur. The pleasure inside her continued to build like a relentless wave until, finally, she spat out the word he wanted to hear in a desperate voice: “Please.”

With a flick of her wrist, she discarded her fork and gripped the edges of her chair, struggling to stifle her moans as sparks of pleasure ran through her body. Averting her gaze, she attempted to contain the overwhelming sensations.

“Look at me,” Matteo demanded.

She raised her eyes to meet his and saw the pleasure reflected in his face, the energy in his stare, and his seductive smile. It was too much, and she surrendered to the irresistible wave of ecstasy crashing over her. Biting down on her lip with all her might, she fought back a scream of pleasure.

“Good girl,” Matteo murmured, and she had to exert every ounce of self-control to suppress another moan. “Simon!”

What the fuck was Matteo calling Simon for? In a second, Simon had appeared again.

“Yes, Matteo Sir?” he asked, his voice slightly shaky.

“Connie here would like to hear the specials for dessert before she decides how much of her beef wellington to eat,” Matteo said, smoothly shifting their focus back to the restaurant’s offerings.

As he spoke, the vibrations kicked in again on her extra sensitive pussy. Matteo Romano was a dead man. She held her breath once more as Simon turned to face her.

“Oh, of course, Miss Connie. We have three main options tonight. There is a cheesecake surprise, chocolate tort ...”

She didn’t hear the rest; she was too busy focusing on steadying herself

against the onslaught of extra strong vibrations that threatened to take over every inch of her being. She kicked Matteo under the table, but he didn't even flinch. She could feel her cheeks heating, and her lungs ached as they grew desperate for air.

"Is that all?" Simon finished.

"Yes. Thanks, Simon," Matteo answered for her, but Simon didn't move.

"Er, are you okay, madam?" he asked instead, his voice laced with genuine worry.

Matteo couldn't help but snort, like an immature child revelling in her discomfort. She nodded once again, her smile strained. If Simon didn't make himself scarce within the next few seconds, his tip would be forfeited. Thankfully, he caught the hint, nodding before turning away. Finally, the vibrations ceased.

"I can't believe you did that to me!"

"You can leave it in you, though," he warned.

"Why?"

"So I can make sure you behave."

She grinned. "I always behave."

## Thirty Two

# Connie



**T**wo hours later, Connie finally left The View hand-in-hand with Matteo. He had allowed her to remove the bullet after she started to behave and eat her food. Though her stomach ached she was so full from the gorgeous food and a bit too much wine. The full effect of which became apparent when she stepped out into the fresh air and walked sideways into Matteo.

“Woah, careful angel.” He squeezed her hand and she giggled.

“You should’ve drunk your beer. It’s not fun being the only one whose tipsy.”

“I want full control when you’re around, baby. Safety first.”

She rolled her eyes. Bert was outside in the limousine waiting for them to get in the back. But a building in the distance caught Connie’s eye and she pulled her hand away from Matteo’s grasp.

“You never did tell me what was wrong. What are you looking at?” Matteo asked.

“It’s never going to be the same, is it?” Connie responded, her voice tinged with the sadness that had weighed heavily on her all evening.

“What isn’t?” Matteo pressed further, reaching out to grasp her hand firmly.

“Life.” She sighed. “I can’t tell my dad what happened. I don’t know how he’ll react. If I tell my sister, I’d possibly put her in danger.”

“Do you think your father would hurt her?” Matteo stroked her cheek.

“Not in his right mind, no. But after finding out his stepson is a rapist who hurt me and that I killed him? He won’t be in his right mind. Then there’s us,” she replied, her words laced with uncertainty.

“What about us? I told you, you’re mine now, angel. That’s all there is to it.”

“Lounge 23 and what happened to me there. That club is your whole life.”

“Yes, and it will be yours too. Come on, we’ll go there now,” he said confidently.

“What? No!” Connie’s voice trembled.

“Do I need to carry you again?” His response was teasing, but tinged with determination.

Frustration welled up within Connie, and she stomped her foot in protest. “Matteo! You can’t carry me whenever I don’t want to go where you want to go.”

He shrugged, an impish grin spreading across his face. “Sure I can. Look.”

Before she could react, his powerful arms scooped her up and lifted her over his shoulder. Connie’s fists pounded against his back, but it was as pointless as striking a solid wall.

“We’ll be a while yet, Bert,” he called to the driver. “Go enjoy a drink at the club. That’s where we will be heading.”

He carried her across the road and onto the path where the oak trees began.

“Fine, I’ll walk! Put me down,” she moaned.

“No running away this time?”

“No! No running!”

“Promise?”

“Yes, Matteo. Promise. Now put me down.”

He stopped and placed her gently down onto the ground.

“You’re a nightmare,” she huffed as she walked toward the club.

“That’s why you’re so ridiculously infatuated with me. It’s disgusting really.”

She slapped him lightly on the shoulder. It wasn’t a long walk to the club, and as the imposing building loomed closer, she froze. Time stood still as the building stared at her like it was daring her to get closer. Her chest tightened, and she pressed a palm against it. Memories of the darkness flooded her mind.

“Nothing in there will ever hurt you again.” Matteo’s deep voice snapped her back to the present and back to the light. He took a few steps forward toward the club but stopped when he realised she wasn’t following. He turned to face her, and she took a step backward.

“You know what will happen if you run,” he said, his wicked blue eyes flashing. “I won’t be gentle, Connie.”

She nodded, her throat constricted with fear. This was her last chance for escape. If she entered Lounge 23 with him, she was done. She was willingly his. The silence between them was the loudest she’d ever heard. The atmosphere between them was thick with danger. She closed her eyes, counted to three, and then she fled.

A jolting terror moved her forward as her feet pounded against the soft grass, deviating from the path and into the sinister thicket of towering trees. She heard his footsteps behind her, but she was too terrified to look back. Her heart raced and her hands grew sticky with sweat, the panic making her footsteps clumsy. Something snagged on her dress, but she ignored it, not wanting to break her stride. The cool air touched her side as she felt a large rip in the material.

The trees towered above her, the tops blocking out any remaining evening light. She glanced at the torn cloth; the threads were frayed and floating in the breeze. But before she could process what was happening, a sharp stick underneath her heel tripped her up and she to the ground. She yelled when she fell, and desperately struggled to regain her footing.

She didn't even see him coming.

He was on top of her, pinning her down in an instant. His hand held hers firmly above her head. Cool air now touched every part of her body as she realised he'd already ripped off her dress. Her breath hitched as he kissed her neck deeply, nipping at it possessively, and he tugged down her underwear with his other hand until it was nestled between her thighs. Her whole body was alive with sensation.

"You are mine," he stated.

She could barely breathe to respond to him.

"This is mine," he growled, pushing his fingers inside her with no warning. It shattered any remaining resistance she had, and she trembled beneath him, surrendering to the overwhelming pleasure coursing through her. Her control was gone.

She tilted her head to kiss him, seeking his lips in a desperate kiss that left her breathless. His lips moved hungrily against hers. With each tug of his



lips, it felt like the world was spinning faster and faster until they were the only two people in existence. His fingers curved in and out of her with a neediness that made her feel adored beyond words. Every angle of his body branded itself into every corner of hers as if he wanted to be a part of her forever.

“Please take me, Matteo,” she whispered, her voice filled with longing. “I need your dick inside me.”

“Tell me you’re mine,” he panted, his voice heavy and brimming with desire.

“I’m yours,” she said easily, desperate for him to claim her completely.

She threw back her head in pleasure as he entered her. True to his promise, he showed no restraint, driving himself inside her with a fervour that showed his desire to remain connected forever. And she never wanted him to stop. Each forceful thrust brought them closer together until they were nothing but an extension of the other. They became an inseparable entity where they no longer belonged to themselves; they belonged solely to each other.

“Come,” his deep voice commanded in her ear as he pushed inside her, and she moaned, the crescendo of her pleasure so close. “Good girl. Let it out. Show me how much you want to please me. Show me how much you love it when I take you. Come now.”

At those words she lost it completely and finally her body let go. Her back arched and her thighs clenched around him as waves of pleasure ran through her. Her pussy contracted around his dick, increasing the intensity of each wave. She felt his release inside her, his mouth still next to her ear as he groaned in pleasure. The ecstasy was so powerful that she never wanted it to

end. His body quivered with pleasure as hers contracted around him, their souls becoming one until nothing could ever tear them apart.

For a few minutes, they lay still and intertwined, their bodies still trembling with the aftermath of their passionate release. Matteo curled his body around hers. He was the perfect balance of protective and feral.

“Are you ready to go in now?” he asked, placing a tender kiss on the crown of her head. “You know if anyone looks at you wrong or scares you in any way, I will kill them.”

She chuckled darkly in response, though she knew he wasn’t joking.

“In that case, if I ever take you home you’ll end up killing a lot of people.”

“You don’t ever need to go home. They don’t know you’re here, right? You can stay with me. You wanted to get away from them, anyway.”

“Do I have a choice about staying here with you?” she teased, playfully tapping his chest.

“Of course you do,” he replied. “You can leave when you like.”

The sudden heaviness in her heart took her by surprise. The thought that he didn’t care if she stayed or not shook her and tears stung her eyes. She wriggled out of his grasp and pulled herself to her feet.

“Fine. I’ll go now, then.” Aware she sounded like a petulant child, she grabbed her dress and yanked it over her head. Matteo had ripped it even further when he yanked it off her. She fiddled with the hole on the side. Damn it. It was large enough for her hand to fit through with ease.

“Fine, if that’s what you want,” he replied casually as he stood, making her feel embarrassed for her outburst. “But if you go, I’m coming with you because wherever you go, Connie Quinn, I will be right beside you.”

She stopped fiddling with her dress and peered up at him.

“Really?”

“Really.” He stepped toward her, taking her in his powerful arms once more. It was fast becoming her favourite place to be. “Whatever you decide to do, it’s me and you against the world, angel. I love you.”

She melted into the warmth of his chest, feeling safety within his embrace. This man, who had once abducted and instilled fear in her, had also saved her from a life of constant evasion, forever running from the darkness that threatened to consume her soul. He had taught her to embrace and revel in that darkness.

“I love you too,” she whispered before rising on the tips of her toes and pressing a kiss onto his lips, ready to tackle whatever darkness came their way—together.

## Thirty Three

# Bree



### **\*\*Reader Warning\*\***

**R**ead at your own risk! If you like happy endings, close the book now. If you want to find out who's coming to Oak Brook next and why, read on at your own risk. I promise, there's a Happy Ever After eventually ...

Bree Quinn delicately placed the sleek, curved knife on the table, its shining edge capturing her attention. Her head tilted to the side as she contemplated the sensation of thrusting it into human flesh. Dad had always likened it to piercing a marshmallow if the blade was sharp enough, smoothly sliding through until reaching the resistance of muscle or bone.

A sudden footstep behind her snapped her head back, her senses heightened as her eyes scanned the training hall. Shadows danced around the room, playing tricks on her mind. She surveyed the familiar surroundings, from the stoic training dummies to the well-worn fighting mats and neatly arranged equipment tables, but there was no sign of anything out of place.

Satisfied that it was her imagination, she returned her gaze to the knife. For a split second, she considered using it on Ricci. The way he looked at women was reason enough. But Dad would go mad. Plus, luckily for Ricci, no one had seen him in more than a week. He was probably on a coke binge somewhere, or perhaps even meeting his demise in some sordid alley. That would be nice.

And now Connie was no longer answering her damn phone. It wouldn't even ring out. Each passing day tightened the knot of anxiety in Bree's stomach. Something had gone terribly wrong, and she couldn't idly wait any longer.

Dad knew where she was living. He hadn't told Bree where yet, but that man somehow knew everything. He had two of his best men follow her discreetly. They were to stay in the distance, but both were now dead. Connie wasn't a killer. She wouldn't have hurt those men, even if they tried to drag her back home. She didn't even enjoy sparring in the training hall.

So who killed them? Dad then sent Ricci. The lowest of the low, psychopathic wank stain that was her eldest stepbrother. Dad rarely made such poor decisions, but there you go. Everyone fucked up sometimes. He'd thought Ricci might show more oomph if it was Connie he was helping on account of the soft spot he'd always had for her. Ricci hadn't been in touch since, so hopefully the trash had taken itself out.

*Good riddance.*

So now it was her turn. Someone was killing Connie's protection. There was only one reason to do that. They wanted Connie for themselves. *Tough shit.* Connie was theirs, and it was time for her to come home. Another noise from behind caught her attention, and she swiftly turned and ducked in one

fluid motion. A towering figure crashed to the ground as she expertly tripped him at the knee.

A hearty laugh echoed through the training hall. It was a sound Bree rarely heard from her father, but it always emerged during their sparring sessions. It lifted her heavy heart in the same way it always did. Dad lay sprawled on the floor, still wearing his full motorcycle gear and helmet, though the visor was up.

“That was stupid,” she mumbled as she held out her hand to help her dad up from the floor. His gloved hand swallowed hers whole.

“Impressive, but you should have investigated when you first heard me. I managed to get too close,” her father remarked in his deep voice, accepting her assistance and grunting as he yanked himself up, almost pulling her arm out of the socket in the process.

“You still ended up on the floor,” Bree retorted. She pulled her hand away from his and rubbed her shoulder delicately.

“Hm. What did you want to see me for anyway?” he asked. He pulled off the black helmet, revealing his short grey beard and tanned head.

“I’m going to see Connie. You need to tell me where she is.”

“The hell you are. I’m not having you go missing too. Anyway, I’ve reported Connie missing to the police.”

Bree snapped around to him in shock. This was way worse than she’d realised if he’d resorted to the police.

“What? You have? Why?” she spluttered once she found her voice.

“Because I called in a favour. She hasn’t been in touch all week, and everyone we send to Oak Brook dies. Ricci is missing. It’s not our turf. It’s Alessandro bloody Romano. I have enough trouble with him being disrespectful in London. At least it makes her hotter to handle if the police

are involved, and Connie is more likely to speak to them than one of my men.”

“She’s in Oak Brook? What if the Romano’s have her?”

“They wouldn’t. Alessandro wouldn’t hurt her. She’s too valuable for him to use against me.”

“I’m going regardless of what you say, Dad. She’s my sister. It’s happening. No matter what her beef with you is, she would not ignore me.”

“Fine. Then I’m coming with you,” he declared calmly.

Bree couldn’t help but snort in response. “Oh, yeah! Because you’re so bloody inconspicuous? You’d make a right sight walking around a place like Oak Brook.”

His eyes darkened in a way that would be utterly terrifying if she didn’t have complete trust that he would never harm her.

And that powerful gaze alone would make him stand out in most places. Not to mention his towering stature and the habit of swiftly dispatching anyone who dared to irritate him, except for his own children. The mood abruptly shifted when his phone rang, and a look flashed across his face that she had never witnessed before.

Was that panic? Surely not. Dad did not panic.

“Yes?” he barked into the phone as he stepped away from her.

Curiosity urged her to follow, and she watched as the blood drained from his dark face. He hung up without saying another word, and when he looked at her, she feared him for the first time.

“Dad?” her voice was merely above a whisper. “Have they found her?”

He nodded once, and a heavy rock crashed into Bree’s stomach. There was only one reason he would react this way.

“Is she okay?” she asked urgently, desperately seeking reassurance.

He remained motionless, his silence speaking volumes. He continued to stare at her, and that was answer enough.

Her baby sister was gone.

“They think she took an overdose,” he finally spoke in a tone she’d never heard from him before.

“Connie doesn’t do drugs anymore,” Bree exclaimed, her breath now coming in quick beats. She put a hand to her chest to calm it. Now was not the time to panic. She needed to go see Connie. “I need to go to her. I need to save her,” she yelled.

Dad pulled her toward him and held her so tightly she could not get away. She tried to pull away from his arms, but was unable to do anything other than sob into his chest.

“Don’t worry, Little Bee,” he replied, her heart aching at the nickname she hadn’t heard in years. He only called her Bee when she was scared or sad, and it had been a long time since she’d allowed anything to make her feel either emotion. “We will kill the person who did this to her. Whether someone forced drugs upon her or if someone is concealing the truth, I will make them pay.”

She pushed herself away from his embrace, wiping her tears and summoning a newfound resolve. “No,” she declared, her voice filled with conviction. “I will be the one to make them pay, and I’m going right now.”

She grabbed her knife and stormed off, her mind consumed by thoughts of revenge. She was so engrossed in her purpose that she momentarily forgot her father was still present. She was quickly reminded when strong arms wrapped around her chest once more, preventing her from moving forward. She struggled, attempting to bend and twist out of his grasp, but he held on firmly.



“You’re going nowhere. I’m not losing two daughters. You aren’t leaving this house until I’ve figured this shit out.”

“No!” she screamed, kicking and fighting his hold. She pushed against him with all her might, but her efforts were futile. More tears streamed down her face, and she succumbed to complete emotional breakdown, sinking to the floor in defeat.

“Come on, Little Bee.” Dad scooped her up as he had when she was small. “I’ve got you.”

She wrapped her arms tightly around him, finding no solace in his embrace. She let herself surrender to the tears and allowed the weight of her pain to be carried by her father’s support. Even in that moment, she knew it wasn’t over yet. Oak Brook would feel her presence, and those responsible for hurting Connie would understand the agony of losing someone they loved.

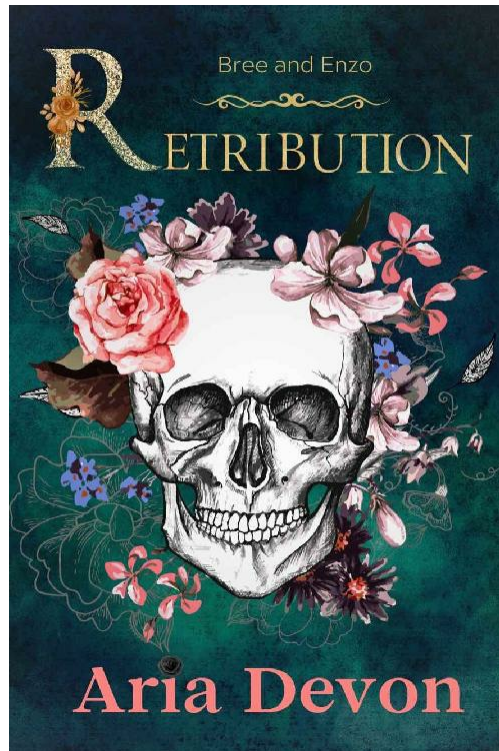
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Also by Aria Devon



# Retribution

<https://mybook.to/OBRetribution>

Bree Quinn has one goal: to avenge her sister's murder. She knows that the dangerous Enzo Romano is indirectly responsible for her sister's death. So when she gets the chance to go undercover and get close to Enzo, Bree doesn't hesitate. But Enzo is not what she expected. He's intense, seductive, and everything she never knew she needed. As Bree gets closer, she finds herself torn between her desire for revenge and her growing feelings for him.

Enzo is a man with a past, one that's as dark as the world he inhabits, and the rules he must follow. It's obvious Bree is not who she says, but he can't help being drawn to her fierce spirit. When Bree's true intentions are revealed, Enzo must confront the truth about his own family. Can their love survive the lies and deceit that threaten to tear them apart, or will their dangerous game of cat and mouse destroy them both? Both will stop at nothing to get what they want, even if it means sacrificing everything they hold dear.