



CLAIMED BY THE DEVIL

AMAZON BESTSELLING AUTHOR
LENA LITTLE

CLAIMED BY THE DEVIL

CLAIMED: BOOK 9

LENA LITTLE

© 2023 by Lena Little

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

If you see this book anywhere other than Amazon, it is a stolen version of this story. My stories are exclusive to Amazon and can only be purchased through Amazon or read through Amazon's Kindle Unlimited program.

CONTENTS

Free Books

1. The Wise Guys Passion
2. The Meeting
3. Dancing with the Devil
4. Claiming Deirdre
5. The First Date
6. A Night to Remember
7. Exploration
8. The Third Party
9. Reciprocation
10. Diavolo and the Bull
11. My Safe House
12. Friend or Foe
13. To the Future

Epilogue

Extended Epilogue

Also by Lena Little

PREVIEW

I had a rough start in life, but that only made me more ruthless in my desire to come out on top.

My name is Danny Dimarco, but I'm known on the street as *Diavolo* (The Devil) because I show no mercy when someone gets in the way of me getting what I want.

I'm the boss of a crew, and today is the wedding of my only rival for domination over the city. Well, my only rival until now. Now, there's a new player on the streets, and he's built a crew that's becoming a problem for both me and my rival.

At another time, I might be going to this wedding locked and loaded, but since we now have a mutual interest to discuss, I'm going as an invited guest so that we can talk business.

I didn't know what would happen at this function, but I didn't expect to find the most beautiful girl that I ever laid eyes on. She's the maid of honor and the illegitimate daughter of my arch-rival.

Her name is Deirdre, and she's as sweet and innocent as she is sexy.

Everybody knows that Deirdre is treated like a nuisance by her father, and she needs someone to treat her like the princess she truly is.

I'm instantly obsessed with her. She needs a man like me to keep her safe in the dangerous world that her father and I have created.

From the moment I see her, I know that I have to have her, so I do what any man in my position would do.

I make her part of the deal.

FREE BOOKS

Get free books from time to time by signing up for my mailing list...

www.subscribepage.com/lenalittle

THE WISE GUYS PASSION

DANNY

The church is packed with black-suited wise guys and their wives wearing too much makeup and gaudy dresses. The Capos all have pot bellies so big that their bulletproof vests are showing under their dress shirts. That's something that doesn't fly with my crew. When they walk into a room, I want them to be large and intimidating just like me.

The organ starts playing, and everyone stands to watch the bridal party come down the aisle.

"You believe Bobby Vito's getting married again?" Jimmy asks me.

Bobby Vito is the boss of what, until this week, was our one and only rival gang in the State. Last week, we might have been staking out this wedding so we could put a bullet in him, but the market is changing and there's a new player in town.

We need to join forces to bring down our common enemy. So, here I am with my most trusted associates breaking bread at the wedding of my enemy.

Lost in thought about my meeting with Bobby later, I'm pulled back to reality when Jimmy says, "Hot damn, where did she come from?"

I look just in time to see a ravenous beauty with long, dark hair and a perfectly sculpted body walk by. She's the maid of honor, and when she stands at the altar, she looks like a work of fine art that's surrounded by finger paintings.

“Who is she?” I ask, knowing that Jimmy did all the Intel on the wedding party.

“That must be Deirdre Vito. She’s Bobby’s illegitimate daughter,” Jimmy replies.

“Illegitimate? That’s a big word for you,” I rib him.

“That’s what they call it when you have a baby out of wedlock, right? Rumor is that her mother was a maid or something,” he explains.

I understand Jimmy’s reaction when he sees her. It’s not just her stellar looks that make her stand out here. There’s a sort of innocence about her that you don’t ever find in this kind of crowd. Even the daughters of men in the business have a harder edge to them. It just comes with the territory.

The priest starts speaking, but I can’t hear a word. The only thing that I can hear is the conversation that I’m going to have with Deirdre Vito the first chance that I get. I should also thank the bride for picking out tight, low-cut dresses that show off all of this girl’s best features. She’s almost small enough to fit in my pocket, but that didn’t stop nature from gifting her with big tits and a perfect round ass.

The ceremony ends and my eyes burn holes in her flesh as she walks back down the aisle. She’s looking down at the floor as she approaches, but when she gets to the row in front of me, she looks up and stares me right in the eyes. I dig my fingers into the pew in front of me as my pulse quickens.

She holds my gaze for just a moment then shoots me a bashful smile and continues out the door. I’m the guy that people avoid making eye contact with. When it does happen, all I can see in their eyes is fear.

There was no fear in Deirdre’s eyes. She was looking for a connection. Maybe she needs someone to protect her from this unpredictable world that we live in. That smile seals the deal. I’m going to be the one who protects her. I just need to be careful not to let my violent reputation and scarred face scare her way.

We pull up to the reception hall, and I'm already scanning the crowd for Deirdre. Bobby Vito and I have to talk business tonight, and I want to make my move before things get serious. Jimmy gets out of the car and checks for any suspicious activity then gives me the "all clear" sign.

I get out and we walk in together. We get the occasional sideways look from some of the rival family members, but they're on their best behavior. None of them would dare spill blood at Bobby Vito's wedding.

Deirdre is posing for pictures with the rest of the wedding party, and I see that I'm not the only one who's watching. With her looks, she can't help but cause a stir, and I wonder how many times she's had to fight off unwanted advances from this tactless bunch of criminals. My fists clench instinctively when I think about it.

"I found our table, Danny. What are you still doing out here?" Jimmy asks. I didn't even hear him approach me and that's dangerous.

"I'm coming. The sooner this thing gets rolling, the sooner we can have our sit down," I tell him.

On my way through the door, I take a final look at Deirdre and stop in my tracks when I see that she's looking right back at me. Her eyes flutter and she flashes that same little grin. This time, there's a rumble in my pants when I see it. Boy, this little girl has got me good already.

Jimmy and I take our seats at the table, and he pours us each a glass of red wine. I take it, but it will probably be my only one. I'm not here for the party. This is supposed to be purely business. The wedding party returns from their photo shoot, and Deirdre goes to take her seat at the bride's table.

Her new stepmother turns to look at her and rolls her eyes. She says something to her that sends my girl running out of the ballroom and into the back hall. Her wicked stepmother just provided me with a golden opportunity.

"I gotta go find the head," I tell Jimmy and slip out into the hall, but I don't see her anywhere, deducing that she must have

run to the lady's room. There is a bench under a window on the other side of the hall so I take a seat and wait for her to come out.

She walks out of the ladies' room and jumps a little when she sees me. Her eyes are red, and though she retouched her makeup, it's obvious that she was crying. My heart aches for her, and I have to fight back the urge to wrap my arms around her and tell her that I won't let anyone hurt her again.

"Are you okay?" I ask, looking her square in the face.

"I'm fine," she says but my question reignited whatever fire her stepmother lit in her and her eyes become glossy.

"Come over here and sit with me for a minute," I tell her as I pat the bench with my hand.

"I don't even know you," she answers but I can tell that she isn't going anywhere.

"Danny Dimarco," I hold my hand out to her.

"Diavolo," she mutters.

"Where did you hear that, little girl?" I ask brushing my hair over my scar.

"That's what they call you, right?"

"Some people do but you can call me Danny. Now, come sit down. You can't go back in there with tears in your eyes."

She hesitates, looking down the hall toward the ballroom.

"Deirdre, come sit down," I say a bit more forcefully.

Her leg rubs against mine when she sits down, and I swallow the desire to put my hand on it.

"Why are you crying? Did your father's new wife upset you?" I ask her.

"Every day," she moans.

"What does your father have to say about that?"

"As if he cares. The only thing we share is blood. It wouldn't matter if I lived or died," the tears well up in her eyes again.

“What about your real mother?” I ask and the damn opens completely.

“She died when I was two. That’s the only reason my father took me in, If he has another kid that’s it for me. He’ll find some wise guy to pawn me off on and forget all about me,” she whimpers.

“You’re an adult now, right? What are you? Twenty-one?” I ask.

“Twenty.”

“Soon you’ll be out of the house and on your own,” I try to console her.

“You know better than that. You don’t get out of these kinds of families. When you’re a girl, you just get married off to a different branch,” she rolls her eyes.

“I had a rough childhood, too, but trust me. The older you get, the less it affects you. One day, it won’t even seem real anymore. You’ll remember things and wonder if it was just a dream.”

“I hope so,” she answers but I know she doesn’t believe me.

“I’m telling you, baby, this is almost a distant memory for you. You’ll see.” This time I put my hand on her leg. She looks down at it but doesn’t flinch.

“So, what? Are you going to take me away from all this?” she smirks.

I know that she’s joking but I can’t help myself and say, “I’m thinking about it.”

She searches my eyes for any truth in my comment, and I involuntarily lean forward. I just met this girl a few minutes ago, and I’m going to kiss her. She looks down at my lips as I inch closer. She doesn’t move a muscle. She’s going to let me taste her warm, soft lips. I almost made contact when Jimmy’s voice bellows from behind her.

“Danny! It’s time,” he shouts at me.

“We’ll finish this later,” I whisper to Deirdre. I take her by the hand and help her to her feet. “That smile that you’re wearing right now, keep it and go back in there with your head held high. Don’t give them the satisfaction of knowing that they shook you. Remember what I said. It’s almost over.”

“Thank you,” she smiles.

I hold Jimmy back and watch her as she moves down the hall. She walks like an angel, and I have to shake myself back to reality.

“Where do we meet him?” I ask Jimmy.

“There’s an office in the back. He’s in there waiting,” he replies.

THE MEETING

DANNY

Bobby Vito is seated at the head of a small conference table when Jimmy and I come into the room. There are two thugs guarding the door who turn and try to stare us down, but I don't play that game. I bow my chest and look down at the little weasels. They won't back down in front of their boss, but tiny beads of sweat begin to form on their foreheads.

"Let them in. Come on," Bobby bellows, and his henchmen move to the side. I give them a big grin on my way by and say, "It's alright fellas, you can stop shitting your pants now."

"Thank you for coming to celebrate my nuptials," Bobby tells us.

"Thank you for having us," I reply.

When the pleasantries are out of the way, he says, "Let's get this business over with so we can get back to the party. It cost me enough. I ought to enjoy myself."

"Of course, I've had some time to consider your offer and the percentages are fair. I'm on board with the business side of things," I begin.

"The business side? What else is there?" Bobby asks me. His belly jiggles a bit when he laughs.

I'm about to formulate my answer, but before I can say a word we hear a crash, a woman's scream, and the sound of glass breaking. Our instincts kick in and we all reach into our jackets but the rules were clear. No weapons are allowed at the

wedding. Bobby's men throw open the door and step out. There were no gunshots, so I'm pretty certain that Jimmy and I can handle whatever's out there, and we slip out right behind them.

"Awe, damn it. You have to do that here when the boss is doing business inside?" one of the henchmen says.

I put my hand on his arm and move him aside so that I can see who he's talking to. One look and fireworks go off inside my head. Heart racing, I rush past the henchmen and grab one of Bobby's other boys by the throat. I lift him off of his feet and drag him across the hall slamming him into the wall.

"What the hell? Get off me, man," the man chokes.

"What do you think you're doing? Did you put your filthy hands on her?" I snarl.

"What do you care? Her own father doesn't care if we mess with her," he says and I see red.

I'm pounding his head into the wall when Bobby Vito comes out into the hall.

"You don't ever touch her," I scream.

My victim holds up his hand, but I snatch it in mine and break two of his fingers. He cries out as the bones crack one at a time.

"Calm down, Danny. That's my guy. You gotta let him go," Bobby says,

"He has no right to disrespect Deirdre. He needs to learn a lesson," I growl back.

"What do you care? She's my kid. You don't have a claim on her," Bobby replies.

I let go of the man's throat, and he slides down the wall and crumbles onto the floor.

"I do now. She's part of the deal. From now on, your crew will show her the same respect that they're gonna show me," I tell him.

“You’re telling me that you want this girl or no deal?” Bobby asks me.

“That’s right,” I hold firm.

Bobby shrugs his shoulders and says, “Take her.”

I want to knock his head off his shoulders and reply, “That’s the last time you’ll disrespect her, too.”

He stops in his tracks and turns back to face me. I clench my fists and wait to see if this wedding is going to turn into a gang war, but he says nothing. He just shoots me a sideways glare.

Bobby goes back to the party, and his henchmen carry the broken and bloodied man out the backdoor. When the hallway is clear, I turn my attention to Deirdre. She looks like a deer in headlights, and I assume that she’s in a state of shock.

“Are you okay?” I ask, brushing her hair from her face.

“He asked me to dance, and I didn’t want to be rude so I danced with him. He was putting his hands all over me. I left him on the dance floor and came back here, but he followed me. He pushed me up against the wall so hard that the dishes fell off the shelf. I thought he was gonna rape me!” she explains.

“Did he hurt you?” I ask, fully prepared to storm out the door and finish the beating that I started.

“No, he didn’t. You got here before he could.”

“Good,” I look around and spot an employee restroom. “Go in there and clean yourself up.”

When she goes to the restroom, Jimmy says, “What was that all about, boss? Were you really gonna blow the whole deal over her?”

All I can say is, “Yes.”

DANCING WITH THE DEVIL

DEIRDRE

Looking at my mascara-stained face in the mirror, I run the warm water over my shaking hands. My mind takes me to a place that I don't want to go. I call it the land of what if.

What if Danny hadn't come out when he did? What would have happened? The most likely answer isn't one that I like to imagine. I would have been raped, and if the assault resulted in a pregnancy, my father would have forced him to marry me and take responsibility for the child that he made. I would tell him that the goon forced himself on me, but he would call me a liar even though he knew it was true. He'd probably be relieved if that happened. It would be the easiest way to get me off his hands so that he could concentrate on making a new family with his pretty young wife.

I was always an uncomfortable burden to him, but when my mother died, he became honor-bound to raise me. Now, I'm more than just a burden. I'm like an old piece of furniture in a newly remodeled room. I don't match the décor, but he keeps me in the room because he can't throw me away. Not because I have any sentimental value but because he'd be judged for it if he did.

What about this Diavolo? Did he really just strike a deal with my father and lay some sort of claim on me? When I saw him in the church, I wasn't sure who he was, but there was something about him that seemed different from the rest of the guys.

He's twice the size of any man I've ever met, with bulging muscles and a scar that runs all the way down one side of his face. The scar takes nothing away from how handsome he is. In fact, it may even make him a bit sexier. Without it, he's attractive, but with it, he's attractive and dangerous.

His eyes tell a different story. When I look at the other guys, I see one of two things—lust or rage—but Danny's eyes are more soulful. I can just tell that he's a deep thinker.

From the stories I've heard, he's the most dangerous man in the business. They call him cold-blooded and say he's the devil himself, but when I look at him, I don't feel intimidated. I feel safe. My instincts must be very good because he didn't waste a second coming to my rescue.

The idea of exploring just what it means to be claimed by Danny entices me, and I finally stop shaking. I fix my makeup and hair and take a final look in the mirror. Maybe when I walk out of this bathroom things will be different. He did promise me that things were going to get better, after all.

He's waiting for me when I come out and asks, "Feeling better?"

"Yes, thanks," I reply, folding my hands in front of me.

"Are you ready to go back out there, then?"

The idea of returning to the wedding reception now terrifies me. I was so fixated on Danny that I didn't even think about having to walk out there and see the looks on all of their faces. By now, they all must know what happened, and in their minds, it's all my fault.

"You're gonna walk out there on my arm. You'll sit at my table and we'll get to know each other a little better. Maybe we'll even dance a little. You deserve to enjoy yourself. Your father isn't the only one who gets to start over today," he tells me and my heart swells. For the first time in my life, I feel special. No one has ever treated me like this before.

I sit between Danny and his associate who doesn't say anything, but I can see that he isn't too sure about my presence. I glance around the room and see a few people

gawking but nowhere near as many as I expected, so I settle back and relax a bit more.

Dad and his new wife, Celia, cut the cake and the wait staff deliver slices to all the tables. My slice is placed on the bride's table, so Danny takes a forkful from his plate, smiles, and tells me to open wide. My face gets hot but I open my mouth and let him feed me.

"What are we doing here, boss? We already had our meeting. Can't we just slip out now? No offense to you, young lady, but a week ago, these people were our arch-enemies. It doesn't feel right being here," Jimmy looks around the room and then shrugs his shoulders.

"You're right. You should go. If they haven't tried to cap me yet, they aren't going to," Danny tells him.

"So, you're staying? Why?" Jimmy asks.

"Because I promised Deirdre a dance. Just go. I'll catch up with you later." He stands and holds out his hand. I feel a bit exposed, but I don't think he's the type to take no for an answer so I take his hand and follow him onto the dance floor.

He places his hand on the small of my back and pulls me against his rock-hard body. A thousand butterflies come to life in my stomach as he presses his thigh between my legs. I get lost in the sensation of being in his arms and completely ignore the hundreds of eyes that are staring at us. I just put my head on his chest and let him seduce my senses as we sway to the music.

The walk back to the table seems endless as I try to control my shaking legs. We sit down and I summon the courage to start asking questions.

"You said that bad things happened to you when you were young. What happened?"

"My parents died when I was twelve. My family isn't much different from yours, and they felt like they had to take responsibility for me so I was adopted by my uncle. Let's just say he had his own way of doing things. Even then, I was big, and he saw the potential to turn me into a good soldier for the

family so he trained me by beating my ass to toughen me up. I had the flu bad when I was fourteen, but that wasn't enough to get me a day off from my training so he took me out in the yard to box. I was gasping for breath, and he thought I was being a pussy so he pulled a knife on me. He cut me six times before I lost it and put him in a chokehold. That didn't sit well with him either so that night when I was sleeping, he gave me this," he says pointing to the scar on his face.

"I'm so sorry," I say, on the verge of tears.

"Don't ever be sorry for me. I didn't tell you that story so you would have sympathy for me. I told it so you would understand that everybody can overcome their circumstances. He wanted me to be a good soldier. I defied him and became the boss. Now he works for me."

"I didn't mean to offend you. That's just a terrible way to treat a child," I explain.

"Sad stories are over now. All we have to think about is tomorrow," he places his hand on mine and all of my problems fade from existence. I start to think that maybe he was right. Things have changed for me. Then he tells me that it's time for him to take me home, and my world comes crashing down around me. I was so caught up in the idea of being claimed that I didn't think about how silly I was being. Did I expect him to sweep me off my feet and whisk me away to some fairytale house in the suburbs? At least dad and Celia will be off on their honeymoon for a few days, and I'll have the house to myself.

"I need to call us a cab since I let Jimmy take the car," he tells me. "Let's step outside where there's better reception."

"Should I go and say goodbye to my father?" I ask him.

"Do you want to?"

"Not really."

"Then no," he takes my hand and leads me out of the banquet room.

He calls for the cab then turns to me and says, "I've been waiting all evening to pick up where we left off."

“What do you mean?” I ask but he puts his hands on my shoulders and presses me against the wall of the building.

I close my eyes as he presses his lips against mine. A spark ignites inside me and I part my lips, allowing his tongue inside. He places my face in his big hands and kisses me passionately, causing every inch of my body to crave him even more.

The weight of his body crushes me, and I feel the thickness of his manhood against my leg. I’ve never wanted anyone the way that I want him right now. He could hike up my dress and take me right here on the sidewalk, and I wouldn’t think twice.

The cab arrives and he opens the door for me. I slide all the way over but when he gets inside, he pulls me toward him and puts his arm around my neck. He rests his other hand on my thigh. I’ve never felt so perfectly at home with anyone.

We arrive at my house, and my mood sinks to rock bottom. I don’t want this night to end because I have no idea what will happen tomorrow.

“You told my father that I was part of the deal. What does that mean?” I hold my breath as I wait for the answer.

“It means, Princess, that you and I will be spending a whole lot of time together. I’ll see you tomorrow,” he kisses me goodbye and stands beside the cab until I’m safely inside the house. I watch out the window until it pulls away.

I enter the dark, empty house and think I should have given him my phone number. He said he would see me tomorrow, but how? Where? This burning question will keep me up all night. I’ve only known Danny for the span of a few hours, but I already know that I would trust him with my life. That’s a feeling that my own father couldn’t give me.

I’ve spent every day since I turned fourteen wondering when one of his guys would rape me or a rival gang would shoot our car full of holes when we were going to dinner.

Danny’s story about his childhood was heartbreaking, and I wonder if that’s why I see such depth in his eyes. He knows better than anyone, even me, what it’s like to grow up feeling

unwanted, but he took his situation and used it to become stronger. Now, he's one of the most powerful men in the city.

Stepping into my room, I take off my dress and stare at myself in the mirror, wondering if I'll be enough for him. He's so handsome, strong, and powerful I bet he has women falling all over him and I have zero experience with the real world.

The kids in school knew who my father was and avoided me like I was a disease. I wasn't allowed to have a boyfriend but even if I wanted to defy my father and sneak around with someone, nobody would run the risk of getting caught with me. I wasn't even allowed to go to my prom. Dad said that there would be too many people there, and he couldn't risk me getting kidnapped by the mysterious Diavolo. The irony strikes me and I let out a laugh. How quickly things change.

CLAIMING DEIRDRE

DANNY

The boys are chomping at the bit about last night's meeting, so I've called them all together at one of our warehouses. They don't need to know the financial details of the arrangement, but they do need to be clear on the rules going forward.

Jimmy keeps a headcount as they arrive and nods to me when he's sure that everyone is here. I clear my throat and announce, "Everybody, settle down. We have business to discuss and we need to make this quick. If we're all in here, nobody's on the street making money."

They stand in a semi-circle in front of me and wait for me to explain why I attended our arch-rival's wedding.

"As you all know, there's been some new activity on the streets. Someone is inching their way into our territory. Turns out Bobby Vito's crew is feeling it, too. Last week, Booby reached out to me with a plan to consolidate our business and join forces to drive out the competition, if you know what I mean. His terms were agreeable so I sealed the deal with him last night. From now on, you don't even think about having beef with his crew. You don't try to move in on his territory, and you don't mess with his deliveries. You pay his boys the same respect that you pay each other. Got it?"

There's an expected low roar of grumbling followed by a show of understanding.

"What about this other crew?" someone shouts from the back.

“We’re gonna treat them the same way we used to treat Bobby Vito’s crew. If they get in our business, you remove them. Period,” I affirm.

I step down off the platform that I used for a stage and work my way through the crowd, shaking hands as the boys do their usual ass-kissing. Jimmy is talking to a group of three men and has his back to me. They’re deep into something, and Jimmy is waving his arms and pointing his finger. I approach to see if it’s something that I need to handle personally and catch just a piece of the conversation.

“The boss got something a little extra in the deal, and now we have to play nice. Is that what this is all about? He fell for the fat man’s bastard daughter and couldn’t have her unless we joined houses?” one of the men asks.

Another adds, “Naw, Bobby Vito doesn’t care about that bitch. He would’ve given her away for free. I guess I should’ve tapped that sweet ass before the boss saw her...”

Sparks shoot from my eyes as I push Jimmy out of the way and come face to face with the idiot misguided enough to say something like that in my presence. Nobody is going to disrespect Deirdre, and this jerk is going to show the rest of them what happens when they do.

He stares wide-eyed at me and holds up his hands, “I didn’t know you were there, Boss. I’m sorry...” he stammers but there’s nothing that he can say to save him now. I raise my fist and slam it into his face. His nose cracks from the pressure and blood pours out onto his white shirt and jeans.

He grabs at his broken face, but I push his hand aside and continue to connect blows, causing his head to bounce against the wall behind him. I don’t stop until his eyes flutter and close and he falls to the floor.

Every eye in the room is on me now, so I crouch down beside him and hold his head up by grabbing a fist full of his hair. I point at the carnage and say, “See this? The next asshole that says a word about Deirdre Vito is gonna wish that this happened to them. He’s gonna recover. They won’t. Is that clear? You don’t talk about her, you don’t talk to her, and you

definitely don't touch her if you want to live." I bounce his head off the wall one more time for good measure and say, "Somebody get this piece of shit out of here."

Jimmy shakes his head and says, "Boss, that was a little extreme, don't you think? How many guys are gonna get their heads bashed in over this girl?"

"As many as it takes for them to understand the rules," I tell him as I wipe the blood from my knuckles.

"And how long is this infatuation gonna last? You can't just meet a girl and think that you're gonna live happily after with her," he adds.

I smirk at him and say, "Watch me."

THE BOYS HAVE nothing to say to me for the rest of the afternoon, and it looks like business as usual so I call Jimmy to my office.

"What's up, boss?" he asks.

"You've got the collections tonight. I'm leaving for the day," I reply.

"Something wrong?"

"Nope," I grab my keys off the desk and put them in my pocket.

"You going to see that girl?"

I let out a long breath and say, "Stop already, Jimmy. I like you but you're starting to get on my nerves."

The truth is that I've been waiting all day to see Deirdre, and I'm surprised that I made it this long. It'll take me just about thirty minutes to get from midtown to the suburbs, and even that's too long to wait. I can feel the anticipation growing with each passing mile.

There are no cars in the driveway so I pull in and park. I check myself in the rearview mirror before I get out and ring the bell.

I can hear someone moving around inside, but nobody answers so I ring the bell again. Still no answer.

On the third ring, Deirdre calls out, "I'll be right there." My foot is tapping as I stand there, checking over my shoulder to make sure that this isn't some kind of setup. My senses go on high alert and even the neighbor walking his dog begins to look suspicious.

"Deidre, open up now. This isn't funny," I pound on the door and tell her.

She finally opens the door and I push my way inside. She stands there looking confused by my insistence. I'm not angry with her, but she needs to understand how this world works. This is her father's territory, and I shouldn't be spending too much time alone and in the open. You never know if word traveled to his whole crew or not. Any low-level street guy could see me and think that a bullet will make him a hero.

"When I knock, you answer. Do you understand?"

She looks down at the floor and her cheeks go red.

"What? Is there a problem?" I ask.

"I didn't expect you. I was trying to put myself together so you didn't see me like this," she replies.

I take a moment to examine her. Her hair is in a messy bun, and she's not wearing any makeup. She has on a pair of mint green silk shorts and a matching halter top. She's the most beautiful thing that I've ever seen. Her nipples poke out of her silk top, letting me know that she's not wearing a bra, and my dick goes hard at the thought of it.

"What are you talking about? You're sexy as hell," I tell her. "You have to understand that my being here might be dangerous for me. Until your father gets back from his honeymoon and verifies that his whole crew is on board, I have to watch my back when I'm in his territory. So, again, if I knock, you answer. Clear?"

"I'm sorry, I didn't know," she tells me and I can see that she's terrified that I might be angry with her.

“Do I scare you, little girl?” I ask her, praying she doesn’t confirm it.

“No,” she shakes her head. “I’m just sorry that I disappointed you.”

I rush to her and take her face in my hands, “You could never disappoint me.” I kiss her gently, and her body melts into mine so I give in to my desire and grab her firm tits. She sighs, then kisses me harder. She likes the way my hands feel on her and that makes my cock rise even further. I touch, squeeze, and grope every part of her that I can reach, eventually sliding my hands under her shorts and fondling her nice, round ass.

She’s putty in my hands so I take a chance and pull her top down off of her shoulders. Her perky tits bounce their way to freedom and I slap her pretty, pink nipples with my tongue. She tilts her head back and moans, cradling my head in her hands.

I want to taste every inch of her so I lift her off of her feet and carry her to the couch. I set her down and drop to my knees on the floor in front of her. I tug at her shorts until they drop to her ankles. She’s not wearing panties either, so I guess this is what she wore to bed last night. I part her legs and run my tongue up her thigh. She shivers as I inch my way closer to her little pussy so I skip over it completely and draw circles with my tongue on her taut belly.

“I want to taste your pussy, baby,” I whisper.

“Okay,” she pants.

“Okay? No, that’s not good enough. Tell me you want it,” I tease her.

“I want it, please,” she answers.

“Want what? Say it. Don’t be afraid.”

“I want you to taste my... my pussy.”

I drop my head and slip my tongue between her smooth lips. She arches her back and cries out when I make contact with her clit, so I clench down on it and suck hard, watching her writhe and buck with desire.

She's the sweetest treat that I've ever tasted and I want to fuck every inch of her with my tongue, so I slide it in and out of her tiny hole. She's lost in a state of sheer euphoria, and I want to make her come so I make my way back to her swollen little button and bear down on it again. She screams and digs her fingers into my shoulders.

"I'm gonna make you come, baby," I tell her.

"I ... I don't know how," she cries and stuns me.

This sweet, precious girl has never had an orgasm before. Armed with this knowledge, I slow my game and begin making tiny circles around her clit with my tongue, allowing the pressure to build in her a bit longer. I slap her clit with my tongue, and she cries out so I pull back and make circles again.

Her thighs close around me, and she squeezes me with her legs. She can't hold out much longer and I don't want to keep her on the edge any longer, so I slap her clit hard until she cries out and sits straight up, bearing down on my face. I lap up her sticky, sweet juices until her spasms subside then get up and sit beside her. She leaps into my lap and kisses my face and neck.

"You liked that, baby?" I ask her.

"It was amazing," she sighs.

I'm ready to bust in my pants and I'm ready to feel what it's like to ride her sweet pussy when I hear noises coming from the kitchen. She hears them, too, and races to put her clothes back on.

"It's the maid," she whispers.

Deirdre is disheveled but dressed when the old woman comes into the room. She flashes us an accusatory glare.

"I'm back from the grocery, Miss Deirdre," the maid sneers.

"Go get dressed, Princess. We're going out," I tell Deirdre and she rushes up the stairs.

I remain on the couch with my hands folded in my lap, covering my giant erection, and the maid saunters back into the kitchen. I suppose I could have asked Deirdre if she was

expecting any of the staff to show up before I stripped her down and ate her in the living room.

Seeing her naked and in submission makes me want her even more, but I don't just want to fuck her. I want to save her. She's the only perfect thing in this messed-up, ruthless world, and her innocence needs to be protected and preserved. That's my job now and the only thing that matters.

THE FIRST DATE

DEIRDRE

My whole body is shaking as I step into the shower. What Danny just did to me was incredible. At first, I felt exposed and embarrassed, but when he used his hands and mouth on me, my inhibitions just melted away. Knowing that he wants me made it that much more mind-blowing. How could such a powerful man find anything about me attractive?

Fearing that he might get tired of waiting or get called away, I dress quickly and rush back downstairs with my heart racing. When I see that he's still seated on the couch where I left him, it pounds even harder. I stop short at the foot of the stairs, wondering if he can see just how excited I am.

"Are you ready?" he asks, approaching me.

"Yes. I mean, is this okay?" I ask, realizing that I have no idea what he's planning.

"You look beautiful," he takes my hand and leads me out the door and to his car.

We pull out of the driveway and I ask, "Where are we going?"

"To dinner in the city. I own a restaurant in the museum district. Have you ever been there?"

"The museum district? Yeah, I went on a school trip once."

"Which museum was your favorite? Let me guess, natural history," he grins.

“No, my favorite was the fine art museum,” I like that he’s taking an interest.

“What about the planetarium? The giant telescope?”

“We never made it to the planetarium. There wasn’t enough time.”

“What about your father? Didn’t he take you on trips when you were a kid? Vacations? The zoo, maybe?” Danny asks me.

“No, not really. We went to Florida once, but I think the only reason he brought me along was that the business associate he was meeting had kids my age, and he thought that spending some family time together might convince the guy to agree to more lucrative terms,” I explain. “It was nice, though. Even if it was just pretend, it felt nice to have him spend time with me for once.”

“That’s a shitty way to raise kids, baby. When I have a family, I won’t take them for granted. My kids are gonna be my world,” Danny says and I feel a deep sorrow in my heart. All I ever wanted was to be in my father’s world.

“Me, too. My kids are going to know that they’re loved.”

He squeezes my leg and says, “I know they will, baby. You’re gonna be a great mother one day.”

“How do you know?” I ask him.

“Same way that I know that I’m gonna be a great father. We learned from other people’s mistakes so we won’t make them.”

We pull into the alley behind the restaurant and park in the employee parking lot. Danny opens my door for me and leads me inside through the kitchen door.

“Hey, the boss is here!” a man in a white apron shouts.

“Having a good night, Tommy?” Danny shouts back.

“Busy as always,” the man smiles.

“That’s because you’re the best chef in town, Tommy,” Danny tells him and I smile. My father never treats his employees with that kind of respect.

“Who is this beautiful lady, boss?” Tommy wipes his hands on a kitchen towel and steps toward us. He takes my hand and kisses it gently.

“This is my girl, Tommy. Her name is Deirdre,” Danny tells him and I can see the wheels turning. His smile fades for a moment then he pulls himself back together.

“It’s my pleasure to meet you, Deirdre. I hope you enjoy your evening,” he says and scurries back behind the pass.

“I guess I should expect that from everyone that I meet when I’m with you.”

“They’ll adjust.”

“How do you know that?” I question him.

“Because I’ll make them adjust,” he squeezes my hand and leads me to the dining room. “They keep a table in the back for me at all times.” He takes me to the table and pulls out my chair.

“This is very nice,” I admire the beautiful dining room with its crystal candelabras and vaulted ceilings.

“Just wait til you taste the food. I wasn’t kidding when I said Tommy’s the best chef in town.”

A waitress approaches with a big smile and asks, “The usual from the bar, Danny?”

“Yes, and two glasses,” Danny replies.

“Alright, then,” she looks me up and down then walks to the bar. Once there, she whispers something to the bartender who leans over and looks my way.

I squirm in my chair, feeling a heat rise inside my body.

“What’s wrong?” Danny asks.

“It’s nothing. I guess I’m just causing a little scene,” I tell him.

“What? Her? Don’t let her get to you. She grew up in the old neighborhood and has had a thing for me since the seventh grade. Her attitude has nothing to do with who you are. You could be anybody and she’d act the same way,” he explains.

“Did you ever date her?” I ask.

“Why? Are you the jealous type?” he chuckles.

“No, sorry, I was just...”

“It’s alright, little girl. I’m just teasing, and no, I have never dated her. She was never my type.”

“What’s your type?”

“You,” he leans in and kisses my cheek.

The waitress, who was returning with a bottle of wine and two glasses, visibly scowls when he kisses me. I catch her eye and smile until she nods and looks away. It feels good but out of character. Yesterday, I would have tried to hide under the table. Being with Danny just awakens a confidence in me that I didn’t know was there.

Danny pours the wine into the glasses and holds one out to me, I hesitate and then whisper, “I just turned twenty.”

“Oh, no. We shouldn’t break the law,” he quips and hands me the glass. “A toast to the beautiful Deirdre Vito. I’m honored to have you by my side.”

I blush a little and look down at the table.

“No, baby, no. You have no reason to be bashful,” he taps his glass against mine and we drink.

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

DANNY

Dinner with Deirdre was a hit. The food, the wine, the conversation, and feasting my eyes on my beautiful date were enough for me to call it a perfect evening, but I have one other thing in mind before we leave the city. I take Deirdre by the arm and we set out down the sidewalk.

“Where are we going?” she asks, looking back at the alley that leads to the car.

“There,” I point to the planetarium.

“Really? Thank you,” she chirps and walks a bit faster.

“Slow down, baby. The sky isn’t going anywhere,” I tell her but the truth is that I love seeing her excited like this. I want to give her everything that has been missing from her life.

We climb the steps to the planetarium and I pay the admission fee. The man at the window tells us that the 3D show is about to start so we rush to the amphitheater and sit down in the top row. Deirdre puts her head on my shoulder and watches as the lifelike display of our universe unfolds all around us.

I can’t keep my eyes off her. Her expression is so innocent and full of wonder that she doesn’t even seem real. When you spend thirty-five years in an ugly world, you start to forget that beauty exists. She’s like a rare, endangered thing that needs to be protected and preserved, and it’s my job to keep her safe.

The show ends and we browse the displays for an hour. There’s a gift shop near the exit, and I take her inside and wait

to see what catches her eye. She stops at the jewelry counter and looks at the stars and planets that hang on silver chains.

“Which one do you want?” I ask her.

“Oh, no. It’s okay. You don’t need to get me anything. Dinner and this was more than enough,” she argues.

“Which one?” I ask again.

She smiles and points to a little globe with a replica of the Milky Way inside, so I call the clerk over and she removes it from the case. I place the chain around Deirdre’s neck, and she wraps her arms around my neck.

“Thank you,” she says and kisses me on the lips.

I pay the clerk and we begin our walk back to the car. I haven’t forgotten the way we left things in her house, and I’m still aching with desire.

“Deirdre, I can take you home and this evening will end, or you can come home with me. What do you want to do?” I ask her.

“I don’t want this night to end. I want to go home with you,” she looks deeply into my eyes and I pull her into a tight embrace. My manhood rises as my tongue explores the inside of her mouth. I don’t just want this girl. I need her and I can’t wait any longer to be inside her.

“Let’s go, baby,” I walk her to the car and waste no time pulling out onto the road. This might just feel like the longest ride of my life.



DEIRDRE LOOKS SO unsure of herself as she stands at the entry to my home. I lock the door and walk up behind her, placing my arms around her waist. She places her hands on mine and lets out a deep breath.

“I don’t want to waste another second, baby. I want to make love to you,” I tell her.

“I’ve never been with anyone before,” she whispers and I spin her around to face me.

“I know and I promise, I’ll take care of you,” I console her, “but, you have to understand one thing. There’s no going back from this. I claimed you with your father, but you still have free will. If you have any doubts, speak them now because once I’m inside you, you become mine forever.”

Tears well and fall from her eyes, and I quickly wipe them away. She bites her lower lip and whispers, “I want to be yours forever.”

I take her in my arms and carry her up the stairs to my bedroom. I set her down in the center of the room and begin to remove her clothes. When she’s down to her bra and panties, I spin her around and observe every inch of her. How is it possible that any girl could be this perfect? I undo the clasp on her bra and slide the straps down her arms then drop her panties to the floor. I lean forward, pressing my hard cock against her ass, and kiss the back of her neck.

“You’re so sexy, baby,” I spin her around again and force my tongue inside her mouth. I kiss her hard as I fondle her beautiful tits. She drives me crazy and my instincts tell me to ravage her, but it’s her first time so I need to maintain some control.

I undress as she watches and see her eyes grow wide as she examines the length and girth of my dick. I take her hand and place it around my shaft. She strokes it timidly, so I take her hand in mine and give it a firm tug as I lick and suck her stiff nipples. She moans when I nibble them and my cock jerks in her hand. I need to move things along before I lose control.

I lay her down on the bed and position myself above her. She parts her legs, inviting me to kneel between them, and I slide my fingers inside her tiny snatch. She moans and arches her back as my thumb makes contact with her clit. My finger makes circles around her tiny hole, and her body stiffens as I slip it inside.

“Relax, little girl,” I command her.

She takes a deep breath and settles back down, so I add a second finger and probe her insides with deep, long strokes. Her body starts to sway back and forth as she finds her rhythm and gives in to the sweet sensation. My stiff rod twitches with anticipation, and I remove my fingers and mount her.

The rush that comes from knowing that the wait is over is better than any drug on the street. My thick head presses against her, stretching her little opening, and she lets out a whimper that causes me to force my way inside. I start out with gentle strokes, giving her no more than half my length, and she digs her fingers into my back.

“Does it feel good, baby?”

“Yes, you feel good,” she says in a breathy whisper.

I press down on her thighs and give her another two inches. She moans deeply and I increase the speed of my thrusts. Her tight pussy sucks my cock with perfection.

“I want you to take it all, baby. I want to fuck you hard,” I groan.

“Do it, daddy. Fuck me harder,” she cries.

That’s all I need to hear and I toss her legs over my shoulders and slam her with all I’ve got. I look down at her bouncing tits and baby face and wonder how I’ve gone this long without shooting a load inside her. I want her to come with me so I grab her mound and slip my finger inside.

She goes wild when I stroke her clit, and I know she won’t last long. I feel like I could spend the rest of my life inside her, but when she clamps down on me and her muscles spasm, I lose it. Her orgasm sends me into a spiral and I come with a force that teeters the line between pain and ecstasy. I stay inside her until my dick goes limp then drop her legs back onto the bed. She reaches up and traces the lines of the scars on my chest, and I catch her hand and bring it to my lips.

I lie down beside her, and she curls up against me with her head on my arm. This is where she’s supposed to be. She belongs by my side *forever*.

EXPLORATION

DEIRDRE

Daylight filters through the blinds on Danny's bedroom window, and it takes me a second to realize where I am. I sit up and look around, but he's not in the room with me.

Oh God, I slept naked, too. I'm suddenly mortified. Did I sprawl out across the bed as I do at home? I get out of bed and find that he's folded my clothes and placed them in a neat pile on the corner of his dresser, so I grab my bra and panties and slip into the bathroom to see how bad of a trainwreck my hair and makeup have become. The mirror confirms what I was expecting. I'm a complete mess. I wash my face then take his hairbrush off the vanity and try to tame my hair.

"Deirdre?" Danny knocks on the door. "I put a clean tee shirt on the bed if you want to throw it on. There's coffee downstairs when you're ready."

"Okay, thank you," I shout back.

I wonder what happens now. I've never had a boyfriend, and I don't know if things change after people sleep together. It's stupid, I know, but the more I consider it, the more nervous I get. I put on the tee shirt that Danny left me, and it covers my knees. I look in the mirror and laugh. I look like a five-year-old playing dress-up with my father's clothes. I consider taking it off, but I don't want to appear ungrateful. Besides, it feels and smells like him, so I keep it on and go downstairs.

Danny kisses my forehead when I enter the kitchen and asks, "Did you sleep well, love?"

“I guess so. I forgot where I was,” I reply.

He’s wearing nothing but a pair of silk boxers. His broad muscular chest and huge arms have me tripping over my own feet as I scamper to the breakfast bar and sit down.

“How do you take your coffee?” he asks.

“Lots of cream and sugar and very little coffee,” I grin.

“Would you like some breakfast? I can make you eggs or oatmeal.”

“No, thanks. I can eat when I get home.”

He places a mug on the breakfast bar in front of me and frowns, “Are you in a hurry or something, little girl?”

“No, I just thought you’d be working and I’d be going home,” I panic.

“Hmm, you go home when I say so.”

I squirm a little and ask, “What are you going to do? Tie me up or something?”

His expression changes and he flashes a wicked grin, “You know what? I think I will.”

I should be frightened or offended, but there’s something about his expression that tells me this is just a game. He stands in front of me and motions for me to stand. I do and he grabs the back of his shirt that I’m wearing and pulls it tight against my skin.

“Go upstairs,” he commands, still holding onto the back of my shirt.

I march up the stairs, stomping my feet for emphasis. If he wants to play a game, the least I can do is play my part. We enter the bedroom and he goes into the closet. When he returns, he’s holding a leather belt. He snaps the leather and it cracks, making me gasp.

“Undress,” he demands and I wonder exactly what might happen if I defy him.

“No,” I say, shaking my head.

He moves like a lion, grabs me by the arms, and spins me around. Crack! His hand comes down on my behind, and I shriek from the shock of it.

“Undress or I’ll take you over my knee.”

This is a defining moment for me, and I take my time contemplating my next move. The clap of his hand on my ass sent a sensation straight to my crotch, and I want to feel it again so I shake my head.

“Oh, you naughty little girl,” he says. He picks me up and carries me to the bed where he sits on the edge and lays me across his lap. With one strong hand, he tugs at my panties, and I hear the fabric rip. He palms my bare ass and rubs each cheek then, without warning, slaps me. This time harder than the first.

“More? Or are you going to do as you’re told?”

“Make me.”

“Oh, I’m beginning to think you like this, naughty girl.”

He paddles my behind until the skin is red. Each slap sends a rush of pleasure to my loins and causes his cock to swell against my belly.

“Get up,” he instructs me and I stand on my wobbly legs. He lifts the shirt over my head and tosses it across the room. He grabs the front of my bra and pulls until the closure snaps open and he yanks it off. He caresses my breasts gently and then slaps them hard.

“Shit!” I gasp.

He lifts my arms over my head and wraps a hand around my wrists, keeping them in place, while he wraps the belt around them and pulls it tight.

“Now, on the bed on your knees.”

I comply and get into position. He removes his boxers and strokes his huge penis as I watch.

“This is all yours, baby,” he tells me. He climbs onto the bed behind me and bends me forward, mounting me from behind.

THE THIRD PARTY

DANNY

Deirdre and I drive to her places so that she can change into fresh clothes and then set out for the city for an early dinner. I wait for her in the living room, doing my best to ignore the accusatory stares that the maid sends my way. When Deirdre returns from her room, I am once again awestruck by her absolute perfection.

“You look amazing,” I exclaim and she spins around so that I can see the back of her petite floral sundress.

“Thank you,” she beams. “Should we go?”

“Yeah, let’s go. Your maid doesn’t like me,” I reply while glaring at the old woman who huffs at me and walks away.

“That’s okay. She doesn’t like anyone,” Deirdre giggles.

I have some business to take care of so I call Jimmy from the car and tell him where to meet us. Deirdre looks uncomfortable with the idea, so I take her hand and tell her, “There will be times when business interferes with our plans, but I’ll try to keep it brief. I want you all to myself.”

She smiles and says, “I just don’t want to be in the way.”

“You? I’d move mountains just to clear a path for you.”

We arrive at the restaurant, and I see Jimmy waiting by the door. Believing that he cleared the area ahead of time, I step around the car and help Deirdre onto the sidewalk. We take three steps toward Jimmy, and my ears are assaulted by a procession of cracks and bangs.

It takes a second for me to realize that someone is shooting at us. I cover Deirdre and push her inside the restaurant then take cover behind the car and pull out my sidearm. It's one thing to take a shot at me but nobody endangers Deirdre.

My heart sends a course of fiery blood through my veins, and I see red as the look of fear and confusion on Deirdre's face burns a hole in my brain. These guys are a threat to her safety and need to be neutralized.

Jimmy joins me and we peer through the car windows to try to get a bead on the shooters. The police are probably already en route, but I don't want these guys to go to jail. I want them in the graveyard, and there's a limited window for me to make that happen.

A man bobs out from the entry of a building on the other side of the street, and I fire at him. The bullet connects with the brick structure and a tiny sandstorm erupts. He leaps out again, and this time, my bullet connects with his thigh. His legs buckle, and he falls on the sidewalk behind a parked car.

There are two other shooters, and Jimmy and I continue to fire in their direction until the sirens are too close for comfort. Then, we holster our weapons and take shelter inside the restaurant. It's only when we collect Deirdre and go to the office in the back of the building that I realize Jimmy has been hit. His blood-soaked left shirt sleeve drips red liquid onto the floor.

"Where are you hit?" I ask, pulling off his jacket.

"Shoulder, I think," Jimmy winces.

"We need to take him to the hospital," Deirdre shrieks, and Jimmy and I look at each other and grin.

"No hospitals. Once the cops leave, we'll take him somewhere to get fixed up," I tell her.

I go out to the kitchen and grab a handful of towels. Jimmy removes his shirt, and I inspect his wound.

"It's clean, Jimmy. Bullet went through," I say as I fold one of the towels and place it over the hole in his shoulder. "Put pressure on it."

Deirdre is clearly shaken and has tears in her eyes. “It’s okay, baby,” I tell her as I pull her into my arms.

“They could have killed you,” she whimpers.

“Not today. Today, they did something worse. They fired on you. Hell isn’t gonna be big enough for the number of them that I’m gonna send there for this. Your father and I were preparing for this war and now it begins.”

Tommy taps on the door and then enters carrying a tray of assorted sandwiches and bowls of soup. He sets it down on the desk and asks, “Jimmy okay?”

“He will be. Thanks for the food, Tommy,” I reply.

“Figured you’d be stuck back here for a while, Boss. If you need anything else, let me know.” He turns to Deirdre and adds, “Pleasure to see you again, young lady.”

“This isn’t the lunch that I had planned for you but Tommy’s right. The police can’t see me dragging my wounded associate to the car, so we will be here for a while. I’m sorry, baby. Have a seat and eat. I promise I won’t ever let anything happen to you.”

Jimmy’s bleeding has slowed, and he puts the towel down and reaches for a sandwich. I slap it out of his hand and say, “It was your job to make sure this place was clear. How did you let this happen?”

“I checked the restaurant and watched for suspicious vehicles. There was no way for them to know you were coming here today, so they’ve gotta be keeping eyes on the joint. They must have already been in position when I got here. That’s how I missed them, Boss. I’m sorry.”

“You’re my friend, Jimmy, but if anything would have happened to her...” I look at Deirdre and her wide-eyed stare caused me to stop mid-sentence. It doesn’t matter because Jimmy knows what was coming.

The dust finally settles outside, and the police leave empty-handed. Our assailants aren’t stupid. They never plan a hit without making sure that they also have a foolproof escape plan. Once I’m certain that it’s all clear, I help Jimmy to the

back seat of the car and then return to the restaurant for Deirdre. We drive Jimmy to the home of a doctor friend of ours, and I help him to the door while Deirdre waits in the car.

“What is it?” the doctor asks.

“Through and through gunshot to the shoulder. I have to leave him here with you. I’ll call someone to come and pick him up,” I explain.

“Go ahead. I’ll take it from here,” he answers.

“Thanks, doc. Take care of yourself, Jimmy,” I say and return to the car.

Now that we’re alone, I turn to Deirdre, “Are you okay?”

“Yes, I was just scared for you. That’s all. I’m glad Jimmy’s okay.”

“You don’t ever have to worry about me, Princess. I know how to take care of myself. Do you want me to take you home?”

She shakes her head and says, “No, I don’t want to be alone. Can I stay with you tonight?”

“Of course, little girl. That’s why I’m here. It’s my job to protect you.”

I don’t tell her but I’m happy she wants to stay with me. The rush of adrenaline that comes from a fight always gets my juices flowing. All I can think about now is getting her home and fucking her.

RECIPROCATATION

DEIRDRE

My body is still shaking when we arrive at Danny's place. Raised by a father who is the head of a crime family, I spent my entire childhood fearing that someone would open fire on us in public, but it never happened until today. Then, I feared that I would be hit by a bullet that was intended for my father. Today, I didn't care about my safety. I was terrified that someone would take Danny away from me. I guess that's called love.

We enter the house, and Danny grabs me and pushes me against the wall. He pins my arms over my head and nibbles my neck while squeezing my breasts through my shirt.

"I need you," he whispers and my body shivers from excitement.

He lifts my shirt and licks my breasts as he yanks my pants down my legs. He's wild and animalistic, and it's really turning me on. He pushes my legs apart and shoves his hand between my legs. Fireworks ignite inside my head, and I purr and pant as he fucks me with his hand.

He takes my hands and places them on his crotch. "Take out my cock," he commands me. I unzip his pants and take his throbbing member in my hand. I try my best to stroke it the way that he taught me, and I must be doing it right because he clenches his fist and rests it against the wall beside my head and groans while still fingering my pussy with the other hand.

"I want you to taste it," he says and uses his hands on my shoulders to gently guide me to my knees. I want to please him

in any way that he wants me to, but I've never done this before and have no idea what I'm doing. He holds my head still and rubs his head across my lips.

"Stick out your tongue, little girl."

I hold out my tongue, and he slaps his shaft against it several times then slips it into my mouth. I wrap my lips around it, and he slides it in until a gag, then pulls back. I suppose that I was worried about nothing. He does all the work. I close my eyes and listen to the sound of his breathing.

He's loving this, and pleasing him is making me hot. I slide my hand down and finger my own needy clit. His cock twitches and I taste the first droplets of his salty pre-come on my tongue. I'd like for him to finish this way, but I'm so hungry to feel him inside me that it's causing me physical pain.

I don't know if he senses my tension, but he pulls out of my mouth and lifts me to my feet. "I need to feel your tight little pussy," he says and lifts me off the floor. I straddle his hips with my legs and take his full length inside me. He lifts me on and off his rod, and I hold on for dear life, feeling an unbridled passion from him that wasn't there in our previous encounters. His need for me seeps into my very soul, and I feel my climax build in the pit of my stomach. I've never wanted anything as much as I want this man to desire me.

"You're my little girl and I love fucking you," he moans.

"Yes, daddy, I love it, too."

"I'm gonna come hard. Can you take it?"

"Yes."

"Come with me, baby."

"I'm ready."

He holds me against the wall, his body pounding against mine with each long, hard thrust. I squeeze his massive shoulders and let go of everything that binds me to this reality. Danny is my new reality. He's everything I want and need in this world.

A rush of orgasmic heat consumes me, and I buck and thrash in his arms, pushing him to the edge and making him find his own release inside me. I feel the sensation of a thousand fingers dancing on my skin, and I lay my head on his shoulder, spent and exhausted.

“You’re staying here tonight. How about we take a nice, hot bath?”

“I’d love that,” I sigh. The truth is that he could carry me to bed right now and I’d probably sleep the rest of the day and night. The mixture of panic, terror, and lust has left me emotionally and mentally exhausted.

He climbs into the large soaker tub and then helps me in. He lays back and I lean against his broad chest. He strokes my arms and I close my eyes. He was right, the warm water is washing away all of my stress. I feel the rhythm of his heartbeat against my skin and begin to wonder what the future will hold for us.

Will he eventually grow bored with me and move on to someone more worldly and exciting? Is there even a chance that this can last forever?

“What are you thinking about, little girl?” his words shock me back to the present.

“Nothing, really. Just how good it feels to be here in your arms.”

“Good, because I plan to keep you here.”

I consider asking him to define that for me. Growing up unsure about your place in other people’s lives breeds a certain level of insecurity, and it would crush me to find out that I was just a passing obsession for him. As much as I’d like to demand a clear-cut outline of his plans for me, I push the desire back. For reasons that I don’t understand, my instincts tell me to trust him even though I’ve never truly trusted anyone before.

I close my eyes again and drift off into a peaceful slumber that ends when his phone rings.

“Baby, the water’s getting cold,” he stirs me.

He gets out of the tub and wraps a towel around his waist. Then, he holds a larger, fluffy towel out to me. I step out onto the bathmat and he wraps me in the towel.

“Go get in bed. I need to check my phone. It’s probably an update on Jimmy,” he kisses my wet shoulder and leaves me.

I climb into his king-size bed and pull the covers over me. He returns soon after and sits on the edge of the bed.

“Is Jimmy okay?” I ask him.

“It wasn’t about Jimmy. It was your father. He heard about what happened today and ended his honeymoon early. He wants to see me at your house in the morning.”

His words send my mind racing and an old, familiar anxiety washes over me. How will my father react when Danny and I walk through the door together in the morning? He must know that we’re being intimate. Will he feign caring so he can use me as a continued bargaining chip with Danny? Will he pretend to be the concerned father? How will Danny respond if my father insults or ridicules me? For the first time, I begin to think that I might be a liability in Danny’s alliance with my father.

“Should I stay here, then?” I ask him.

“Why would you do that? You live there and you don’t have any clothes here,” he questions.

“I just don’t want to be in the way,” I explain.

“In the way? What does that mean?”

“My father doesn’t care about me, but if he thinks that he can use me to gain some sort of advantage with you, he will.”

“I told you, you’re mine. That deal is done, and he needs to honor it. It’s the code. You have nothing to worry about,” he asserts.

I nod my head but I’m not at all convinced that things will go smoothly. My father is a lifelong opportunist, and he’s not above using anything or anyone to get his way.

WE PULL INTO MY DRIVEWAY, and I try to shake off the rush of nervous energy that hits me. This situation isn't initiating my response. It's merely enhancing the feeling that I had every day when I came home from school and my father's car was in the driveway.

There are guards posted at the front door who pat us both down before allowing us to enter. The larger of the two men point to Danny's sidearm and says, "You need to leave that with us."

Danny looks the man up and down. He's one of the biggest guys on my father's crew, and he's still half Danny's size. Danny smirks and hands him the pistol.

We enter the house escorted by the smaller of the men. I hesitate in the entry and tell Danny, "I'm going to go up to my room."

"You sure you don't want to see your father first?" he asks.

"Very sure," I nod.

"Okay, I'll come and see you when we're through," he kisses my forehead and I make a break for the stairs. I have to calm my racing heart and wobbly legs before I hyperventilate.

DIABOLO AND THE BULL

DANNY

Bobby Vito is seated on his patio reading the paper and looks up at me when the guard escorts me out. He folds the paper and sets it on the patio table.

“Newspapers are supposed to be a thing of the past. I’m supposed to read my news on that tiny phone screen now. It’s not the same,” he tells me. He points down at an article titled, “Shots fired in midtown.”

“Things change,” I reply.

“Easy for you. You’re still young. If you get lucky and live to be my age, you’ll understand. That brings me to the point of this meeting. Are you gonna live to be my age? After what happened yesterday, I wouldn’t bet on it,” he lights a cigar and coughs as he inhales the thick smoke.

“I’m still here without a scratch,” I say, holding my arms up in demonstration.

“But one of your best guys got hit and the shooters got away. Take it from me, nobody wants to work in an unstable crew and crews that get shot up without retaliation are unstable.”

“I appreciate the words of wisdom, but I’ll get retaliation. Isn’t that why we’re merging our interests? To put this third party out of business?”

“My daughter didn’t come home last night. I can only assume that she spent the night with you. I wonder if maybe you’re distracted by her, and I don’t want you on my team if you’re gonna be dead weight for me to carry.”

“Dead weight? Do you think I’m dead weight? My crew brings in a bigger take than yours every week. If it wasn’t for your ‘history’ here, we might have taken over the whole enterprise,” I snap back.

“But you couldn’t because I have connections that reach farther than your imagination,” he boasts.

“If that’s true, why did you strike a deal with me in the first place? Why not use your connections to wipe out both my crew and the other?”

“You’re smart,” he snorts when he laughs and I wonder if that’s why they call him Bobby the Bull. “I wouldn’t expect a boy who was raised to be a soldier to be that smart.”

“True, I wasn’t raised to be a leader. Everything I have, I earned. I fought for it and if anyone stood in my way, I removed them. I’ll remove this obstacle, too, with or without you. It would be easier with you and if you backed out of our deal, well, you and I would be enemies again. I don’t think either of us wants to see that happen, do we?”

“You are enterprising but you’re not immortal. You should’ve had that whole street covered and cleared before you showed up at that restaurant. You were sloppy and spontaneous and your right-hand man paid the price for it,” he takes a long breath and continues, “That girl that you’re so fond of? She wasn’t meant to be here. She was a mistake that I made with a woman that I could never marry. Her mother was beautiful, just like her. I lost my mind every time I picked up the scent of her. When she told me that I got her pregnant, I fired her. I gave her money to do whatever she needed to do to handle our mistake. She decided to keep her and then got herself killed in a car crash. I thought about sending the girl to the nuns for adoption, but by then, everybody knew she was mine and I have a reputation as an honorable man so I did what was right. I took her in and raised her. She’s had everything that she could have wanted...”

“She wanted you to love her and keep her safe,” I growl.

“I have kept her safe. The first time bullets flew over her head was with you, not me,” he grins.

I grit my teeth and dig holes in my palms with my fingernails, “You let your boys grope her, threaten her, and attempt to assault her. You never once tried to stop it. To me, it looks like you condoned it. From the minute I met her, I’ve done more to protect her than you’ve done her whole life and you’re her father. Yeah, mistakes were made yesterday, sure, but they were made by the guy who took the bullet, not by me. Keeping your daughter safe was my first priority, and I did that.”

“And that’s my point. If something happens to you, your crew goes rogue. Some of them might come to work for me, but maybe the other guy makes them a better offer and they all go to his side. Now, I got a bigger crew that I’m up against all because you got yourself killed protecting her. She’s a liability to you and that makes her a liability to me,” he proclaims.

“I claimed her and you agreed,” I stare down at him.

“That’s right. So, if you want her that badly, marry her and lock her in the house. Sit a couple of guards by the front door and get your head back in the game. The devil doesn’t stay the devil by being sentimental.”

“And one day, even the strongest bull gets put out to pasture.”

“Be careful, Diavolo. Now’s not the time to make more enemies,” he warns me. “That girl connects us now. If I wanted to make a move that hit both our crews, I’d take a shot at her. For all we know, she might have been the real target yesterday. If you want to keep her safe, we have to take down our mutual enemy together.”

As much as I’d like to rip him out of that chair and drown him in his own pool, he’s right. It’s very likely that Deirdre was the target of a hit yesterday. A hit like that would earn them instant fame. It doesn’t matter that Bobby has no love for his daughter. She’s still his flesh and blood, and I made sure everyone knows that she’s mine. Killing her is the only way that they could hit both of our crews with one shot.

“She can’t stay here in my house anymore. I won’t have a gang war on my front lawn. I’ve worked hard to keep the police off my tail. I can’t risk that kind of attention.”

“I’m gonna put her somewhere safe and keep her guarded. Once that’s done, you and I have to make a plan. This guy goes down and he goes down fast,” I tell him.

He nods and we seal the deal with a handshake.

“I’m gonna tell her to pack a bag and get her moved out of here. Her location will remain secret until the threat is neutralized. I doubt you have a problem with not knowing her location. Am I wrong?”

“No, I don’t need to know where you put her,” he unfolds the paper and begins flipping through the pages.

I try to compose myself as I march up the stairs to find Deirdre. I don’t know which room is hers so I put my ear to each door until I find the one with the sound of movement inside. I tap lightly, hoping Bobby’s new wife doesn’t come to the door.

Deirdre opens the door just a crack and peers out. When she sees me, she throws open the door and smiles. She looks relieved that my meeting with her father didn’t end in violence.

“Is everything okay?” she asks me.

I kiss her and say, “Yes, but I need you to do something for me.”

“Anything. What do you need?”

“I need you to pack a bag or two. Take everything that you think you might need for at least a week because you can’t come back here,” I tell her.

“Do I need to pack any particular types of clothes?” she asks, confused about my intentions.

“Whatever you’re comfortable in. This isn’t a vacation. I’m gonna move you somewhere safe until my mutual business with your father is concluded,” I explain.

“And he’s okay with that? Why would I be in danger?” she questions me.

“It’s just a precaution. No need for you to worry. I told you that it’s my job to protect you, and after yesterday, I’m not going to take any chances. Now pack, please.”

She’s not convinced but she pulls a large suitcase and an overnight bag out of her closet and begins packing. I sit down on her tiny princess bed and text Jimmy.

“I’m taking something precious to that place outside of town. I need two for a twenty-four-hour door watch.”

My phone buzzes and I read the reply, “On it.”

Deirdre packs her clothes, toiletries, some books, and a laptop. She picks up a framed photo and looks at it for a moment before placing it on the top of the suitcase. It’s a photo of a beautiful dark-haired girl holding a tiny, red-faced baby.

“You and your mother?” I ask her.

“Yes. It’s all I have,” she replies, closing the suitcase.

I carry her bags downstairs and head for the door, but she stops and looks through the living room to the patio where her father is still seated.

“Did you want to say goodbye?”

“No,” her voice cracks as she fights to hold back her tears.

I take her hand and bring it up to my lips, kissing it softly. “It’s okay, baby. Let’s go.”

MY SAFE HOUSE

DEIRDRE

Danny drives me north of the suburbs and away from the city. The view from my window grows more scenic as the distance between houses expands.

“Can you tell me where we’re going?” I ask.

“There’s a motel out here. When I was young and coming up in the world, Jimmy and I got into some hot water and needed to go on the lamb for a while. We had no idea where we were headed, but we found this place and decided that it was as good a place as any. It’s clean and way out in the sticks. You’ll be bored, but you’ll be safe.”

“And you? Are you staying with me?”

He looks at me then tacks a sudden right turn onto a narrow dirt road. He drives up the winding road, kicking dust on the body of his black Mercedes, then pulls off in a thicket of lush, green pines. He kills the engine and turns in his seat to face me.

“Once I get you settled, I have to leave. If I don’t take care of this situation, you’ll never be safe and I want you back with me as quickly as possible. That means that I won’t be coming to see you for a while, either. I can’t run the risk of someone following me to your location. You’ll be guarded by some of my best guys, and they’ll be responsible for bringing you food, drinks, and anything else you need,” he tells me and my heart sinks in my chest.

“I don’t want you to leave me,” I cry.

“I don’t want to leave you but it’s what has to happen if I’m gonna protect you,” he pulls me toward him and kisses me passionately.

I know that he’s doing what he thinks is best for me, but that doesn’t prevent me from feeling abandoned. I put my head on his shoulder and sob while he strokes my hair.

“We need to get there before dark so I can have a look around. I know you’re upset but we need to get back on the road,” he says and I release my hold on his neck. “I need you to be strong, little girl. This will all be over soon, I promise.”

“How much farther is it?” I ask him, hoping that we’ll have more time together.

“Only a couple miles.”

THE MOTEL SITS atop a large hill overlooking the main road. There are only a few cars in the parking lot and one flashes its lights at us when we pull in. Danny circles the building and then parks next to the office.

“Stay in the car until I come back,” he exits and walks into the office.

Two men emerge from the car that flashed its lights at us and position themselves outside the office door. I sink down in my seat to avoid their uncomfortable stares. Danny returns a few minutes later holding a room key. “Pizza okay for your dinner tonight?” he asks.

“Yeah, that’s fine,” I nod.

“Tomorrow you can give these guys a list and one of them will go to the store for you,” he says as he pulls the car around to the back of the building.

The two men pull into the spot beside us. Danny opens the window and says, “One of you go into town and pick up a pizza and a six-pack of bottled water.”

The taller man nods, and once his partner is out of the car, he drives away. Danny leads me up two flights of stairs to the top floor while the other man carries my bags. Looks like room 310 is going to be my new home for a while.

“Deirdre, this is Mikey. Dave is the guy who went to get your pizza. They’ll be spending the night in the car outside. You might hear them outside your door from time to time when they make their rounds. They’re gonna come see you in the morning so you can give them a list of supplies to pick up for you. When they do, let them know what you want for lunch and dinner, and they’ll pick that up when it’s time.”

Mikey sets my bags on the bed and walks out closing the door behind him.

“They’re good guys and I trust them. They’ll watch out for you,” Danny wraps his arms around me and holds me tight.

“So, I’m not allowed to leave this room?” I ask him.

“No, you may not leave the room for any reason. If you need ice or something from the vending machine, flash the room lights and one of them will come to you,” he explains.

“Please don’t make me do this for too long,” I whimper.

“I’ll call you every night and I’ll be back for you as soon as I can,” he lies down on the bed and beckons for me to join him. I lay my head on his chest and breathe in his scent, wishing I could store it up and save it for later. He rubs my back and neck until Dave returns with my dinner.

“You should be all set, baby. Eat your dinner, take a hot bath, and get some rest. It’s been a crazy couple of days. Some time to de-stress might do you some good,” he kisses me and I don’t want him to ever stop. “I’ll call you tomorrow,” he tells me and opens the door.

“Don’t forget me,” I call out.

He turns, smiles, and says, “Impossible.”

ON DAY three of my motel confinement, I find myself pacing the floor. I've watched every movie on my streaming service watch list and read as much of the sappy romance that I packed as I can stand. Those books were my favorite before I found a romance of my own. Now, all I want is to continue my own story. It's six o'clock on the dot and Mikey knocks on the door. I open it and he hands me the chef's salad and iced tea that I ordered for dinner. I have to cut calories since I'm not getting any exercise.

"Thank you," I smile.

He grunts an unintelligible response and trudges away.

"Great conversationalist," I mutter and close the door.

I set my dinner down on the bed and check my phone for the hundredth time to see if there are any messages from Danny. Still nothing, so I toss it on the pillow and sit down to eat. Someone pounds on the door before I can take the first bite. Mikey and Dave couldn't possibly want anything. They only come to the door when it's time to make a delivery.

"Danny?" I leap off the bed, almost spilling my salad, and rush to the door.

I open it without thinking and stare blankly at the figure on the other side.

"Why are you here?" I ask but he just pushes his way into the room.

"Is Danny with you?" I try to look around him but he puts his hands on my shoulders and pushes me to the floor.

My heart races as I imagine leaping to my feet and running out the open door, but he knocks the wind out of me, and it takes too long for me to get back on my feet. He's closed and locked the door and is holding his gun on me.

"Why are you doing this?" I pant, still trying to catch my breath.

"You're either gonna be a valuable bargaining chip or a pretty revenge corpse. I haven't made up my mind yet."

I feel the tears well up in my eyes, and I prepare to use all the breath that I've acquired to scream my lungs out, but he grabs me by my hair and smacks the top of my head with the butt of his pistol. The room begins to spin and my vision grows hazy. He catches me as I start to go down and drags me to my bed. Searing pain fills my head as it bounces off the mattress and the world goes dark.

FRIEND OR FOE

DANNY

It's four-thirty when I remember that Mikey and Dave are overdue for a guard change so I call my associate John to the office.

"I need you and Frank to relieve Mikey and Dave tonight. They've been sleeping in the car for two nights now. They can't be on their A game anymore," I tell him.

"Are you sure, boss? I know you said that you wanted us to go out there, but Jimmy told us that you didn't need us anymore. He said you made some other arrangement."

"Why would he tell you that? Are you sure you didn't misunderstand him?" I ask, sure that Jimmy and I hadn't had a conversation that he could have misunderstood.

"No misunderstanding, Boss. He was pretty clear."

"Don't go too far. I might need you," I tell him and he steps out of the room.

I grab my phone and call Mikey.

"Yeah, Boss? What's up?" he answers.

"Have you heard anything from Jimmy?"

"Yeah, he called twenty minutes ago. He said he was coming out to pick up your girl. He said you handled the...uh... situation and everything was clear," he replies.

"He's lying, Mikey. He must be playing for the other side. Do not let him near that room, you hear me? I'm on my way," I

end the call and grab my car keys. “John! Let’s go. You’re coming with me,” I shout and John follows me out to the car.

“You really think Jimmy flipped to the other side, Boss?” John asks me as I burn out of the parking lot, “Why would he do it? He’s second-in-command.”

It’s a good question but there can only be one answer. The only spot higher than second-in-command is the boss. Jimmy didn’t flip to the other side. Jimmy is the other side. He’s the third party, the new player, and that explains how the new crew gained such a presence so quickly. He took everything that he learned from me and used it against me.

“What time did Jimmy talk to you today?”

“Not too long ago. Maybe ten minutes before you called me to the office. He insisted that I clock out and go home, so I walked out with him but I forgot my jacket so I came back in to get it. That’s when you called me to the office.”

So, he has a ten-minute head start at best. His car isn’t as fast as mine so that’s not the worst news. I step on the accelerator and shift gears. Images of Deirdre flash across my mind like a slide reel. I see her bashful smile, her beautiful naked body, the look in her eyes when I touch her, and then, the images that I don’t want to see. If Jimmy lays a finger on her, there won’t be anything left of him. I will beat him half to death and then burn him alive.

“Boss, be careful. There’s got to be deer and all kinds of things up here. We can’t help her if we die on the way,” John white knuckles the dash.

“You packing?” I ask him and he raises his pant leg showing me the pistol on his ankle. “And you’re gonna be able to put Jimmy down if you have to? You’ve known him a long time.”

“A traitor is a traitor, don’t matter how long I’ve known him. If he turns on the boss, he turns on the operation and that’s my livelihood,” John explains and I believe him.

We roll up to the motel and I kill the headlights. I park in the front lot and tell John, “Her room is in the back. We’re gonna walk so he doesn’t see us coming.”

John goes one way and I go the other. If we don't run into any opposition, we should meet on the other side. I see Mikey's car and crouch down. I need to get close enough to see what's inside, but the car is parked in sight of Deirdre's room, so I get as low as I can and inch my way to the car. I look in the passenger side window, and my face heats up as I stare at Dave and Mikey's lifeless bodies.

I look up at the window of Deirdre's room and see no movement through the curtains. There's no one guarding the door either, so I run across the lot and plant myself against the wall beside the stairs. John creeps up next to me with his pistol in his hand.

"Room 310," I whisper. "He killed Dave and Mikey."

"His car is still here, Boss. I passed it on my way around."

That's good. They're still inside. I start up the stairs with John on my heels. We stop on the second floor and look up at the door to 310 to make sure it's still clear then start our ascent to the top floor. Halfway up, I stop and turn to John.

"You knock on the door. Tell him you wanted to make sure you didn't misunderstand his instructions. Watch yourself. He may not buy it, and if that's the case, he's coming out shooting."

John nods and takes the lead for the rest of the climb.

When we reach the room, John stands in front of the door. I hug the wall between the door and the window. I nod to him and he knocks on the door. We wait but Jimmy doesn't answer. "Talk to him," I whisper.

John takes a deep breath and knocks again, "Jimmy, it's John. I came out to see if you need backup. You in there, man?"

The deadbolt turns and light streams out through the crack in the door. John leans over so his face is in view. "It's me, man. You need some help out here?" The door opens further and John raises both of his hands. "Whoa, man. What's the problem? Don't shoot me," he says.

"Drop your pistol and kick it into the room," I hear Jimmy say. My heartbeat pounds in my ears when I hear his voice.

“Why are you holding the Boss’ girl like that man? What are you doing?” John asks the question to let me know that Jimmy is using Deirdre as a shield.

“Get your fat ass in here and face the back wall,” Jimmy instructs him and I smile. That’s my opening. I prepare to move as I watch John enter the room. I give him a few seconds to get in position then inch my way to the open door. Jimmy has his back to me now. He’s got his arm around Deirdre’s throat pushing her back into the room.

He reaches back to push the door closed, and I slide in, allowing it to close behind me. Jimmy is forcing John to the back wall with his gun pointed at his head. I raise my weapon and aim. At this range, a body shot could go through him and hit Deirdre, and I don’t want to aim for his head. It’s too soon for him to die. I need to have a word with him first.

He cocks his weapon, ready to end John, so I start shooting. I hit him twice in the left leg and three times in the right. He loses his grip on Deirdre and falls to the floor. John rushes him and secures his weapon. Deirdre’s face is red and stained with tears, but she looks unharmed. She crawls onto the bed and holds her knees to her chest as she watches the scene that’s about to unfold before her.

Jimmy lies on the floor, groaning in pain from the torn flesh and splintered bones in his legs. I kick him in the gut to get his attention then crouch down beside him. I want to hear every word that comes out of his traitorous mouth.

“Why, Jimmy? I was good to you.”

“It wasn’t yours. It was supposed to be mine,” he mutters. “I was groomed to run things, not you. You didn’t deserve it.”

“I didn’t deserve it? You ungrateful piece of shit, I earned it,” I growl.

“Let me live and I’ll bring you my crew. We can join together and end Bobby Vito for good,” he heaves.

“That might have been something to consider before but your last decision, Jimmy. That was your last decision. You never should have come after my girl,” I clench my fists.

“I wasn’t gonna hurt her. I was just gonna use her to get you out in the open. I swear.”

“You’ll either be a valuable bargaining chip or a pretty revenge corpse,” Deirdre says and I smack Jimmy across the face.

“I didn’t mean it. I just wanted to scare her. I won’t do that to you, Boss. I swear,” Jimmy begs.

“Deirdre, get your things and go outside,” I tell her.

“You’re not gonna kill him, are you?” she gasps.

“Do as I say, baby.”

She tosses a few items in her suitcase and slings her overnight bag over her shoulder. She rushes past me, opens the door, and steps outside.

“John, you got this?” I ask him.

“With pleasure, Boss. Then I’ll take our old friend Jimmy here for a ride in the country. Take care of your girl, Boss.”

I nod at him and say, “Goodbye, Jimmy.”

“Danny, no. Come back. We can talk this out. We can make a deal. Come back,” Jimmy bawls.

I close the door behind me and take Deirdre in my arms.

“Did he hurt you, baby?” I inspect her from head to toe.

“Just my head. He knocked me out,” she says through her tears.

“We’ll get it checked out. Let’s get out of here,” I put my arm around her and help her down the stairs.

At another time, I would have taken pleasure in finishing Jimmy off myself, but I saw the look in Deirdre’s eyes when she asked me if I was gonna kill him. Part of protecting her is going to include shielding her from the parts of me that she doesn’t need to see. When she looks at me, I don’t want her to see a killer. I want her to have only good memories of me.

TO THE FUTURE

DANNY

Word spreads quickly of Jimmy's downfall, and since he had no second-in-command, his crew folds overnight. Some look for a place with my crew, while others gravitate to Bobby Vito. They can try to stay in this life, but they'll have to do a lot to prove themselves first.

Bobby and I haven't seen each other since the day that I took Deirdre to the motel. Our mutual enemy has been eliminated so there's no reason for us to join forces or share our territories. Still, I'm not foolish enough to think that I can be with Deirdre and never come face-to-face with her father, so when I see his car in the driveway, I don't hesitate to go up and ring the doorbell. The snarky maid answers the door and shouts, "Senior Vito," before moving aside so that I can step across the threshold.

She smirks at me, proving that she knows I'm here for Deirdre and not her father, but Bobby saunters up to the door before I can curse her for her pettiness.

"Danny Dimarco, you must be here for my daughter."

"I am, Bobby. How are things with you?"

"Better now. I never got a chance to thank you for handling that matter so quickly and without any intervention on my part. Now that we've been to the table face-to-face, maybe there won't be so much animosity between our crews. If you stay in your territory, we might just keep this thing civil."

"We didn't move into your territory. As I recall, you moved into ours," I remind him.

“That, my friend, was a difference of opinion, but it’s in the past now. Here’s to the future,” he claps his hands and walks away just as Deirdre comes down the stairs.

“How are you feeling, baby girl?” I ask as she leaps into my arms.

“I’m good, daddy. Just very glad that you’re here,” she bats her eyes at me causing that all-too-regular twitch in my pants.

“Dinner in the city?” I ask her.

“And, maybe the planetarium?” she tilts her head to the side.

“We’ll see, kitten. We’ll see,” I take her by the arm and lead her out to the car.

TOMMY OPENS the kitchen door for us and greets us with his regular charm, “Good evening, Boss and Ms. Deirdre. You look lovely as always.” He leans into her and whispers, “Very happy to see you safe and sound.”

We make our way to my regular table and Deidre smiles, “You told them that we were coming this time. The wine is already chilling at the table.”

“I did let them know this time because this is a special occasion,” I tell her. “Tommy’s already got our dinner order, too.”

“More special than our first night together?” she teases.

“I don’t know if I can top that one, but I’m gonna try,” I secede.

“What’s so special? The suspense is killing me,” she squeezes my arm.

“Sorry, you’ll just have to wait. For now, I’m going to enjoy a bottle of good wine and good food with the most beautiful girl in the world.”

“Then I guess I’ll just enjoy a good meal with the most handsome man in the world,” she grins.

The waitress arrives with Deirdre's salad and pasta, and the appetizers that I preordered. She smiles at Deirdre when she sets down her plate. "Wow, remember the last time she served us? She looked at me with such disgust."

"See, everything is changing. Didn't I tell you that you were going to have a bright future?"

"You did," she agrees.

"I'm sorry that you had to go through so much to get here, but I promise every day from here on will be better than last."

Tommy personally delivers our entrees and places them on the table, "Buon appetito," he says with a big, bright smile on his round face.

"Everyone is in such a good mood tonight. What's going on?" Deirdre begins to get suspicious.

"Finish dinner and then we'll talk about it," I shake my finger at her and she smiles.

She takes a few more bites of her fettuccine then drops her fork and pouts, "I can't eat with all of these butterflies in my stomach. Please tell me what's going on."

"Okay, I suppose if you insist, I won't keep you in suspense any longer. When I saw you at your father's wedding, it made me sad for the bride. I mean, it's supposed to be her day, and yet, when she stood at the altar beside you, she became invisible. There is no match for your beauty, and it just wasn't fair for her to have to compete with you on her big day. I wondered then what would happen when it was your turn and all of the people who were pretending not to look at you at your father's wedding could admire you openly at your own wedding. Strange thought, right?"

"Very odd, actually," she pokes out her lower lip and raises her eyebrows.

"Well, it would only have been odd if I hadn't already made up my mind that I would be the man standing up there beside you."

“Really? We hadn’t even met yet and you were already planning to marry me?”

“Yes, and I’ll prove it,” I drop to my knee and pull the ring box out of my pocket. I open the box and show her the large diamond ring. “Will you marry me, Deirdre?”

She smiles from ear to ear and dances in her seat, “Yes, of course. Yes!”

I slide the ring onto her finger and return to my feet. She leaps from her seat and into my arms.

“I love you with all my heart, baby girl.”

“I love you, daddy. You’re the man of my dreams.”

EPILOGUE

DANNY

“9 11.” I read the text and grab my coat. If it’s anything like last time, I have a very short window to make it to the house on time. Deirdre didn’t panic when she went into labor with Danny Junior. She waited so long to go to the hospital, we almost had him in the bathtub.

As I drive out of the city, I think back to the day that I met her and how she captured my heart at first sight. When Danny Junior was born, he had the same effect on me, but I swear my love for Deirdre grew stronger, too. I was a guy who never knew what love was, and now, I can’t believe that I have an endless supply to give to my family.

Deirdre is waiting at the door with her bag packed when I arrive. She has her hand on her stomach, and she’s breathing heavily, but she’s never looked more radiant or alive.

“D.J. and the nanny are all set for the night?” I ask, kissing her on the forehead.

“Yes, he’s already down for the night. He won’t even know that we’re gone.”

“How much time do we have?” I smirk at her.

“Not much. We better go,” she flashes me that bashful smile that I love so much.

“You’re a bad girl. I told you not to wait so long this time.”

“I hate hospitals and I wanted to spend more time with D.J. Still love me, daddy?”

“I love you more every day, little girl, but I don’t know how to deliver a baby, so let’s get you to the car.”

THERE ARE no complications and the delivery is quick this time, too. I hold Deirdre’s hand and watch as my first daughter, the beautiful Daniela, comes into the world.

“You did it, baby. She’s perfect just like her momma,” I whisper as the nurse places the baby on Deirdre’s chest.

“I love you, daddy. Thank you,” Deirdre says with tears in her eyes.

“For what, baby? You did all the work.”

“For giving me a life that I didn’t know was possible. You’re the best husband and father that a girl could ask for.”

“No, little girl. That’s what you did for me,” I kiss her. “Rest now. I’ll be here when you wake up.”

The nurse hands me my daughter, and I sit and rock the tiny baby as Deirdre drifts off to sleep. She looks just like her mother, but she and her big brother have something that their mother and father never had. They have parents who love them and each other, and they will never feel lost or alone in the world.

When both the baby and Deirdre are sleeping soundly, I step out of the room to get some coffee and make a few calls. I’m pouring the coffee when a familiar voice calls out to me from behind.

“I heard you’re a father again. Congratulations,” Bobby Vito says.

I close my eyes and my nostrils flare as I breathe in and prepare to turn and face him. His being here is an intrusion, and it feels like an insult to my family, but I can’t cause a scene in this place. Deirdre would be heartbroken if she woke up to find that I’d been banned from the building.

“Thank you, Bobby. Why are you here? That old heart of yours needs some servicing?”

“No, I have a clean bill of health. I won’t be getting out of your way anytime soon. You’re the reason I’m here. You and my daughter. I came because it’s the respectful thing to do.”

“Our first child was born two years ago. You didn’t want to be respectful then?”

“Fair, I can’t argue that logic. I was wrong. I should’ve been here.”

I’m stunned by his admission and how sincere it feels.

“I don’t want to go up and see her or anything. I just wanted you to know that I was here and that I’m very happy for you both.”

“Thank you. I’ll tell Deirdre that you stopped by,” I nod.

He starts to walk toward the two thugs that accompanied him here then stops and turns back to me.

“You surprised me. Who would’ve thought the ruthless Diavolo would become a good husband and father? When you told me that my daughter was part of the deal, I expected you to have your fun with her and then leave her used up and heartbroken on my front lawn. I’m glad you didn’t. Good night, Danny.”

I return to the room not sure what to think of Bobby’s confession. On the one hand, it’s nice to see that he feels some sense of family honor but, on the other, he confessed that he would have sacrificed his daughter to an animal just to make a deal. I ponder whether or not to tell Deirdre that he was there at all.

If the news gives her hope that she can have a healthy relationship with the man and he reverts to his old behavior, it will break her heart, and it’s my job to protect her from pain.

She’s awake when I enter the room and sees that I’m lost in thought.

“Is everything alright, daddy? she asks me.

“Yes, little girl. Everything is perfect.”

WE ARRIVE HOME from the hospital to find the house filled with flowers and gifts from the crew and their families. D.J. runs to the door and cries, “Daddy! Mommy!” I lift him in the air and cover his face with kisses.

“Hi, baby. Would you like to meet your baby sister?” Deirdre asks him.

He nods and I carry him to the sofa where Deirdre is seated with Daniela in her arms.

“Here she is. What do you think, little man?”

“Hi, little baby,” he smiles. “Mommy, look at all the stuff!”

“I see. Do you want to look at all the presents with Mommy?”

“Yes,” he leaps from my lap and rushes to a giant white teddy bear that is sitting against the wall.

Deirdre hands me the baby and joins him by the bear. She pulls it out so that he can hug it. I laugh and say, “It’s bigger than he is.”

There’s a card tied with a ribbon to the bear’s paw, and Deirdre pulls it off and reads it. She looks up at me with her mouth hanging open and says, “It’s from my father.”

“He came by the hospital, baby girl. He wanted to congratulate me,” I confess.

“Amazing.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you sooner.”

She smiles and says, “It doesn’t matter. It was a nice gesture, I guess, but my family is right here.”

“We are, baby, and we’re not going anywhere,” I reply.

EXTENDED EPILOGUE

DANNY

Deirdre rushes through the house trying to locate little shoes and jackets so that we aren't late for D.J.'s recital.

It's important to her that the whole family shows up to cheer for him. I suggested leaving the little ones at home. When the three smaller kids are finally dressed and ready, she stops to look at herself in the mirror.

"Jesus, I'm a mess now," she complains.

I walk up behind her and put my arms around her waist. "No, baby. You're still the most beautiful girl in the world. Every man in the venue will be wondering how I got this lucky."

"You're so sweet, but seriously? Look at this hair," she rolls her eyes.

"It's beautiful, just like you."

Deirdre puts Daniela in her car seat, and I strap in Damon and Dillon. The twins are teething, and I wipe the drool from their faces before Deirdre sees it and decides that she needs to change their clothes again. She's the best mother that I've ever seen and always makes sure the kids are neat and tidy. I don't know how she handles them all day and still stays so damn sexy. I open her door for her and slap her on the ass as she climbs into the SUV.

"Daddy!" she gasps. "Save that for later."

I lean into the car door to kiss her. I bite her lower lip and say, "Don't tell me what to do."

D.J.'s school is just a few blocks away, and we get there in plenty of time to see him standing in line with his class. He looks adorable in his Uncle Sam costume. He sees us and waves frantically.

We find a row with enough empty seats to accommodate us and sit down just as the auditorium lights dim and the recital begins. I stand up and cheer with a baby in my arms when D.J. gets on the stage. He recites his lines just the way that we rehearsed them and bows with a satisfied grin on his face.

He's overjoyed when he gets a standing ovation from the crowd. He's a natural leader like his father, but I think maybe we should steer him in the direction of law or finance. My progeny will not be following in my footsteps.

After the show, we stop for pizza to take home for D.J.'s celebration dinner. Deirdre rarely orders takeout. She won't even let me hire a cook for her. She says that it's her job to feed us, and I know that she loves doing it.

The boys are fed and put to bed, and the nanny takes D.J. and Daniela upstairs to prepare for their baths. Alone, I take Deirdre by the hand and escort her out to the patio. We sit together on the deck lounge and sip our wine.

"It was a good day, daddy. Our little boy is growing up," Deirdre tells me.

"He has a fantastic mother," I reply.

"And father," she adds.

"You looked great tonight, too," I tell her, squeezing her by the waist.

"So did you, handsome daddy," she places her hand on mine.

"I have to tell you when I slapped your ass and watched your tits bounce, I got a little hard."

"You always do," she laughs.

"When everyone's asleep and the nanny goes home, I'm gonna show you."

"I hope so. Maybe you can finish that spanking, too."

“Um, daddy’s bad girl needs a spanking?” I run my fingers across her nipples. “Maybe we should try for baby number five while we’re at it.”

She looks up at me and asks, “Do you really want more kids?”

“I want as many as you want, Princess. If you told me you wanted ten, then we’d have ten, and I would love every minute of making them.”

“Ten? No, I don’t want ten. Maybe one more. Daniela is severely outnumbered and could use a sister.”

“Sure, and if we make another boy, we’ll try again.”

She laughs and says, “I’m gonna check on the kids and send the nanny home.”

“I’ll meet you in the bedroom,” I grab her sweet ass and squeeze it as she walks away.

The End. Thanks for reading!

Did you know you can get free books from time to time by signing up for my mailing list? Just click the link below to sign up so you’ll be the first to know about new releases and get the next free book when it’s ready...

www.subscribepage.com/lenalittle

ALSO BY LENA LITTLE

Yes Daddy Series

- Book 1: Daddy Next Door
Book 2: Bossy Daddy
Book 3: Paying Daddy's Debt
Book 4: Daddy's Halloween
Book 5: Daddy's Italian Friend
Book 6: Russian Teacher
Book 7: Daddy's Housekeeper
Book 8: Possessive Daddy
Book 9: Protective Daddy
Book 10: Daddy's Destiny
Book 11: Dear Daddy
Book 12: Russian Doctor Daddy
Book 13: Daddy's Christmas
Book 14: Italian Mafia Stalker
Book 15: Daddy's Friend
Book 16: Possessive Policeman
Book 17: The Debt Collector
Book 18: Her Hitman
Book 19: The Goalie's Girl
Book 20: Hitman's Target
Book 21: Daddy's Secret
Book 22: Stepbrother Daddy
Book 23: Daddy For A Day
Book 24: Stepbrother Daddy's Christmas Eve
Book 25: Guardian Daddy
Book 26: Terror of Tuscany
Book 27: My Irish Stepbrother
Book 28: Valentine's Day Daddy
Book 29: Stepbrother Firefighter
Book 30: Paying My Daddy's Debt
Book 31: Texting The CEO
Book 32: Defending Daddy
Book 33: Easter Daddy

A Possessive Man Series

- Book 1: Jealous

Book 2: Possessive

Book 3: Stalker

Book 4: Discipline

Book 5: Obsession

Book 6: Control

Book 7: Motorcycle Man

Book 8: Possessive Puppy

Book 9: Possessive Mechanic

Book 10: Lawyer

Book 11: Nanny For The Italian Mafia

Book 12: The Italian

Book 13: Butcher of Belfast

Book 14: Addiction

Book 15: Psycho Professor

Book 16: Principal Obsession

Book 17: Psycho Cop

Book 18: Possessive Pitcher

Book 19: Possessive Surgeon

Dad's Best Friend

Book 1: Dad's Policeman Friend

Book 2: Dad's Italian Mafia Friend

Book 3: Dad's Blacksmith Friend

Book 4: Thanksgiving With Dad's Best Friend

Book 5: Dad's Doctor Friend

Book 6: Christmas Eve With Dad's Best Friend

Book 7: Dad's Jealous Friend

Book 8: Dad's Russian Friend

Book 9: Dad's Navy SEAL Friend

Book 10: Dad's Cop Friend

Book 11: Halloween With Dad's Ex-Best Friend

Book 12: Baby For Dad's Best Friend

Book 13: Dad's Mafia Secret

Her Bad Boy

Book 1: Opposites Attract

Jealous Psycho

Book 1: Jealous Cop

Book 2: Jealous Fighter

Book 3: [Jealous Firefighter](#)

Book 4: [Jealous Protector](#)

Book 5: [Jealous Boss](#)

Book 6: [Jealous Lawyer](#)

Book 7: [Jealous Italian](#)

Book 8: [Jealous Detective](#)

Book 9: [Jealous Savage](#)

Book 10: [Jealous Serial Killer](#)

Book 11: [Jealous Stepbrother](#)

Claimed

Book 1: [Claimed](#)

Book 2: [Her Protector](#)

Book 3: [Protective Cop](#)

Book 4: [Security](#)

Book 5: [Protective Artist](#)

Book 6: [Hot Cop](#)

Book 7: [Claimed By My Stalker](#)

Book 8: [Claimed By The Convict](#)

Book 9: Claimed By The Devil

Her Mafia Man

Book 1: [Baby For The Mafia](#)

Book 2: [Paying Dad's Italian Debt](#)

A MMF Ménage Romance

Book 1: [Her Two Doctors](#)