



Danger

MAFIA TIES #2

Fiona Davenport
FIONA DAVENPORT

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Danger

Mafia Ties #2

Anna Martin was looking for a nanny position, but she found more than she bargained for when she fell for single dad Nic DeLuca. When she finds out he's a mafia boss, her head tells her to run but her heart tells her to stay. With his baby girl in the hospital, Anna stands by her man in his time of need. But when danger swirls around them, will they manage to find happiness together?

Please note: Nic & Anna's romance is a three part story, but there are no relationship cliffhangers.

Love is not blind,
it sees more not less;
but because it sees more,
it chooses to see less.

~Unknown~

Chapter 1

Anna

Waking up to sunlight streaming through the window, and the other side of the bed still empty, was a disappointment—a major one. Nic hadn't told me much about the work he did, but if it was going to keep him from being able to sleep, either with or without me, then maybe I needed to push him into letting me help. Somehow. With whatever I could. When Sophia was at school during the day, I had hours upon hours to myself with nothing to do since Nic had a cleaning staff who already kept his home in pristine condition.

As I left his bed and headed to my room to grab a robe, I was determined to find Nic and make him open up to me about whatever it was at work that was weighing so heavily on his shoulders. After a quick peek into Sophia's room to make sure she was still asleep, I headed downstairs, hoping to find him in his office. The doorbell rang as my feet hit the bottom step, so I headed towards the door instead. When I opened it to find a gorgeous but disheveled redhead standing there, I didn't like it. Not even a little bit.

It might make me a cavewoman, but the thought of another woman thinking she had the right to come knocking on Nic's door this early in the morning didn't sit well with me. I was already feeling defensive when she blatantly looked me up and down, her green eyes flaring with a hint of humor I didn't understand. I expected her to make some kind of disparaging remark about me, but nothing could have prepared me for what she actually said.

“The word is spreading about you. But, I have to say, you aren't what I expected. You seem awfully innocent to be with the ruthless, gun-running head of the local mafia.”

Ruthless?

Gun-running?

Mafia?

Say what now?

“Oh, shit,” she muttered, her eyes filling with contrition. “You didn’t know.”

I shook my head back and forth, trying to convince myself it wasn’t true even as my mind started putting all the pieces together. The late meetings, literally at all hours of the night, when no respectable businessman would be doing anything work related unless it was a call overseas to Japan or something. The guys in dark suits with bulges under their coats that in hindsight looked a lot like gun holsters. The careful way the staff at the school treated Sophia, which I’d attributed to her health. The air of deference from people when they spoke to Nic, with a hint of fear underneath it.

I’d made excuses for it all, refusing to believe the truth staring me straight in the face. Love had blinded me.

Love.

Oh, crap. I’d somehow managed to turn into a double cliché. Not only was I the nanny who’d fallen for her single-dad boss, but I was also the good Catholic girl who’d given her virginity to the head of the Italian mafia. What had I been thinking? Then I felt Nic’s heat as he came up behind me and I was reminded of the fact that I couldn’t think when he was around. I couldn’t because I was too busy being overwhelmed by him.

“Carly,” he growled, anchoring his arm around my waist and squeezing tight when I tried to wiggle away. “It’s good to see you didn’t flee town after what happened with Bran, but I don’t appreciate you speaking to my fiancée about things which don’t concern you.”

Fiancée? I glanced down at my ring finger just to make sure I hadn’t missed something overnight. I didn’t find a ring there, but I wouldn’t have been surprised if he’d slipped one on me while I’d been sleeping. He was so darn high-handed. A

trait which was sure to be immensely helpful since he ran an illegal empire, but not so much when it came to how he handled me. Even if I let him get away with it each and every time. A little huff escaped my lips, and his fingers dug into my waist as he tugged me even closer to his body.

“Look,” the woman bit out, her attention wholly focused on Nic. I was surprised to find no sign of fear or deference from her. In fact, she looked irritated. “I didn’t have to come here and warn you, but I wasn’t sure Bran would do it since the asshat seems to think I’m aligned with my da. You need to fill the moat, lift the drawbridge, and keep the dragons circling your castle if you want to keep your queen and princess safe.”

My eyes widened at her description, drawing her gaze to mine before she turned back to Nic. “And you might want to fill your queen in on what her life is going to be like before she gives you another little princess. Being kept in the dark about what’s going on around you sucks ass. And it doesn’t keep you safe.” She glowered at Nic, a deep pain filling her eyes. “If anything, it makes it hurt more when you’re dragged into the harsh reality of our world.”

“Her situation is nothing like yours, Carly. Your father and I are two very different people.”

“I hope so. For her sake and mine,” she whispered, turning away and heading for the stairs.

“Carly, wait!” Nic barked out, dragging me with him as he followed after her.

She paused on the bottom step. “What? You and I both know I need to get out of here before my da comes looking for me.”

“Let me help. I can keep you safe from him.”

“I won’t be safe until he’s dead.” Her reply was filled with a defeated certainty. “By now my brother is sure to have told him what I’ve done. There’s no going back for me.”

“Let me help you hide. I have resources available to me that you don’t have access to.”

“I wish I could say yes, Nic. I really do.” With as tired as she sounded, I didn’t have a hard time believing she wanted nothing more than to take the assistance Nic was offering. Watching her standing there, I wanted it for her too. “But we both know my da isn’t the only man with a grudge who’s going to be looking for me. And if you’re the one hiding me, Bran is sure to find me.”

“Can you blame him? You shot the man. Dammit, Carly, you could have killed him.”

She’d shot someone? I’d never even handled a gun. What had I gotten myself involved in?

“If I’d wanted him dead, I wouldn’t have shot him in the thigh.”

“Bran told me your gun only went off because you were startled when your brother shot at you.”

Brothers shooting at sisters? Seriously, how had I found myself in the middle of a daytime soap opera?

“I might have been surprised, but I’m damn good with a gun, and those skills were probably the only thing that kept your precious Bran alive. Feel free to tell him he owes my da for all those lessons at the range.”

“What in the hell happened between you and Bran?”

That was an answer I’d love to have heard since I’d been pulled into this drama. Unfortunately, it looked like it wasn’t one I was going to get anytime soon.

“None of your damn business.” Those were her parting words because she took off at a sprint down the street.

Damn, the girl was fast. But Nic was just as quick, because I found myself lifted off my feet, carried into the house, and placed onto the couch in the living room, in what felt like the blink of an eye.

He sat down next to me, leaning over, his face close to mine. “We need to talk.” I pushed against his chest, trying to get out from under him, my mind a jumbled mess after everything I’d just heard. What I’d just learned about him. My

Nic was a mobster. It was almost impossible to believe. He was into bad stuff, illegal stuff. Things about which I had zero clue because he'd kept me in the dark.

"We'll talk," he promised, his hand sliding under my robe and up my inner thigh. "After."

"After?" I stuttered, my breath hitching when he sank two fingers inside me.

"After you come on my hand, in my mouth, and on my cock."

I pushed against his chest again, even as my legs widened slightly, giving him better access to my body. "I'm angry with you, Nic. And hurt. And a little scared."

He stilled over me, staring down at me with pain filled eyes. "I will never hurt you, mia dolce. Never."

It was a heartfelt vow, and I believed him. It might make me the most naïve person on the planet, but I knew deep in my bones that Nic didn't mean me any harm.

"I know," I whispered softly, one hand sliding up his chest to cup his cheek. "But I'm still unbelievably angry with you."

"Then take your anger out on my body, Gianna, and let me show you exactly how sorry I am."

"But-" I tried to protest. Despite everything, my body responded to his dark tone. A quick twist of his wrist had his fingers rubbing against my G-spot and any coherent thought fled my brain.

With expert strokes, he drove me higher and higher until I was fulfilling the first part of his promise, coming on his hand. Then he dropped to his knees, lifting my legs over his shoulders, and his mouth latched on to me. He ate at me like he was starving—licking and sucking while he held my hips down so I couldn't move. It wasn't until I'd come twice more that he lifted his head. I saw my wetness glistening on his beard before he wiped it against my belly, bared as the robe had parted wide down the middle. Then he unbuckled his belt, unzipped his pants, and pulled his cock out. It was hard and bobbed thickly against his stomach.

Without any preamble, he lifted my hips into the air, lining us up and driving inside of me. Sensitive from my orgasms, I felt every inch of him as he slid against my drenched heat. He was so big, my body had to stretch to take him all. Somehow, I was both uncomfortable and excited at the same time. Then he pulled out, only to thrust back in and my mind blanked as he pounded into me. Deep and hard. I'd thought he'd been rough with me the night before, but it was nothing compared to the way he was taking me now. Like he owned me, and my body loved it. I was caged between his muscular body and the couch, writhing in ecstasy, and even with what I knew about him, it felt like exactly where I belonged. When his mouth dropped down to mine, claiming it in a searing kiss, I was thrown over the edge once again, taking him with me.

Chest heaving, on a panting breath, Nic growled, "Now we can talk. And you'll listen to me, with my come filling your pussy."

Chapter 2

Nic

Gianna's face was already flushed from the multiple orgasms, but her cheeks darkened with a blush at my words. I brushed a finger softly over the pink tinge, and my dick began to harden again. I was enchanted with my Gianna and her beauty, inside and out. My finger continued to trail down her silky skin, through the parted center of her robe and pushing each side open wider until I bared her perfect tits completely. She was such a contradiction, an innocent with a body made for sin.

“Nic, you said we would talk—oh gosh.” My lips wrapped around one stiff, pink nipple and she moaned. My cock was completely hard again, stretching her sweet pussy and I felt an undeniable desire to fill her with my seed one more time.

Releasing her nipple with a pop, my lips whispered over the skin around it as I spoke. “We will, bellissima. But first, I'm going to fuck you again and make sure you're full of me.” I started to move again, slowly at first, working her up into a frenzy of need. “I want your body to know who owns it, to greedily hold my come inside until it takes root and you're carrying my baby.”

Her eyes widened, but then they rolled back in her head as I sped up and swiveled my hips. I groaned at the sensations rocketing through me. “Do you feel that, Gianna? Your pussy gripping me tight, milking me, begging me to come?”

My mouth returned to her generous tits and I alternated, taking each one in my mouth, opening wide to fit as much in as possible. My hips started a punishing rhythm and in no time, she was at the edge. Slipping a hand in between us, I pinched her clit, hard. She broke apart, and I covered her mouth with mine to swallow her screams. One last thrust and I

drove in so deep, I bumped her cervix, feeling her womb welcome the hot jets of semen pouring from my cock. “Fuck!” I gritted out, trying to keep myself from shouting my release. “That’s it. Take it all Gianna. Every last drop.”

I needed her to be pregnant. I craved the sight of her swollen belly as much as the sight of my ring on her finger. I collapsed on top of her, holding my weight up on my elbows so I didn’t crush her. I touched my forehead against hers for a moment, then kissed her eyelids, her nose, and then her mouth.

She melted into the kiss for a second, then stiffened and began to push against my chest again. I sighed and levered myself up so I could look her in the face. I did not, however, pull out of her. Instead, I kept her pinned to the couch with my hips, my cock still semi-hard, sealing her entrance to keep my come inside her.

“You’re not going anywhere, mia dolce,” I growled. “You’re right where you belong, and we both know it. No matter what I do, who I am, it doesn’t change the fact that you’re mine.”

She wiggled as if to test my theory that she couldn’t get away from me, but it only served to change the angle, so I slid even deeper inside her. She bit her lip, the skin around it turning white as she held back a moan.

“Bu—but, you’re a criminal,” she stuttered quietly. She was always guileless, her thoughts and emotions clearly projected on her face. Her tone was filled with confusion, but it was less about what I am and more about her reaction to it. Or rather, her lack of reaction. She was obviously fighting against her instinct to accept me and the instincts of the good little Catholic girl she was raised to be.

“Life is not black and white, Gianna. The gray fills the vast majority, and, it’s where I live my life. I may do things that are illegal, or some would find morally questionable, but I was raised to be an honorable man and there are lines I will not cross. I also make sure none of my people cross them either. I have to lead, to be seen as strong and unbreakable. Sometimes that requires more force than others. I will always, *always*,

protect you and Sophia, as well as the rest of my family.” Her eyes were searching mine as she listened intently, and I could see she was looking for something in my words to justify my actions enough that she could accept me without guilt.

I shook my head. “I am who I am, *mia dolce*, and I know you love me. So, stop looking for an excuse to follow your heart and just do it.” I lowered my head so our noses were almost touching. “I won’t let you go, Gianna,” I growled. “Even now, you could be carrying my baby and as soon as I can, I’ll be putting a ring on your finger, so everyone out there knows you’re mine too.”

“You can’t simply decide I’m going to marry you and start walking around referring to me as your fiancée, Nic.” Her lips firmed into a straight line, a defiant expression on her face. But, the effect had been ruined by the tiniest softening of her green eyes at the mention of having my baby.

I grinned. “Now, we both know that’s not true. Besides”—I raised an eyebrow—“what will your parents think if you’re pregnant and unmarried?”

Her jaw dropped a little, her mouth forming a round *O* of surprise. It was adorable, and I couldn’t help but kiss her cute little nose. When I pulled back, I could see the fucking guilt still lingering in her eyes and it pissed me off. However, I knew I had to tread carefully and I decided she needed to know what was truly in my heart.

“Carly was right, you know.”

Gianna’s brows furrowed and the fingers she’d had resting against my chest suddenly curled into my shirt in a possessive hold, and I had to fight a smile at the display of jealousy. I was getting another glimpse of my tigress, and it was sexy as fuck. I shifted as I began to harden again, and we both moaned. Fucking hell. I would never get enough of her.

“You are my queen. And just like the royalty on a chess board, this king needs his queen to protect him. I’ve given you my heart to guard, Gianna.”

Her beautiful green eyes filled with emotion, although there was still an air of wariness about her. I was tempted to fuck her until she admitted that she loved me, but I knew our family would be awake soon and I didn't want anyone but me seeing Gianna this way.

I pulled out of her slowly, my erection dragging against her walls and almost convincing me to take the chance of being discovered. But, I preferred not to scar my baby girl and put her in therapy because there were some things you just couldn't unsee.

Gianna whimpered as I left the warmth of her pussy completely. It sent tingles down my spine and I shivered. Standing, I tucked myself back in before closing her robe and retying the sash. After helping her to her feet, I grasped her chin and forced her to meet my hardened gaze.

“Unless you want to find yourself spanked until you can't sit for a day, don't ever answer a door like this again. I don't care who is on the other side. This”—I slid my hands down her back and cupped her round, little ass, squeezing her closer until our bodies were melded together—“is for my eyes only. Got it, mia dolce?”

Gianna's eyes narrowed slightly, and I thought maybe she would argue with me, but after a moment, she nodded in capitulation. I rewarded her obedience with a scorching kiss that was suddenly interrupted by the sweet sound of my daughter's voice calling for me.

“Daddy?” There was an odd tone to her voice. She was obviously terrified about something. Gianna and I sprinted to the door and out into the hallway. Sophia was standing at the top of the stairs, and I took them two at a time to get up to her.

When I got to the last step, I jerked to a stop and yelled for Gianna to call 911. I heard her spin around and race back down the steps as I gathered my little girl in my arms and followed her path. Sophia's bleeding nose was soaking my shirt, her head resting against my chest as she softly cried. “My head hurts, Daddy,” she sniffled.

My heart started pounding at the signs of severe hypertension and I barely felt any relief as an ambulance pulled up in front of the house. Luckily, we didn't live far from the hospital, so we didn't have to worry about the truck having to navigate through city traffic, slowing down our journey.

Gianna stopped at the door and told me to go, that she would get dressed, get my mother, and meet us at the hospital. I nodded, hoping my eyes conveyed my gratitude for her among the stark terror ripping through my heart.

Chapter 3

Anna

The day started badly, learning that Nic was the head of a mafia family, and it only got worse when Sophia was rushed to the hospital. I'd never be able to forget the sight of her standing at the top of the stairs, deathly pale with blood leaking from her nose in a steady stream. The look of horror on Nic's face when he screamed at me to call for help. How shattered Allegra seemed when I woke her and told her what had happened. The way my heart raced as she and I rode in the back seat of the town car which we'd found waiting at the curb, our hands gripping each other's tightly while the only sound was the prayers Allegra muttered underneath her breath to keep her grandbaby alive. It all replayed in my head, over and over, as I wondered how long it would be before the doctors would come out and tell us what was happening with Sophia.

In the blink of an eye, my anger at Nic for keeping such a monumental secret from me seemed unimportant. The only thing which mattered was Sophia's health and well-being. My reaction—or lack thereof—to Nic's place in the criminal world, him calling me his fiancée, and then point blank telling me he wanted to knock me up—all of it could wait until we made it through this crisis. Nic couldn't afford any distractions. He needed to be strong for his daughter—and so did I. She'd quickly found her way into my heart, just like her daddy had. I couldn't imagine a world without her in it. I couldn't fathom how Nic would go on if anything happened to his precious little girl.

Allegra and I almost hadn't been able to get back to the exam room where Nic and Sophia had been taken, but I refused to allow a simpering nurse who couldn't be more than

a couple years older than me to keep us from them. Allegra looked on approvingly as I begged and pleaded, cajoled and threatened—and ultimately used the DeLuca name to get what I wanted.

“You will take us to my fiancé,” I growled at her, a hint of menace in my tone. “And you will do it immediately unless you want to face the wrath of the DeLuca family once she’s well. Don’t think for one moment that I’ll forget the time you’ve made us stand here when we could be back there comforting Sophia.”

“It’s fine, Sandra,” another nurse chimed in, stepping forward to intervene, her eyes wide as they darted between Allegra and me. “I’ll take Mr. DeLuca’s mother and fiancée back.”

“Fine,” the other nurse huffed, stomping away.

Sandra. I mentally marked the name down for consideration later. I hadn’t been issuing empty threats while I’d been talking to her. The sound of Allegra’s low chuckle had me jerking my head her way.

“What?” I asked defensively.

“You’ve been hiding some fire beneath your nice girl exterior,” she answered approvingly

“She’ll need it to be married to him,” the nurse mumbled as she opened the door to a spacious exam room.

“I thought they fixed it when she had surgery two years ago. Why is she having problems now?” Nic roared at a tall dark-haired man in a white lab coat. “And why has it taken so damn long for you to figure out what’s been going on with her?”

I hurried to his side, tugging his hand into mine and jerking my head towards the exam table where Sophia lay, watching her dad and the doctor with wide, tear-filled eyes.

“Niccolo,” Allegra tsked. “You can’t blame Dr. McGowan for Sophia’s condition.”

“He’s the only one who’s here,” he grumbled.

“Because you’ve probably managed to scare everyone else away,” Allegra chided, eliciting a snort of laughter from Dr. McGowan, confirming how true her words must have been. “Remember, she’s only been seeing him for a few weeks, which is hardly enough time to get the results back from all the tests he’s run.”

“Actually,” Dr. McGowan interrupted their argument. “Most of her tests came back this morning. If you’ll stay with Sophia for a moment, I’d like to speak with her father in the hallway.”

Nic gave Sophia a gentle hug and dropped a kiss onto her forehead before following Dr. McGowan into the hallway. I followed suit, pausing to whisper in her ear. “Love you, sweetie.” Her tiny hands gripped my back as she leaned up to reach my ear. “I love you too, Anna.”

I hurried after Nic, tears streaming down my cheeks at her admission. Both men turned to me when I joined them in the hall, shutting the door behind me.

“As I was explaining to Nic, Sophia’s refractory hypertension has become unresponsive to her drug therapy. When they operated two years ago, her condition was considered improved because her blood pressure was within normotensive range.”

“And now that they aren’t?” I asked, making Dr. McGowan pause and consider me assessingly.

“You must be the Anna I’ve heard so much about from Sophia.”

He moved forward to shake my hand, and Nic tugged me closer to his side. Dr. McGowan sent him a quick grin and took a step backwards, dropping his hand to his side. It was as though he completely understood why Nic didn’t want another man in my space. Some of the tension left Nic’s body. Apparently, they were united in their caveman-ness or some such ridiculousness.

“To answer your question, Anna, I’ve recommended another surgical intervention for Sophia. Her previous surgeon

performed an aortorenal bypass with a vein graft, but the conduit has since undergone aneurysmal deterioration. I'd like to go in and use the internal iliac artery as a free graft. They've since become preferred for aortorenal bypasses."

I gripped Nic's hand more tightly, most of what the doctor had said going straight over my head. I glanced up at Nic, and the blank expression on his face made me think maybe he didn't understand any better than I did. "Could you repeat that, maybe in English this time?"

"Sorry," he replied wryly. "Sometimes I slip into doctor-speak and forget most people have no clue what I'm talking about. Basically, the method her previous surgeon used has failed, and I want to reconstruct her renal artery using one from her pelvic region. Recent studies have shown outcomes are much better this way."

"What are our other options?" Nic gritted out.

The grave look on Dr. McGowan's face was answer enough, but his words confirmed it. "She needs to have this surgery, Nic."

I moved even closer to Nic and wrapped my arm around his waist, trying to lend him what little strength I had.

"Do it," he growled.

Dr. McGowan gave us a jerky nod. "I'll book an OR and make sure I have the best of the best in there with me. She'll be in good hands."

"She'd better be."

In that moment, I had no doubt Niccolo DeLuca was a very dangerous man. If anything happened to his precious daughter, heads would roll.

Dr. McGowan moved quickly, and Sophia was prepped for surgery and wheeled away from us within less than two hours. Another ninety minutes had passed, and the three of us sat in the waiting room, Allegra and I on either side of Nic. His hand was wrapped around mine, and my head was resting on his

shoulder. Head bent, his eyes were closed, but I knew he wasn't sleeping and Allegra worried her rosary the entire time, lips moving soundlessly in prayer. The moment Dr. McGowan entered the room with another doctor at his side, we all leapt to our feet.

“How” —Nic gulped—“is she?”

“I'm not going to lie to you, Nic,” Dr. McGowan breathed. “She's in critical condition right now.”

Nic dropped back into the chair, Allegra and I following him down.

“The surgery was tougher on her than I expected, but it was successful,” Dr. McGowan continued.

“She's a strong little girl,” the other doctor chimed in. “There's a reason Dr. McGowan is our Head of Pediatrics. He's the best in his field. We were lucky to lure him away from his previous position, a fact you seemed to be well aware of when you insisted he take your daughter's case.”

The emphasis he placed on the word ‘insisted’ made me wonder what form of persuasion Nic used to ensure Sophia received the best care possible. I might not have come to terms with his role in the criminal world, but I couldn't help silently cheering at the knowledge that he'd been able to leverage it to help her.

“My team will keep a close eye on her tonight in the ICU, and I'm hoping to be able to upgrade her status within the next twenty-four hours,” Dr. McGowan added, a slight blush darkening his cheeks.

Those hours passed in a blur, the minutes ticking by painfully slow. Sophia's condition was finally upgraded to stable. She was moved to a private room on the pediatric floor, one which more accurately resembled a suite in a five-star hotel than a hospital room. Allegra came and went several times over the next few days, bringing many of Sophia's things to decorate the room. Stuffed animals and toys were strewn about, and flowers and mylar balloons covered most of

the available surfaces. Neither Nic nor I had left her side, though. A fact Allegra was quick to point out.

“Go home,” she ordered us bluntly. “I’m perfectly capable of taking care of my granddaughter, especially since I’ll have the help of the private duty nurse and aide you’ve hired for her.”

I stifled a giggle because it was a little over the top considering she hadn’t even been left alone for a second by Nic or me yet.

“I’m fine right where I am, Mamma,” Nic argued.

“No, you’re not,” she snapped, her gaze sweeping across the both of us. “And neither is Anna.”

Oooh, she was playing dirty now, bringing me into this. Nic’s head jerked my way, his eyes scanning my face for any sign his mom was correct.

“Look how tired the poor girl is,” she continued. “She hasn’t gotten a good night’s rest since we got here.”

I shook my head in denial, but she just carried on.

“Or a real shower.”

I barely resisted the urge to sniff myself to see if I stank.

“Or decent food.”

And that was the straw which broke the proverbial camel’s back. Nic had me bundled up and out the door while Sophia slept peacefully with Allegra in a chair at her side. When he had me settled in the back seat of the car and slid in next to me, it dawned on me—this was the first time we’d been alone since Sophia had woken up with a bloody nose and distracted us from the argument we’d been having. It was difficult to reconcile the Nic I knew with the one he seemed to show everyone else. I was falling in love with my Nic, but I wasn’t so sure about the other one.

Chapter 4

Nic

Gianna was sitting stiffly beside me in the car, which wasn't acceptable to me. I needed her comfort as much as I needed to keep her from running away from me. I slid an arm around her waist and hauled her up next to me. Her spine stayed ramrod straight for about thirty seconds before she gave in and melted into my side.

I sighed and snuggled her in a little tighter. The feel of her body against mine was soothing some of my fear for my little girl. She was slowly improving, but I couldn't help the terror at the idea of losing either of my girls.

The car pulled up to the house and parked, then the driver exited the vehicle and opened the door for us to get out. I released Gianna only to allow her to climb out. As I followed, I noticed the driver's eyes were lingering on her ass, and I gave him a black look. Grabbing her hand, I brought her in close and tucked her into my side. He had the good sense to look apologetic and a little frightened, so I decided to fire him, rather than kill him.

The cleaning service was in the house when we arrived, and I dismissed them. It didn't matter if they were finished or not. I needed to be alone with Gianna to assess where her head was after everything she'd learned.

"Are you hungry?" I wanted to take care of her before we delved into the serious discussion ahead of us. She shook her head as she hung up her light jacket in the coat closet.

"You need to eat, mia dolce. Let me feed you," I said coaxingly, putting my hand at the small of her back and trying to lead her to the kitchen.

She shook her head again and stepped away, making me frown intensely. She barely noticed, when my look would have put the fear of God into anyone else but my mother.

“I will. But, right now, I need a hot shower and some clean clothes,” she said with a yawn as she started for the stairs. I put a hand on the back of her neck to halt her progress and moved in close, so I could rest my lips on her forehead. “All right, mia dolce,” I murmured, my lips brushing her skin with each word, “I have to make a call, but I’ll be up soon.”

Letting her go, I watched the swing of her curvaceous hips and sexy ass as she ascended the stairs. When she was out of sight, I remembered my purpose in staying downstairs. I swiftly walked to my office and sat behind my desk. I dialed my friend Brecken, a former military man turned security specialist. I had to recant my statement about who fears me. Brecken was one of the only other people who didn’t fall in line with my demands. He was more likely to tell me to go fuck myself and do whatever he wanted.

“Hey, it’s Nic,” I greeted.

“Nic? Damn, I haven’t heard from you since that thing, with the guy, in the place.”

It was a private joke between us, and I chuckled. The sound felt somewhat foreign, but it spread a little light in my current darkness.

“How’s the wife?” I’d heard he’d recently been married.

“Knocked up.” I could practically hear the smile on his face, and his words rung with pride. I couldn’t help feeling a little envious.

“Congratulations,” I said, genuinely happy for him despite my envy. “Listen, I need your help. Things in the family have progressed faster than I’d expected. I’m staring down the barrel of a fucking war and while I’m hoping to prevent it, I need to make sure my mother, Gianna, and Sophia are protected.”

“Gianna?”

“My fiancée,” I informed him. I loved referring to her that way, but I was eager to start calling her my wife.

“Seems the congratulations go to you, man,” he said, before pausing. “How is Sophia?”

“Back in the hospital. Another reason why I need guards ASAP. She’ll be coming home in a few days, and while I trust my men, I’d rather have expertly trained ones guarding my mother, woman, and sick little girl.”

Brecken was silent for a moment. Neither of us were the type to get emotional, and I knew he was quietly conveying his sympathy.

“I’ll have some guys there tomorrow. Do you want them at the house or hospital?”

“Both. Things are extremely volatile right now.”

“Done.”

I thanked him and hung up feeling marginally better knowing my family would be a hell of a lot safer. After making a quick call to check in on Sophia, I stood and headed for the stairs. The thought of Gianna wet and naked in the shower had my balls aching and my cock reminding me I hadn’t had her in days. I’d chosen to make my calls first so she would be relaxed and taken by surprise when I joined her. I had no intention of letting my sweet Gianna shower alone. Besides my physical need to fuck her, I knew we would find a sliver of peace in the comfort of each other’s arms.

I looked for her in the bathroom of her old room and found it empty. The bedroom was bare as well. Smiling smugly, I mentally patted myself on the back for using our time away to have all of her things moved to my room—which I’d turned into *our* room.

Entering the master suite, I heard the sound of running water and hurried to undress, desperate to hold my woman. When I twisted the door knob to the bathroom, it was locked. I rolled my eyes and searched out the key stored in the top, left drawer of the desk in the sitting area.

I unlocked it and opened the door, my breath catching at the vision before me as lust roared through my body. Through the glass, I saw Gianna standing under the spray of hot water. It cascaded over her every curve. Her hands were buried in her long hair as she washed it, and the position thrust her large tits out, as though offering them up for my mouth.

Within seconds, I was inside the steamy shower, grabbing her waist and dragging her to me, lifting her small frame up so my mouth could latch on to her nipple. Taken completely by surprise, Gianna had no time to think and she immediately moaned, grabbing on to my head and thrusting her breast up even farther.

I turned to the side and walked forward a couple of feet until her back was pressed up against the shower wall. Moving my attention to the other nipple, my hand glided over her slick skin, cupping her delicious ass for a minute before continuing down and grasping the underside of her thighs. I lifted them up and guided her legs around my hips. My cock was rock hard and the generous length had it standing up against my belly. Her new position pressed the underside of my thickness into the wet heat of her pussy, and we groaned simultaneously.

I let go of her nipple with one last lick and moved to her mouth, sucking her bottom lip into mine and giving it a little bite. Using my hips to pin her in place, I brought my hands to her tits and palmed them with a rough squeeze before using my fingers to toy with her hard little peaks, twisting and plucking. She dropped her head back against the stone and took a deep breath.

“Nic, I need to think. We can’t—”

“The fuck we can’t,” I growled before kissing her deeply and rocking my cock against her sex. She shivered violently, and I let my baser instincts take control. Returning my hands to her ass, I lifted her away just enough to plunge my cock into her, immediately taking up a punishing rhythm, pounding into her, reveling in her cries as she begged me to go harder and faster.

“You want to come, bellissima?” I asked through gritted teeth as I made every effort to hold back my own orgasm. “Is that what you need, what you crave?”

“Oh, gosh. Yes!” she panted.

I slid her up the wall a little farther, allowing me to get inside even deeper, groaning as my cock dragged along the walls of her pussy. I kept my eyes open and locked on her emerald gaze. “Beg me,” I commanded. “Tell me how much you want me.”

Behind the hazy lust, fear lurked in her gaze, most likely worried about giving in to her desire for me, her head and heart battling. I wasn't above sexual coercion. Whatever it took to keep my sweet Gianna. I slowed my thrusts to a maddening pace but re-entered fast and hard after a few strokes before slowing again.

“How much do you want me, Gianna? Beg me to give you what you need. Your tight little pussy is all ready to suck me dry, trying so fucking hard to keep me buried deep inside you.”

She whimpered, but then she whispered, “Please, Nic. I need you to make me come.” I drove in fast and hard once again, but I kept her on the edge, deciding I needed one last thing before I let us both fall over the edge.

“Say you'll marry me, Gianna. We both know your heart and body belong to me. I want the world to know it too.”

Her eyes widened but her mouth stayed firmly shut. I put a hand between us and lightly circled her clit, pushing her a little higher but still keeping her from coming.

“Now, Gianna, I'm losing my patience,” I growled. “Say you'll marry me.” Thrusting harder, I pinched her little bud. “Fuck! You were made for me, mia dolce!” I ran out of control and started slamming into her and pinching her even harder. “Say it!” I shouted.

“Yes!” she yelled before she reached the peak and dove off the cliff, screaming my name. With one last thrust, seating me all the way in, my orgasm ripped through me and come

exploded from my cock, filling her with my seed. It went on for so long, I was sure that if she wasn't already pregnant, she would be after that.

As my heart rate decelerated, I kissed her softly then buried my face in her neck, nuzzling and licking away the droplets of water. "You're all mine, bellissima. I'll never let you go now."

Chapter 5

Anna

“I need you to wake up, bellissima.” Nic’s words rasped in my ear, sending shivers up my spine.

My eyes drifted open and I noted that the sun was barely shining through the window. I blinked a few times before focusing on him. He was standing by the side of the bed, dressed in dark jeans, a black button-down shirt, and bare feet. His dark hair was slightly damp from his shower, and it looked like he’d trimmed his beard.

“What time is it?” I asked blearily, lifting up on an elbow, my brain still foggy from sleep. By the time we’d finished in the shower and eaten a light meal, my lack of rest had caught up with me and I’d quickly fallen into an exhausted sleep. I’d been so out of it; I hadn’t even noticed when he’d left the bed.

“Not quite seven.”

I dropped back onto the mattress, groaning, and pulled the blanket over my head. “Too early.”

“I wish I could let you sleep longer, Gianna, but I can’t.”

Then it hit me.

“Sophia!” I yelped, tossing the covers off and jumping from the bed, stark naked.

“She’s fine,” he assured me, his eyes running hungrily up and down my body. “Mamma called about thirty minutes ago. Sophia slept well and her vitals are even better than they were last night.”

“Oh,” I sighed, feeling relieved as I pulled my robe off the post at the foot of the bed and wrapped it around my body. If I didn’t cover myself, I had a feeling I’d end back on the

mattress with Nic's hard body covering mine. Although the pleasure would be amazing, I wasn't ready to fall back into bed with him when I was feeling flustered by the way he'd managed to convince me to accept his proposal last night. "Then what's the rush?"

"There's some people I need you to meet before we head back to the hospital."

"Some people?" I quirked my head to the side and squinted up at him, trying to figure out what he was leaving out.

"Your security detail."

"Security detail?" Great, now I sounded like a parrot.

"Yes, I've hired guards for the house and hospital, to protect you, Sophia, and my mamma."

One of my hands reached out, searching for the mattress. When I laid my hand on it, I backed up until I sat down. "Are we in danger?"

Nic crouched down in front of me, one lean finger lifting my chin until we stared into each other's eyes. "I won't lie to you, Gianna. I don't lead the safest of lives, but I swear to you upon my life that I'll do whatever it takes to keep you and the rest of my family out of harm's way."

My breath heaved out of my lungs as my heart raced at the steadfast look in his gaze. Most of my hurt feelings fled at the way he so easily called me family and promised to keep me safe.

"The men I've hired are the best at what they do. They'll keep you protected." His finger toyed with the edge of my robe, trailing down from my neck to the top of my breasts. "But you're not meeting them until you're dressed."

"Like I'd walk down there half-dressed, knowing there are other people in the house," I huffed, pushing his hand away to get up and stomp towards the closet.

I yanked clothes that had mysteriously shown up in his closet off the hangers, muttering to myself about his high-

handedness as I dressed. When I stalked back into the bedroom, Nic was waiting for me. I gasped at the sight of him kneeling down on one knee. He snaked a hand into his pocket and pulled out a tiny, dark blue ring box stamped with 'HW' on the top. With his thumb, he flipped the lid open and my jaw dropped open at the sight of the ring inside.

An oval-shaped diamond center stone, bigger than any stone I'd ever seen before, was framed by micro pavé diamonds. They were set on a glamorous micro pavé platinum band. It was a delicate, feminine design that I could easily imagine had been made especially for me, even though the diamond was larger than anything I would pick out for myself. One thing was for sure, though, nobody looking at me would miss it. I was sure that had factored into Nic's thought process when he was picking it out, but this was one occasion where I wasn't going to hold his caveman tendencies against him.

Tears streamed down my cheeks as he lifted the ring from the box and slid it on my finger. "Weren't you supposed to ask me something first?" I sniffled.

He rose from his knees, pulling me tightly against his hard body. His head lowered, his mouth crashing down against mine in a thorough kiss. His tongue swept inside, tangling with mine. He didn't stop until I was weak in the knees and leaning into him so I could stand.

"There's nothing to ask," he whispered against my lips.

I pushed at his chest, but almost forgot my point as the diamond ring twinkled up at me. Straightening my spine, I jutted my chin out at him. "You got down on your knee, but you didn't actually ask me to marry you."

"I didn't need to." He shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly.

"You're ruining a perfectly romantic moment," I chided.

"You're lucky you got me on my knees without your sweet pussy in my mouth," he growled into my ear, making my legs tremble. "And I don't need to ask because you already said yes."

"Under duress," I moaned when he nibbled at my neck.

“Were you under duress when you called me your fiancé to the nurse at the hospital?”

I couldn't believe it; I'd been ratted out by his mom. “Oh, never mind,” I grumbled.

His laughter rang in my ears as he tangled his fingers with mine and led me downstairs, his thumb sliding along the ring as we walked. Four men were waiting for us in the living room. They were unlike the others I'd seen hanging around Nic. Although they were dressed much the same, in dark suits with sunglasses, they reminded me of soldiers. Tightly cropped hair, paired with an air of restrained power and supreme confidence, set them apart from Nic's men. Not that the guys I'd seen around were buffoons or anything like that, they just weren't up to quite the same level as these men.

They stood as we entered the room, their attention somehow focused on Nic and I but still scanning the area for possible threats. Nic kept me anchored to his side as he introduced me to them, calling me his fiancée and practically peeing circles around me to make it abundantly clear I was under their protection, but off limits.

Each of the men shook my hand, their gazes completely professional without the slightest hint of flirtation. And yet when the last one turned to Nic after our introduction, his eyes lit with humor.

“Another one bites the dust,” he murmured.

“Shaddup,” Nic drawled.

His exaggerated mafia-guy accent made me giggle, drawing both men's gazes my way. Nic practically growled at the bodyguard, tugging me closer to his side.

“Brecken wasn't kidding when he said you were gone over her.” He glanced down at my hand where it rested on Nic's arm. “I'm pretty sure they can see that rock from outer space, dude.”

“It's not that big,” Nic grumbled.

“Maybe you should knock her up just in case the ring doesn't warn other guys off her,” the other guy joked. “It

worked for Brecken with Hadley.”

I buried my face in Nic’s side, blushing wildly in mortification at their turn of topic. It had been less than a week ago that I’d been a virgin, and here I was standing with Nic while a stranger talked about him knocking me up.

“Enough, Devon,” Nic bit out. “You’d do well to remember who you’re speaking to.”

I shivered at his hard tone and the icy look he sent Devon’s way. Any sign of humor, which had been there moments before, was wiped clean away at my discomfort. As we left the house and headed back to the hospital, I was comforted by Nic’s protection of my sensibilities, as antiquated as they might be. And yet, I couldn’t help but note the one thing he hadn’t done—not once had he denied that he’d been trying to get me pregnant. He couldn’t, not when he seemed to be doing his best to make it true.

Chapter 6

Nic

Sophia was coming home.

I hugged Gianna to my side tightly as we thanked Dr. McGowan for the news and hurried into her hospital room. My mother had already packed up her things, and we were able to get her out the door and home by lunch. The activity took a lot out of her, and when we arrived, I carried her up to her room. I laid her on the bed and tucked her in, kissing her forehead before making my way back downstairs.

Voices floated back from the kitchen and I smiled, thinking about my family as I walked down the hall. For so many years, Sophia had been my world. Now, I was so desperately in love with Gianna, and she fit perfectly into the space in my heart that had previously only been filled by Sophia. Hopefully, I would be making room for another addition soon.

I stopped in the doorway to the kitchen and drank in the sight of Gianna as she pattered around, making lunch. She shoed my mamma out of the kitchen casing her to grumble, but she winked at me as she left the room.

Gianna's long, dark hair was pulled up into a mess of curls, high on her head, showing off her beautiful face. Her sweater wasn't tight, but it clung to her curves and I stared at her flat belly, envisioning it swollen with our baby. Feeling my pants tighten at the thought, I started going over baseball stats in my head until I calmed down. When that didn't work, I moved on to ugly little men dancing around in my daughter's ballerina costume. Mission accomplished.

I slipped into the room silently and came up behind Gianna, closing my arms around her and holding her tight. She

gasped in surprise but melted the moment I nuzzled my face into her neck. “Mia dolce, you are so beautiful.”

I turned her around in the circle of my arms and kissed her, pouring out my love with every breath. When we came up for air, I was unable to keep a smug smile off of my face at the sight of her pink cheeks and lust glazed eyes. I pecked her on the nose and released her, allowing her to go back to cooking.

Putting my hands on the counter behind me, I leaned back and crossed one ankle over the other. I would have loved to stay there all day and watch her, but there was something I needed to do.

“Sophia will be asleep for several hours with the pain medication she took. I’m going to run an errand after we eat so I can be back here when she wakes.” I said nonchalantly.

She paused in her task and looked at me curiously. Obviously, I hadn’t done a good enough job disguising the importance of my errand. “What’s going on?”

“Nothing for you to worry about, mia dolce.”

She scowled with irritation but didn’t push for more information. I winked at her as she scooted by to reach a cupboard on the other side of me. I lightly smacked her sexy little ass and grinned when she glared at me, barely holding back a smile. Having taken off her shoes earlier, she wasn’t quite tall enough to reach the bowl on the top shelf, so I reached up and grabbed it, handing it over and stealing a kiss.

“Hmmm,” I mused as she stepped away, her cheeks pink with a sweet blush. “My ring is on your finger, you’re in our kitchen, barefoot. There’s only one thing missing from this picture, mia dolce.”

She hesitated and glanced at me warily. “About that—”

“Another time, Gianna.” I cut her off but softened my words with a smile. “I’d like to go soon so I can get back to my girls as quickly as possible.”

She looked like she wanted to argue, but she simply asked, “Tonight?”

“If we have time to sit and discuss it,” I answered noncommittally. She studied me for another moment, her eyes narrowed, then went back to tossing a salad before announcing lunch was ready.

I helped Gianna bring the food to the table and waited for her as she wrapped up a small, plain lunch, and put it in the refrigerator. Warmth filled me as I realized she’d made food for Sophia, keeping in mind that her stomach was sensitive because of her medication. Gianna was everything I could have ever dreamed of for a wife and mother of my children.

I rang the doorbell of a small apartment building situated not far from the Columbia campus. Gianna’s father was a math professor at the university, but she’d mentioned he had no classes on Mondays and worked from home.

When the door opened, I was surprised to see a beautiful woman, no older than her late forties, with mocha skin, short, curly hair, and twinkling brown eyes. I was sure I hadn’t gotten the address wrong, so I asked, “I’m looking for Mr. and Mrs. Martin, am I at the right home?”

She smiled brightly and something about her seemed familiar. “I’m Mrs. Martin, what can I do for you?”

I was taken aback by her response and more than a little confused. “You’re Gianna’s mother?” I asked. Then wanted to kick myself for how rude it must have sounded.

“Gianna?” A funny expression came over her face, but then she laughed again and nodded. “I am Anna’s mother,” she confirmed, “but I didn’t give birth to her.”

Her stepmother. I mentally rolled my eyes at myself for not considering that option. I decided to start over. “I’m Nic DeLuca.”

“Ah, Nic. I’ve been expecting you.”

“I—you have?”

She stepped back and waved me in as she spoke. “My daughter and I speak quite often, Nic. Hearing how you met

and the way she talks about you. I figured it was only a matter of time,” she said slyly.

I grinned, I already loved this woman, I could see the sass she’d passed down to her daughter. “She is irresistible.”

“I agree.” She held out her hand in greeting and I took it, kissing the back. “I’m Olivia Martin, but you can call me Livy. Please, come in.” She led me to a sitting room and when we entered, I was immediately drawn to the walls filled with my sweet Gianna. They told her life story and I studied every picture until I heard a deep voice from the doorway.

“DeLuca. It’s about time you got here. I was wondering if I was going to have to dig out my trusty shotgun.”

I turned to see a tall, olive-skinned man, with brown hair and a bushy mustache, both beginning to streak with gray. Livy smacked his arm and murmured something that sounded like “Behave.” His arm slipped around her waist and he pulled her close, placing a kiss on her forehead before turning back to me. It was easy to see where Gianna had learned to love so openly. I never doubted Gianna loved Sophia like her own, but from the way she spoke about her mother and seeing her parents together, it was clear that she had a deeper understanding of the love between a child and their parent, whether they are genetically related or not.

“I’m always on my best behavior, Olivia,” he laughed, squeezing her tighter before leading her to a couch. There was so much love and light in this house, it was easy to see Gianna growing up here.

Her father shook my hand firmly. “I’m Salvatore Martin. Take a seat.”

“Olivia—”

“Livy,” her father cut in, his tone stern. Livy rolled her eyes, but they sparkled with love when she looked at her husband.

“He doesn’t allow anyone else to call me Olivia. He used to tell Anna that the one for her would never let another call

her anything but Anna.” She eyed me knowingly, and I couldn’t help but return the gesture.

“Yes, I am the one for Gianna,” I stated clearly, making sure my tone emphasized the fact that this wasn’t up for debate. “My father is probably rolling over in his grave at the backwards way I’ve handled this. I’m going to be honest, I’ve already asked Gianna to marry me and she’s said yes. I’d like your blessing, but, and I mean no disrespect, should you withhold it, I’m keeping her anyway.”

“Is she pregnant?” Salvatore asked, his eyes narrowed and voice hard.

I lifted my chin, not in the least intimidated. “I hope so.”

He raised a brow, and I heard Livy stifle a laugh.

“Salvatore, I love your daughter more than anything on God’s green earth. She and my daughter are the center of my world, and I will do anything and everything to see that they are always happy and safe.”

Livy sniffled into a tissue and gave me a watery, but sincere smile. “I’m so happy for you two. All Anna has ever wanted was to be a wife and mother. It was all I wanted growing up too and I’m elated she is getting her dream as well.”

I looked to Salvatore, who was contemplating me. “You’ll keep her safe?” he reiterated. I’d wondered if either of them would recognize my name.

“Yes sir,” I responded fervently. “The safety of my family will always be my number one priority.”

He nodded and stood, walking over to me and holding out his hand. I got to my feet, and we shook before he pulled me in for a hug, slapping me on the back. A little harder than necessary, in my opinion.

“Welcome to the family, Nic. Now, you’d better get my little girl down the aisle and stop living in sin.” There was a threat in his voice, and I stored that away for future use in case it took more coercion to get Anna to marry me.

Livy hugged me as well, then I invited them to join us for brunch the following Sunday. They eagerly accepted, excited to see Anna and to meet Sophia and my mother.

Chapter 7

Anna

I woke up the same way I had for the last week or so, to the feel of Nic's hot breath against my skin. My legs spread wider, to give him more room as he wedged his shoulders between them.

"Morning," I moaned, my voice cracking.

"Need a taste of this sweet pussy," he growled.

"Oh my," I gasped. My clit throbbed, my body tightening and warming.

"Lift up and give it to me." His voice was pure sex, and it only made my pussy throb harder.

My hips rose off the mattress, as though they had a will of their own, my legs trembling at the touch of his tongue on my clit. He gave it a slow lick, and my fingers clenched in the sheets. Then he flicked his tongue around my clit, and my hips hiked farther up. I couldn't tear my eyes away from the sight of his dark head bent between my legs as he tortured me with his mouth. I whimpered in need and the sound spurred him on. He ate me like he couldn't get enough of my taste, tongue-fucking me until I was hanging by a thread, so close to a huge orgasm but unable to quite get there.

"Please," I begged, desperate to come.

He chuckled darkly before wrapping his lips around my clit, sucking hard, and thrusting two fingers inside me. Twisting his wrist as he plunged them in and out of me, it didn't take long for me to fly over the edge. Nic took several more licks at me before he released my hips and let them drop back down onto the mattress. I was a boneless heap while he kissed up my body and nibbled at my neck. I felt his hardness,

hot against my leg. I shifted my hips, fully expecting him to take advantage of our position and slide inside me. I was surprised when he pulled away and dropped a kiss onto the top of my head instead.

“But what about you?” I asked, sliding my palm up his thigh.

He wrapped his hand around my wrist, stopping my upward progress and making my eyes bug out.

“No time,” he murmured. “But you can make it up to me later by wrapping your lips around my cock and sucking me off.”

His dirty words sent a blush racing up my chest to my face. I wanted that, him in my mouth. It made me feel powerful to watch him lose control. But I wanted it to happen sooner rather than later. Blinking up at him innocently, I swiped my tongue across my bottom lip before biting it.

“Don’t make it any harder than it already is, bellissima,” he growled, making me giggle at the play on words as I glanced down at his hard-on. “Not with your parents due to arrive in thirty minutes.”

“My parents?” I shrieked. It was like a splash of cold water on my libido. I grabbed at the sheets and pulled them over my body, as though my dad could see into our bedroom and would find me sprawled naked in bed. “What? How? Why?”

“I invited them over for brunch.”

He answered so matter-of-factly, as though the words should make sense to me.

“You invited them over for brunch,” I repeated. “My parents. Whom you’ve never even met.”

“I met them last week,” he informed me.

“What do you mean you met them last week?” I cried out, utterly confused and totally frustrated with his lack of communication. “And why am I only hearing about this just now?”

“Because I wanted to do something special for you. I know how much you love your parents, and I didn’t want you to worry about them accepting us.” He pulled me off the mattress, sheets and all, and set me onto my feet in front of him. “I’ve already broken the ice and made sure they understand how much you mean to me. You have nothing to worry about.”

My heart melted, and I wrapped my arms around his waist, resting my head against his chest. “You’re so good to me.”

“I promise to be especially bad to you tonight,” he murmured huskily. Then he stepped away, swatting me on my butt before pushing me towards the closet.

I heard the doorbell ringing as I was setting my brush down. I spared myself a quick glance in the mirror, pleased to see my eyes were bright and my cheeks flushed with color. Luckily, there was no need for make-up, and I headed for the stairs. I reached the bottom just in time to see Nic open the door to my parents. Sophia was peeking at them from behind him, her arms wrapped around his legs.

I moved forward, resting my hand on the top of her hair as I bent down to whisper in her ear. “I bet if you ask my dad nicely, he’ll give you one of the caramels he’s always carrying around in his pockets.”

Her eyes lit up and she smiled radiantly at me. Her hand slipped into mine and we moved forward to greet my parents. “Mom and Dad, this is my precious Sophia.” My parents crouched down until they were eye-to-eye with her, huge smiles on their faces. “And Sophia, this is my mom and dad.”

“Hello,” Sophia said shyly.

“Hello, sweet girl. How about you give your new Grandma and Grandpa a hug?” my mom asked. When I’d called to tell them about the engagement, I should have realized my mom was as excited about Sophia as she was about me getting married.

“More grandparents?” she asked in a loud whisper, her eyes huge as she looked up at me.

“Yes, sweetie. With your daddy and I getting married, you get two new grandparents.”

“Wow!” she squealed, losing all her shyness and launching herself into their arms while jabbering a mile a minute. Her words only came more quickly when my dad took several of his favorite caramels out of his pocket. He tucked one into her hand and put the others into her pockets for later.

Nic offered my parents a tour of the house, but my mom declined, picking up a bag of groceries she’d set down and instructing me to lead her to the kitchen. My dad took him up on the offer, following after him with Sophia on his shoulders.

Allegra hadn’t made it downstairs yet, but it looked like she’d made sure the fridge was fully stocked for our brunch. We were chopping, stirring, baking, and sautéing in no time. I had always loved to cook with my mom, and it was especially nice to be doing so in my kitchen, in the home I shared with Nic.

“He’s perfect for you,” she sighed.

“B-b-but—“ I stuttered before just blurting it out. “He’s in the mafia.”

“Uhhuh,” she murmured, pulling a pan of toasted baguette slices from the broiler. She didn’t even react to my announcement as she spread a honey and ricotta mixture on the slices and topped them with a strawberry, balsamic, and mint concoction. It was one of my favorite dishes, and she’d brought the ingredients with her just so she could make it for me. It was the perfect recipe to follow brunch, but as much as I appreciated her thoughtfulness, I would prefer her to take this seriously.

“Mom,” I hissed. “Nic is a mafia boss. He’s into illegal stuff. I expected you to have some kind of reaction to this information. Shouldn’t you be telling me to find a nice boy to marry?”

She laughed lightly as she arranged the pieces on the plate until they were to her liking. Then she looked up at me and smiled, patting my cheek. “Sorry, sweetie. He made us an offer

we couldn't refuse." My jaw dropped. "Besides which, it isn't like we didn't already know who he was before he came to visit us."

My mom was making mobster jokes about my fiancé who really was the head of the mafia.

"What kind of offer?" I couldn't imagine a single thing he could give them that would make my parents not care about his background.

"To love and care for you."

I sighed dreamily, picturing Nic telling my parents that he loved me. There was only one problem with the vision in my head. "But neither of us have actually said the words to each other."

"Niccolo!" Allegra called out from behind me. I swiveled around to find her standing in the doorway, muttering in Italian under her breath. I hadn't heard her come in, but she was the furthest thing from quiet when Nic walked into the kitchen, and she lit into him. I couldn't understand half of what she said, but Nic apparently didn't have the same problem based on the look of dismay which crossed his face.

"Basta, Mamma." He cut her off mid-rant and turned to me. "Of course, Gianna knows I love her."

My eyes widened and filled with tears as I shook my head. He stalked towards me, pulling me tightly against his chest and claiming my mouth in a passionate kiss, uncaring who our audience was. By the time he let me up for air, my tears were gone and I was breathing heavily.

"Silly woman," he murmured against my lips. "Of course I love you."

"I love you, too," I whispered back.

"Perfetto!" Allegra clapped.

"Indeed," my mom sighed. "And perfectly timed, too, since brunch is ready to be served."

And so the blending of our families began—with love, acceptance, and delicious food.

Chapter 8

Nic

I shook Salvatore's hand and kissed Livy on the cheek, earning me a bit of a glare from Gianna's dad. After brunch, we'd all attended mass together and were departing to go our separate ways from the church. Gianna hugged her parents goodbye, and I smiled when Sophia did the same. She'd taken to Salvatore and Livy, as though they'd been part of the family all of her life. In fact, we'd blended together almost seamlessly.

I was almost struck speechless when I realized I hadn't told Gianna I loved her. I'd thought it so many times. It hadn't occurred to me that she would question my love for her, and I hated the idea that she had. Heat shot through me as I thought about all the ways I planned to make it up to her.

We climbed into the black town car and took the short ride home, our bodyguards in the car behind us. After we arrived, my mother announced she was going to rest and would probably be in for the night.

"Daddy?" I didn't think I would ever stop feeling the rush from hearing her call me that.

I lifted her into my arms and kissed her nose, making her giggle. "What, preziosa?"

"Can we go to the park?"

It was on the tip of my tongue to say no, Sophia had only been home from the hospital a week, but Gianna chimed in. "Of course we can, sweetheart. As long as you promise to take it easy. No running, okay?"

Sophia's head bobbed up and down as she squirmed, prompting me to set her on her feet. She started to run up the

stairs, then stopped and threw us a quick glance. We pretended not to notice, and she continued up the stairs at a more sedate pace. I chuckled at my adorable baby girl, and Gianna held her hand over her mouth, clearly trying to stifle her laughter as well.

Grabbing her hand, I pulled her into the sitting room and backed her up against a wall. Letting go, I caged her between my arms with my palms on the wall.

“You are an amazing mother, *mia dolce*.” She blushed, but I wasn’t finished. “And I want you to feel free to make decisions in regards to Sophia. In this house, and in private, you may contradict me as much as you want.” Her eyebrows fell and she looked wary at the hardening of my voice. “But in public, or around those I work with, you are not to question my decisions.”

Her eyes darkened with anger and she looked away. I gripped her jaw with one hand, turning her eyes back to me. “I cannot be seen as weak, especially right now with all of the fucking trouble brewing between us and the O’Reillys. It puts you and our family in even more danger if they think I cannot protect you.”

Tears began to fill her eyes, and I softened my tone a little, hating the sight. “You are what makes me strong, *mia dolce*. But to the old fashioned and pigheaded men I work with, they won’t see it that way. All I’m asking is that you wait until we are alone to voice your opinions.”

“Fine,” she huffed with a nod. I kissed her lightly, satisfied to see some of the hurt leak out of her eyes.

“One more thing—” my fingers tightened a little more on her chin—“you will stay with your bodyguards at all times. Are we clear, Gianna? No giving them the slip or going anywhere they cannot follow you. If you do, I swear, your sweet little ass will be cherry red when I’m done spanking you.”

Her mossy-green eyes heated, and I swallowed a moan as I realized she was aroused by the comment. “Hmmm, seems my sweet little innocent wants to get dirty. Is that what you want,

mia dolce? For me to smack your pretty little ass before I fuck you until you scream so loud they'll hear you in Brooklyn?"

She sucked in a quick breath and her cheeks flushed, a mixture of shyness and desire. It was impossible not to kiss her, but I kept my lust at bay, mindful that Sophia would appear at any moment.

The thought must have conjured her up because she skipped into the room happily. When she saw me holding Gianna in my arms, she smiled widely and launched herself at us. "Group hug!" she squealed. I burst into laughter and held both my girls close, love spilling from my overly full heart.

After a picnic in the park, we spent the evening, just the three of us, watching a movie and snuggling on the couch. Halfway through, Sophia fell asleep curled into Gianna's side, and I scooped her into my arms and took her to her room. Together, we changed her into pajamas and tucked her into her pink, princess bed.

I loved spending time with my daughter, but it was time to collect Gianna's debt from the morning. Taking her hand, I led her into our bedroom and shut the door. Then I walked swiftly to the closet and rummaged around in a bag of silk and lace I'd purchased earlier in the week. Finding what I was looking for, I went back into the room and tossed it to her.

"Put this on, mia dolce."

She glanced down at the garment in her hands and her mouth dropped open into a little *O*. The adorable blush I loved so much infused her face as she scurried towards the bathroom, closing the door behind her. I stripped down to my black boxer briefs and waited, impatiently, for her to return. After a few minutes, I padded over to the door and knocked lightly.

"Come out, mia dolce."

"No," she squeaked.

"Now, Gianna," I commanded impatiently. I was hanging by a thread, ready to bust through the door and fuck her. But I wanted to see my cock disappearing between her pink lips

even more. “Every minute you make me wait is another minute I’ll make you beg me to let you come,” I threatened gruffly.

The door finally cracked open, and I pushed it in all of the way, forcing her to step around it and into my line of vision.

Holy fucking shit.

The lacy, pale pink teddy clung to her every curve, the top lifting her magnificent tits up like an offering. The front got more narrow as it moved southward and by the time it reached her pussy, it was only enough to lie between the lips, getting drenched by the wetness already dripping from her sex. I twisted my finger in a circle, indicating I wanted her to spin for the full effect. She turned and my breath caught as the two large, silk straps crossed on their way down her back, attaching to a G-string, showing off her incredible ass. She was my every fantasy come true.

“So fucking beautiful,” I whispered in awe. My reaction seemed to give her a little more confidence, and she sauntered past me into the bedroom.

I was on fire and so fucking desperate. Stalking to the bed, I grabbed a pillow and tossed it to the ground. Then I took her hand and helped her to lower down onto her knees. I slid my underwear down, hissing when it caught on the tip of my rigid and aching cock. Gianna eyed my length hungrily and licked her lips, the sight of her pink tongue causing me to leak even more pre-come. I took my cock in hand and positioned myself directly in front of her.

“Open, bellissima.”

Gianna obediently opened her mouth, and I guided the glistening tip of my cock around her lips, my blood thickening at the sight. Her tongue snaked out to lick the tip and I groaned. Unable to wait any longer, I began to feed her my cock, breathing deeply with every inch, fighting to keep from coming.

“That’s it, bellissima,” I gritted out. “Keep going. Take it—oh fuck that feels good.” Finally, I bumped the back of her

throat and held still to revel in the feel of her hot, wet mouth wrapped around my dick. We'd worked on her gag reflex, and she took all ten inches like it was made for her. "Lick it," I directed softly. Her tongue swirled around the head, pressing against the slit at the top, and letting it go with a pop so she could run her tongue along the bottom vein. I shuddered in pleasure and drove my fingers into her hair, clenching and tilting her head back again. "Suck it, Gianna. Hard," I directed, my voice becoming rougher. Taking me to the back once again, she did as she was told, hollowing out her cheeks and milking my cock with deep pulls. "Oh fuck yes," I groaned, throwing my head back and squeezing my eyes shut. Her head began to bob up and down as she hummed around me, the vibrations sending jolts of electricity straight through me.

I opened my eyes and looked down to see her staring back at me. Fisting my hands in her hair, I kept her in place, and growled, "Keep your eyes on me, Gianna. Don't look away. And, you will take everything I have to give you, do you understand? Every drop."

I unclenched my fingers enough for her to nod, then tightened them again, holding her head back to the perfect angle. My hips began to pump, fucking her perfect mouth, thrusting to the back and dragging myself out as she sucked and moaned. Without breaking the connection between our eyes, I stifled a shout as my release began to pour down her throat. I was so far back, it went right down, but she swallowed and it heightened the grip she had on my cock, sucking me dry.

Once I was empty, I pulled out, only to realize I was still hard and growing to the point of pain as my gaze dragged over her delectable body. Reaching down, I helped her to her feet and pulled her into me, taking her lips in a passionate kiss, my hands splaying across her back.

"You did so good, mia dolce," I crooned. "I think you deserve a reward." I slid my hands low and grasped the round globes of her ass, lifting her so her legs wrapped around me. Taking her to the bed, I set her on her knees, facing me. Our height difference put her almost eye to eye with me.

I twisted the G-string around my fingers and grinned wickedly when she gasped. The fabric pulled and caused friction from the strap running through the middle of her pussy. A shudder ran through her and it tensed my every muscle, causing the strings to snap. The sound seemed to mirror the tear in the last thread of my control.

I flipped her around and used a hand at the back of her neck to push her face down into the comforter. “Stay there.” My tone made it clear I expected to be obeyed, so when she lifted a little to look back at me, I spanked one cheek hard, leaving a red print on the creamy skin. She sucked in a breath, even as she moaned, and I raised an eyebrow, waiting. Once she’d gotten back into position, I gripped her hips with both hands, lifting and tilting until I was satisfied, and slammed inside her pussy.

“Oh, holy shit!” Gianna cried out.

It was the first time I’d ever heard her swear, and for some reason, it brought out the savage in me, and I pumped into her wildly. Every thrust sent my balls slapping against her clit, and she cried out loud enough that I put my hand over her mouth.

“You’re so tight, bellissima. So fucking soaked, your cream is all over my cock,” I groaned. “Fuck. Fuck. Fuck” I chanted, trying not to shout in ecstasy. “I’m so deep. Tilt your pussy. Yes, just like that, oh fuck!”

The walls of her pussy began to bear down, strangling my cock, but she was so wet I still slid in and out smoothly. Her cries into my hand became screams, and it was all I could take. Lifting a knee onto the bed, I hit just the right spot and together, we splintered into a million pieces.

“I love you, mia dolce,” I panted, resting my head on the damp skin of her back.

“I love you, too,” she answered, with her body still shaking from her climax.

Our heartbeats calmed, and I helped her remove the ruined lingerie before climbing into bed and cuddling her into my arms. My front was to her back, and I laced the fingers of one

hand with hers, setting them across her belly, my pinky finger rubbing idly over her engagement ring.

I nuzzled into her neck, inhaling her sweet scent. “I can’t wait to lay with you like this, our hand resting over your belly, full with my child.” I slid our hands up to cup one of her large tits, squeezing as I added, “I want to see these spectacular tits grow and fill with milk.” My cock obviously liked the sound of those things too, because he was growing harder. Journeying our hands back down, I took them all the way to her pussy, dipping our fingers inside and finding her drenched. “You like the sound of that, mia dolce? Your pussy is telling me you do.”

She moaned as our fingers played with her clit. It seemed a crime not to give us both what we wanted, so I took her twice more, filling her to the brim with my seed, and ordering those little fuckers to do their job.

When I woke to the sight of Gianna’s sexy, naked ass bolting for the bathroom, I smiled smugly. I’d knocked up my woman. *Missione compiuta.*

Chapter 9

Anna

Ugh. I knew I shouldn't have eaten so much yesterday, but I couldn't resist my mom's strawberry-ricotta bruschetta. Boy, was I paying the price for my over indulgence, as I puked so hard it felt like my insides were being forced out of me. I didn't see any humor in the situation, but apparently Nic did because he was staring down at me with a huge grin on his face. I glared up at him, even as he laid a cool washcloth on my forehead and rubbed soothing circles on my back.

"This isn't funny," I moaned. "I don't think I'm ever going to be able to eat one of my favorite dishes again after this."

"You never know what cravings you'll have," he chuckled. "Maybe you'll get lucky and bruschetta will be the only thing you want."

Just hearing the word 'bruschetta' was enough to set off another round of puking. By the time I was done, my stomach was completely empty and I was thoroughly drained. Nic cleaned me up, helped me brush my teeth, and carried me back to bed. I tried to focus on why he mentioned cravings and dropped a kiss onto my belly before he left the room, but I was too tired to figure it all out before I drifted off to sleep.

I woke up a couple of hours later feeling much improved. A little hungry even. When I padded down to the kitchen, I was glad I'd taken the time to dress before leaving our bedroom because I found Sophia there with two of the guards.

"Morning, sweetie." I dropped a kiss on Sophia's forehead and headed over to the toaster to pop a couple of slices of bread inside. "You hungry?"

“No, Daddy made me pancakes,” she replied, looking up from the picture she was coloring. “He said I should be quiet like a mouse until you woke up because you needed extra sleep, but now that you’re awake I don’t have to be a mouse anymore, right?”

“I don’t know.” I cocked my head and squinted my eyes at her. “You do make an adorable mouse.”

“I’m not a real mouse!” she squealed, jumping off her chair. “Just quiet like one and now I want to be loud, loud, loud.”

“How about we go to the park, and you can be as loud as you want as long as you don’t overdo it and get too tired?”

“Yay!” she shrieked. “I love the park.”

“Head upstairs, change into play clothes, and we’ll go as soon as I’ve eaten my toast.”

“Okie-dokie,” she tossed over her shoulder as she skipped to the stairs.

“We only have two men available to accompany you to the park this morning, Miss Martin. Mr. DeLuca has a meeting and the other men will be covering him there.”

I was startled by the sound of the guard speaking, since they mostly faded into the background.

“We go to the park all the time,” I muttered, nibbling on the edge of the dry toast when it popped up.

“Maybe this afternoon would be better,” he suggested.

I barely restrained myself from rolling my eyes as I wandered down the hall towards Nic’s office. We were always surrounded by men, but it had been weeks and there hadn’t been any sign of the danger Nic was trying to protect us from. But if the guard didn’t think it was safe, I figured it was best to run our trip to the park past Nic before we left. As I neared his office, I heard his voice through the door. It was low with an undercurrent of irritation.

“You’d better find O’Reilly and his son. Soon. Really fucking soon. Brandon hasn’t seen any sign of them on Carly’s

trail. I might not know what the hell they're up to, but I'll damn well put a bullet in you if they manage to get close to my family."

Discomfort twisted inside me at the verbal reminder of the kind of man Nic was outside of our home. I tapped lightly on the door and cracked it open, drawing Nic's attention to me. He ended the call and strolled over to me, stopping in front of me and running a fingertip along my cheek. "I like seeing the color back in your face."

"I'm feeling much better."

"I'm sure you are," he replied, cryptically.

"In fact, I feel so good that I'd like to take Sophia to the park this morning." It's a question couched as a statement because I'm annoyed that I have to ask permission for something so mundane.

"I have a meeting and won't be available until this afternoon," he answered, his voice full of regret.

"We're just going across the street and we'll have two guards with us the entire time."

"Gianna," he groaned. "Why is it so impossible to tell you no?"

"Because you love me," I quipped with a smile.

"I really do," he murmured against my lips before claiming them in a hard kiss.

The trip to the park was as uneventful as I'd expected. I pushed Sophia on the swing, watched as she went down the slide, and chased after her in the open field. As we were riding the carousel, I started to feel light-headed and was relieved when she told me she needed to use the bathroom. The guards were standing, each one covering an entrance to the open area in front of the ride. Their heads were swiveling as they assessed the area for possible threats, particularly the tunnels under the bridges where, I suppose, someone could easily be hiding in the shadows. There were so many people milling around, it seemed like overkill to me. I jerked my head towards the public restroom across the way to let them know

where we were headed, before I helped Sophia off a brightly painted, wooden horse. As soon as her feet hit the ground, she was off, racing ahead of me. I moved as quickly as I could to catch up to her, reaching her just as she was a few feet away from the bathroom door. I placed my hand on her shoulder to slow her down, ready to remind her about not running off like that when I noticed the shadow of two men coming up behind us, quickly. Looking over my shoulder, I expected to see the guards. I was shocked when I found two burly men I'd never seen before, their hands outstretched as they reached past me for Sophia.

“Run!” I screamed at Sophia, stepping into their path. She looked up at me in startled confusion, never having heard me raise my voice to her before. I gave her a little shove. “Get to Daddy’s friends. Now!”

Her wide eyes filled with tears, but she nodded and went running past us. One minute, I was watching Sophia’s little legs moving as fast as they could as she ran to the guards who were running towards us, and the next, I saw nothing but black as something was dropped over my head. Strong arms wrapped around the middle of my body and lifted me off the ground. It felt like I was hefted over somebody’s shoulder and then I was flying through the air, landing hard on my side on a firm, carpeted surface. I heard the roaring of an engine, the squealing of tires, and then I went flying until somebody reached out and pushed me back down. They weren’t the least bit gentle, and I didn’t think for a moment that they’d done it to protect me from harm.

I opened my mouth to scream, but it came out as a startled yelp when I heard a rough voice in my ear. “I told ‘em ta go after the girl. It seemed only fair since DeLuca cost me a daughter, don’ ya think?”

Oh, crap. This was really bad.

“Everyone knows DeLuca is a sucker for his young one, but ya just wouldn’t let me boys get to her, would ya?”

I felt crushing pain in my wrist as my hand was lifted, followed by a sharp tug on the ring on my finger.

“Judging by the size o’ this rock, I’m thinking I still managed to catch meself a mighty fine prize.”

Then I felt the sharp prick of a needle in my arm, and I stopped seeing the black of the hood they’d shoved over my head. I was too busy passing out from whatever they’d shot me up with, the sound of harsh laughter ringing in my ears.

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About the Author

Hello! My name is Fiona Davenport and I'm a smutoholic. I've been reading raunchy romance novels since... well, forever and a day ago it seems. And now I get to write sexy stories and share them with others who are like me and enjoy their books on the steamier side. Fiona Davenport is my super-secret alias, which is kind of awesome since I've always wanted one.

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