

S . H



the
MAFIA

Ring *La cosa nostra*

"To insanity Isabella Knight"
"To insanity Vincenzo King"

The Mafia King
Series book no.1

S.H

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all my mafia lovers enjoy this fiction, and a special thank you to my inspiration for one of the characters 'Lorenzo' for reading and always supporting me no matter what. I owe you a lot and appreciate all you did and continue to do, for giving me the confidence to write the book, to publish it and for being there from the beginning.

TRIGGER WARNINGS

This book contains sexual content, mature themes, description of torture and sexual harassments (not in detail but mentions it) in the book a warning has been presented during the sexual scene's along with sexual harassment scenes to give readers a chance to skip over if they feel uncomfortable reading such content.

PSA

(PSA this is not the end of the mafia king, this is just book #1 book #2 will be a continuous of this one only with a small time jump.)

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PROLOGUE

My entire body was shaking, how dare she. I step away from Vincenzo as I approach his mum the closer, I get, the angrier I become. “How long?” I question. I keep my gaze fixated on her daring her to speak. I could feel my eyes darkening, as my mind begins recalling the horrors I once had to endure. She looks at me confused almost scared. “Listen I-” putting my hand up cutting her off I point a finger at her and repeat myself.

“I said. How. long?” my voice becoming rigid as I felt the hairs on my body stand up. No response I nodded my head elaborating, “How long do you think it would take you to break, if I simply left you in a cold, dark cell to rot?” I slightly tilt my head giving her time to process my question. “I know the answer” I state, with a cynical smile begging to form on my lips as I fought back tears. Anna’s chest visibly tightened at my statement. “Humans need company” I murmured as I took a step back looking out the window dazing off a little.

“They go a little crazy without it. You hate me so much, perhaps you’d prefer to be left on your own, hm? No parents, no family ... completely cut off from the world. Isolated made to feel like a dog. The only form of human contact being the man torturing you repeatedly. enduring all kinds of torture being used against your will”

I turned around facing Anna once again, tilting my head slightly. “I always imagined that’s what death would be like. A cold, dark cell, unable to move or do anything. Trapped in your own head with no one else to guide you out of the dark places you end up in. An eternity of conscious nothingness.”

THE BEGINNING

Isabella’s POV

Flashback (trigger warning)

I let out a sigh looking around the darkroom, my panic rising hearing footsteps approaching me, “NO! PLEASE! STOP!” I scream trying to scoot away, the chains wrapped around my wrists and ankles making it hard to do anything. Tugging and pulling at my skin leaving a burning sensation the more I struggle against them. “Hello gorgeous” he whispers, I look up at his silhouette the only source of light was from the dangling light bulb that he would turn on when he came down.

“Please stop” I softly cried pleading for him to leave me alone my body physically and mentally drained unable to put up any

sort of fight I can't do this I'm not strong enough to handle the torture today, or ever again.

He bowed down sitting next to me, placing his arms around me and pulling me in. I mentally gagged, immediately cringing burying my head in my shoulder. Upon contact, my body immediately trying to get away from him squirming and struggling against his hold.

The more I struggled the harder and tighter he held onto me like he was scared I'd win and escape. My body throbbed and my soul began begging for its end so it can finally rest. I looked at him dead in the eye and felt my body go limp giving up.

"it's funny" he laughed softly; I looked up at him confused "what?" I mumbled my voice barely heard from the lack of will. "Your plea to stop ... that's exactly how your parents said before I shot them" He laughed harder, the sudden wave of energy washed over me rage and anger were more powerful than anyone thinks.

I head-butted his nose "Put a" I spat watching him bend down, holding his bleeding nose in his hands, taking advantage of his state I lay flat on my back bring my knees to my chest and push out with as much force as I could master kicking him in his head with the heels of my feet.

He falls down groaning in pain he quickly gets up whipping away the blood that began pouring from his nose, "Oh, you're going to regret that" he threatened, "drop dead" I hissed trying to scoot away as the chains around my hands and legs left a deep bloody scar. "Until then my love I'll make you wish you were dead" he smiled looking down at me my heart starting to beat rapidly knowing what was to come. "Don't you dare" I warned closing my legs shut.

He grabbed them forcing them open and forcing my panties off. "NO!" I yelled feeling powerless, I screamed and yelled but nothing no one came to save me. No. One. "PAPA! MAMA" I yelled praying they were looking down on me, I look up at the roof and beg for help.

I let out a gasp feeling it, I cried out “Get off of me!” I begged. Taking control over me he forcefully pins me down I let out a whimper looking back up at the roof one last time I whisper “Look away”

End of flashback

I jolted out of bed screaming, my chest rising and falling rapidly I put my hand on my chest trying to calm myself down.

I sighed and sat on the edge of the bed still breathing heavily. Even in my dreams he won't go away, even seas away from him I couldn't escape him or the nightmares he put me through. I closed my eyes and ran my fingers through my hair desperately trying to calm down.

I should've killed him when I had the chance. I snap my head towards the door when I hear Maria screaming from the hallway, I quickly jolted out of bed and ran outside seeing her on the floor covering her head with her arms.

I pushed him off her and quickly got her up to her feet, “GO!” I yelled, she looked at me hesitantly before she dashed off to our room and closed the door, locking it in the process.

He quickly grabbed a fist of my hair dragging me to the bathroom filling the bathtub with water, he dunked my head underneath. Struggling to breath I try pulling myself out, after a moment or two he quickly takes me out. Panting I elbowed him in the stomach and ran out of the bathroom, not far behind he catches up and kicks me to the floor.

“Fuck you” I hissed, as I stared the man who adopted me and Maria down. Our eyes locked in an intense face-off. My body internally shut down with every punch and kick but my mind regenerating reminding me of the promise I made forcing me to fight. “Worthless” he spits at me, I looked up at him, my eyes meeting his cold drunken stare. “Go fuck yourself!” the second those words left my mouth, his foot collided with my stomach again and again until he started losing balance from his obvious drunken state.

I clutched my stomach holding it tight suppressing a groan. I looked up at him again “do it!” daring him to finish the job he knelt and grabbed a fistful of my hair lifting my head up from the ground. I grunted and tried to move back, his lips near my ear “I’m not done with you yet” He smirked

Slamming my head back on the ground. I let out a groan pulling myself back up slowly, I searched the room for him again, but he was gone. Lifting my limp body up slowly I listened hearing him scream out Maria’s name.

My heart was pounding, sending my body into fight mode the adrenaline surged through my blood, I chased after him trying to shield Maria from any pain.

“MARIA CIERA LA PUERTA!” I yelled for her to close the door. “OPEN THE DOOR!” He banged on the door and the old door frame began slowly caving in, seeing the cracks getting bigger I panicked.

He looked over at me his features darkening as his scowl became demonic but like a baby devil, he was nothing compared to what I’ve dealt with. “I’ll take it” I spoke up my voice cracking feeling my entire body begin throbbing, “oh you will?” he mocked looking me up and down “he was right about you” he whispered so low I barely heard him. Who was he talking about?

“Your death is closer than you think” he lowly mumbled.

“Genuine question who told you I was scared of death? For a guy who’s been threatening to kill me for years, you would think you’d do it by now” I gestured to myself still being very much alive. “I’m starting to doubt your commitment” I smiled tilting my head watching his anger levels rise higher and higher. He smashed his beer bottle on the floor picking a piece of glass and lunging for me.

I didn’t move or give him any satisfaction; he stopped right in front of me “You’re not scared” He looked me up and down waiting for a single sign to show him that he had the upper hand. Not breaking eye contact I calmly responded “No.” He

pressed the piece of glass behind my ear. I hissed shutting my eyes my jaw tensing trying to suppress the scream that was dying to come out.

“I’m going to kill you” He whispered harshly in my ear. I smiled “If your aim is to seem threatening don’t go straight for death” I spoke out giving him some pointers from experience.

“Describe how you’ll torture me. The way you’ll destroy all that I stand for.” I grabbed his wrist moving him away from me, twisting it behind his back I stood up taking my position behind him holding his wrist in place forcing his torso up against the wall.

Leaning down towards his ear “I’m going to use this piece of glass” I dragged my finger over the glass he had in his hand and looked back up at him “I’m going to show you how many inventive ways I can torture you, I’ll have you screaming and begging me to end it! Every cell in your body will scream at you to die your soul will try to escape” I pushed him up against a wall twisting his arm higher up.

“But I won’t let your soul leave ... not until I say so, and I’ll make sure my face is the last thing you ever see” I hissed tightening my grip. His body stiffened, his colour draining from his body. Not daring to look at me he remains still.

“See describing what you’ll do is much more intimidating, it gets the imagination running” from the corner of my eyes I saw Maria watching me I bit back the urge to kill him for her sake and pushed him to the floor dashing for our bedroom before he could get back up.

Quickly shutting the door behind me I’m greeted by a scared tear-stained Maria. She jumped hugging me as if she was scared this might be the last time, she will ever see me. Or she was scared I was going backwards.

“Shh,” I cooed, “I’m okay, we’re okay” I whispered into her neck in hopes to calm her down. She sobbed uncontrollably into my shoulder, and I tightened my embrace on her. After a

few minutes, she calmed down but never realised her grip on me.

“I was so scared, I thought he was going to kill you” she cried, I cupped her cheeks and made her look directly at me. “Maria we are in this forever, your breathing? I’m breathing. You’re smiling? I’m smiling. Your alive? I’m alive.” I reassured her in all aspects she eyed me, studying my facial expressions trying to decipher if I was telling the truth. After she concluded that I was okay she wiped the tears off her face.

I don’t know how much longer I can handle this, the constant worrying, the constant beatings I need an escape. We both need to escape, to start over in a city no one knows who we are. “We need to figure a way out. Our grandparents didn’t send us away from one psychopath just to be trapped with another one” I sighed bowing my head. I walk towards Maria and stand in front of her, “We managed to escape one sociopath ... You managed to get us out.” Maria breathes in a deep breath recalling the events of that night.

“How do you want to escape?” Maria whispered I shrug “I don’t know how ... yet but we will figure something out” We lay on the bed and try discussing a way out. That was until we both started getting sleepy, our eyelids becoming heavier and heavier before we both eventually fell asleep from exhaustion.

X

The sound of two loud bangs made my body jolt awake and I quickly scanned the room for Maria, seeing her on the floor I shake her awake as we ready ourselves for God knows what’s about to happen once that door gives out.

“OPEN THE FUCKING DOOR!” He shouted banging on the door repeatedly not backing down, we both watched the door waiting for him to barge in the silence suddenly grew louder and louder with each passing moment. We stayed still before we heard a door slam shut, I roll my eyes ” he’s gone” Maria sighs out, I look over to her and nod my head.

Looking at each other we both knew what the other was thinking, my body throbbing from the number of hits it took. I had a higher tolerance than Maria, growing up in an environment where violence is expected just heightened my tolerance along with the kidnapping.

I sighed shaking my head wanting to forget everything.

Even though Maria and I are twins in a way we lived very different lives. Taking in a deep breath. I slowly open the door. "You ready for another day at work?" I smile sarcastically, she rolls her eyes and gives me a thumbs up with a forced smile. I let out a small laugh and shake my head "come on" I laugh out, we walk out of the house and see his car pulling up. We start running trying to get out of sight.

Once we were far enough from the house, we slowed down a little. Living in Minnesota was not fun, I hated it here and not because of the people or the place but because of him. In a way, I always thought it was just me, that no matter what I do or where I go, I was bound to abusive men. Someone who just wanted to use me for many things, they would play with my mind and make me think it was my fault.

Our real parents were beautiful, graceful, but far from normal my dad was a drug lord who had a lot of power and he loved showing it. It was the biggest drug cartel in Spain, El polvo del diablo (the devil's dust). They were smart about their business, growing up being fathers only children he took us under his wing showing the ins and outs of the business hoping one day we would take over.

Maria was a more flowers and rainbows kind of a girl, she didn't hate the family business, but she didn't want a part in it she was just like Mama, optimistic and wanting the peaceful side of life. I on the other hand was a daddy's girl, wanting to be just like him in every way possible.

I always loved the adrenaline of it all even the business side to it, I use to sneak in on his meetings, follow shipments even got invited to some Big Italian mafia families' business meetings.

I was so invested and interested in it all I even helped him figure out ways to discreetly import and export drugs. After my reputation started becoming well known I was being asked to join meetings by dad's clients.

Aside from being the most feared family in Spain, we were normal your average family. Every Sunday Papa would take a day off spending time with mama, me and Maria. Once me and Maria puppy-eyed him for him to get his feet and nails done with us.

That day mama couldn't stop laughing, watching him getting a pedicure. I smiled sadly at the distant memory I swear I could still hear her laughing.

Then one day poof they were gone. **He** took them from us he took their lives right in front of me. I scoffed recalling the reasons he justified killing them to take over the business. Seeing them die in front of me is a scar I'll never be able to heal. A scar that will haunt me till the day I die. A scar that shaped me into being who I am, hateful and full of revenge.

After mourning our parent's death, we were shipped to Minnesota. Our grandparents felt it was best to get me away from the toxic lifestyle I was in, I was spiralling out of control and got involved with a dangerous man ... the man who killed my parents. I became the biggest threat in Spain.

My name on the streets became like a scary legend, when someone whispered the tale of 'Dragon' it left everyone fearful, many truly thought I was a myth a scary bedtime story. I don't blame them for being fearful they should've been they had every right to. I'm not ashamed of what I did because I needed to do it, the world I live in is a bitch.

For survival, we do a lot. But to live in denial we do a lot more than we think we are capable of.

My grandparents prayed by sending my twin sister Maria and I away that it would keep us safe and would get me to forget about my revenge, my hatred, and the anger I had brewing in me. They prayed it was a fresh start away from all the violence

and dangers I surrounded myself with and inevitably brought Maria into. That we were still so young and could clean up and get my future on track.

Rolling my eyes, I thought of the irony.

We got into the system and got adopted. At times it seemed he didn't want to adopt that he was **somehow forced. Like he was ordered to take us in**, now to make any sort of income, Maria and I became strippers. Nothing wrong with it but we always hoped we would be something else. It paid the bills and got us food, so we were thankful. Maria grabbed my arm snapping me out of my head. "Earth to Bella," she said in an astronaut's voice.

Bursting out laughing "what the hell was that?" I laughed looking at her confused. Giggling she slaps my arm "I was trying something new, sue me" she raised her eyebrows shrugging her shoulders with the slyest smile. I rolled my eyes smiling, it was rare but we promised each other that no matter what life puts us through we need to find the silver lining, to one not fade away and two in a weird way to honour our mum who taught us that life is only bad if we keep looking for the bad, that it was okay through all the chaos to look for the positive to laugh and smile even when it feels like there's nothing to smile or laugh about she'd say so make something.

"Back to what I was saying before I realised, I was talking to myself" rolling her eyes she continues "How are we going to get out of this shit-hole we call a life?"

"Let's move to New York" I state.

"Why don't we just go back home?" I froze in my tracks trying to comprehend if she understood what she had just said. Her mouth formed an 'oh' "I forgot **he's** there sorry" I smiled a small pity smile nodding my head. "We can book a flight and move to New York ... start fresh?" I suggested again.

"Okay well how about we buy a plane ticket right now with the money we don't have, and we'll go in the car we do not own, and we'll live in an apartment we oh yea do not own.

Isabella, I don't know how you come up with such brilliant ideas I swear you have a gift" She sarcastically chimed up, I turned my head to face her followed by an instinctive eye roll.

"First of all, your sarcasm is not appreciated and second of all we have rich clients coming in today, we can stay later do a few extra dances, and private sessions and with the rest of the money we hid in our lockers at work we have enough money to buy tickets and rent any small apartment. Also, clients on Saturdays pay big." I reminded her how big our high rollers tip.

Turning my head to meet her gaze, she's deep in thought I can tell. Her vein in the middle of her forehead is poking out damn she's deep in thought. "Let's do it"

"Let's do it" I confirmed our plan at a fresh start.

We moved here after our parents died in Spain and ... a lot of other stuff happened, let's just say my past is anything but happy. I never talk about it, even to myself the second I think of the events that occur I feel myself reliving it I start spiralling but that doesn't stop the flashbacks that occur when something triggers them.

x

Finally, we arrived at the club.

Walking through the crowd's hand in hand Maria and I make our way to the back changing rooms. Huffing I take off my jacket and throw it in my locker, looking through the outfits on the rack I grab a black latex one piece.

After two minutes of rubbing lube for it to slip on "You could have picked an easier outfit" Maria snapped. "Shut. Up. I like this one now help me zip it up" rolling her eyes she zips me in.

We both move on to hair and makeup and once we are satisfied, we exchange that 'here we go again look.' The place was swarming with sweaty men, the majority either between the age of 30-40 the rest looked like they should be home with their grandkids, but hey there were the ones with the most money.

I got done with serving the high rollers drinks, flirting, and giving them a little lap dance. Teasing them so they can book a private dance and I can get paid. The high rollers gave out thousands like it was nothing, their tips could cover both aeroplane tickets, a private dance might even be able to cover an apartment's monthly rent.

Looking at the clock I sighed my shift is over, my turn on the pole. Handing another barmaid her tray I walked over backstage. "Stella!" I turn around "yes boss" I wasn't going to give him my real name. "You're on for a full performance we have big people in today. Most high rollers we had in months pull out all stops doll" I cringed at his choice of a pet name.

I watched him walk away near the DJ probably telling him to play buttons by the pussy cat dolls, he knew that was my favourite song and my choreography was top tier.

The familiar beat began to play. Booming through the speakers filling the whole club with Nicole's angelic voice. I closed my eyes letting myself empty my mind and allowing myself to simply get lost in the song.

Opening my eyes, I strut to the pole. My long legs extend in front of me with every step, as the beat drops so do I, slowly bringing my ass back up making sure to keep eye contact with everyone in the room. I hold the pole and swing, arching my back to the pole wrapping one leg around and extending the other out. Lifting myself up a bit high I flipped myself upside down, using my hands to trace my curves along with my breasts. Hearing the men whistle and howl I smirked. Slowly lowering myself down. I motioned for the rest of the girls on stage to come to me.

Leaning on one another we all bend down extending our asses in the air, as we seductively look at the men in front. Grabbing the zipper on my one-piece toying with it, swaying my hips and going down on all fours. Propping myself on my knees I seductively lean forward to the men who are throwing hundreds on the dance floor.

I smirk at a particular gentleman; he looked thirty not a disgusting age his teeth are still intact. slowly getting off the stage I take long strides toward him showing off my legs. I stood in front of the gentleman leaning down so my face is directly in front of his while my ass is perked out.

I slowly lower my zipper exposing the centre of my cleavage, "I bet my boobs aren't the only things that are big" I whisper in his ear, hearing him suck in a breath made me smirk victorious. I nibble at his ear a little bit before turning around and walking back up on stage and to the back.

"Stella, you have ten private lap dances and two private sessions with high rollers" the boss yelled from the DJ area. Throwing him a thumbs up I make my way to the private rooms, discuss the price, and begin the private dance.

This is all worth it, just a few more days until you can escape you got this.

After what felt like hours it was my final lap dance, you're almost done Bella you got this come on. I waited for my next client to walk in. Hearing a cough, I looked up, a tall man stood at the door, nicely dressed, clean shaved, had a tattoo a pattern with a small crown on it, he wasn't fully built but wasn't skinny either. He looked young I'd say mid-20s.

"You ready baby?" he asked. Cringing I bit back my sarcastic remark and just smiled gesturing for him to sit down. "Do I get a little head?" raising my eyebrow "That's extra" I state not completely ruling it out only because I was desperate for money right now.

"How much more?" the stranger asked "extra thousand" he looked like he was debating it before he furiously stood up and grabbed me by my arms and was face to face with me. "You trying to fucking steal from me puta, I got head yesterday and it only an extra hundred" he spat.

To anger him even more I laughed at him, "you thought you were scary?" I laughed harder clutching my stomach. "Stop fucking laughing".

I looked up at him and slightly tilted my head. “Do you really think your act is intimidating? You’re nothing but a Kitten, you can hiss and show your claws, but one punch and you’ll bow down” I mocked him.

Freeing myself from his grip, I walked closer to him pushing him with my finger, “I’m extra because my reputation around here is higher than the rest of the girls, I’m extra because I’m the best, I’m extra because all my clients are high rollers ... wanna guess why?” I purred pressing my finger in his chest.

“You’re the best?” the man muttered out. Smirking “yes” I replied, “Now either pay up the extra or you can get a free blowjob by righty over there” I smiled motioning to his right hand. “All you’re getting right now is a lap dance since you paid, but if you want my lips around your cock, then ‘baby’ you got to pay big for my tongue,” I say putting air quotes around the word baby.

I press play on the iPad and the song Candy shop played. Pushing the man back onto the couch I start dancing a little far from him. Swaying my hips to the beat, dropping down the crawling toward him as I spread his legs. Honestly, it was only an extra couple of hundred, but I needed the money for a ticket to New York.

I purr, as my hand travels his legs and up to his chest. Turning around I grind my ass on his now visible arousal. Arching my back, I smirk as he goes to grab my waist. I slap his hand off and whisper “you want me? You got to pay to get me” and continue with the dance.

The song came to an end and this man looked like if he didn’t fuck something soon, he was going to die from blue balls.

“You better start sucking bitch” he threatened. I rolled my eyes sick of men thinking they hold such power.

“Give me the thousand,” I said ignoring the fact that he just called me a bitch before I bitch slap him. Growing frustrated he grabs me by my arms again and pins me against the wall. “You don’t know who you’re messing with” I stared at him

with a blank expression, “ask me if I care.” I calmly responded.

He looked taken back by my sudden cool demeanour, ” I don’t care who you are or who you work for. I’ve been to hell and back when I was merely a child. So, I fear no hell from you” He stared at me as if he knew me, or like I resembled someone he knew.

Rolling my eyes, I go to walk out of the room, but before I exit, I look back smiling “I know you’re in some sort of mafia by the way. Your Italian accent tipped me off, not to stereotype but that tattoo on your hand represents a very powerful mafia. But by your threat, I can guarantee you’re not the boss. You don’t have that element of control or power to anything you say. You threaten but if I was to hold a knife to your throat you’d fold. I’d say you’re merely a soldier.” I frown at his status and smile quickly nodding my head goodbye.

“Tell righty not to be shy I’ll give you two some privacy” I winked closing the door behind me.

I made my way to the changing room and seeing Maria changing her clothes. “How much did you make?” Maria shuffled through her belongings “ten thousand. You?” she asked “12 thousand.” I laughed looking back up at her. I toss around the wallet I stole off that man in my hand.

“Whose is that?” Maria asked pointing at the wallet, I hummed looking up at Maria “Some idiot who threatened me in the private room” I paused for a second and looked up at her with a straight face “no one threatens me.” I smiled slowly, she looked worried for a second and I winked at her. I stood up changing back into my clothes before we heard a loud scream over the roaring music and crowd of people.

“SNEAKY FUCKING BITCH” The man yells, I looked up at Maria with wide eyes. Laughing I can’t believe he noticed so quickly. “Time to go” I laugh out we both hurry to leave the building and haul a taxi. “Isabella?” My eyes slowly dozing off, it’s been so long since I had slept without fearing he was going to find me, then kill me for what I did ... or worse kill

Maria in front of me. I shook my head and looked at Maria who was waiting for me to reply to her “Yes amore” I smiled exhausted.

“Do you want to leave tonight? like now?” She bit her bottom lip waiting for an answer.

I looked at her excited and extremely nervous like this leap was going to be one hell of an experience and getting to New York was *just the beginning*.

CH2 THE FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Vincenzo POV (Trigger warning some viewers may find uncomfortable in bold)

Blowing out smoke I look at the man standing in front of my desk. He stands upright shaking waiting for me to speak, I tilted my head blowing smoke in his face before straightening up. He looks as though he’s just seen a ghost. “I-I thought you died” he gulped. I smirked shrugging “Yeah, well it didn’t stick” I mocked him.

Leaning forward in my chair I stare the man down, examining his body language, such a shame they sent such an inexperienced assassin to kill me. “Who sent you?” I smiled waiting for his response. He shook his head no and shut his mouth tight, I rolled my eyes at his strategy to stay silent. Staying quiet isn’t always the best move.

“Silence? That’s a new one.” I continued mocking him. This wasn’t the first time an attempt was made on my laugh and it won’t be the last. I open my drawer grabbing my knife, I chuckle looking down at the handle my thumb tracing over the engraving ‘V.K’

slowly I lift my head to look at the man my smile widening knowing my favourite part of interrogation was about to commence. “Your attempt to kill me was pathetic.” I stated leaning closer to him, my chair only balancing on two legs.

“How about I show you how to do it.” I whispered smirking at him “a live demonstration.” I take one last drag from my cigarette and place it on the astray keeping an unsettling eye contact as I did so.

I straighten my posture and watch him, standing there shaking trying to anticipate my next move, watching me, trying to study me. I wasn't easy to read always in a calm mental and physical state even if I was furious, it makes it hard to read and anticipate what is to come.

I stay calm and play with the knife in my hand tracing the sharp edge with my thumb. I couldn't help the pleasure that was crawling all over my skin, my eyes subtly trailing his shaking body, his once blue are now slowly draining becoming hollow and empty.

All because of me, because of me I drained the life from his eyes without having to inflict any pain on him. Simply by standing her Infront of him his soul already vanished losing all hope. “How? How do you do it?” He asked breathlessly like it took every bit of courage in him to speak. I lean against the desk and entertain his question.

He cleared his throat “how do you thrive off of darkness, how are you so numb” he emphasises. I looked at him with a tilt of the head, darkness? I mentally questioned. “You understand the irony in your statement right? You just tried to kill me, you trained for this job” I squinted at him, “yes but I wasn't built for it the thought of taking a life drains me. So how?” he continued getting a bit courageous.

I nodded my head slowly answering him.

“I like the darkness” I spoke up, “there's something to the feeling of not knowing your surroundings, not seeing the colour of the things as they appear, but as they truly are.” I watched him absorb every word looking genuinely interested in my answer.

“There's something about the unknown, the quiet, the cold, the power it holds in its grasp. There's something unspoken about

the dark, something I can never quite put into words. It always helped me to see despite the obvious irony.” I stood up “besides when you finally accept the darkness within you, it absorbs you allowing you to become one with it.” I watched as his face shifted. I looked at him approaching slowly.

He flinched backwards looking all around the room trying to desperately find an escape. His sweat dripped from his forehead trailing down to his jaw, his heartbeat getting noticeably faster the longer I stood in front of him just watching him the more anxious and fearful he grew. He was staring death in the face, and he knew it.

“Your tattoo of the X with the guns intertwined tells me you’re from the assassination camp in France. Now judging from your hesitation and lack of ruthlessness I’m going to take a wild guess that I was one of or if not your first assignment outside the training camps” I took a second to examine his body language which was proving my statements true. “It’s easy to kill something that already dead or a doll. When you’re faced with a real human it takes much more to pull that trigger” I emphasis mimicking a gun begging shot with my hand.

“Your commander would be disappointed in you. You were trained to shoot and kill with no second thought with no hesitation and always to kill! However, to be fair whoever sent you to kill me set you up.”

He cut me off trying to say something, opening his mouth to utter a desperate plea for his life. I put my knife up placing it on his lips silencing him immediately.

“Listen I’m fair if you can prove yourself useful, I’ll spare you but!” I move my knife down to his neck “If you prove to be useless, I’ll dispose of you as such” I snapped my fingers demonstrating how fast I can get rid of him.

“So, what will it be then?” I whispered in a low unsettling tone, the hairs on his arms standing upright. He stood there pondering the question for what felt like hours, I am a man of

the utmost patience, but today my patience was none-existent every year on this day I had no patience.

“My patience is wearing thin boy!” I warned him grabbing him by his throat pinning him against the wall. “I-I-I’m s-s-s-sorry” rolling my eyes. “My question was simple; I didn’t ask for an apology nor an essay.” I looked at him. “I don’t like repeating myself” I warned him. Letting him go he quickly moved away from me backing himself against the wall on the opposite side of the room.

He stared at me his body trembling, his colour fading slowly turning into a white ghost. I slammed my hand on the table frustrated, causing him to jump on impact shutting his eyes waiting for the blow.

I raised my eyebrows at him amused “Tsk tsk, open your eyes” I laughed out, he opened his eyes so fast it made me let out another chuckle. “You’re proving yourself” I toyed with him mockingly, he looked relieved, and I quickly shook my head waving my knife around “Oh don’t look so happy, you’re proving yourself to be useless” I corrected.

“Do you want to know what happens to people who try to kill me?” I ask him a rhetorical question. “People who go against the Kings?” I continue and start walking closer to him, I stabbed my knife on my desk and grabbed my cigarette from the ash tray. Taking in a drag I slowly blow the smoke out and lower my hand holding the cigarette in between my fingers, I stood in front of him and roughly grabbed his throat pinning him to the wall once again.

I placed the bud on his neck and pressed it in, he let out a grunt. My jaw tensing, I narrowed my eyes as my face remained expressionless. The sound of his skin sizzling at the touch of the cigarette sent a wave of pleasure down my spine.

I removed the bud from his neck and put it on his cheek, then his eye lid upon contact he let out a yell. “I’m going to keep doing this until you tell me something” keeping my promise I kept burning his skin repeatedly. Until he finally shouted “SALVATORE! HE WANTED YOU DEAD! IT’S THE

SALVATORES!” unable to handle the small bud burning his skin I huffed pathetic. “You caught me on a day of mourning so I won’t kill you. Especially because the information you gave is useful to me” I explained moving back.

“Salvatore?” I thought aloud. It had been a while since we heard that name, I smirked I walked back to the desk grabbing my knife from the table and came back around to him. I pull him towards the desk by his hands kicking just behind his knee causing him to kneel. His hands on the desk, he begins screaming begging for mercy. “Misericordia?” (mercy) I repeated his plea dumbfounded.

“Trust me. This is me showing you mercy” I paused slightly watching all hope leaving his soul. “I promised not to kill you, but you will be punished for attempting an attack” Slowly accepting his fate he bowed his head down **with one swift move my blade sliced through his fingers, his right hand now left with no fingers and full of blood.**

The man’s scream filled my entire estate, he screamed so loud I was surprised the glass in my office didn’t shatter.

“So, you don’t forget me” I explained as I grabbed his arm stretching it out and craving *V.K* to remind him and show his ‘boss’ who’s the one in charge.

“The next time you or your boss ever think your big enough to take me on. This will serve to be a reminder and keep in mind the next time I won’t be so polite Inteso?” (got it?) I pushed him down. “Lorenzo” I yelled out. The doors in my office flung open with two of my men.

“Take this piccola cagna (little bitch) and dump him back where you found him, and Lorenzo get Gina to give me the supplies to clean the blood” I ordered him, walking around my desk and taking a seat in my chair.

“Boss you could just have Gina clean it” he states the obvious. I wave my hand around “You know no one is allowed in my office, not even the maids.” I grab another cigarette and light it up, inhaling the toxin. I felt my body slightly relax.

“Vincenzo” I looked at the door seeing the man who helped bring me into the world. “Giovani” I greeted him back coldly.

“Tell me how’s business, is every-” he cut himself off seeing the blood on my desk and the knife next to it. “You really love that knife, don’t you?” he questioned, letting a smile take over my lips “The knife was a gift” I answered offering him a cigarette getting uncomfortable that his in my office. I lit up another cigarette “you sure you want to have another” he questioned looking me up and down. I turned to face him and starred at him expressionless. My silence was louder and more intimidating than anything I could’ve said my eyes boring into his.

My brother’s birthday was approaching, as was the anniversary of his death and I was never good during the approaching days. My parents have always been distant never caring about us except for when it came to the business and by business, I meant everything to do with the mafia, it all came down to power and that’s how I was raised.

From a young age that’s all I ever knew, I was raised and surround by death, guns, and more violence than you can imagine and from people you would think would never lay a hand on you. Usually, fathers want to shield their sons from the dangers of this world. I was raised watching them and trained to become one of the many dangers in the world.

It was my parent’s thirst for power that tore the entire family apart. I turned facing my window and sighed taking in the beautiful view, standing up and looking out to appreciate it more. Our estate wasn’t too excluded from the city, but it was enough to keep our location on a need to know.

I looked out my pool in view, my men taking a much-needed breather, but further out you could see the lights my city had to offer. My city! I took over New York, in my early years nothing happens without my knowledge. New York never belonged to anyone but now it’s the King’s ... it’s mine.

The five families think I did it for them, to be accepted in the hierarchy to be one of the biggest threats but it wasn’t for that

I did it for my family for my sister and brother, so no one dares touch or lay a finger on us again.

I watch my dad leave my office as Lexi walks in “Hey baby” I cringe at her use of the word. “I’m not in the mood” I blow out the last of my smoke before putting it out. She approaches me closer rubbing her tits on my chest “You sure?” she teases. I roll my eyes “out” I ordered her, no one is allowed in here. She bit her bottom lip, “guest bedroom” I ordered her which she happily obliged running inside. My room and office were off limit’s to everyone.

Isabella’s POV

I stared at her with wide eyes, adrenaline-pumping throughout my body. “I’m serious we have the money on hand with us right now and we’re in a taxi and we won’t have to endure another day of beating’s or see his face. We also have nothing at home we need to bring with us. Plus who knows If we’ll make it out alive tomorrow, there’s nothing stopping us” I looked at Maria absorbing everything she just said.

“Excuse me, to the airport please,” I told the taxi driver. Leaning back in my seat I looked at her with a relieved expression. “We’re doing this” I thought aloud. After searching through the internet online, trying to find a somewhat decent apartment. We found one in Downtown Brooklyn. The apartment was decent, and only \$1,000 a month.

Maria called the landlord while I looked for jobs available in the area.

x

“I’ll go talk to the lady can you get us some food?” Maria nodded and headed to the cafeteria while I approached the reception desk.

“Next!”

“Hi, how can I help you?” She looked up from her computer with a smile. “I was wondering when the next available flight to New York is.” She typed on her computer and looked back at me. “The next flight out to New York is in one hour, would you like a ticket?” she politely asked.

“Can I get two?” she nodded and began to do whatever it was she doing before telling me the price. “Is the ticket one way or will you be returning” she asked looking up at me, I scoffed “Never fucking coming back” I muttered thinking I was said it quietly until I saw her shocked expression.

“Oh no, I didn’t ... one way please” I cleared my throat. She let out a nervous laugh while giving me a sympathetic smile handing me the two tickets, we exchanged a few words, and she told me the directions to the plane.

I sat down in the waiting area, messaging Maria where I was. Then playing a few games to pass the time until she comes with the food. “What seats we get” looking up from my phone I see Maria with McDonald’s my stomach growled “Big mac?” I asked she nodded yes.

x

An hour passed and Maria was slowly falling asleep listening to whatever music she was blasting through her headphones. “Final boarding call for flight 291 to New York City”

I jolted up and nudged Maria “come on” I muttered half asleep myself. Already feeling the exhaustion overtake my body along with a potential food coma. We settled in our seats barely able to keep our eyes open.

Maria fast asleep leaned her head on my shoulder holding onto my arm, I let out a sigh of relief resting my head on top of hers while I watched Tangled. “That Chameleon cracks me up” I laugh to myself as he stuck his tongue in Flynn’s ear. The plane took off and I hugged my sister protectively falling asleep peacefully a common necessity many take for granted.

x

After the plane landed, we both felt nervous. Stepping into the unknown, Maria and I were the first to leave the plane, not having any luggage or carry-ons made us fly through customs.

I waited for Maria while she went to the bathroom leaving me standing alone in an unfamiliar airport. I sighed looking down at my phone getting the directions ready to go to our apartment. I felt an unwanted presence slowly start to creep up being me, "Hey gorgeous" I smiled uncomfortably "I'm not interested" I declined any further conversation and tried to turn and walk away.

When I turned around, I caught a glimpse of the most gorgeous man I have ever laid eyes on. I tried to turn away, but I couldn't bring myself to tear my eyes off him. His demeanour was honey for the eyes. He was towering over someone who approached him, his jet-black hair looked neatly slicked back.

He moves his arms up brushing his hair back with his fingers highlighting his muscular figure and his sleeve lifted slightly revealing the ink that covered him. I bite my lip wondering if he had more in hidden areas. Scratching his scruffy beard like he was waiting for someone.

I bit my bottom lip feeling completely taken by this stranger. I snapped out of it hearing the guy still trying to get my attention gripping my forearm. I looked at his grip and slowly back up to him. "Let. Go" I warned lowly.

Before he could respond a loud screech caught both our attention "who the fuck is she?" A girl yelled out pointing at me disgusted, I looked her up and down and rolled my eyes. I rip my arm out of his grip turning around trying to walk away before I start my first day here in a blood bath.

"I thought so keep walking" I stopped dead in my tracks feeling my blood boiling, I spun on my heel and eyed her "believe me you'd be safer if I walked away" I stared her down my eyes boring into hers daring her to say another thing. She looked taken back but quickly recovered.

She approached me and raised her eyebrow, “listen if I catch you flirting with my man, I’ll wipe that cocky smile off your face” she tried threatening me, I cringed at her pathetic threat and rolled my eyes. I hummed amused “it’s cute you think that was threatening” I smile a crowd beginning to form around us.

She looked visibly nervous avoiding eye contact but couldn’t walk away because of the crowd that now surrounded us. “You can either walk away like the little bitch I know you are, or you can stay and attempt to wipe the smile off my face and then get pounded like a little bitch.” I smiled shrugging my shoulders, tilting my head to the side. ” Either way I win” I winked sizing her up.

She lunged towards me, and I quickly stepped to the side, dodging her failed attempt to attack me. She falls on the floor hearing laughs and taunts from the crowd she quickly stood up on her feet flustered.

Letting out a frustrated groan she raced towards me going to punch me in the nose. I caught her fist midway, smirking I twisted it and bent it in an unnatural direction she yelped and kneeled trying to ease the pain. I twisted her arm jerking her to the side pinning her arm behind her back. “You’re not even worth it” I spat and pushed her to the floor.

“HEY!” her boyfriend yelled out, coming to her rescue I turned around and rolled my eyes “don’t touch her” he yelled fist bawled I cocked my head to the side standing my ground waiting for him to come to me.

I felt a pair of eyes staring at me that made my body light up on fire, I turn to look to the side seeing the hot stranger staring at me intensely he licked his bottom lip keeping his tensed stature intact. We locked eyes for a minute before the man roughly gripped my throat, he didn’t squeeze just held me for a moment.

“I would let go” I warned him lowly, feeling my old habits starting to creep back up an all too familiar persona. “Or what?” He spat; his cocky smirk was enough to get me to snap. “I like them tough” he licked his lips going to lean in, I

knee him in his groin he bends over in pain holding himself. Now I should have walked or ran away but my feet seemed to be glued to the floor as I happily watched him in pain.

He stands up after some time “you shouldn’t have done that” he warned me, he raised his hand up ready to lay on a blow before someone gripped him arm mid-way. “You should never hit a woman” my eyes go wide seeing sex on legs stand in between us.

His Italian accent sent an automatic shiver down my spine. “Go get your own whore” He spat at him. My mouth dropped ready to say something, but the stranger punched the man square in his nose. I watched him intensely he repeatedly kept punching him in the face before eventually forcing him up by his neck. Where the fuck was security? I looked around no one dared utter a word and all the guards suddenly nowhere to be seen.

“I think you owe the lady an apology” He spoke in a low threatening voice, almost daring him to defy his order I raised my eyebrow, who is this guy? No one even blinked in his direction like no one dared to stand in his way.

Not even one minute in New York and I already managed to start it off with a bang. “Or what?” he spat back at the gorgeous stranger. He smirked like he was waiting for him to ask that question the man simply whispered something that I couldn’t hear, but whatever it was the man was visibly terrified. “I- I- I’m sorry” He stuttered out.

The man let go of his shirt and nodded in my direction “not to me to her” he looked over at me shaken up “I’m sorry” he quickly spoke out. Looking back at the gorgeous stranger who motioned for him to leave and without hesitation, he ran leaving his girlfriend on the floor and the crowd around us quickly fled just as fast. “Some boyfriend” I huffed out looking how fast he left leaving his girlfriend behind.

“Are you okay?” the man spoke up I nodded my head, “Yeah ... Uh” I coughed nervously. My god why is he so intimidating “Thank you” I smiled. He looked me up and

down analysing me curiously. He was trying to read me to figure out who I was, and I'd lie if I said I wasn't doing the same and maybe also checking him out in the process. I looked at his hand noticing a King's crown tattoo, the man tucked his hand in his pocket catching me staring.

He nodded his head and without another word he walked off back towards the man who now arrived. Maria came back out and looked at me "Isabella?" I shook my head and pried my eyes away from him and looked back at my sister. "Yeah" I answered her "You, okay? Did I miss anything?" She questioned looking in the direction I was staring in.

I smiled and shook my head "Oh nothing interesting" I joked and linked arms as we walked out. I bit my lip looking over my shoulder trying to get one more peek at the gorgeous stranger. To my satisfaction, he was staring right back at me not even trying to be discreet before a crowd walked in front of him and he vanished along with them.

Biting my lip, I turned back around and headed out to find a taxi with Maria.

CLOSE QUARTERS

Vincenzo's POV

"I want two new Casinos opening in the next two months we are already behind schedule on constructions. If it's not ready to be open to the public within the given time frame, I will be deducting it from your pay" I hung up the phone and looked up.

"The board is here" Lorenzo announces before stepping aside and allowing the head of the five families inside. Coming next to me to take his rightful seat beside me and Hacker. I stand up as a sign of respect acknowledging them as they all walk to their assigned seats.

Everyone acknowledges the other nodding their heads and proceeding to take a seat, “Vincenzo thank you for holding the meeting” Samuel states waiting for me to begin.

“Pleasure is all mine” I state to a room full of men much older than me. I clear my throat before going into detail, “We were all called to this meeting being the five heads of the family, we recently been informed that Salvatore has gone ashtray and not only put a hit on a member of the five families but also broke Omertà by sending a tip about the Colombo family to the feds. This meeting is to discuss what to do. We have the bosses here, the underboss and the Caporegime for each family present to discuss.” I elaborate further when anything is done in the Mafia such as assassinations in this instance the second and third rankings of the family must be informed to make informed decisions in the future and know who is an all and who is a weak link.

“Vincenzo, how did you discover all this?” I looked at John and cleared my throat he was the capo for the Frances family. “We have a failed attempt of an assignation done on me a few nights. After interrogating he reviled his intents and who had sent him. Upon further digging, we discovered through a fed on my payroll about the leaked information” I explain standing from my seat handing out a folder to the heads so they can examine numbers the transcript and photos of one of his soldiers interacting with a fed and walking into the federal offices.

“In your folders, you can see the words that were said along with the pictures for further proof.” I lean back in my chair giving them a moment to digest the information in front of them. “Salvatore has been going rouge lately upon our denial to allow him to become a part of the family and of our dismissal of him in the commission” I look around the table seeing everyone exchange looks and gestures before they regain their focus on me.

“What do you suggest?” Garcia speaks up, I smile looking up at him. Garcia has always been loyal to the family most

importantly he was always loyal to me becoming a father figure when mine failed to do so.

I cleared my throat and gestured to the room “I personally would like to terminate him. However, I called this meeting to discuss other options” I sat back as everyone began talking and discussing ideas and ways to deal with the problem at hand.

“He broke Omertà there is no question here” John began getting agitated. “He broke the code of silence, and none less didn’t have the balls to go himself to the feds. He sent a soldier” Samuel spat looking toward Garcia disgusted. “We took a blood oath to keep our mouths shut. How do we know this soldier was a part of the Salvatore’s mob?” Michele being the only calm one questioned the information I presented.

I smiled waiting for him to ask that question, I whistled looking towards the doors, opening it revealed Luca I nodded at Lorenzo who sat next to me both my men waiting for my order “bring him in” I ordered them both, Lorenzo heads out with Luca to retrieve the soldier.

Within a moment my men came back with the soldier slightly beaten up. All men shot their heads in his direction examining the man before me “Gentlemen meet the soldier.” I gestured to the red-headed boy standing in front of us all.

He was medium built, average height did not look a day over 23, especially since he willingly dyes his hair red. The underbosses all stood up wanting to interrogate and attack the soldier.

I stood up squaring my shoulders asserting my dominance “Sit. Down.” I warned the underbosses sternly, receiving a direct command from another don would have no effect but, I was an acceptance. All faced me and forcefully sat down, being the head of my Mafia and of the five families my powers were not limited to just my family but to all the families.

I never assert myself in their affairs unless it affects me. “This man is now a part of my family, anyone who threatens him threatens me. He is a recruit, still proving himself.” I reminded Red.

“Red, tell them.” He looks up at me clearing his throat, “I was a recruit for the Salvatore family for over a year, I was vouched for by Salvatore’s son Frankie. After a year of being a recruit, I was finally moved to soldier, before they made me take the Omertà they wanted me to be a spia (snitch) the order came directly from the boss I didn’t think much of it. So, I went to the feds and told them about the five families, specifically about Mr King” He looks at me hesitantly before quickly looking back down on the floor.

“Once that was done, I would officially become a soldier and took the Omertà.” I looked around the room smiling, “that enough proof?” I questioned the room. Everyone reminded silent, “why does ‘red’ get away with it?” Samuel’s underboss groans out visibly upset.

I laugh smirking at them, I walk towards red and lift his shirt up, revealing the cuts, scars, bruises, and engraving. “I wouldn’t say he got away with it” I clarify moving my finger from his shirt. “However, proving himself loyal and useful I allowed mercy. Not that my affairs are anyone’s business” I reminded them who is the boss looking around firmly.

“What do you suggest Vincenzo?” Garcia spoke up. I smiled waiting for someone to finally ask me that. “Death, at my hands with every family’s blessing before action is taken” I respectfully looked around waiting for everyone’s nod of approval.

“How?” Samuel’s underboss crossed an obvious line, I looked at him sternly no one asks me how, when or what. Especially a underboss from another family.

He quickly went silent once more. “You will all be notified once his death is finalised. Thank you all for coming.” I stood up, unbuttoning my suit jacket wanting to desperately get out of it.

One by one everyone stood up getting ready to leave shaking hands. Only John and Samuel stayed back looking at me, “can I assist you in any way?” I questioned visibly confused as to why they chose to stay back.

“I need some added assistance from the King’s” John spoke up, “I’m here as a witness to the exchange and also in need of assistance” Samuel added, I nodded my head slowly. I resumed my seat and looked over at John, “what can the King’s assist you with?” I asked leaning back in my chair.

“I have the feds closing in on my ‘business adventures’ I need help to get them off my trail” he explained I nodded my head.

“John, you have the feds on your tale tracing illegal activities through illegal gambling, street fighting. Samuel, you also have the feds barking up your ass due to the traceable money coming from faulty and unprofessionally done weaponry shipments and exchanges.” I explain going down a roadmap already knowing the details.

They nodded their heads slowly, grasping just how much trouble they can be getting in. Feds exposing the men of the five families are not only life-threatening it’s an end to the Family. Specifically, if it’s the head of that family the mafia won’t shut but it will always be exposed and watched as the identity and details of that mafia would have been realised.

I sighed looking up at them “I have two new casinos, clubs and a few hotels opening up. In New York, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Russia. I can add you as business partners and use the business as a taxable example of the sudden growth in income also a way to money launder your earnings through the legit businesses.” I explained being the only businessman among the group.

Knowing just how to exploit the government while also gaining more money than I know what to do with. They looked at each other then back at me with relief, I smiled

condescendingly surely, they wouldn't think I'd give such a favour without expecting a fair exchange.

Dominance, confidence, and power are extremely important to be taken seriously in my line of work. I need to show them that with or without them I was still in power, that my rank was still higher, and it isn't me who is in trouble with the law. Letting them simmer for a moment I decided to speak.

“In the end, this deal benefits you more than it does the kings. Our business flourishes and you stay out of the law's eye. However, in return, the Kings get 25% profit for all that we are offering” I explained the numbers.

I slightly tilted my head eyeing everyone in this room “The choice is yours, choose wisely but please don't take too long as this deal has an expiry date.” I explained handing them drawn up contracts in case of such an occurrence were to happen.

They all looked at me, “how did you know we would ask you for help?” I looked tapping my thumbs together “I don't like mistakes. Preparedness is key”

They sat in their seats for a minute before both John and Samuel signed the contract. Smirking in victory I turned to Lorenzo who was beyond impressed and If I wasn't mistaken proud.

“Pleasure doing business with all of you, after my lawyers go over the paperwork. I will personally call you both to explain how it's going to work” One by one the members shook my hand, exchanged pleasantries, and left.

I grabbed a cigarette from my left pocket and lit it. I blew out the smoke watching as it slowly disappears in the air. Gaining 25% profit from two of the head families should feel like such a victory usually it would be occupying my mind, but I found myself wondering about something else.

Someone else to be more specific, I found myself thinking about the girl I saw yesterday at the airport, she was captivating like you were staring at an eclipse you know you

shouldn't be, but you can't help but admire. She was beautiful without a doubt her long black hair just hovering over her ass, her sweats hugging her curves perfectly. I sighed scratching my jawline, thinking about how her eyes melted as they looked into my own.

Those big emerald, green eyes. Some say green is the strongest colour because it ignites the new season after the passing of wintry days, and something tells me she lived up to that saying.

I have never seen a girl fight as effortlessly as she did, her demeanour reminding me too much of my own the power she was able to radiate was both intriguing and worrying. She looked like the type of girl that would drive me to insanity I was still torn if that excited me or worried me.

I shook my head mentally cursing myself, putting out my cigarette and walking out of my office. I walked past some of my men and women. Everyone apart of my Mafia has a responsibility being either something in the estate or in the mafia or my other businesses.

All sworn under the code of silence. Under that code, you swear loyalty to the mafia and its boss. Swearing silence and loyalty are seen as a big part of our life it's a sacred binding agreement and if broken, is punishable by death. No matter how long it will take you will die, it's a guaranteed death sentence there is no escaping.

x

I get back to my office, sitting at my desk I look at the file and paperwork that was stacked neatly. Letting a sigh out I bury myself in work, then I heard the two idiots at the front of my door. Arguing "Cazzo" I sigh under my breath watching the doors burst open.

"Hey Fratello, you miss your baby bro" Lorenzo sang approaching my desk. I smile trying to hide my amusement shaking my head "awe poor baby are you working?" Lorenzo teased pouting looking down at the pile of paperwork. I kept

my head down filling out paperwork flipping him off, “ouch” he grabs his chest acting hurt. “Fuck yourself, Lorenzo, where is Ariana?” I asked.

“Right here Fratello, who do you think opened your door like that,” she said placing a kiss on my cheek. “You’re so lucky it was you” I smiled and kissed her head. “How is that fair, she touches you and flings your door open and I get the finger fuck use both, I’m going to the club” He jumps off my desk and goes to the door.

Ariana and I burst out laughing, “Lorenzo the second I was born you became irrelevant” The only person who I had a major soft spot for was Ariana. I raised her, I was there for everything, and it was really killing me watching her grow up. Being the oldest, I couldn’t help but be overly protective over her. Putting aside the obvious sibling rivalry so was Lorenzo.

“Vincenzo we all know I’m your favourite but because she’s here you deny it” Lorenzo hissed the word ‘she’s’ pointing his finger at her. “But it’s fine because she’s my favourite as well” Ariana leapt for Lorenzo like a tiger hunting a deer, Lorenzo being the drama queen in the family screamed like a little girl and made a run for it as Ariana chased him. I burst out laughing “idiotas” I screamed out, making a gesture with my fingers to the men to shut my doors.

Isabella’s POV

Finally catching a cab, we gave the man the address to our new apartment and sat quietly in the back looking for jobs sighing in defeat the only available good-paying jobs was this private strip club and a waitressing job near our apartment. Honestly, the money is good and if we are going to make it on our own, we really can’t be picky just yet.

Maria and I individually called the businesses applying Via phone giving them details of our previous jobs and so forth.

For the stripper's joint, we had to give our real names as the owner is apparently pretty controlling and hates being lied to.

Someone doesn't like making mistakes. I huffed, great a controlling boss what a nice way to start this new chapter. We were told to start tomorrow at the restaurant and the strip club said they will call us sometime next week or earlier with details about our employment status. Man, there were so well-spoken for a strip club. I mentally shrugged and landed back in my seat waiting to arrive at the apartment.

x

I woke up to someone shaking me, "Isabella we're here get up" I looked at Maria like a five-year-old would look at their mother before saying just five more minutes. Maria from her facial expressions was so over my shit already. I giggled and finally got out of the cab the feeling of the cold air hitting my skin jolted me awake, "Mierda" I hissed it's freezing. We quickly walked inside; the building looked really nice for a place in the backstreets of Brooklyn.

We gave details, filled out forms and the landlord gave us our key we got inside the elevator and pressed floor 25. We were high up and all I wanted to do was cosy up with a blanket and sit on the balcony, as my memories of Spain take over, and my thoughts ran wild, slowly erasing the trauma we had to endure.

But I was not going to let his abuse turn me into some damsel in distress I didn't allow it then and I won't allow it now. I shook my head as if to get rid of those thoughts and focused on the number on the elevator changing before it dinged on level 25.

Opening the door to our apartment I took it all in. It wasn't much but it was breathtaking. Our living room and kitchen were connected in front of us a massive slide door right in the middle of the wall leading you to the balcony.

Our bedrooms were connected, and we had only one bathroom. "Great twins are sharing a bathroom, this should be fun" Maria sarcastically beamed. "We each get only an hour

inside in the mornings” she nodded her head in agreement. Looking at each other we couldn’t help the silly grin forming on our faces “WE’RE FREE” we shouted at the top of our lungs.

We stayed up watched tv, ordered a few living essentials, bed covers, blankets, pillows, and things for the apartment. Tomorrow morning on our run will stop by the grocery store to pick up food and toiletries. We each went off into our separate bedrooms, lying in bed I couldn’t help but grab the blanket wrap it around myself and step outside on the balcony.

The feeling of the cold air causing goosebumps to form on my skin sent a shivering feeling through my body. Gripping the blanket tighter around myself I couldn’t help but imagine that man again, who was he?

Why did he stare at me for so long? why did my body heat up? why am I still thinking about a man I don’t know? why does he have so many tattoos?

All unanswered questions, well except for the last one I think I know that answer and all I could master was heavenly. I clenched my legs together feeling the intense throbbing from just picturing his gorgeous face in between my legs.

I sighed closing my eyes softly, imaging how his deep grey eyes burned into mine, the way his eyes looked like they were formed by the god of thunder.

x

“STUPID FUCKING ALARM CLOCK, MARIA WE ARE IN THE 20 FIRST CENTURY FUCKING BREAK THAT CLOCK AND GO BACK TO SLEEP” I yell from my bedroom. First goddamn decent sleep we have had in lord knows how long, and this idiota really wants to wake up at ... I grab my phone to check the time 6am ... SIX BLOODY AM!

I bury my face in the pillow groaning and yelling into it. “Get your ass up I’m hungry, we need to go for our run, and we have no food, or any female products move it.” Rolling my

eye's, I grab my sweats that we arrived in, and the tank top I had on yesterday and put them on again. Okay, maybe we do need to go get a few things I mentally gag at how dirty I feel.

x

After our hour run, we stopped by Starbucks and got a frappe. Yes, we got Starbucks, no judgement! As we entered the mall, we got a few outfits with the stripping money we earned before we arrived in New York, some food, and toiletries. Maria was getting bored and wanted to buy some lingerie, I have no idea who she thinks she's wearing them for but whatever.

As soon as we entered Victoria's secret my body heated up, I eagerly scanned the store knowing only one person was able to get that reaction out of me. My eyes landed on a tall, tattooed man with a girl who could pass off as his twin. It was him; my heart began speeding up feeling like it was on the verge of bursting out of my chest. My legs started turning into jelly feeling myself throbbing. I crisscrossed my leg mentally scowling myself to get it together.

"Isabella" Maria shouted from across the room alerting sex on legs as he scanned the room curiously before landing his eyes on me, I tried to desperately pry my eyes away and make myself seem as normal as possible and not look like I was imagining him fucking me on that table.

I licked my bottom lip when I caught him still staring at me and walked further inside the store, I started grabbing a few pieces and watched as he eyed a lingerie set on a mannequin. I smirked getting an idea, I slowly strolled past him picking up the set smiling to myself when I heard him suck in a breath.

I made sure to sway my hips when I walked past him. His eyes followed me hungrily watching his body heat up and his breathing pick up, his chest heaved up and down and it made him a million more times attractive. Seeing how hungry he was for me, it felt like a long time being wanted like that. I stop in front of Maria and smile "You find something?" I

genuinely asked her also trying to act as normal as possible without alerting her.

She gave me a few sexy pieces to try on and placed the casual ones for both of us in a basket. Three pieces were picked out by Maria, red, dark purple and black.

I grabbed the set I picked up and decided to spice it up by adding fishnet stockings pulling them up to my knee and trying on the lingerie. The corset bra and low waisted underwear highlighted my curves as I analysed myself in the mirror.

I open the door subconsciously hoping he was somewhere near the changing room; I opened the door completely revealing myself to Maria.

“Cazzo” a deep-voiced muttered. His Italian accent was thick, my heart jumped to my fucking throat and my pussy began throbbing just from hearing his voice, his thick accent just made me go from lust to hunger.

dulce Madre de todo la Santo. (Sweet mother of everything holy)

Maria looks at my flustered face then scanned the room and her eyes landed on sex on legs, she looks back at me with the biggest evil grin. I mentally yell at her to not do whatever it is she is about to do.

“Isabella Knight” she whistles out altering him and practically the rest of the store. I look at her mortified and ready to kill her “te mataré” I hissed at her. The sexy Italian muttered something under his breath before running his hands through his thick black hair. Trying to breathe, my breathing hitched watching his muscles flex under as he tried to desperately remain calm.

Nice to know I wasn't the only one feeling like I was going crazy.

I cleared my throat death glaring at Maria “We are leaving” it came out more of a threat than a statement, but she simply nodded feeling satisfied with herself and went to checkout.

“Ariana, I don’t know why the fuck you dragged me in here” the Italian man spat at who I’m assuming is the girl’s name, Ariana I repeated her name in his accent in my head. A pretty name I thought to myself. “Ay your such an idiota, Vincenzo you’re here to pay that’s all.” she spoke up, and I sniffled a laugh.

“Why do I have to pay? Why the fuck would you bring your brother here while you shop for this shit. Put it back I don’t know who the fuck you think you’re wearing this shit for anyway.” He hissed, even from behind the door I swear I heard her roll her eyes.

“Big bro ... just shut up” She responded exhausted, “this is the last time I’ll ever let you guilt me into shopping with you” I laughed in my head, ‘no it’s not’ I mentally added my inputs don’t know why but the way he treats his sister made me smile like a puppy.

I climbed out of the dressing room, looking at the price tags bumping into Italy. On impact, my face hit his chest, what is under that shirt, rocks? I hissed and looked up, “I- sorry I didn’t see you” I stuttered out rubbing my forehead.

He stared at me unamused, “watch yourself” he walked past me, I rolled my eyes grabbing his arm stopping him from walking off “It looked like you enjoyed doing that yourself” I winked indicating him watching me in the set. A small playful smirk immerged on his sour face. “It was a show I’d love to watch again”

I raised my eyebrows and looked him up and down “except next time, you won’t have anything but those fishnet’s on” my breathing hitched, and I clench my legs shut and mentally cursed my urges that were getting the best of me.

“How about next time you get out of my way” I smiled looking up at him. His jaw tensed “watch that tongue” he warned me. “I wouldn’t want to have to cut it off before I get good use out of it” He threatened his threat coming off more intimidating than I would like to admit. I laughed lowly,

“watch your step” I threatened him and walked off pushing past him.

“I’M FINE BY THE WAY” I yelled out as I started walking towards Maria. Then suddenly I felt a pair of hands gripping my forearm’s. I hissed and looked at the man holding me. My eyes went wide. Fuck it’s him. The guy from the club “what the fuck are you doing here?” I asked shocked to see him again. “You sneaky stealing, fucking bitch” I yanked my arms from his grip. “Judging from your fucking tone I guess someone didn’t get sucked off yet huh?” I grabbed Maria by her arm as we quickly exited the store.

We quickly exited the store, and he was hot on our tail, he cut us off in the surprisingly deserted parking lot and stood in front of me. “I cannot catch a break” I sarcastically muttered.

“You have five seconds to give me back my wallet or so help me god I’ll fucking kill you both here” he spat. Pulling his jacket back, revealing a gun.

Maria was clearly frightened, but I on the other hand being surrounded by people like him my whole life was calm. I felt in my element right back at home “Go ahead kitten, do it” I pressed teasing him. “Your money is all gone now, I’m actually planning on wearing it tonight” I smiled condescendingly winking at him.

He pulled out the gun and aimed it at my head, my heart rapidly beating. Not sure if it was fright or simply adrenaline, I looked him dead in the eye not moving a muscle or showing any sign of fear. Like I was almost daring him to pull the trigger, to do something stupid and give me an excuse to return to my old self like I so badly wanted.

“RED!” a familiar deep Italian voice roared clearing everyone who was in the mall. Whoever was around now all scattered away like scared cats.

“But boss-”

“Shoot and you’re a dead man” His voice was low boring its way into my head sending a chill up and down my spine.

“Red, that’s an order” Red stayed stubborn with the gun still aimed at me. “SHE STOLE FROM ME” He shouted like it was a green light to shoot me. Like he was going to allow it and I thought he would when I saw his face go through shock than anger. He pulled out his gun and aimed it at the man in front of me “Red” He muttered, Red visibly scared lowered his gun slowly before adrenaline kicked in and he shot at me, my old reflexes kicked in I leaned back everything felt like it was happening in slow motion like I saw the bullet travel above my head then hit the wall behind me. I jolted up and looked back at him shocked and pissed.

“You need to learn how to aim a gun, or don’t carry one” I spat, he looked at me mortified and back at his boss. “Watch. Your. Mouth” Vincenzo slowly warned me.

Goosebumps rose on my skin rolling my eyes I chose to ignore it but before I had the chance to react my body jolted back at the sound of the gun firing. Red now laid on the floor clutching his leg “I don’t like repeating myself,” he muttered before casually walking away. I looked down at red shocked, not knowing what to feel.

He laid on the floor his leg bleeding out. Not being able to utter a single word my heart turned Oh, bloody hell. I cursed myself, sometimes it felt like I had two different personalities, I didn’t but in a way, it felt like I did.

I kneeled to his level, grabbed a scarf I recently purchased and applied pressure to the wound to stop the bleeding. “Why are you helping me” he managed to cough out. “First of all, don’t talk your voice annoys me. Second, because I’m not completely heartless” well at least not anymore.

How did he just casually shoot someone, like nothing and walk away like nothing even happened. No one even blinked an eye, as if what just happened never happened. Not that many were around anyway.

I went to call the ambulance before he snatched my phone from my hands and hung up. “No” he muttered. “You need a hospital” stating the obvious. “We have a private clinic!

hospitals ask too many questions” He spoke out breathless, unbelievable he just got shot, and he’s still loyal to the Italian. Sure, his amazing to look at but he doesn’t seem ... well you know gay. I eyed him chewing the inside of my lip.

“I still want my stuff back” I rolled my eyes at his comment “Yeah and I want my sanity back.” I stood up “we want things that are long gone. Get over it already” seeing men approach us I walked off grabbing Maria as they helped her into a car.

Maria still slightly shaken up looked at me, “don’t get yourself in that mess” she stated, I looked her offended “you have a tendency to get wrapped up with people like him Isabella, you always loved the adrenaline, the mystery, the danger. But he might be too dangerous. stay away from him” I looked at her dumbfounded “I was not planning on getting wrapped up in anything” I stated half lying.

The thought of the Italian sent a shiver down my spine, fear, curiosity, and adrenaline pumped through my veins. He was dangerous no doubt but something about him caught my attention and I knew once something catches my attention it’s hard to let it go.

There was more to him, but he was way too dangerous to be messed with. I shook my head, I need to stay away from him I can’t go down that path *again*, I just can’t do it.

X

Entering the apartment, we organised everything. Food in the fridge, clothes in the closet, everything was in place and we both felt so sticky. Maria ran to the shower before me, so I decided to start dinner before our shift at the restaurant.

I placed a plate for Maria on the table while I ate my food on the balcony. ‘**Shoot and you’re a dead man**’ his voice echoed in my head like a catchy song you just couldn’t shake off.

X

Vincenzo’s POV

“YOU JUST SHOT HIM” Ariana yelled in my ear as we got in the car, “years and years of me shooting people and you never fail to be just as shocked as the first time Ariana” I rolled my eyes, at her repetition.

“It’s Red, he’s a part of the mafia! We don’t shoot our own” She stated the obvious. “Ariana, I gave him a direct order, he disobeyed and shot an innocent I don’t tolerate that. I’m the boss if I say jump you jump. Besides he is a new soldier, he is only a part of us because he was useful”

“Your main rule is don’t show mercy to those who steal or wrong you!” She stated my rules back to me, rolling my eyes I rubbed my temple feeling a headache coming on. She wasn’t wrong, that was my main rule. We don’t show mercy to those who wrong us, steal, or try and harm us.

“I’m the boss Ariana, what I say you obey. My men. My business. Drop. It. Ariana.” I warned her. Hearing the threatening tone in my voice she huffed and crossed her arms and sat in her seat like a child avoiding my stare.

Finally, silence.

Cazzo, the second it got quiet. My phone started buzzing against my thigh. “Vincenzo King” I answer the phone. “Boss we filled the positions for the strippers. You told us to call when those spots were filled as they will be entertaining your personal guests”

“Si, I need names”

“Isabella Knight and Maria Knight”

Isabella Knight, my thought began to run wild imagining her on that pole causing my dick to twitch. Hell, I don’t know why I can’t get her out of my head. I shot one of my men for her and I don’t even know how, I cursed under my breath knowing I’ll be apologising for it later. Letting out a cough I hung up the phone.

My mind disregarding my plea to shut up began thinking about her in that set at the store. I shuffled uncomfortable moving and adjusting my pants. It hugged her curves like it

was made just for her, her long legs barely covered in the fishnet stockings and her long hair draped down just above her waist. She looks like something out of this world.

She has this attitude this commanding personality, my mind replaying the events at the store. The way she grabbed my arm stopping me from walking off, how she threatened me.

She radiated power but also goodness, that's what intrigued me the most. How can she be both a devil and angel, watching her handle Red and even talk back to me was something I have never seen any man do and I respected her for that. It only made her more desirable, setting her apart from every girl I know. I had an annoying feeling that this was not going to stop. I just needed to get her out of my system, I nodded my head convincing myself it was just lust.

We arrived back home, and I went straight towards my office.

"Lorenzo and Bullseye in my office" I yell out, the whole estate going dead silent. I didn't forget that Salvatore trying to kill me off, I gave him enough time to stir in his spot. Time to play I smirked to myself feeling the adrenaline pumping through my veins.

Both men rushed inside the office before nodding their heads in respect, "Boss" I nodded my head greeting them.

"We just got word from Red that the Salvatore's have been stealing from us, let's not forget he tried to kill me. There's a shipment about to take place near the harbour. The Salvatore's will be present to do an exchange with the Gracias under our name."

"I want his men wiped out, I want him to think he escaped"
Both nodded and went to assemble men. Nessuna Pietà (No mercy.)

X

Within a few hours Lorenzo and the men were back. "We have a special someone downstairs boss" Lorenzo smiles looking between himself and Bullseye.

(TW GRAPHIC SCENE)

I walk down to the basement and eye a very scared Francesco. Lorenzo and bullseye standing next to him. I step into the light so I'm in view. "Vincenzo Please, let's talk" he begs. I motion for bullseye to leave and Lorenzo to stay put.

I grab a chair and slam it in front of him as I sit down "Talk" It came out harsher than I intended but I remained calm and composed waiting for him to speak. He flinched trying to move back and get as far from me as possible.

"I didn't steal anything I swear we owe our entire legacy to you" He blurted out, like a scared mouse. I laughed mockingly "Oh si, you didn't steal anything" I laugh smiling at him. Enjoying his obvious fear, the amusement intertwining with my every word.

Nodding my head "Si, all you did was sell our narcotics without informing us, stealing my contacts claiming you were doing business under the Kings name, proceeding to try forming an alliance with our overseas partners and as if this cannot get any better."

Grabbing the chair, I was sitting on I stood up picking it up in the process slamming it across his head. "Your pathetic attempt to kill me. I'm sure your assassin came back and showed you my handy work" I spoke out proud.

His eyes widened his chest going up and down as his breathing became harsher and rigid. "Do you know what I do to those who go behind my back Francesco?" I question him. He looked at me his eyes, widening visibly terrified and full of fear.

The kind of fear that can paralyse you, the fear of what's about to happen. The fear of not knowing kills more people than torture. His body trembled while I watched in bliss feeling satisfaction in his terror.

His knuckles began to turn white as he gripped the chair he was currently tied to. I leaned down now at eye level. "I

torture them” I whispered answering my own question.
“Vincenzo please don’t do this I’ll do anything” I cut him off-putting my finger to my lips.

“I didn’t finish” I walked over to the table containing my favourite weapons. I dragged my fingers across the weapons feeling giddy. “I torture them until their souls leave their bodies. Until your body simply can’t take the pain anymore until it finally gives up and puts you out of your misery. In short, my old friend ... You’re going to die tonight” I conform his unasked question.

I pulled out my knife walking back towards him I glide it over his face and body. “Vincenzo Please” he cries. I drag the knife and wherever it landed cut him hearing his grunts and cries on the more sensitive areas. A fresh cut on his cheek watching it ooze blood, “PLEASE” he screams. Another cut. I began to cut him wherever I decided the skin could use a scar.

“Why shouldn’t I end you right now?” I questioned “I have a son” he begged. I looked at him fire burning inside me. “Am I supposed to care that you procreated?” I asked him calmly. “I have a family; I have siblings I’m responsible for. But that didn’t seem to matter when you wanted to kill me” I made clear at the irony in his plea.

I then stab him in his stomach, missing all vital organs not killing him. Just causing him pain, “Did you think I was going to end your life fast? ... oh no I want you to feel this ... I want you to suffer” I threatened in a low voice. “I have a kid please” He whispered. I looked at him with a raised brow
“Congratulations? Let’s hope he isn’t as stupid as you” I prayed.

I watched his Adam’s apple slowly bounce up and down as he swallows the lump in his throat, muscles stiffening his body kicking in flight or fight.

I tilted my head a crazed look in my eyes. Sweat began to fall from his forehead as he eyed me looking for any sort of hope, any humanity behind them. My eyes darkened my head

became clouded by a dark cloud and a devil whispering in my ear.

I laughed, keeping my eyes on him. Grabbing the knife, I pull it out of his stomach harshly and tossing it up in the air and catch it, swiftly stabbing him in his right eye. “You won’t be needing those anymore” I hiss pulling the knife back out.

The room filled with his horrific screams as I proceeded to do the same to his left eye. Then once slice to the neck. Ending his life, I watched his body fall lifelessly to the floor. His head collapsed in front of him blood dripping from every inch of his face.

I grabbed his arm and carved V.K before flinging his arm back standing up to grab a towel off the table and wipe my stained hands.

“Send his eyes to the Salvatore estate” I looked over at Lorenzo, “and burn his body to ashes” I give out my orders heading towards the door.

THE JEALOUSY

Isabella’s POV

Same stink new smell.

Maria and I are in the changing rooms getting ready for our performances and hopefully some private dancers. The number of people in here I’ve seen throwing bags of hundreds ... all that came to mind was you can really get a sugar daddy here.

The exclusive strip club called us back and we had to start straight away. So here we are getting dressed and caked. yay. The manager briefed us and gave us our only uniform. The boss apparently did not want any of his stripper’s identities to

be seen and instructed them all to wear a wig of sorts to give them privacy as well as keep their identities hidden from some of these men here. Honestly, a change of hair can really alter one's appearance.

The second I saw the fire-red wig I fell in love I quickly rushed towards it and snatched it off the mannequin's head. "Um excuse me I was going to pick that wig"

Plastering the fakest smile I can manage I look at her, "Aw sorry love, maybe try another one" I suggested trying to go back to the mirror. "First of all, it's Roxy-" Cutting her " I don't recall asking" I pointed out and shrugged my shoulders turning back around. Hoping she would get the hint and walk away.

"Listen I tried being nice, but don't think I won't knock you out if you try me with that tone again" I look at her narrowing my eyes and in the sweetest most innocent voice I can muster, "Oh Hun, if you're not gonna be polite I will happily tear your voice box from your fucking throat." I kept my cool, knowing the calmness in my voice was more intimidating than a yell.

Rolling my eyes, I proceeded to walk off after she chose to keep quiet. "Listen, babe, the boss is coming in today and his favourite colour is red. He's mine and so is that wig" She spits, I cocked my eyebrows up and smirked turning around on my heels, I charge for her neck and pin her against the wall. Applying just enough pressure to cut off her airways but not enough to kill her.

"What did I just say?" I calmly ask her, tilting my head ever so slightly not losing my grip as she desperately tries to get my hand off her. Still keeping a firm grip around her neck, I pulled her towards me then quickly slam her head back on the wall, "I asked you a question." I warned lowly the girls in the changing room staring at us no one daring to interfere.

It felt like the room was on edge to see what I was going to do. She started choking out a cry for help her words barely audible.

I let go of her neck and she falls to the floor grasping her throat. “You know your kind of my bitch now” I laughed out blowing her a kiss I walk back to Maria and sit on the couch getting her assistance with the wig.

In my defence, she started it. I’m not crazy, or violent unless you try to take advantage of me or treat me like a damsel. You can’t blame me really, I came from a criminal background and got pushed around for the rest of my life by one man and then by my stepfather and his abusive ways.

Nothing I wasn’t used to not to make myself sound like a victim. If you don’t fight and bite back, you’re going to be pushed around your whole life by people like her.

I look at myself in the mirror and analysed myself. Fixing up the bangs on the wig I grabbed my red sparkly stilettos and walked out. Ten minutes on the pole and I swear I made at least \$5,000.

The music blasting through the roof speakers, I let the beat of the song completely take over my body. I grab the pole and swing myself upside down, hanging on by just my legs intertwining my leg around the pole to keep me from falling. I extend my free leg out in front exposing myself teasingly.

I arch my back and trace my breasts along with my curves. From the corner of my eyes, I see more people coming in. Must be someone important judging from the armed men that hung around him as a puppy does to its master.

Swinging back right side up, I continue dancing and doing moves on the pole while I eye the man. Suddenly my body was completely set on fire, a zoo decided to escape in my stomach, and I bent down to clutch it.

I remembered where I am and saved myself by gliding my hands upon my exposed legs and flicking my hair and ass on the way back up.

It’s him.

His eyes connected with mine and I suddenly found it hard to breathe. I took my time analysing him, a black turtleneck, dark

charcoal grey pants, and black boots. Four rings. I dozed off imagining those rings wrapped around my neck. Before I was snapped back into reality by a creep “Come on baby shake that ass for daddy”

I mentally threw up more times than I can count. He wasn't bad looking, but just wasn't the one I wanted. I looked back at Italy and saw his face change from lust to complete anger. Oh? Then that bitch from the dressing room walked up to him, placing her hand on his chest, and whispering into her ear. A flood of jealousy overtook all my senses. Despite my best efforts to stop.

I shook my head bringing myself out of my murderous gaze. Italy smirked, seeing the frustration and jealousy on my face and began stroking her leg and squeezing her ass. Oh, he wants to play.

Bring it on Italy I mentally challenged him. I look down and the man, I sat at the edge of the stage and used my finger to indicate for the man to come over. I pulled at his tie. Oh, kill me. I stood upright and began grinding my ass into the man, my eyes fixated on Italy. Like he was the man I was dancing on, I watched as his knuckles started turning white, the veins on his forehead popping out and his scowl evident on his annoying face.

One point for me. Just as I was about to turn around and grind myself on his leg, I was brutally pulled away. “Aye fuck off, this one's mine find your own whore” the man yelled.

Honestly, I use to get offended being called a whore and slut by these men, but then I remember I'm walking out of here with their thousands and all I do is a dance on a pole. I like to think of them as my bitches, so I just shrug it off now. Italy however grabbed the man by his shirt and spat something in Italian. The man looked petrified and ran out of the club.

“In case you haven't noticed I work on commission” I smart-mouthed him, he turned looking at me with an unreadable expression, his body tensed and stone cold. He rolls his eyes and grabs me by my arm and takes me to a private room. He

eyed me up and down for a few seconds then sat on the chair, resting his head extending his legs apart and arms on the armrest. Power move. He looked in charge and like in power like I was some peasant that needed to bow down and kiss his ring.

“Dance” is all he said. Crossing my arms, I looked him up and down “No” I responded.

Furring his eyebrows in pure amusement, “Dance, or I’ll make you” he spoke his thick Italian accent made that threat a million times hotter. Make me I begged him in my head wanting him to overpower me to take control.

“I’d love to see you try” I smiled; he lowered his head slightly keeping eye contact. I roll my eyes and ask, “you paying for this dance?” all he did was simply nod. Grabbing the iPad, I played Grind on me. Just so I have an excuse to keep grinding onto him. As the song began my body immediately began moving to the beat of the song, following the lyrics.

I placed my hand on my chest slowly moving it to my neck and in the same motion, I began descending into a split. Placing both legs behind me I crawled over to Italy who looked too calm.

His calmness and lack of facial expression sent a wave of disappointment, frustration, and annoyance throughout my body. Fine if I can’t get your facial reaction, I’ll get something else’s reaction. Moving his legs further apart, I placed my face inches from his cock licking my lips slowly and raising up. Inches from his face I bit my lip and spin myself around as I begin to grind into him.

And on cue his cock gave me the reaction that wasn’t evident on his face. Smirking I grind further into him. I turn around and sit on top of him and I slowly grind myself into his now hard on. Fuck his big, I had to bite my lip to restrain myself from letting out a moan. Our faces now inches apart he looked at my lips then back at my face hungrily. The song stopped and so did my movements.

We both sat there like we were in some sort of trance; you could cut the sexual tension with a knife. What are you thinking about? Just as he was leaning in to kiss me the door flung open, “Boss baby don’t you want a private dance from your favourite girl” she smirked her finger twirling her hair and the other hanging on her already low underwear.

I felt him stiffen. Looking at him that vein in his forehead reappeared. Fuck she’s gonna get it. Although to my surprise the complete opposite happened, Italy took me off of him and walked out with her.

My body was in complete shock, I just stood there trying to understand what just happened. Bella, you’re acting like he is yours shut the fuck up he was just a client I mentally scolded myself, but I couldn’t help but feel the sting of jealousy rushing through me like blood.

Slamming the door on my way out and throwing all rational thoughts out the window I walk into the room they were in. “What the fuck?!” I screamed scaring the girl and earning an angry expression from Italy.

Smirking she looked at me “Oh baby, did you think he was actually enjoying your pathetic dance. You can never please him like I do. Now do yourself a favour and go away”

I looked at both of them in disgust “Did you seriously forget what I warned you about in the dressing room? Don’t think because Italy is sitting here that, that’s gonna stop me.” I hissed watching her eyes grow wide.

“What did you just call me” Italy roared.

“Italy.” I repeated in a firm voice. His acting like I just said the worst thing ever, if he wants, I can make it worse. “You don’t scare me” I spoke up firmly, my gaze burning into his. “As your boss, I suggest you watch that tongue because I won’t hesitate to cut it off” he threatened. Oh, great of course he’s the boss, well I guess I did guess that earlier.

His threat terrified me more than anyone has in a long time, for what felt like a decade I genuinely felt scared, but that

wasn't going to stop him from running my mouth. Not knowing when to shut up I didn't take him or his threat seriously, wanting to test his patience further I edged closer to him. "Then do it mafia" I teased mockingly. The whole strip club, some of his men I presume and my sister staring at us. With the attention, I knew Mafia had to keep up an image FUCK. I yelled in my head, why did I do that.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION DON'T EVER TAKE A MAFIA BOSS UP ON HIS THREATS.

I mentally yelled at myself. Oops, letting out a groan he pulled his pocket knife out of I don't even know where from and grabbed me by my throat and pinned me against the wall.

My heart was in my throat and my body shaking like a washing machine. I was beyond petrified; I wanted the walls around us to swallow me whole.

"Unless everyone wants their eyes pulled from their sockets. I suggest everyone gets back to work" he roared like a madman. His voice was deep, and his Italian accent was thick and strong. Something I noticed happens a lot when he's mad. The girl ran out closing the door behind her.

The fade noise of the music resumed, and everyone went back to doing whatever it was they were doing with their functional eyeballs. Cool no one coming in here to help me, why would they. It's not like they're dumb enough to get in between a random girl and their boss.

At least I can say I had the balls to threaten the Vincenzo King. OH, WAIT HAHHAHAHA I WON'T EVEN BE ABLE TO SPEAK. cool, cool, cool, cool, cool. cool, cool.

He grabbed my jaw forcing my mouth open as he placed the knife on my tongue. Looked me dead in the eyes with pure power and amusement. He was thriving having me in such a vulnerable position and it wasn't until now that I realised just how close he is to me.

"Were you jealous leonessa?" he purred against my ear.

THE NICKNAME (LEONESS = LIONESS)

No, absolutely the fuck not. The nerve of this man ... okay maybe I was a little jealous, but I was not going to let him know that I pushed him away from me, smiling “me? Jealous? Of her? You got to be kidding me.” he eyed me his smug smirk never leaving his lips he corned me against the wall again, his body inches from my own. He cocks his brow up licking his lips while hands trail down my body, leaving goosebumps in its path.

A deeply satisfying hum left his soft pink lip. As much as my mind was screaming at me to push his hand away It felt like my I was paralysed. I couldn't do anything but stare at him, I watched intensely as his adams apple went up and down as the low groan left his sealed lips.

I bit my lower lip to restrain myself from letting out any kind of moan. “I- y- you just didn't pay for the dance” I muttered out breathless, trying to master an excuse as to why I came. As his hands continued to roam my body. I cursed myself and my stupid body for reacting so intensely to his touch.

(Sexual scene)

“I own this place” his free hand begins trailing down from my breasts to my thighs. Roughly pulling me closer to him “You work for me” He whispered in my ear, his hot breath on my ear, his scruffy beard tickling my neck.

I clenched my thighs together as my breathing became rapid. My chest rose and fell as my eyes fixated on his gorgeous grey eyes, eyes full of hatred, and anger. It was as if I was staring at the devil himself how can eyes so grey appears so dark and black. He gripped my thigh forcing them open. I look at him my eyes wide I had no idea if my reaction was fear or if I wanted this, his hands all over me.

Before I had the chance to speak, he traced my throbbing area above my one piece with his thumb, my mouth gaped open forming an O as I let out a soft whimper. I gripped his arm stopping him, "Stop?" I whispered; it came out more like a question than an order. His palm rested against me, I knew he could feel how wet and ready I am my entire body betraying me caving into his touch.

Despite my obedient pussy I kept a firm hold on his arm, a small laugh left his lips I looked at him curiously. He moved his hand from my pussy placing it firmly on the lower part of stomach pushing me further into the wall, he stabbed the knife into the wall inches from my face causing me to jump. This man almost stabbed me in the eye and yet it just made me wetter throbbing even more at his dominance.

That did not just turn me on. What the hell is wrong with me?

He presses his body into mine, my body immediately reacting to his touch burning underneath him I rolled my eyes back trying to desperately ignore what was happening. His hand finds its place back on my pussy, I arched my back biting my lip to keep from moaning arching into his touch.

"Do you want me to stop?" He questioned teasingly, knowing full well I didn't.

breathless I muttered "yes?"

"Leonessa ... your mouth says one thing, but your body says another" using his free hand he placed his thumb on my bottom lip parting it while he unclipped my one piece. Rolling my eyes back I lean my head on the wall and let out a small sigh of pleasure. Fuck

"You're so wet for me." He whispered against my ear, rubbing his two fingers on my clit, going faster. "So ready for me" I bite my lip trying to stop myself from giving him the pleasure of hearing me moan out.

"Don't bite your lip" he growled. "Let it out" he demanded like he needed to hear me like it was a mission to get me to moan. My body craved him, and I couldn't explain why, but it

reassured me when I felt his body replicate mine. His hard-on pressing against my thigh.

All the senses in my body erupted as I let out a moan when I felt him pick up the pace teasing my clit. “Fuck” I cursed. He smiled feeling satisfied upon hearing my moan, he places one finger in me thrusting it in and out in slow motion.

“Is this what you wanted when you came bursting in here” I wanted to scream I wanted to push him off me I wanted to strangle him, but it was like my body was frozen and he knew it, he knew the power he had over me. I became paralysed by his touch, by him and I can’t explain how or why. “Did you want me to play with your pussy?” He questioned picking up the pace, I arched my back grinding my hips further into his finger.

He inserted another finger into me, Vincenzo began pumping in and out of me so fast I didn’t even try to suppress my moan anymore and I screamed his name before my moans turned silent unable to let anything out. He started rubbing my clit with his thumb while his fingers worked their magic pumping in and out. I gripped his arm nearing my climax and he pulled out. I whined at the lack of friction, I looked at him pissed that he stopped.

“Not yet leonessa ... not yet” he grabbed my jaw “open those pretty red lips” doing as he said like a fucking puppy, he stuck his fingers in my mouth “tell me how you taste” he purred

I sucked on his fingers without fighting him, he groaned as my tongue flicked and licked his fingers covered in my juices. He grabbed his knife out of the wall and placed the tip of it under my chin tilting my head up. He leaned in and whispered “Only good girls get to cum” not finishing what he started and walked out.

(End of sexual scene)

WHAT. THE. FUCKING. FUCK. JUST HAPPENED.

after 20 minutes of trying to regain my composure and finish the job after he left me hanging, I failed miserably. I let out a

sexually frustrated sigh and walked out of the room. Everyone was busy entertaining, and no one dared to look this way on account of Vincenzo's threat.

I walked backstage and changed back into my normal clothes. After calming Maria down and convincing her that I was fine, and nothing happened we went home.

x

Running into the shower I put the water on and stripped my clothes off. As I wash myself off, I couldn't help but remember how his hands felt on my skin, I traced the parts of my body that were touched by him and felt fire along with those areas.

Stepping out of the shower I plopped myself in bed. My phone buzzed

'Leonessa, I enjoyed playing with you today - V.K'

How did he get my number, looking down at my phone

'don't bother worrying how I got your number I have my ways' he answered my unasked question.

'That's stalker behaviour don't you think?' I replied.

'Did I leave the much of an impression ;)' I teased.

Within a second he responded, ***'do you think it's wise to talk to me like that after tonight?'*** he responded, and I could hear his cocky accent and see the smug look on his face.

'Don't get cocky, I'm sure you had a cold shower after you helped yourself' I responded rolling my eyes, he makes me so mad, and I hate that he has that power over me.

Who does he think he is. Ok, I didn't want him to stop, and I might've wanted to just jump him but in my defence. Oy Vey his hot you can't blame me.

'Watch it, Isabella. I'm not the person you want to piss off.'

I rolled my eyes texting him back ***'Oh on the contrary you're exactly the person I want to piss off'***

‘until next time Leonessa -V.K’

I shut off my phone and threw it across the room. Every rational thought is telling me to stay away, to avoid him at all costs but my other side wants to play his little game.

x

The next morning, I checked my phone and found no new messages from Italy. Slightly disappointed, I shook my head and threw my phone back on my bed.

I went on my morning run a little earlier than Maria. I needed to just get out. I was running like a girl on a mission, and then I fell flat on my ass after bumping into someone. “Oh my god I’m so sorry” I rushed out. “Oh my god, I spilt coffee on your shirt let me get that for you.” I rubbed his shirt with the napkin that also fell on the floor.

“You’re only making it worse” the man laughed. Blushing I buried my face in my hands. “I’m so sorry, I’ll buy you a new shirt”

“Hey, it’s fine the shirt’s pretty old” He muttered looking down at his stained shirt. “I’m Isabella” I greeted myself to the handsome man, tall, tan sadly no facial hair and tattoos he wasn’t very built, but he was still sort of attractive. “Oh my god, Isabella? it’s Sam” Realisation overcame me, my ex-boyfriend, Sam. “Oh my god I didn’t recognise you,” I said and went in for a hug. Sam and I dated when I first moved to Minnesota but broke up because I didn’t want him to know about my abusive stepdad and I just wasn’t able to date at that period.

“Would it be strange if I asked you out on a date?”

I stare at him hesitantly, I mean yes, we had a connection a while ago and yes, he is attractive, and he seems very sweet but there’s no mystery he seemed too safe? I mentally slapped myself as I caught on that I was subconsciously comparing him to Italy.

“Hey, it’s the least you could do for staining my new shirt” he smiled “New? you just told me it was old” I giggled rolling

my eyes, but I smiled and agreed.

We exchanged details and he said he'll pick me up tonight for our date.

x

Walking back into the apartment I see no sign of Maria.

"Maria?" I call out

"In the kitchen" I follow her voice and see her cooking breakfast. "You were up early this morning?" she asked looking me up and down, "I just needed some fresh air" I wasn't lying, ever since last night nothing I did help. I was beyond frustrated and irritated. She hummed and continued cooking. "I bumped into Sam on my run... literally" I joked at the literal behind that statement.

"Ex-boyfriend Sam?" She questioned curiously, "Yes" I nodded grabbing a bottle of water from the fridge, "Is he still cute?" she asked in an excited voice, I thought for a second and shrugged my shoulders "Yea I guess" I answered her question unsure of my answer.

"Tall?" She was now standing directly in front of me, "Built? How's his hair? Is he living here? How old is he again? Oh, my is he still cute? OH MY GOD! are you getting back together?" She began firing questions not being able to keep up "Jesus Maria I don't know, stop firing questions at me." I yelled feeling overwhelmed.

"Last one, are you looking forward to it?" she asked seriously staring at me, I stared back at her for a minute "I don't know" I answered truthfully, I felt like I was missing something. That going on this date with Sam was just wrong. I wasn't excited nor was I fully invested in going.

Maria sighed and sat across from me at the dining table. "Is it because of Vincenzo?" she cautiously questioned me.

"I-I don't know Maria ... maybe?" My unsure voice not reassuring her, I walked back towards the fridge and put my bottle back in and turned around to look at Maria on the kitchen table. "I can't tell you how to feel, but my advice. You

might end up liking the guy he isn't dangerous he doesn't own a mafia, nor does he kill people or sell drugs or do business with criminals for a living."

Why didn't any of those aspects of Vincenzo's life bother me? "I guess" Sam was a safe option and I'm talking and debating my life as if there is something even happening between me and Vincenzo. He is just my boss and a man I'm in a sick game with? I sigh frustrated shaking my head and trying to focus.

Halfway through our shift at the restaurant Maria and I meet Karla, she's also a waiter and she's sweet. We planned to go clubbing together tomorrow night.

"Isabella, can you take table nine, please. There in the private booth" Nodding my head, I walk towards table nine grabbing my notepad I look up "Are you men ready to order?" I question.

Examining the booth my heart stops and it felt like my airways got cut off. My luck of course he was here. "What's your name beautiful?" one of his men asked. Plastering the fakest smile I can master "Isabella, I'll be your waiter tonight are you ready to order?" I plastered my best self-service voice smiling at the men.

"Aw come on now gorgeous no need to shut me down, I can show you a good time baby" I cringed his lack of charm made this entire conversation awkward and uncomfortable. I looked back at the man and saw a scared expression plastered on his face, I follow his gaze and saw Vincenzo's dangerous warning stare. Oh, jealousy? Smirking to myself I thought this was a perfect time to play his game.

Since he wanted to be a little bitch yesterday. "Actually, I just recently got back with my Ex today, and he knows exactly how to show me a good time" I winked trailing my pen in-between my breast and down my stomach letting it rest just above my waistline. Stealing a quick look at Vincenzo, he has his jaw clenched and his body is tensed up.

One point Isabella.

“I’ll give you all a few minutes to decide what you want to order, and I’ll be right back.” Walking away I caught Vincenzo’s murderous stare. Smiling victoriously, I walked away making sure to exaggerate my hip movements in the process.

I went back and took their orders after five minutes of leaving I begged Karla to give them their food. I was officially off the clock. Maria finished before me, so I was walking home alone.

I walked outside the restaurant and exhaled not realising I was holding my breath, that man gets under my skin. He is the definition of infuriating. Instead of firing me like a normal person, he punishes me by letting not letting me cum. What kind of a boss. I exhaled a deep breath “Isabella shut the fuck up” I scolded myself, snapping myself out of my daze I caught someone approaching me from the corner of my eye.

I picked up my pace and walked faster and the man was hot on my tail. Getting scared I ran for my life. The man behind me tackled me to the floor and dragged me into an alley. “You’re fucking sexy” He spat trying to undo my pants. Yelling I tried kicking him off me, but the bastard put his knee on my chest. “HELP” I cried out.

“STOP FUCKING TOUCHING ME” I hooked him and got up to my feet and ran. Of course, not before being stopped by a bunch of men. “Get her and hold her down” he yelled. My heart was beating so fast that I felt like it was going to burst out of my chest this can’t be happening again. Crying I started kicking and screaming. “SHUT THE FUCK UP BITCH” One of them backhand me across the face. Just before I was about to do anything. A very deep Italian voice silenced me.

“Gentlemen I wouldn’t do that if I were you.” It was his voice. “Go find your own toy” the man spat as he unbuttoned his pants and took out his cock. “Put your tiny dick back in your pants before I blow it off” he warned in a low voice. The man didn’t listen I looked between them, my breathing harsh. I

smirked “*He doesn’t like repeating himself*” I coldly repeated Vincenzo’s words to the man. Looking over at Vincenzo, I see him smirking proudly at my recollection. He pulled out his gun and did exactly what he threatened to do. He blew his dick off.

The men dropped me and rush towards Vincenzo. With his gun he cloaked one of the men, kicking another in the stomach before casually grabbing him by his head and kneeing him. One came from behind with a knife “VINCENZO BEHIND YOU” I yelled out.

He spun around and grabbed the man by his hand stopping him and punching him in his ribcage, the man dropped the knife and fell to his knees struggling to breathe. He grabbed him by his neck and spat in his face. He pulled the man who was going to rape me by his legs and cupped his face in his hand as he began to cut something into the side of his cheek.

The man cried out a horrific scream, a scream that made my hairs stand up. If he wasn’t just about to rape me, I would have cried for him. He threw him back down. I looked at his cheek, ‘V.K’

The men backing off leave the man and run as fast as they could, so much for no man left behind.

I look up at Vincenzo with blurry vision, his breathing heavily as he re-buttons his shirt. Not realising what I’m doing I run towards him and jump in his arms hugging him as tightly as I could.

He didn’t even move back nor flinch catching me mid-air, he steadies himself, after a second his body relaxed holding me tightly against his chest. “Are you okay Leonessa?” He whispered softly generally worried.

I cried into his neck and gripped him tighter. The fear of being rapped again unleashed memories that haunt me, memories I spent 8 years burying away. “Shhh” he cooed into my neck.

Vincenzo King. Just saved me.

THE PROTECTIVE

Vincenzo drove me back to my apartment; the ride back was quiet. I thanked him again and got out of his car. He kept his head forward and drove off, completely ignoring the entire way and now. I sighed looking at him through his car window, about to say something, he quickly sped off. I watched his car slowly fade away before deciding to forget everything and go inside.

I walk back into the apartment shaken up but surprisingly calm, yes, I was petrified but knowing Vincenzo is around brought a wave of serenity. I felt safe. I can take care of myself I don't need him, and his ego trying to overpower me anyway. Although for once it was nice to be protected instead of being the one to protect.

My ringtone snaps me back to reality. Sam is calling shit, I completely forgot about him, that's not a good sign. "Hello?" I answered the phone, "Hey Belle you ready for tonight, we are going to a fancy Italian restaurant so dress fancy. I'll pick you up at 8" he spoke excitedly.

"I would have been happy with a quiet ice cream date or even just lounging around an apartment and watching the big bang theory" I truly was not in the mood for anything tonight, I wanted to cancel the whole date but knew it was too late.

"Come on Belle, we'll have plenty of time for that. Don't keep me waiting I'll see you soon" Hanging up the phone I check the time, 3 o'clock I have a good five hours to get ready.

"Maria want to go shopping?" I call out. Poking her head in the door frame like a three-year-old child looking at me with puppy dog eyes. "Do you mean that? don't toy with me" she warned me.

I burst out laughing at the sight of her “Go get dressed idiota, let’s go.” This girl suddenly possessed by the flash speeds off to her room to change out of her pjs.

“I need a simple dress for tonight” I warned her so she wouldn’t go overboard and make me wear a ballgown. “Hmm okay leave it to me, you just shut up and try on what I tell you no b-” I cut her off “But-” Maria pinched my lips together making me silent and eyed me like a madwoman. “No buts” she finished her conditions, and with that, we went into every single store in the mall. My feet are so sore I feel like they’re going to just curse me and snap off.

“Maria, we have been in every store if you don’t like something in here, I’m not going” I whined just wanting to go home and then to this date so it can be over and done with, “Stop whining. Get in” She pointed to the entrance of the store.

After rummaging through the isles Maria finally finds a dress to her liking.

It was a Black mini silk dress, the fabric hung low on my chest area but didn’t expose me too much. It was soft to the touch and hugged my body perfectly. Outlining my curves and making my butt look perfect and perky.

Finally purchasing the dress and some jewellery to match. We went home. Maria was jumping around the house like a child getting told they were going to Disneyland. “Maria calm down!” I shouted, trying to settle her down.

“Shut up and sit down, I have a lot of work to do” she pushed me down on the chair after insulting me, “Maria were twins” I called out offended, “I was always the better-looking twin” she flipped her hair back with such sass.

Looking at her I point my finger “No more coffee for you” I shake my head watching her caffeine high, “Wha- whyyy” she whined like a baby, I shook my head “you’re going to come crashing down so quick” I pointed out knowing she was going to sleep early today. She kept staring at me with puppy dog

eyes, I sighed and facepalmed this was going to be a long night.

Two hours later and I'm ready. I analysed myself in the mirror. The off white complimented my complexion, I looked down at the ring I had on. I took it off and placed four silver rings on instead. The intercom buzzed. "Isabella it's me I'm waiting outside ready when you are."

He isn't going to come to the door. I- okay then. Reaching his car, he looks at me like a puppy looking at a bone.

Uncomfortably I rubbed my elbow. "You look stunning Bella"

"You clean up good yourself." That was somewhat a lie, I felt so overdressed. He was in simple black pants and a grey T-shirt. We finally arrived at the restaurant after an awkward silence in the car. He opened the door for me and linked our hands. We walked up the stairs and went to the man to give him our names. Assuming he made a reservation.

As Sam was talking to the man, I took a second to analyse the restaurant.

The restaurant was breathtaking, it screamed expensive and elegant. The wall was covered in red hand-painted patterns, while the edges of the walls were gold. In the middle of the room was a Crimson **King** maple tree. Red velvet chairs, the table pearl white with gold decor.

I was in awe about everything. Finally, taking our seats "You like it?" I giggle "Seriously? look at this place it's beautiful" I admired the building. "Just like you Isabella" I look away from his gaze feeling myself cringe slightly, I continued looking around taking it in.

"Ahem, so what are you going to order?" I ask him to try to change the subject, He scans the menu "Ah the Chicken Scallopini with chicken mushroom sauce" Just the mere sound of that made my stomach growl, I looked over my menu "I have never been so stuck on anything in my life" I joked.

"May I suggest the Chicken Parmesan Casserole?" I looked up at our waiter. "That sounds delicious, yes please." I smile up at

him. “And for you sir?” “The Chicken Scallopini with mushroom sauce.”

Sam ordered red wine for the table and the man went off to put our orders in. “Isabella, can I ask you something?” he asked seriously, humming a yes, I nodded my head and looked at him anxiously. “Why did you break up with me?” he breaths out, A lump formed in my throat, I don’t want anyone to know about the abuse and trauma I went through.

I don’t want people walking on eggshells with me nor do I want people to pity me. When people find out about a bad, hard, or traumatising upbringing you’re no longer looked at for who you are now, you’re looked at for what you went through. ***You go from being a person to being the trauma itself.***

‘That abused girl’

“I uh w-” I tried to come up with an excuse before the restaurant suddenly became pin-drop silent. The waiters and waitresses rushed, people, moving around to make room for whoever just walked in. The man and his posse stopped in front of a table eyeing a few men currently sitting on it.

With one swift motion of his finger, they cleared the table and left. My body heating up, I shrugged trying to brush off the feeling. After they settled down everyone hurried back to work.

“He must be some big shot” Sam stated. “I wonder who he is?” I questioned, trying to change the subject. “Oh my god, Sam, I heard you have a daughter? When did that happen?” I asked curiously.

Trying my absolute best to change the subject, he looks at me with happy eyes “Oh yea, her name is Belle she’s a beauty. After we broke up, I moved to LA and met my now Ex-wife, she’s amazing but together we were toxic. We share custody though and are pretty good friends”

Taking a sip of wine, did he seriously name her after me? Yikes. “That’s really cute, that you guys can stay civil for her

sake” he nodded his head. He reached his hand out grabbing my own, he traced small circles with his thumb on the back of my hand. I smiled looking at him, Sam was different and as bad as this sounds not a good different, he was safe. Predictable and he cared too much about what people said and thought about him. Sam goes to speak up before the buzzing of my phone cuts him off. I look at my phone seeing a blocked number.

“Sorry” I apologised answering the phone. “Hello?”

“Get your hand away from him, before I tear off his arm Isabella” I scanned the restaurant looking for him, but I couldn’t find him anywhere. “I-” Cutting me off, his voice is deep his Italian accent once again becoming stronger. “3... 2...”

I quickly pulled my hand out of Sam’s grasp my heart beating rapidly, still trying to find him. Finally, my eyes landed on a smirking cocky Italian staring right at me. “Good girl” he hummed before hanging up the phone abruptly.

“You, okay?” Sam questioned looking at me concerned, I tore my eyes away from Vincenzo and refocused on Sam. “Huh?” I questioned still in a haze. “Oh, yeah I’m okay wrong number” I laughed playing it off. Mid laugh I quickly take another sip of my wine. This is going to be a long night.

“What about you? What are you doing nowadays are you still working as an um you know” he trailed off looking at me cautiously. Going out he never ‘approved’ of me being a stripper, but I had no other means of income, and in all honesty, I didn’t care. I never asked for his approval, and it never bothered me that he didn’t like my work. It’s my life and I get to choose what I do with my body.

“a stripper? yup,” I say finishing his sentence for him as I proceed to take a gulp of the wine. Indeed, a long night. I need to get wasted for this conversation. “Don’t you find it degrading?” He blurted out.

Looking at him frustrated I let out a giggle, “You know what Sam? No, no I don’t. I find it empowering. It’s my body I can do what I please with it when I feel uncomfortable, I will stop but on my own merit. If you don’t like my line of work. I am more than happy to call an Uber and walk out now.”

“That’s not what I meant it’s just there are men everywhere eyeing you like an object it’s slu-” I put my hand out cutting him off “Don’t finish that sentence.”

“Slutty” he finishes anyway. Reminding me of one of the other reasons why I dumped him. I grabbed his wine glass and threw it in his face. “You asked why I dumped you?” I shouted gaining everyone’s attention. “Because of your entitled spoiled overcompensating personality”. I scoffed getting ready to walk off. Looking at him one last time, “Fuck you. You and your small dick can go to hell” I spat as I grabbed my purse and walked to the bathroom.

x

After spending thirty minutes in the bathroom, I composed myself and walked out but in a matter of literal seconds, I’m pinned up against the door. I gasped shocked, before finally recognising who it was who had my body pinned up against a wall.

My body instantly heated up. “Hmm, that dress is testing my patience, Leonessa.” He purred, his stare hard and cold. “It’s like you want to drive me insane” He commented his eyes trailing my body. “Italy,” I breathed out feeling my chest rising and falling at the lack of space between us. I look up at him, tilting my head as to warn him to not do anything stupid.

“Vincenzo” I trail off looking around us scared someone’s going to see us in such a position. “Small dick huh?” he questions mockingly.

“Was he able to please you with such a small dick?” he teases me, “show you a good time?” He mocked me from earlier. I shut my eyes and opened them frustrated. “Vincenzo” I warned softly, “looks like you like saying my name amore” I

shut my eyes rolling them, I look back at him shaking my head.

“Do you just appear out of thin air, or do you plan these little meetings?” I say gesturing between us. He let out a low chuckle, my legs turn into jelly unable to hold my weight. Oh, that laugh that genuine laugh was the first thing that was able to make my legs weak. It should be illegal for someone to be this attractive. It should be punishable by death to be this gorgeous and a dick.

“You didn’t answer my question, Isabella” I look at him confused. Did he ask me a question? It’s like whenever he’s around I can’t help but turn into this mess. “Was he able to please you with his small dick?” he questioned again. He traced his hand up my thigh and then underneath my dress and I couldn’t think clearly anymore. Not that I was thinking clearly before.

“Uh ... um” I started stuttering as he closed the gap between us, and his curious hands kept roaming purposely avoiding the one area I wanted him to go to the most.

“Hmmm, do you want to know what I think? I think he wasn’t even able to get you to orgasm, was he able to make you dripping wet just from the sound of his voice? Make your toes curl with his tongue? Make you scream in pleasure as you finally realise?” He whispered into my neck his hands still teasingly playing with me. “Maybe you need to experience it with someone who has ... more to offer” His arrogant smirk reappearing on his face, I smirked and rolled my eyes. “So humble” I mocked.

His hands trailed down my hips, my eyes going wide.

“Vincenzo ... people can ... walk ... in” my chest rising and rapidly falling, the air being knocked out of me, dirty thoughts completely clouding my mind and better judgement. “Then they can enjoy a little floor show” he whispered in my ear.

“Are you going to answer my question or am I going to have to get it out of you the fun way.” He eyed me, like a madman

full of a million emotions but the dominating one being lust, attraction completely taking over him.

“No” I breathed out answering truthfully. He sucked in a breath staring at me as though deep in thought. Looking into his eyes it was evident he was imagining a million and one scenarios. Different ways... or positions he can have me in right now.

Taking in his features, the scar across his eye, his chiselled jaw, his stubble, his beautiful grey eyes being covered with his long thick lashes. The king's crown tattooed on his neck and another on his hand. I admire the one on his neck how it covers him with a mesmerising pattern. I raise my hand with the tip of my finger I begin tracing it.

He initially stiffened under my touch, but then he eased into it, letting out a sigh. I bit my lip and continue to trace every detail on that tattoo. I wanted him.

But I hated him. Letting out a shaky breath I pulled my hand away. “I should g-” Cutting me off he slams his lips to mine, catching my lips in a hard kiss. There was nothing gentle about it. Pressing me against the wall, he took my face between his hands. Every thought in my head blurring into madness.

In his lips I felt the dark lure of desire it started to completely take over, bending all my rules.

Snapping back into reality. I was still on a date, and he is still the most agitating person in New York, and most importantly we were in public. Holding on to the last trembling bit of self-awareness I tried one last time to pull away. “No,” He roared, slamming my lips back to his. Oh, fuck it. I slid my hands through the opening of his black silk dress shirt, it was unbuttoned exposing his beautiful, chiselled chest.

He let out a low rough groan coming from the back of his throat, a small, pleading noise that set every inch of my skin on fire. “Fuck” he whispered against my lips. Smirking into

the kiss I pulled him closer by his belt. He broke the kiss and eyed me “Don’t start something you can’t finish leonessa”

As I went to reply I looked at his knuckles. That are covered in “blood?” I questioned looking back at him.

THE I GOT YOU

“Blood?” I questioned looking up at him. His facial expression hardens at the mention of his stained knuckles. He harshly snatches his hand out of my grip.

“Whose blood?” my mind screaming out the name, my mind telling me to run and don’t turn back every fibre of my body telling me to escape, but my feet stay firmly planted on the ground as I look at him. “Answer me, Vincenzo” I demanded.

“Who the fuck are you?” He responded his voice would have made anyone else tremble at his feet or flea, but not me. “This mafia boss act might scare everyone else, but not me.” I reminded him, “Vincenzo whose. Blood.” I asked him one last time although I knew the answer to my own question, I needed to hear it from him. I needed to hear it from his lips.

My patience began wearing thin. He straightens his posture and takes a step towards me. “Your dates” he answers my question with a stone expression his face inches away from my own. “After what he said and did ... he is lucky I didn’t kill him” he pressed not feeling any sort of remorse, I sucked in a breath watching him, whether he wanted to show it or not he was very protective and in the only way he knew how he protected me.

and me? I possessed no sense of guilt, no remorse. Others in my position would think I was crazy that I should at least be scared, or sad at the fact that Sam is either close dead or about to die. But I just didn’t care, instead I felt safe, protected,

because it has been a long time since I was the one being protected rather than protecting.

I should care but I don't, and it scares me. It's like whenever I'm around him my body is numbed to all that is good and bad, it fades into a blurry line, and I can't decipher what's what. His intentions were pure, but his actions were evil but who am I to judge when all my actions and intentions only consisted of evil.

"Isabella?" he looks at me as though he was expecting me to scream or even cry, but I just stand there looking at him. I walk past him and towards the exit. "Isabella!" He roared causing once again the whole restaurant to fall into a deadly silence. I stop on my heel and turn around.

I open my mouth to speak but what was I going to say? My mind was puzzled, in chaos I couldn't even think straight let alone form words. Shaking my head, I turn back around, and I calmly walk out.

"Sam!" I called out looking around the alley, "fucking hell where are you?" I shout trying to find the idiot, I'm still fuming from his comments earlier but he could be dying right now so I'll consider us even. From a far distance, I hear a low groan, I quickly sprint in the direction. In front of me I see a beat up, broken boy.

His shirt was ripped, his face and body covered in blood. He looked dead. I edged a little closer seeing the open scars on his cheek and jaw, "Oh my" I looked at his beating intrigued how did he do so much damage with just his hands.

I rush towards him and slowly lift him up, "Come on" I hold his weight up and slowly make our way to his car. Laying him flat in the backseat I drive to the hospital. The car ride was silent the only sound was Sam's painful moans and groans.

I parked the car at the entrance and screamed for help as medics came with a stretcher and rushed him inside. Not wanting to answer questions about who or where or what

happened I gave his keys to the reception and began walking home.

Yes, it's late, yes, it's cold but I needed this time to think. Alone.

I had so many questions, it's making my head spin. In a normal situation, everything about Vincenzo would bother me, it would make me not only hate him but also fear him. Fear the opportunity of history repeating itself once more if I give in to the darkness. If I give into him, upon every encounter I had with him he was doing or done something that people would consider evil or bad. But whenever I think about those acts all I can think is about is why he did it.

The first encounter at the mall shot his men to save me and Maria from being shot, the second encounter saved me from being raped the third encounter he protected my self-worth by silencing Sam.

He was a rare breed of bad? If I'd even call him that, a man who has evil running through his veins but deep down he also had a speck of innocence pumping through his heart. This man holds so much power, so much authority and so much responsibility. Yet isn't someone you can automatically understand or take from just appearance.

He was pure darkness, but I always found darkness alluring and beautiful. there's something to the feeling of not knowing your surroundings, not seeing the colour of things as they appear, but as they truly are. There's something about the unknown, the quiet, the cold. There's something unspoken about the dark something I can never quite put to words.

Darkness is painted as evil and scary but judged too quickly. For there's something terrifying yet beautiful about it.

Deep in thought, I didn't notice the droplets of rain landing on my exposed skin. Shit! Running under a shelter I hold myself to try and retain as much warmth as I can. Lights blinding my vision I see a familiar jet-black Mercedes Benz approaching

me. Does this man have me bugged? Did he shove a GPS in me at some point?

“Isabella get in the car” He orders me, scoffing I roll my eyes and continue walking through the rain trying not to look at him “No I’m fine” I respond knowing damn well that I’m not fine. I’m going to get sick and I’m freezing my nipples off.

“Get in the fucking car leonessa” I stop in my tracks and look at him frustrated, “Stop fucking calling me that it’s Isabella and no” I continued walking when his threat made me stop dead in my tracks again, “Are you going to make me come out of this car and fucking carry you in?” his threat sent goosebumps all over my skin. “I dare you” I smiled crossing my arms over my chest.

Rolling his eyes, he got out of the car and approached me like a madman, letting out a squeal I ran. Yes, I ran in the rain, in heels like a child being told to come inside. “Isabella I’m not playing with you! Get in the car!” He roared, but it didn’t stop me, I picked up speed and yelled from over my shoulder, “you’re gonna have to catch me Italy”

I ran onto an empty field taking a quick glance behind me he was hot on my tail. “Not fair I’m in heels!” I shouted whining at the un-advantage. As I’m running, I take off my heels and throw them behind me like you would in a Mario cart game. “Catch Italy” one of my heels landed on his head I fist-bumped the air “YES!” forgetting to keep running he tackled me to the floor.

We rolled around a little before he finally pinned me down. Laughing I looked at him drenched from the rain and a small bump forming on his head. “Ti ho preso” (I got you) his Italian accent sent shivers down my spine as I stared into his eyes I whispered. “Mi hai beccato” (You got me) not saying anything he kept his gaze fixated on me. Staring at each other for a second before he caught onto himself. Coughing he quickly gets off me reluctantly extending his hand out, I take it as takes me to his car.

As we're seated in the car the tension in the air is thick, this man is hot and cold. One minute we are running around in the rain and the next he looks like he is about to murder me. He almost killed a man, yet against my better judgment I'm in his car. His jaw tensed; eyebrows furrowed in a knot. The concentration in his eyes indicating his deep in thought. What are you thinking about? I mentally asked watching him.

The car came to a stop as he kept looking straight ahead, "get out" I slightly jumped as his tone came off way harsher than I expected. "No need to be a dick, last time I fucking checked you forced me in this car" I opened the door as he grabbed my arm and pulled me back in the car.

"You need to watch your tone leonessa, last time I checked I can kill you. That tongue of yours is going to get you killed." He warned me I laughed dryly smirking I leaned into him "An hour ago, you liked my tongue" I purred into his ear. I got out of the car slamming the door and ran inside. I press my floor level as I stepped into the elevator. A part of me feared his threat but the other part of me was terrified of myself that his threat turned me on more than it scared me. What is wrong with me? why does nothing he does scare me? why am I not scared of him? of the man he is?

His dangerous, impulsive, ruthless, and simply doesn't care. Vincenzo King is what he says he is the devil. Then why am I so drawn to him? I hate him yet I don't, I've always been someone who looks too deep into something or someone. That's because from a young age I've learnt there's always more than meets the eye.

The elevator doors ding open as I snap out of my thoughts and walk to my apartment. "What are you doing b-" I look up at Maria still somewhat soaking wet, heels in hand and what I can assume my makeup ruined. "Bella, what happened?" she asked me worried, sighing I explained I just wanted to shower and sleep, but of course, she wasn't going to let this go. So, I showered, and we sat on my bed as I explained everything to her.

“He beat him up that badly?” I nod, “I took him to the hospital avoided the security cameras and left” I shrugged my shoulders casually. Maria stared off into space, I looked at her curiously “you’re dangerously quiet” I analysed her silence carefully.

“I’m trying to desperately erase the image of you and Vincenzo from my head” she shivered in disgust, and I couldn’t help but burst into a fit of laughter. “Bella, I know this goes against everything I said before but ... maybe he would be good for you” he spoke softly still deep in thought.

“No, you were right the first time. He can go fuck himself” I shot up and made my way towards the kitchen. “Isabella your mouth is saying one thing, but your eyes and body say something else. It’s okay to admit your feelings for him, I saw it the second you mentioned his name your eyes lit up like they do when you talk about Mama and Papa. With admiration. What he does and who is never bothered you because of who you are. Besides you need a man like him to keep you on your toes. Despite my better judgement”

“Who I was” I corrected her. “Spain my lifestyle everything about me I left, and I buried in Spain.” I reminded her sternly.

“You might think you killed that side of you, but it’s always been a part of you Isabella. It’s the part of yourself you wish you can hide and deny but it’s a part of you. It’s who you are, and you can’t run from it.” She shrugged her shoulders, accepting me for all I was the good and the dark as cliché as it sounded.

She walked out of my room leaving me in my thoughts as I stare off into space I think about Spain, who I was.

FLASHBACK

“NOOOO” I cried out. “THEY’RE NOT DEAD THEY CAN’T BE DEAD”

I cried on top of my parent’s bodies, “YOU BOTH PROMISED YOU WOULDN’T LEAVE; YOU PROMISED SO WAKE UP DONT GO” I buried my head on my mum’s

chest “Mama please wake up, I’m begging you open your eyes”

I turn around and hug my dad “Papa, please ... don’t go”

I looked up at the ceiling and let out a blood curling scream.

Greif, emptiness, sadness. Maria and I walked hand in hand along with my grandparents behind the coffins of our parents. The whole town gathered to say goodbye. My eyes were swollen, and my heart was shattered.

“Stay here Isabella, take care of Maria if we don’t come back my dragon” Papa’s whisper echoed in my head, the family feeling of his gentle kiss on my head.

END OF FLASHBACK

I witnessed my parent’s death, and I saw who killed them. I swore to avenge them. My father called me dragon as a child, because of my strength, fight, and my loyalty to my family. I did whatever I needed to do to protect them. My childhood wasn’t like normal. We came from a crime organised family. I was Isabella to my family, but I was Dragon to the world, and they feared her even at such a young age.

So, when he and Mama died, I was on a killing spree trying to reach him.

And I did

SAVOUR?

The day went by quick and before we knew it, we were back at the strip club. I walked in as Maria was heading to the changing rooms, I took a quick scan. Sighing in relief there was no sign of Vincenzo. I haven’t seen him for a week, and it felt unsettling. I didn’t know if I was happy or disappointed.

As I was dancing, I felt someone slap my ass I spin around and find the same man that was here my first night. “Come here doll.” This, this is my life. I walked a little closer grabbing his tie as I pull him in.

I try to imagine I was dancing for *him*. Just like my first night in that room. “How about we take it to a private room” he shouts over the loud music. Sighing I gesture him to take the lead, “no” I stop frozen in my spot so did he.

“Hey, listen here go find someone else to fuck.” oh no I mentally winced. Vincenzo cleared his throat before he gestured the man to leave, surely when he finally turned to look, he was faced yet again with Vincenzo. Without another word, the man quickly ran off. Vincenzo looked me up and down before he himself decided to walk off. What the actual hell was that.

Frustrated I followed him “Not sure if you know this but I need clients to get paid you asshole” He turned around facing me his face showed no emotion not even annoyance, “Okay, then go.” Without another word he turned on his heel and left me standing on the floor frustrated and surrounded by too many people to count.

He moved through the crowd, “I’m not done!” I yelled as I chased after him until he was no longer in sight. I rolled my eyes and let out a frustrated groan I spun around on my heel and went back on the dance floor, I bumped into a mature man, and he asked for a private session. I happily nodded my head, and we made our way to the private rooms in the back, I walk in and started up the song.

I edged closer swaying my hips and grinding on his leg, he roughly grabbed my waist and pushed me down. I scoffed and moved his hands away, “Sir you’re not allowed to touch” I moved his hands and stood up from his leg feeling uncomfortable, he quickly stood up and pinned me against the wall. “I can do whatever I want, for the amount I’m paying for you” he retorts his hands planted on the wall behind me cornering me in. I lower my eyes sighing.

“That doesn’t give you any right, to do anything I’m uncomfortable with sir. Please remove your hands and leave the building” I asked him trying to stay calm, he scoffed and pushed me back into the wall by my neck. “Not until I get what I paid for” he grunted trying to take off his pants, “GET OFF!” I yelled, his grip around my neck tightened.

Feeling the air being choked out of me. I use every bit of strength I had left and pushed him off me which wasn’t much because from the smell I knew he was pissed out drunk, he stumbled back and looked up at me annoyed.

“I love it when they resist” He mumbled and lunged towards me I tried kicked him off me which resulted in him slapping me across the face. My cheek stinging, I let out a surprised gasp and he pulls me up by my hair punching me in the mouth. I felt my lip swell up and tears threatening to fall.

I let out a scream getting scared he quickly let go and stepped aside in case anyone came in, I stormed towards him and kicked his balls, He bends downs groaning, taking advantage of his pained state I grab the back of his neck and slam in into my knee on impact I heard a satisfying crack. I did you a favour now you can get a new one.

He fell to the floor unconscious. I rush towards the door without turning back I get out and slam it shut behind me, I’ll tell the security guards and call it a night.

My mind was hazy and my lip hurt.

As I was moving through the crowd I bumped into a familiar rock-hard chest. I looked up and saw Vincenzo giving me a hard look, he looked up his eyes followed where I just came out from. “Move” I yell already feeling like shit. He looks back down at me his gaze darkening. I clear my throat and bow my head down wanting to get the hell out of this club I move past him, and he grabs my wrist and pulls me back towards him.

I slam back into his chest. Still looking down I didn’t want him to see the cut or the bruise

“Vincenzo, I’m not in the mood.” I beg him to just leave me alone, he tilts my chin up to get a better look at my face. I looked at him, he looked down examining my face with a concerned look. He gently wiped away the blood on my lip with his thumb still saying nothing as he looked at me. “I didn’t know I was bleeding” I breath out, my chest rising and falling steadily.

After a brief pause, my heart skips a nervous beat as Vincenzo looks me dead in the eyes. “Who did this to you?” my breathing hitched, knowing that tone I stayed silent. “I ran into a wall” I lied “Isabella” he called my name obviously not believing a wall could do this much damage.

His eyes travelled down to my neck seeing the bruise from the man’s grip. “Who did this?” he asked firmly. I gulped and avoided eye contact, he pushed past me and went straight for the private room he saw me come out of. I quickly rushed after him, he stood in front of the door blocking the entry. I went to object, but his eyes went pitch black, I knew no matter what I said he was going to do whatever he wanted and if I tried to save the man it was just going to anger him more.

His face was stone cold, his body was tense he had veins bulging out of his body while he kept tensing and biting down on his jaw. He stepped back and aggressively shut the door in my face. I banged on the door trying to open it up, but it was locked.

“That poor son of a bitch” I muttered under my breath, knowing exactly what was about to happen. I tried a few more times banging on the door, but it was no use. I couldn’t even hear myself think with the music blasting and the amount of people that surrounded every inch of this strip club. I pressed my ear on the door trying to hear what was going on “I’ll tear your arm off for fucking touching her” I hear Vincenzo faintly threaten the man.

“You have no power over me boy.” He spat back; I oohed in my head pressing myself further up into the door. “You sure about that?” even through the door I could see the dominance

in his persona, imaging him hovering over the man with that sadistic look on his face. That smile that indicates something very bad is going to happen.

I waited to hear another comment, but it was quiet, unsettlingly quiet. I moved back examining the door what's happening. I went back to the door and pressed my ear up against it trying to hear what's happening, but it was still so quite... too quiet.

I waited for a few minutes and heard a loud thump; I moved back and my heart slightly racing but I wasn't sure if it was because I was scared or if it was because of an all too familiar sensation of adrenaline mixed with nostalgia.

The door flung open, and Vincenzo stood in front of the door fixing his cufflinks, I peeked over his shoulder and saw a body lying on the floor in a pool of blood. I looked back at Vincenzo who was now wiping a drop of blood that landed on his lip with his thumb.

"What did you do?" I asked him shocked, "What he did to you" he responded causally he stepped forward and extended his hand back slamming the door shut. "How did you?" How did just his hands cause that much damage, he looks to his side and whistles a few men quickly rushed towards us he nodded his head to the door and walked away dragging me with him.

"Let go" I yelled taking my arm out of his grip, he let out a frustrated sigh and looked at me. He looked around and saw people watching he gave as soon as they saw Vincenzo staring back at them, they all quickly looked away going about their business.

"Why did you do that? I was going to get security" I stated, "I'll handle your issues from now on." He stated simply, I looked at him sceptically "Why?" I pushed edging closer to him, "Isabella, drop it." He warned his voice edging in a very dangerous territory.

I edged closer to him closing the distance, "I don't want you near me. I don't want your help and I hope you take the hint

and stay away from me unless you want my knife lodged somewhere very uncomfortable” I threatened him and walked away.

Honestly, I don't know why I was so pissed off at him protecting me, It didn't need to lead to the man's death though. I frustratedly moved through the crowd, I was perfectly fine protecting myself his cocky arrogant attitude is just so frustrating!

But on him its frustratingly attractive Cockiness is so attractive in a way and it's so irritating. Like it's annoying and it annoys me. But the kind of expression and body language that comes with it. The self-satisfied attitude. The smug comments, the eye rolling, the smirking. 'Come and get me' hand gestures during a fight.

The eyebrow raises with an air of superiority, it's just like, fuck you. I'm annoyed right now; I am so annoyed right now. But oh my god I am also so very, very attracted right now. That, that's what's making me angry. My main rule my only rule Hate Vincenzo King and what am I doing? I'm still thinking about him.

I decided to just finish my shift, go home, and take a nice long shower. Maria clocked out an hour early to go to her late shift at the restaurant. I walked back to the stage and went on about my routine, I look over my shoulder as I approached the pole and saw that bitch dragging Vincenzo into a private room. So, he can sleep around but I can't even do my job.

I got off the stage and decided to just leave early and go home tonight. I change out of the wig and my outfit. I take the back door and walk down the street. I felt a thud to the back of my head, and everything went black.

“Is that her?” I heard a man mutter, “That's her” another higher pitched voice spoke out. “Hmm, I can see why he may be taken by her.” a low voice speak up I groaned and tried to rub the back of my head before I realised, I was tied up.

My eyes flutter open, but I wince at the throbbing sensation at the back of my head. As my eyes readjust to the light in the room, I stare at the two men in front of me. One was visibly older while the other looked to be in his early 30s.

I focus my gaze on the younger gentlemen, “Ah the princess is awake” he cooed, “Where am I?” I spat, looking around disgusted, “If you gonna kidnap a girl at least clean up a bit damn.”

“Temper, temper, temper. It’s starting to become clear why the King himself fancies you.” He scratched his chin as he knelt to where I was sitting, “But temper doesn’t work with me, if you speak to me like that again I will gladly teach you a lesson” He purred his threat coming off too sexual to be taken seriously, but enough to make me uncomfortable.

I looked at the old man dead in eyes, “And if you talk to me like a puppy, I will gladly rip out your vocal cords and feed them to you. Don’t ever mistake me for a damsel in distress” Truth be told I was petrified, but not because of him or his baby threats, but because of being confined in a small dark basement. My whole body was threatening to shut down as my mind immediately wandered back to Spain.

I narrowed my eyes staring him down, I smirked knowing the reaction I was giving him was not what he expected but then again. He kidnaped a girl without knowing exactly what he was dealing with. I started laughing remembering the things I did before being shipped off to Spain.

The man growled as he took a hold of my throat cutting off my air. My eyes rolled back as I struggled to breathe, my hands and tied. I wheezed out “coward” He slammed my head onto the brick wall behind me. “SHUT THE FUCK UP” he roared.

I decided to not say anything as I caught my breath. He grabbed two knives from the table as he approached me again, I looked down at the waistband and saw the shine of his gun. I looked back at him as he propped me up and sat in front of me.

“You’re the daughter of the drug lords back in Spain, aren’t you? You had a name something they called you.” He shook his head before muttering that it wasn’t important since they’re dead now.

“What do you know about Vincenzo King, who are his contacts, and when are his next shipments. When is the next family meeting, I know the head of the King family even if no one else believes me.” He asked strategically, I tilted my head as I studied his body language, his hands were shaking, his breathing was harsh and the way he is questioning me was to structured, not like a mob boss trying to get information on his rival but like a cop. “You’re an ex-cop, aren’t you?” I questioned him.

He looked taken back as he dropped both knives to the floor and pulled me closer to him by my throat. “How did you know?” he asked shocked.

I smiled “The way your hands were shaking when you were getting ready to torture me, you find the whole idea of this disgusting and it’s evident on your face, you’re very uncomfortable and disgusted with yourself. Also, the questions you asked me, didn’t resemble a fellow mafia boss or someone in a gang, you questioned me like a cop you wanted information about the contacts and next shipments so you can infiltrate and potentially get your job back.” I broke down my analysis.

Slowly reaching for the knife he dropped on the floor, using the tip of my fingers I get a grip pulling it closer to me. Freeing myself from the ropes. Still lost in thought as he tried to comprehend how I deciphered everything so fast. I could help myself feeling frustrated that I was able to break down everyone so quick but when it came to Vincenzo, I was clueless. I huffed knowing this is not the time.

“That proves nothing” He muttered loosening his grip on my neck. I shrugged my shoulders unbothered “judging by the way you’re loosening your grip on my throat it’s evident that You’re ashamed of the person you’re becoming the type of

person you're trying to get information on is who you're turning into." I analysed him carefully, seeing so many of his people in the days.

"And also, by the fact that you didn't realise I just freed myself by the knives, you dropped and pulled me closer too." I smiled as I stabbed his leg and grabbed his gun from his waistband. I shot the guy from the club in the chest before he could grab his gun. I aimed it back at the man in front of me. "I told you do not mistake me for a damsel in distress who needs saving" I warned him in a low voice edging closer to his face.

Still slightly disappointed he wasn't the one who came to save me, I was proud that I still don't need anyone to save me. The day I rely on anyone else to protect me is the day I signed my life away. He took the knife out of his leg as he charged for me. I shot him three times in the chest before I heard a lot of footsteps approaching the room. Panicked I grabbed the other guy's gun and ran out of the back door.

I have no idea where I am, so I ran as far as my feet could carry me. I looked behind me and saw three men on my tail, fuck fuck fuck fuck. One of the men fired hitting me in the arm. Falling to the floor I cursed.

They handcuffed me to the chair; my heart beating faster than I was breathing. My body was slowly shutting down from PTSD. I can't be in a tight, dark room. I need to get out of here now!

"You shot my brother and son" an old man spat. I looked up, the man looked to be in his fifty's, grey streaks in his hair, wrinkles beginning to appear around the eyes. He was dressed in a suit and fit that whole godfather mafia boss vibes.

"Look on the bright side. I could have killed them" I spoke out harshly out of breath, keeping my head down trying to mentally take myself out of this room. I felt his presence approaching closer, but I couldn't bring myself to look up. I can't be in this situation again, not after last time.

"You do understand I'm now going to kill you?" He teased.

Maria's POV

I finished my shift at the restaurant and waited for Bella at home. I paced around the apartment waiting for her to walk in but nothing. A knot in my stomach began forming, something's wrong I quickly grabbed my phone and called Isabella.

No answer. I called another ten times and each time I got sent to voicemail. Ok, maybe she's still at the club. I grabbed my coat and ran downstairs to hail a cab.

I paid the driver and ran inside searching for her, nothing. I raced to the dressing room, "Has anyone seen Isabella?" I asked they all shook their heads. I ran my hands through my hair the knot in my stomach only getting bigger, where are you?

"If you're looking for your sister, she left hours ago" I shook my head at the lady, "There's no way she never came home." She shrugged and walked off. My eyes went wide as I realised the only person who's going to be able to help me is Vincenzo. I stormed out of the changing room and into every single private room until I found him.

I flung the door open and saw Vincenzo about to receive a blow job. I shook my head and focused my gaze back on him. "Um what the fuck do you think you're doing" He asked frustrated, zipping himself up, I went to speak and looked back at the girl who was in Isabella's previous outfit she wore today. Talk about fantasy.

"Listen babe you suck him off later" I grabbed her by her arm and shoved her out as I closed the door behind me. "Isabella's missing" I told him panicked, Vincenzo's body shot up at my words, "What do you mean missing?" he questioned. Catching onto himself he calms down, his posture returning to as it was before. "What makes you think I care?" he tried playing it off. "She doesn't want my help she can handle herself" he spoke up annoyed, looking at him I wondered if Isabella said something. Knowing her she probably did.

Resisting the urge to roll my eyes, “She left the club hours ago and never came back home, which is out of character considering we don’t know anyone in this city, and she always comes straight back to the apartment after work”

He started at me with a blank expression, “Listen, you can deny any feelings you may have for my sister but please help me find her. Imagine it was your sister in this position. I’m begging you” I plead my voice cracking. “She can’t go through this again, not after last time” I whispered softly to myself.

“I hate when women cry.” He groaned walking out of the room in a rush, I scoffed doesn’t care my ass. I ran after him taking it as my cue to follow him, we entered the security room. “Play the back exit footage until you see a girl that looks like her leaving,” he said gesturing towards me.

I roll my eyes as I stare at the camera footage. “Wait stop there” I scream spotting Isabella. I cover my mouth in horror as I see someone hitting Bella in the head with the back of the gun. They drag her lifeless body to the back of a black van. Vincenzo grabbed me by my arm as we exited the room. We left the club and went for his car.

“Get in” without question I quickly jumped in the car as he speeds off. We approached a secluded gated estate. The land was massive housing over five houses and in the middle a place fit for well for a king. We approached the gates heavily guarded by 12 men.

They looked inside the car and immediately open the gate upon seeing Vincenzo. I look over at him studying his facial expressions, he looked calm, but it was obvious deep down he was furious, and even a little scared. Was he scared for Isabella?

Everything about him was powerful, how he spoke, walked, dressed. He no doubt was a man you don’t want to mess with, and I know this from one encounter with him, and I recognised that hard look on his face from the parking lot. he is ready to kill.

We arrived at the front of the mansion as he parked his car in front of the fountain, he hurried to my side as he opened my door and grabbed me my arm again, rushing us inside.

“LORENZO GATHER THE MEN NOW” He roared making me jump. We entered a bedroom sitting on the bed that looked like Vincenzo’s twin, she was gorgeous long black hair, tan complexion, and the most beautiful crystal blue eyes I’ve ever seen.

“Keep her here, non perderla di vitsa” (don’t let her out of your sight) He quickly ordered a girl in a room, I eyed her sceptically not knowing what to do, and with that, he slammed the door closed leaving me in a room alone with her.

“I’m Ariana King I’m Vincenzo and Lorenzo’s baby sister” I nodded my head “I’m Maria knight I have a twin, but she’s been kidnapped hence why there’s a stranger in your room” I explained to her, she eyed me carefully. “Don’t take this to offence, but why does my brother care your twin got kidnapped?” I rubbed the back of my neck “They have some weird relationship id get into it but honestly I don’t understand it at all and judging from the way your brother reacted to seeing who took her I think he knew the men. I think they’re trying to get to him through her.”

She nodded her head understandingly “Come here” she sensed my fear and pulled me in a tight hug. “He’ll bring her back” she whispered reassuringly. “H-how can you k-know”

“Because my brother never goes to help someone outside the family, and he is never this angry.”

Isabella’s POV

I bit my lip to refrain from screaming out in pain, I was not going to satisfy this man and allow him to know I was hurting. Despite the king crawling pain in my legs as he kept rapidly stabbing me. My legs covered in blood, my body feeling tired ready to collapse at any minute.

I force my eyes open as I stare at the old man in front of me “just kill me already” I spat over it, he smirked, “You didn’t

think it would be that easy, did you?” He laughed.

I laughed bitterly at his pathetic threat once again, “You don’t have the balls” I mocked him. “You’re pretty cocky for a girl who has her hands handcuffed to the back of the chair” I shrunk back into my chair as I stared at him hopelessly, “I’m cocky because I’m not afraid of death. We’re old friends actually” I muttered. Feeling the last bit of energy, I had left slowly fading away.

I looked at the door praying he would come storming in to save me but nothing. I hated myself that I was waiting for him to come, and regret and guilt overtook my body.

Our conversation from the club when i yelled and attacked him for helping me, **‘I don’t want you near me. I don’t want your help and I hope you take the hint and stay away from me unless you want my knife lodged somewhere very uncomfortable’** my own voice echoed in my head, I lowered my head down sighing.

“No one is coming to your rescue love, you’re going to rot in here” he smirked, I shut my eyes waiting for the next move. I heard him take his gun out from behind his back aiming it at my head.

I look up at him, keeping my gaze fixated on his eyes. “If you’re gonna kill me, I want you to look at me old man. Don’t go from behind like a coward.”

In a split second a flash went off and I was left in nothing but complete Darkness.

THE QUESTIONS

I look around and darkness, did he shoot me? am I dead? Am I in heaven or hell? I looked around the area. I couldn’t see anything, only hearing the footsteps that echoed through the warehouse. My breathing picked up I can’t be here. “GET ME

OUT OF HERE!” I cried out jumping up struggling against the restrains. Now all that was heard was the sound of my chair hitting the floor.

“WHAT THE FUCK HAPPENED TO THE LIGHTS” he roared.

The lights turn back on and when I adjusted my eyes to the light, calming down that it was no longer pitch black, I see more men than before. All dressed in black, black pants, black tops, and vests. Their guns were pointed at the men’s heads.

“Luke, drop the gun before I drop you” His low firm voice threatened, and of course his heavy thick Italian accent was deeper than ever. “Vincenzo, what took you so long my boy” he snickered, Vincenzo pressed the gun further into his head. “Uccidili” he demanded (kill them). Gunshots echoed the small basement, all the men dropped to the floor blood splattering everywhere, and the only one’s standing were the King’s men.

He just ... did he just ... he gave the order to kill. Okay, I’m starting to believe the whole mafia boss a little bit more The dude who’s name I just found out was Luke, which was a slight disappointment I was hoping for a cooler name.

He took the knife out of my thigh and went to stab Vincenzo in the chest. My heart getting caught in my chest, forgetting about the pain in both my throbbing thighs. I went to stand up but was pulled back by the restrains, the stab wounds in my legs also making it impossible to stand up on my own.

Vincenzo grabbed his wrist before the knife could get anywhere near him, he smirked cockily and twisted his arm around. Forcing his chest up, he kicked the back of his knee Luke losing balance gets forced to a kneeling position in front of Vincenzo.

Vincenzo had the knife placed on the man’s throat, he bathed in the fact that the man was kneeling before him, a smug smirk overtook his facial features. Vincenzo whistles a slowly. I don’t know how a whistle could sound intimidating but

behold. His whistle alerting his men, knowing what he commanded through his whistle they all aim their guns at the man who had been stabbing me repeatedly torturing me.

“Take him, and keep him in the basement until I get back ... I might have some fun of my own.” He keeps his gaze fixed on him, before yelling “ANDARE” (go) three men grab him and drag him out. I look up at Vincenzo my body weak and my eyes threatening to close shut for good, the loss of blood.

He quickly knelt and Un-handcuffed me picking me up bridal style. “You’re okay leonessa, you’re okay” he reassured himself more than he was trying to reassure me. He rushed out of the building with me in his arms, holding me close and tightly against his chest we got into the back of a car as he demanded the man to go to the estate. The estate? No, I need to get to Maria. I mentally cry out, but my body failing me too tired to let me say anything.

His grip on me tightened as I buried my head further into his chest. He once again risked his life to save mine. Chaos is all I could think about to describe this situation, **insanity** is what we were, and we barely knew each other.

The thing about chaos is that while it disturbs us, it too forces our hearts to roar in a way we secretly find magnificent. He was rude and a prick but, in his own way, he was gentle with me. Even if his gentle side still made me want to strangle him.

He looks down at me as he tucks a loose strand of hair behind my ear. I finally give into my body urging me to fall into a deep sleep. I was able to faintly here Vincenzo telling me to keep my eyes open, but the weight of my eyelids was too heavy to stop.

So, I finally allowed the darkness in.

x

My eyes flutter open, I tilt my head to my right, and I don’t recognise the room I’m in. My chest tightens as I can feel my heart beginning to pick up speed. “Dear sh sh sh you’re okay”

I look at the woman with wide eyes “Vincenzo brought you in here, this is the private hospital he has on his estate”

I go to speak but the dryness of my throat sends me into a coughing fit. I go to stand up but the sharp pain in my legs forces me still. The lady hurries off to get me a glass of water.

The soothing coldness of the water entered my dry throat as I felt the dryness wash away, I look up at the lady “Why am I here?” I managed to finally speak up.

She looks at me with pity eyes, “You were involved in a kidnapping, and you got really hurt.”

She started explaining trying to not go into full detail, “I know that, but why did he bring me here. He made it very clear he didn’t want anything to do with me.” I asked her to clear up the fact that I knew and am aware of the events that led me to need medical attention. What I was confused on was why Vincenzo brought me to his home, especially after how I treated him.

She let out a small sigh. “I know Vincenzo can be ... tiring to put it in simple terms, but that’s because of all he has been through and the man he is now. He may not be good at explaining how he feels, and he might suck at showing it but his intentions when it comes to his people and you are pure.” She explained briefly, I looked at her confusion all over my face. What did she mean ‘me?’ as if she read my mind, she elaborated a little further. “The way he assembled all the men to rescue you is enough to know you’re important to him whether he sees that or not”

I nodded my head slowly trying to comprehend the whole situation, “where is he?” a slight tug in my heart made me realise I was disappointed that he wasn’t here when I woke up “In his office or in the basement.” She casually informed me; I nodded my head “if he cared as much as you say he would have been here” I commented she looked at me a small smirk on her face. I rolled my eyes “I don’t care that he isn’t here, it just contradicts what you said” I quickly clarified but the amused expression never left her face.

She shrugged her shoulders smiling “If he isn’t here, he is handling the situation” I nodded my head confused before realising what she meant “he killed him didn’t he?” I asked she looked at me with a look that confirmed my question.

I take a deep breath and get off the hospital bed. “Dear no, no. You cannot be moving you need to rest.” I shook my head “No, I’m fine I- I need to see him” I slowly and in immense pain walked out of the home hospital or whatever this is.

I looked at my surroundings in complete shock, my mouth hung open as I took in the view. The land was enormous the place had over five different properties not including this at home hospital. How am I going to walk all the way to the damn house.

Wait ... WHICH ONE IS IT.

I looked around noticing a bunch of men scattered around the estate. to my right there was a man tall, with jet black hair and a nicely built frame. He was the closest person near me “Excuse me?” I called out, He looked over at me shocked, he ran closer to me “Hey, you really shouldn’t be up.” he pointed out looking at my condition, I shook my head quickly. “I’m fine, but I need a favour can you take me to Vi- your boss?” I cut myself off not wanting to say his name, since everyone here calls him boss.

He looked at me hesitantly “Please” I looked at him with pleading eyes “You wouldn’t say no to a girl with stitches all over her thighs and a few on her stomach, would you?” I gave him a puppy dog eyed expression, he looked at me squinting his eyes trying to look away so I couldn’t guilt trip him.

“Ugh, that’s not fair.” He whined face palming himself. “Fine lets go but if he gets mad it’s all on you Chica” He gave in walking closer to me so he can help me walk. I couldn’t help but laugh, he gave me a side eye look and I bit my lip to muffle the laugh. “Chica?” I questioned mockingly returning his side eye.

“Wha- I know you’re Spanish and I wanted to lighten the mo-” he paused for a second looking a little lost in thought “Wait why am I explaining myself to you. Chica do you need a ride to the estate or not,” he asked in a childlike tone. “Oh, we will get along fine. I’m Isabella by the way” I introduced myself and smiled. “I know the whole estate knows being we saved you today” He clarifies, I looked at him my mouth forming an ‘O’ I felt so stupid of course everyone knew who I was after the rescue mission.

“Oh yeah ... right thanks for that by the way” I thank him for assisting in saving my life, He shrugged his shoulders, “You’re welcome but honestly you’re thanking the wrong person. It’s Vincenzo you should thank. I can’t put my finger on it just yet, but something tells me you’re a special one” He laughed shrugging his shoulders.

I looked at him exhausted of people telling me the same thing, I let an exhausted breath, “I’m too tired to try and decipher what you mean by that” I breathed out feeling the energy slowly drain out of my body.

A heartfelt chuckle left his lips as he looked at me and started walking helping me limp. “Come on let’s go. Oh, and I’m Lorenzo” he introduced himself, I nodded my head pointing out the similarities between his name and Vincenzo. “That sounds just like your bosses name” I stated the obvious.

He laughed and turned his head facing me, “Yeah our parents wanted our names to sort of rhyme” I stopped dead in my tracks my mouth fell wide open. He stopped and looked at me worried “you, okay?” he asked frantically, I waved my hands in the air “YOU’RE HIS BROTHER! HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE YOUR SO PLEASANT” I yelled out unable to hide my surprise.

He looked at me with wide eyes at my sudden outburst but then lost his composure and laughed like I just said the funniest joke. He called over a car to take us to the estate. Yes, yes. we needed a damn car to get there. The car parked right in

front of the stairs that lead to the door, and in front of a fountain. Damn, I want to get drunk and swim in that.

Lorenzo helped me out of the car, “Are you going to be able to go up the stairs?” I tilted my head contemplating the whole thing in my head “I’ll be fine, might take me a minute but I need to move.” I admitted knowing that to get back to normal I need to move my muscles and not constantly lay down on a bed I probably shouldn’t start now since they are fresh stitches, but I was never one to follow the rules anyway.

I looked up at the stairs in front of the mansion huffing I walked up them slowly; it took me longer than usual, but I made it just to find that Vincenzo’s office was on the second floor but thank the lord above they had an elevator. “Who the fuck has an elevator in their house” I burst looking at him.

He turns to me shrugging his shoulders. “The real question is who doesn’t ... what peasants” he sarcastically mocks snapping his fingers and pointing me in the elevator “let’s go, Chica” he calls out.

For the first time today, I let out a genuine laugh holding onto his arm as we stepped inside. We walk towards his office and see two men standing in front of the doors. “We need to see Boss” he informs the men, the men looked at me then back at each other.

“Sorry boss ordered us no one is allowed in” he paused for a second and the other man spoke up “Especially the girl.” Rolling my eyes, I push past the men and swing both doors open.

“Boss? we need to talk” I mocked him.

There he was at his desk he was so concentrated on what he was doing I wasn’t sure if he realised, I was in the room, but the sly smirk that formed on his lips let me know he was aware of my presence.

“Ms you’re not allowed to be in here” his men grab me by my arms and are about to pull me out of the room. I winced;

Vincenzo's head snapped up he raised his hand up gesturing for his men to let go.

“Leave her.” Without another word they do just that quickly letting me go and walking back outside, I look back at them with a rather cocky look earning a chuckle from Lorenzo. “I like you” Lorenzo laughed out before they closed the doors and leaving just myself and Vincenzo.

I go to speak up but get distracted by the elegance of the office, I look around and admire every detail. His office was a matte black with gold interior, the walls coloured black with only one wall having gold detailing. On that wall was five pictures of very intimidating, powerful, and dangerous men. I approached the pictures, and I realised it was the heirs of the Kings. I scanned the names reading them in my head, until my hands grazed over the last one with the gold plaque. ‘Vincenzo King’ my fingers traced over his name.

I looked around a little more and noticed a small library he had on the other side of the room. I walked towards the hundreds of books he had, my hands ran over them and stopped when my eyes caught the title of my favourite novel. I smiled like a little girl as I pulled it from the collection.

“Stop touching everything” his sudden harsh outburst made me jump dropping the book. He made his way towards me grabbing the book kneeling down slowly, his hand grazed my thigh. My airways suddenly becoming tighter than they should be.

He stayed kneeling near me for a moment before he took in a deep breath and slowly stood up to neatly put the novel back in its allocated spot. “Someone is a bit anal about their office.” I commented to myself watching him align it perfectly with the rest of the novels on the shelf, “What are you doing here Isabella?” he asked exhausted.

I nervously scratched my arm as I mustered the courage to look at him, “I have question’s” I admitted, nothing about what happened made any sense to me. He looked at me curiously before gesturing to sit on the leather couch near his

desk. I sat down as he walked over sitting on the edge of his desk. “Why was I get kidnapped?” I asked him straight away I hated beating around the bush.

“They thought you have information on me, they used you as well as leverage thinking you hold some sort of meaning to me” he shrugged his shoulders leaning into his chair. Ouch.

“Then why did they single me out? I know those close to an enemy usually get taken as a bribing tool. It doesn’t make sense I’d be taken unless ...” I drifted off softly my mouth forming a thin line, he edged closer to me “unless?” he dragged curiously.

I shook my head “nothing” I whispered; they couldn’t have kidnapped me for me. Because of Spain ...all they asked me about was Vincenzo they have no Idea who I am. I tried reassuring myself taking in a deep breath I looked up at him. “Why did you save me?” I asked softly knowing I basically threatened him if he did that again.

“I didn’t” he shrugged and walked around his desk and sat down. I looked at him in pure disbelief “You didn’t?” I asked mockingly. “Just like the idiota’s who took you thinking you meant something to me, in case it wasn’t clear enough already Leonessa, I don’t care. Isn’t that what you wanted? for me not to care or be near you!” he shouted getting defensive, he looked back down at his paperwork and continued what he was doing before I stormed in.

“Oh, you don’t care, do you?” I exaggerated, he kept his head down not answering or giving me attention. “I’M FUCKING TALKING TO YOU, LOOK AT ME.” I shouted irritated, he didn’t even flinch, but he did stop writing for a second before he continued. “VINCENZO” I yelled wobbling closer to his desk not being able to keep applying pressure on my thighs.

I swipe everything off his desk with the back of my hand. I straightened up my posture watching everything that was on his desk fall to the floor. I edged closer to his face, “I don’t like being ignored.” I warned him, especially after what I had to endure because of him.

He stands up slamming his fists on the table matching my energy, I slightly flinched back but quickly regained my composure. Our eyes locked with one another, anger radiating off the both of us. "Get. Out." He warned me to leave, I kept my stare narrowing my eyes I slightly shook my head no. Slightly tilting my head, "make me" I called out his bluff. "Gladly, just don't say you didn't ask for it" he licked his bottom lip looking at me. I snickered a laugh "Not even in your dreams Italy" I smiled mockingly.

"Isabella, leave before I do something I'll regret." He straightened his posture and went to sit back down but I had enough, I felt all the emotions I was feeling rising, and it was about to burst in any second, I scoffed throwing my hands in the air, "Like what Vincenzo?!" I laughed out looking at him in disbelief, he watched me with a stoned expression. "Huh? Are you gonna stab me in the leg?" I asked him sarcastically.

Hitting the side of my head I shouted "Oh, wait-" I recalled the events knowingly and pulled up the hospital gown I was in exposing the scaring, stitches, and dried blood on both my legs. He shut his eyes turning his head not being able to handle the sight of my legs and for a split second a wave of guilt washed over his features before he turned back returning to his usual state.

"Are you going to kidnap me? OH, WAIT A MINUTE!" I shouted using my hands to gesture to the estate and his office. "You already did!" I cried out, shaking my head frustrated. "So, tell me Vincenzo King, what is it you can do that hasn't been done to me already" I asked him my voice came out from the core of my throat firm as the word vibrated against my neck.

He watched me for a minute staying quiet, I shook my head biting my lower lip calming down I looked back at him.

"If you don't care, why am I here? Why wasn't I just left to die? why am I not in my own apartment? why did you ... why did you save me?" I asked him seriously wanting an answer,

except he just stood there like someone was holding his mouth shut keeping him from speaking.

There was no emotion on his face. None, to anyone else they would think he wasn't even listening but as I walked closer to the desk and looked him in the eye again, I whispered "why?" my eyes slightly glossy as I felt the urge to cry but bite back. His face may show an emotionless Cabeza de polla (dick head) but his eyes, his eyes gave him away.

If anyone else looked at him in this moment if anyone else witnessed everything that happened, they would think he was the devil himself, emotionless with a heart dark as the night.

No one would be able to see the guilt, I see in his eyes right now and maybe I see it because so did mine. Maybe I saw it because we were the same, I was just lucky to escape my past, but something told me in this moment staring at Vincenzo King who has yet to tear his eyes from mine.

He continued to stare at me, he went to speak before he was interrupted, "ah, there she is the leverage, you and your sister are the children of Mario Dante Knight. You can be very useful." I backed away from him in complete disbelief. I looked at her with an irritated expression, "keep my dad's name out of your mouth" I spat, "What makes you think I'm staying." I asked her annoyed, but before either could answer the door flew open.

"Isabella?" suddenly someone's arms wrap around me holding me in a tight embrace. I take a second to compose myself and realise it's Maria. I hug her back tightening my arms around her as she cries into my neck "I-i thought I was going to lo-"she cried in my neck softly, I burry rub her back whispering "shhh don't even think it, if I'm breathing, I'll never leave you. Come on let's go home" I turn around and look at the women and Vincenzo disjointed. We walk towards the door but the two men from earlier block our way.

"You're not going anywhere."

THE HIDDEN GUN

Maria and I both turn around and face the lady. She was no doubt beautiful; her short black hair made her blue eyes pop. She looked to be in her mid-40s early 50s. However, you can see underneath all the makeup she looked exhausted and judging from the smell on her breath she was not sober.

“Excuse me?” I asked sarcastically starting at her in disbelief, “I’m not staying her” I looked in-between her and Vincenzo. “I don’t recall asking your permission” Vincenzo pipes up, I stare at him in disbelief “What is it with people constantly kidnaping me?” I point out frustrated.

“Dear, you are obviously hurt, and we cannot have you going to a normal hospital. They ask far too many questions. Besides my son has made it clear you can be used for something greater for the Kings” she clapped her hands together and smiled brightly “We might finally be able to expand our contacts to Spain. So, you and your sister will stay here for your treatment and protection. Those men may try to attack you again.” She points out the danger of leaving the estate.

Stay here? with him? No freedom? Fuck no. “Last time I checked this is illegal” Vincenzo laughed softly slyly looking up at me “Last time I checked I wasn’t a beacon of good behaviour.” I rolled my eyes “We are not bargaining tools. Besides, I don’t think it would be a good selling point” I cleared my throat before clapping my hands together. Ready to put on a demonstration of how it would go if they used us as a means of getting more alliances.

“Yes Sí, we would love to form a partnership with you, Oh! Oh! By the way if you say no, we have two of the Knight girls here held hostage.” I mimicked her voice and smiled with my teeth visible.

Everyone fell silent, obviously intimidated by her presence but I didn’t care. This entire conversation is outrages, and I was not planning on staying here even if that meant getting hurt

once I was out. Not much they could do to me that hasn't already been done.

"You are staying here and that's final. Do not make me repeat myself and do not think about running away. I can guarantee you won't be happy with what happens if you do" she warns us both and turns on her heels to walk away.

"Well, if you keep me here against my will, I can guarantee you won't be happy with what I do." I call out threatening her along with her son. She stops in her tracks hearing my threat she turns around "I can imagine actually" she looks me up and down before she ushers her son Lorenzo to show us to our rooms and left.

"So, you met mum then" Lorenzo snapped me out of my thoughts, as he approached us "She's-" Maria drifted off trying to find the right word to describe her "A bitch" I snapped saying it for her, Lorenzo, chuckled and looked up at me about to speak before he fixated his eye's on Maria. I looked over at Maria and she was fiddling with her fingers breaking eye contact. I shook my head unable to find joy in her shyness.

"I want to go home" I sate aloud breaking the awkward silence. Lorenzo shrugged and looked at me defenceless. "Hey, she birthed me and breastfeed me. She owns me... besides Vincenzo didn't give the order to let us go yet ... what he says overpowers everyone in this house until he gives the okay ... I'm afraid you're just going to make yourself comfortable" Maria sniffled a laugh at his fright and the comment he made about both his mum and Vincenzo.

I shoot her a warning stare, as much as I will enjoy teasing them about this later. I was just kidnapped and stabbed a million times in the legs for a man who 'doesn't care' just to be kidnapped again, and then be used as a bargaining tool... *again.*

My legs are throbbing, and I feel the stitches threatening to reopen because of how much stress and pressure I'm putting on them right now. As much as I hate the idea of staying here,

I needed to rest a little. I just wanted to lay down in a bed and sleep away my problems, to escape to another world.

Maria coughed trying to cover up the fact that she just laughed, I looked over at her amused before I shook my head smiling. She shushed me looking at me with wide eyes, “Lorenzo, I can’t stay here. If I do, I can guarantee someone will die” I sated the obvious, he scratched the back of his neck “We all have a bet on who will kill who first honestly” he admitted.

“YOU ALL HAVE A WHAT!” I shouted astonished, I let out a huff and begin to feel my legs starting to give out. I place my hand on my thigh and I look up and everything starts spinning “Lorenzo ... I think I’m going to ... pass out.” I breath out feeling my head become fuzzy and my vision becoming blurry.

He looked at me alarmed and quickly caught me before I collapsed. “Chica I told you; you shouldn’t be out of that clinic.” I shook my head trying to reassure him that I’m fine. I used his arm for support as I straightened my posture. “I’ll fight you some more tomorrow, but I think I should really lay down before I faint.” I breathed out slowly, we follow Lorenzo to our rooms I couldn’t help but take a quick glance at his office doors. Vincenzo stood next to the frame of the door, looking at me alarmed.

He took one last look before walking back into his office slamming the doors shut. How could I hate yet want someone so bad?

“Isabella, Vamos” I come back out of my trance and lock hands with Maria whose helping me limp towards the new bed.

Maria and my room are on the second floor and are across from one another. She comes and helps me in my bed as she sits on the side of the bed, she looks at me worry embedded into her facial expression.

“Maria, stop it I’m okay I promise.” I stretch my legs out and lay flat on my back as I look at the wall and recap everything that occurred in the last 24 hours.

Making me focus again Maria whispers, “I was wrong about him” and looks at me while fiddling with her fingers, “No, you were right. He’s dangerous and look what happened to me” she shook her head, “No, I was wrong. Yes, he’s dangerous and it got you to this point but ... the way his eye’s burned and his entire body lit on fire when you were being taken. It was a side of him I’m not even sure he is aware of.” She breathed looking off.

Maria always had a sixth sense about people, she was able to pinpoint their intentions before the person themselves know about it. She chose to see the good in everyone.

She gets off from my bed and looks at me “He may be the devil ... but I know you see it too. You finally found your match Isabella Knight” she teased. I rolled my eyes looking away so I could hide the stupid smile that was forcing its way onto my lips.

She breathed in looking at me with soft eyes “just makes sure this is all worth it. I’m okay and before you ask this entire arrangement is bizarre ... but I feel safer now with a million men armed and protecting the estate, and I feel more assured that you’ll be okay with the nurses here. That I don’t have to worry about someone breaking in and shooting at us”

she walked out the door closing it behind her did she seriously overlook the whole keeping us here against our will? I laid down staring at the ceiling thinking about how simple life was and where it’s lead me to know. I missed Spain, I missed my family. I missed being free. A pinch of guilt ate me alive, as I swore to avenge my parent’s death, and here I was.

As I reminisced about my childhood, my body relaxed as my eyelids grew heavier and I didn’t fight them to stay open.

FLASHBACK

They're gone. They're dead. I thought as I sat at my parent's grave, the tears rolling down my face this grief felt never-ending. Like a waterfall never stops my eyes don't seem to be running out of tears.

They can't be dead they just can't be. My throat closing making it harder to breath as the tears continued to flow down my face. "Who's going to hold my hand? Who's going to tell me bedtime stories? Who is going to watch us grow up, who are my kids going to call abuela and abuelo" I cried out leaning my head back on the tomb stone.

I stood up and looked down, wiping away the tears the rolled down my cheeks. "Lo juro por los dos. Mataré al hombre que te quitó de nosotros incluso si es lo último que hago" (I swear to the both of you. I will kill the man who took you from us even if it's the last thing I do).

The next day I put my promise into action. I went and looked for the man's gang, getting detail from partners from our businesses to tell me anything they could about who would want to kill my parents.

I eventually found out he was a part of the **Serpiente de Sangre Gang**. An amateur gang, what didn't make sense was why they wanted to kill my parents. I managed to get my hands on one of their men. After seducing him back to my house I lead him to our basement and handcuffed him to a chair.

"Oh yeah baby, I see you like it rough" he looked at me lust swimming in his eyes. I smiled walking towards him I pulled my knife out from my pocket and flicked it out, so it was in view. He started to squirm and tried to get out of the cuffs.

"Shhh" I dragged out placing the knife over his lips, "this can go one of two ways either you tell me what I want to know, or-" I moved the tip of the knife to his throat "I get it out of you using my own ... methods" I seductively whispered in his

ear and looked back at the man. “Your choice, of course, I’ll enjoy both options.” I purred, looking at the man lustfully.

He looked at me, fear evident in his eyes, it was clear he was scared, and he knew I was going to get the information out of him one way or another. “What are you gonna do? Huh? you’re just a girl.” He bites back. I smirked and stood up to my feet. I threw the knife 1 inch away from his face.

“Just a girl” I mocked softly, “I’m a girl whose parents were murdered right in front of her, a girl who took made a promise on top of her parent’s dead bodies and again at their graves. So, I may just be a girl, but it’s the fact that I am a girl that should scare you.” I warned my tone low, firm, and intimidating.

I walked back towards him and grabbed him by his jaw, I pierced my nails into the side of his face. “Why did they want my parents dead?” I asked him to cut right to the chase, watching him start looking very uncomfortable the deeper my nails dug into his skin.

He shook his head refusing to answer, shrugging my shoulders I pulled the knife out from the wall and cut him below his ear. He screamed in pain “Just wanted to make sure you can hear me” I threatened my face stone cold, “Why did they want my parents dead!”

He started pulling at the cuffs as he screamed for help. I stabbed him in the stomach as I put the knife back to his throat. “I will kill you! Do not think you will leave this basement alive if I do not get what I want. You won’t be the first to die here. Kitten.” I warned applying pressure on the knife causing it to slightly pierce his neck as droplets of blood began to drip.

“NO, NO. OKAY. I’LL TALK” I removed the knife from his throat and urged him to continue. “They wanted your parent’s empire they wanted to run it all. Be at the head of the table with the other two families. They said something about ruling Spain and getting revenge.”

“Revenge for what?” what could have my parents done that they needed to pay for it with their lives, “I don’t know” rolling my eyes I went to stab him again before he screamed in horror. “NO, I REALLY DON’T KNOW, BUT I KNOW SOMEONE WHO MIGHT.”

I tilted my head analysing his face, “Who?”

He went on to tell me about some Man named Xavier, he’s the leader of the gang and ordered the hit. He told me he always attends the underground fights and tries to seduce the winner.

After letting him go, I got myself ready for the fight. The drive to the area was about an hour. I looked around for the guy that matched his description and spotted him surrounded by a million girls and a few of his men.

“Who’s next?! HUH COME ON” I looked over to the ring. I scoffed; this was a joke right? This is the biggest amateur underground fight club I’ve seen. I jumped on the ring and lifted the ropes as I swung in.

“I believe I’m next.” she eyed me from head to toe before letting out a laugh. “You? really? Why don’t you leave now before you break a rib.”

Scoffing, “underestimates me, that should be fun.” The crowd went dead silent as they waited for her response. “Look either way I win, you can either throw a punch and get knocked out or you can be the little bitch I know you are and leave the ring. Either way Eres mi perra” (you’re my bitch.)

Girls oohed as the guys whistled, I took off my blood red leather jacket as I made eye contact with him. He looked at me amused licking his lips as he eyed my body from head to toe. I immediately felt agitated something about his face, I couldn’t put my finger on it.

Winking at him to keep his interest I turn back to the girl in the ring. She threw a hook, my reflexes kicking in I quickly ducked in a swift motion I uppercut her on her side, then finishing it with a right hook to her jaw. When she tumbled back, I push kicked her in her stomach she fell flat to the floor.

I went on top of her and let out all the anger I bottled in since my parent's death on her. Blacking out I felt someone pull me off of her, as I shook my head snapping back into reality, I saw her face covered in blood, she was either dead or unconscious. I grabbed my jacket and got out of the ring.

"That was some fight doll," smirking I mentally high five myself. I spun around and looked the man who sent my parents to death in the eye. "Oh, that? it was nothing really." I looked down at my hands covered in her blood as I scratched my arm feeling completely numb to what I just did. He scratched his chin, and he came closer, "What do you say want to have a little ... fight of our own" I whispered into his ear. "Sounds like a plan, but I play dirty." I warned

I placed my hand on his chest and went on my tippy toes as I started nibbling on his ear, "Me too" and that's when everything went south. He took me back to his place and before I know it, I was handcuffed to a chair, the bastard knocked me out in the car. I started struggling to try to get out of the chair, "WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS"

The man came into light as he stared at me "Oh dear, I know who you are you're a knight. Now someone's been a bad girl. Bad girls need to be punished."

He left me in the basement for months with no light and no food. He would come in and take advantage of me. Then belt me when he was angry or drunk. The man who killed my parents was going to kill me.

END OF FLASHBACK

"NOOO," I lunged out of my bed as I ran my hands through my hair. My door flew open and in came Vincenzo. He had his gun drawn-out "What, what happened." I placed my hand on my chest, "I-i I'm sorry, I just had a bad dream." I breathed out softly looking around the room still alarmed.

He put the gun behind his back as he came closer to me, I subconsciously backed away. "You want to talk about it?" I shook my head no. He stared at me for a minute "Follow me."

He interlocked our hands and gently tugged telling me to move.

“Are you kidnapping a kidnapped?” He rolled his eyes turning his head trying to hide the fact that he smiled, I laughed and chose to point it out and start a fight truth be told I was not ready for one.

We left the house; he helped place me in the car before we drove off to another property he had on the land. I looked out the window and saw metal figures, targets, and stands. “You have a fucking shooting range?” I stated in disbelief.

“I do.” he answered casually like everyone has a shooting range, we got out of the car as he leads the way. “When I was going through shit, shooting and targets helped get my frustration out. Try it” He handed me a gun, I looked at him with both my eyebrows cocked up. “You’re the most bipolar human being I have ever fucking met.”

He chuckled before putting his hands in his pockets “I’ll take it as a compliment, now shoot.” He ordered me pointing at the targets.

“How do you know I won’t kill you?” I asked him, completely serious and honestly debating it. All he did was simply shrug “Because you would have done it by now, I wouldn’t blame you if you did, but I wouldn’t.” He answered matching my energy and arrogance.

I aimed and shot every target right in the head, and some of the full-body targets I shot at the genital area causing Italy to cover his own private area, when I turned around and saw him in that position, I couldn’t help but burst out in laughter.

This was the first time we weren’t fighting or yelling or arguing. I didn’t know if this was just a calm before the storm, but I was enjoying it.

Before Vincenzo took me back to the manner, I slipped one of the guns on the table in the back of my pants, I let out a sigh.

I was leaving today. If I had to kill him to do so ... then so be it. “How are you feeling?” he asked me as we got back in the

car, I nodded my head smiling “honestly, a lot better thank you” I smiled at him.

I’m about to be even better soon.

THE GAME

We came back to the manner; he placed his hand on my lower back to help me up the stairs. My heart started beating rapidly when his hand on my back started getting lower if he goes any lower his going to feel the frame of the gun. He travelled his hands a little lower I coughed and quickly shuffled to the side. He looked at me confused and offended, “You don’t care remember? I’ll help myself up.” I bit trying to keep him at arm’s length.

He walked past me mumbling something to himself, as I catch up to him and walk inside the living room, I see Roxy. My stomach turned in pure disgust. She had that red wig on from the club, she attaches herself to Vincenzo like a leach. She purrs something into his ear, I had to suppress my laughter as he completely shrugged her off keeping his eyes on me before dismissing her completely walking upstairs.

She huffs annoyed and goes to follow him, “Boss doesn’t want anyone disturbing him.” Two of his men stood in front of Roxy blocking her, oh this should be interesting. I plop on the couch next to Lorenzo who is also enjoying the show watching Roxy get the third degree.

“I’ll put \$100 that Marco snatches that wig off” Lorenzo whispered his eyes fixated on Marco and Roxy waiting for something to happen, I sniffled a laugh and shrugged my shoulders looking back at Lorenzo “I have no money on me but ill double your bet that ill pull it off first” I bet him smirking he give me a side eye I wiggle my eyebrows.

Lorenzo knowingly laughed shaking his head before all his attention was once again back on Marco and Roxy. “He wants me up there. So, id move out of my way before I get you both killed” she threatens them but it fell on death ears. I was so proud of them and their ability to hold in their laughter.

“Boss said no one goes up” he repeated himself and she ignored him trying to push past them, but the guys were built like bulldozers, not budging Marco grows frustrated and grabbed her by her shoulders and moved her away. “IF I DON’T HAVE VINCENZO KILL YOU BOTH MY NAME IS NOT ROXY!” sheesh talk about dramatic.

After them standing in a face-off Lorenzo threw a pillow at Roxy, “BOO! Come on what the fuck happened to you. It used to be so interesting watching you trying to desperately cling to my brother. You, Roxy, have lost your touch Chica.” He gets up to leave being bored at the lack of action. Roxy goes to scold him before she notices me.

“You!” she shouts out pointing her finger at me, Lorenzo does a complete 360 and charges back for the couch jumping back down crossing his legs and leaning his chin in the palm of his hands, smiling like an idiot “this is what I’m talking about” he calls out approvingly.

“What are you doing here?” she spits eyeing me up and down choosing to not answer her I simply shrug my shoulders. “I’m not doing this with you today” I told her getting up to walk past her she grabs a hold of my wrist preventing me from walking away. Stopping in my tracks I turn my head slightly my eyes trailing my arm until it lands on her hand gripping my wrist.

“Unless you’re not very fond of your hand, I suggest you let go” I threaten her, she looks at her hand shocked and slightly regretful of what she did. “DON’T LET GO!” Lorenzo shouts from the couch. Clapping his hands, “Who the fuck let him in here.” I yelled out looking at Marco who already had amused look on his face watching, rolling my eyes I twist my hand out of her grip and now it was me who was gripping her wrist I pulled her towards me.

Holding her by her throat, “Next time you lay a finger on me I’ll break it off” I threatened her and watched amused as she started squirming trying to get out of my grip. She kicks my

leg and I hiss pushing her to the floor, I bend down and snatch her wig straight off her head.

I look at her and laugh “No wonder he doesn’t want you up there” I laugh louder looking at her state “Yikes” Lorenzo laughs out clapping his hands enjoying this way too much. My legs begin to throb at the added pressure, I slightly wince at the sensation. Her eyes dart from my pained expression to my legs. She lunged herself towards me causes me to fall flat on my back.

She starts digging her finger in the cuts through my pants. Screaming in pain, I yell out for her to get the fuck off me, but she kept going, I used up whatever energy I had left in me grabbing her hand and twisted it to the flipping us over so now I was on top. I quickly punch her in her nose and repeatedly pound my fist in her face.

“ENOUGH” Vincenzo roars from upstairs, “GO ISABELLA KNOCK THE BITCH OUT!” Lorenzo shouts applauding me from the couch, Vincenzo rushes towards me and prying me off her he looked at me and then at Roxy impressed.

I hissed the pain in my thighs sending what felt like electricity throughout my entire body. Vincenzo quickly looked at me, seeing the blood leaking through my ruined pants, “shit Isabella” he curses looking at me, where the fuck did, he even come from.

“Uscire” (get out) he spits in her face telling her to leave, I smirk at her watching her face fall and jealousy overtake her entire body. Vincenzo quickly walks back towards me, picking me up bridal style “you don’t need to carry me I can walk on my own” I object trying to get him to put me back down, “Isabella, just shut up” he looked at me exhausted.

I sigh and mimic zipping my lips and throwing the key to the side. Lorenzo storms towards us and shouts in Vincenzo’s face “WHY’D YOU DO THAT FOR ISABELLA WAS GONNA RID US OF THAT EVIL WITCH BITCH” He points towards Roxy; I was in so much pain and instead of him pulling her off me he watched amused. “I swear to god if I get my hands on

you-” I threaten him lunging for him, he looks alarmed and quickly jumps over the couch and runs off somewhere.

“You’re kicking me out for her, really?” Roxy spits giving me a dirty look, “why are you even holding her! She isn’t even- UGH! WHY IS SHE HERE” She screeched, “Just doing my job” I winked at her, placing the tip of my tongue on my top lip.

Vincenzo looked at me confused for a second before he and Roxy both realised what I meant. She looks at me with her eyes wide and her hands balls in a fist “I’ll kill you” she yells “ROXY!” Vincenzo roars, stopping her dead in her tracks.

He looks at her dead in the eye tightening his grip around me. In a firm voice “Now” he warns her. “Baby it’s me come on ... leave this slut to someone else and let’s go have some fun.” She tugs at his wrist, the sight of her touching him only made me grow more agitated. I rolled my eyes and went to lunge for her again, Vincenzo pulls me closer to his chest alarmed.

I look at him and roll my eyes “If you don’t get her out, I’ll kill her” I warned him of the outcome if I had to see her face for another second. I start struggling to get out of his hold but the more I struggle to leave his hold the tighter his hold on me becomes. Then suddenly I feel him tense. Shit, shit, shit. The gun he can feel the gun tucked away. “Stop holding her like that!”

I felt something warm moving its way down to my knee, did I pee myself? I looked down seeing the blood oozing out more than before, fucking bitch reopened the stitches. “Fuck” I winced at the pain of the reopen stitches grip onto, Vincenzo’s shirt. I hide my face in his chest. “Fucking hell, leonessa” he curses to himself before carrying me upstairs.

“Call Elia now!” He yells to one of his men as he carries me upstairs to what I assume is his office. “GET HER OUT OF MY FUCKING SIGHT” He shouts at his men to get Roxy out of the estate. Marco satisfied rushes to finally get rid of her.

“It’s nothing I’m fine,” I mumble softly, trying to convince him to let me go, shaking his head he lays me flat on the couch. He stares at me for a moment before softly and slowly flipping me on my side. His cool hands trace my back leaving a trail of goosebumps behind.

Holding my breath, he slowly lifts my shirt up revealing the gun, pulling it out he flips me back. Hanging it over my head. I shut my eyes not wanting to devour the fact that I intended to shoot my way out of this hell hole.

“Isabella” his voice came out low and stern he knew exactly why I had it and what I planned to do with it. I opened my eyes and stared at him for a moment, letting out a sigh “I was going to shoot my way out.” I confirmed his inner thoughts.

“How do you expect to escape an estate full of armed men with just one gun?” I shook my head laughing to myself, the fact that he asked me that question shows he really has no idea who he is talking to.

I slowly turn my head to my right and watch as his face begins to slowly examine mine, “never underestimate me mafia. I suggest you do your homework on me before allowing me into your home.” I turned back.

The doors burst open as Elia rushes in with her necessary equipment to re-stitch my wounds. As she cleans the blood I reach out and grab the first thing my hands were able to get in contact with, it only was stinging a lot more because that bitch stuck her finger making the wounds a lot deeper.

I saw her contemplating on using anaesthetic as she had to sew me back up again. I shook my head “The wounds open and it is oozing blood, by the time it takes effect on me. I would have lost a lot of blood and be exposed to infection because the wounds ... exposed. Just do it I’ll be fine” I dealt with worse, she hesitantly nods her head and proceeds.

Biting down on my top to keep me from screaming and breaking my teeth. I look to my right to see I’m gripping Vincenzo’s shirt. Closing my eyes to distract myself from the

needle going into my skin. I felt a pair of strong hands holding mine, not questioning it I take his hand in mine squeezing it with every prick.

x

“Ok, Isabella you’re done. Seriously stay off your feet.” she packs her things but stop as she notices our interlocked hands, Vincenzo clears his throat as she quickly regains composure and rushes out of the office.

Vincenzo stands up hovering above me. “Do it” he speaks up, I look at him confused as to what he is talking about. “Do what?” I asked looking at him cautiously. He threw the gun in my lap and gestured me to shoot. “I know exactly who you are Isabella, I know all about the famous Dragon. I’d like to see how far you get.” He says genuinely interested.

He paces around the office as though he was somehow insulted, I wanted to leave “your legs are pretty much fucked, you have multiple stab wounds giving you little ability to run. You want out so bad? Leave.” He walked back towards his desk as he sat down finishing off whatever it was, he was doing before Roxy, and I’d fight interrupted him.

“You act as though I should feel honoured to be here” I grab a hold of the gun as I slowly sit upright. “I didn’t ask for this, I didn’t ask to meet you. I didn’t ask to be kidnapped then tortured again. I never asked for your help, and I never should have been put in that situation for a man who couldn’t care less. So, sue me if I wanted to get out and away from you.”

He didn’t look up rather he kept ignoring me, feeling frustrated I shot the gun at the wall inches from his face. He didn’t even flinch rather he slowly looked up at me with the most irritated expression. “You owe me your attention, and you’re gonna give it to me” I warned him.

“Leonessa, do you even want to fucking leave?” He laughed looking at me. I looked at him completely dumbfounded, why would I want to stay here. As I opened my mouth to respond

he cuts me off by putting his hand up at me while shaking his head.

“I don’t think you do; I believe you feel as though you have too. But a part of you is grateful to be here, yes at first it was against your will. But you’re getting free treatment, professionally cooked meals and both you and your sister are protected from anyone who dares touch you.” He paused letting what he said sink in before he continued.

“You know better than anyone that if you succeed in your mission to leave you will just be putting both you and your sister in danger. So again, if you are so miserable here then leave” he gestured towards his doors.

“I don’t want any of my men to be shot in the process of your ingratitude” He spits sitting back down at his desk. I stared at him with a blank expression processing what he said, everything he said was true. It may have only been a day, but I never felt safer than this very moment.

I throw the gun on his desk “maybe what you said is true, maybe a small part of me knows id be safer here than anywhere else but have you ever considered the fact that behind your hard exterior you actually want me here?”

“I do want you here, for leverage.” He pointed out never looked up from his desk but the way his fingers grew white from the pressure of holding the pen tight answered my question.

“Okay, if that’s what you choose to believe” I walked towards the doors wanting to just leave and get some rest, “What’s that supposed to mean?” I stood at the doors with my back turned to Vincenzo and took a second to breathe. I looked over my shoulder and smiled “whatever you want it to mean.”

x

Turning over to my right side to get more comfortable and try and get some sleep, I felt like someone was watching me. Opening my eyes, I flick the lights on and no one was in my room, I could’ve swear I heard shuffling. Shaking my head, I

turn the light in my room off as I lay back down trying to get some sleep.

My body jolted up when I heard someone heavily breathing, I felt a strong pair of hands grab my shoulder, screaming I slapped whoever it was they dropped something on the bed, I quickly grabbed it, and it was a gun. I aim it at the noise and shot the gun.

I heard what sounded like a man groaning, as I reach to turn my lights on my door swung open out of fear and the fact that I can't see who it is. I shot the gun again and quickly turned on the lights.

Two of Vincenzo's men were now on the floor bleeding from a gunshot wound. "Oh, fuck me" I place my hand over my chest as I try to slow down my racing heart.

"WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN MY ROOM" I look at the floor at Red "I WAS LOOKING FOR MY WALLET"

"oh you have got to be fucking kidding me"

"IT WAS EXPENSIVE" sighing and rubbing my temples "It was a cheap knock off" I breath out. Vincenzo comes running in and has his gun drawn out after hearing the gun shots, I aim the gun in his direction and shoot scrapping his shoulder.

"ISABELLA" He shouts, shrugging my shoulders innocently I mutter an "oops" that one was for letting Roxy in the house.

He holds the side of his arm as he stares at me in complete disbelief. "You will pay for that?" he warns me. Still completely unable to understand why I shot him even though I knew it was him at the door.

"Let the games begin" I winked smiling at him. "Now get your men out I want to sleep." I shoed them out getting comfortable in the bed.

Smiling as I lay back down hugging my pillow. "lei è pazza" (she's crazy)he calls out shrugging my shoulders with my eyes still closed I yelled back "and you invited 'crazy' into your home"

THE GARZIE

It's been two weeks since Vincenzo took me to the shooting range to relieve some stress. Two weeks since he carried me to his office because of that bitch re-opening my wounds. Two weeks since we sort of had a moment and two weeks' since he spoke to me, and when we did speak, we were fighting.

So, who cares if I shot his men, and him? It's not like I got him, it barely scraped his shoulder. Now he and half of his men were at god knows where. While Maria, Ariana and I sat in the kitchen eating cookie dough ice cream. To my surprise the only thing making this kidnapping slightly bearable is Ariana.

"Tomorrow, shopping spree what do you girls say?" Ariana perked up looking at the both of us, Maria shoved a spoon full of ice cream into her mouth, smirking at her I gestured with the spoon in my hand "You alright there?" I teased her, blushing she laughed and quickly cleared her throat. "Ahem, I would love to, but I have an uh. a date." She mummurs under her breath hoping no one would hear her.

I looked over at Ariana both of our faces reading the same expression, "How do you have a date you're not allowed to leave the estate-" I cut off Ariana before screeching, "ITS SOMEONE FROM THE MAFIA ISN'T IT." I burst out acting like I didn't already know who it was. She looks up at me the spoon hanging from her mouth.

Ariana dramatically gasps before slapping my arm in excitement, "OH MY GOD WHO? WHO? WHO? WHO?" Ariana screams practically trying to jump into Marias lap to find out who. Maria buries her face in her hands as her cheeks begin to flush red. "It's Lorenzo isn't it." I state when she doesn't answer Ariana lets out a high-pitched scream "LORENZO? MY IDIOT OF A BROTHER? Oh, this is gold,

you do know I highly suspect that sarcastic motherfucker is gay right?" she points out.

I nod my head completely agreeing with Ariana. Maria flushes red "Oh, believe me, anything but gay" she winks as she goes back to eating her food. Ariana and I gasp as we cover our ears, "OH COME ON WE DIDN'T NEED TO KNOW THAT" Ariana screeches.

The roar of at least five cars causes everyone to go quiet. Vincenzo's mother who was sitting on the couch now stood up waiting for her boys to walk in. All the men walk in, my heart in my throat as I wait for Vincenzo to appear.

He finally walks in, his mother gasps and covers her mouth before she rushes to him. "Quello che è successor?" (what happened) she cries as she examines the blood gushing from the side of his face. He pushes her hands away and walks off.

His mother hugs Lorenzo examining him before he takes a hold of her hands and assures her, he's fine. "My face and body are too pretty for a scar," Lorenzo says with a snap of his fingers, Ariana extends her hand out gesturing towards Lorenzo who just proved her point. Laughing I shake my head as Maria facepalms. Lorenzo shrugs his shoulders as he continues to tell his mum that he tried to get Vincenzo to go to the nurse, but he wouldn't go because of how stubborn he is.

Vincenzo rolls his eyes walking away. He passes me without even looking at me twice and goes up the stairs to I'm assuming his office. My eyes follow him as he walks up the stairs cursing in Italian before we all hear the loud thud of the door slamming shut. Lorenzo explains what happened and how the guy got cocky and tried shooting Vincenzo, he dodged it in time for it to not hit him in the skull, but the bullet grazed the side of his head. "I knew something was wrong. Giovani, I told you to go with them." she scolded her husband.

She looks over at her husband as he goes on to tell her the kids are fine, and he is capable of handling himself. "Did he kill him?" He asked Lorenzo. "Yeah, he shot him in the nuts first then in the head." He laughed out, I began to zone them out as

my feet and legs started moving towards the stairs. Before I knew it, I was standing in the front of his office, his two men look and me and shrug moving aside knowing either way I was going in. I open the doors and let myself in.

“Get. Out.” He warns me in a low voice as he tries to tend to his wound, I continue staring at him closing and locking the doors behind me. “No.” I firmly respond, He turns around to look at me, the blood still dripping from his head. “Isabella-” I cut him off sharply before he ruins my mood and turns this into another one of our fights, “Vincenzo, I’m not leaving until I stitch up that wound on your head. Now for once sit the fuck down and shut the fuck up.” I scold him frustrated.

He looked at me anger evidently radiating off him before he snapped “I can take care of myself! I don’t need your pity.” He turns around trying to tend to it himself but failing miserably, “It’s going to get infected. I need to-” I went to move his hair out of the way to examine the depths of it before he pushed me away from him. I stumbled back softly gripping the desk to keep my balance before I tripped over it.

“Don’t touch me. Get out.” He yelled, I watched him for a second his shoulders broad, his chest rising and falling harshly while he stared at coldly. I scoff “Listen, you fucking puta. I don’t fucking like you either okay? But I’m not going to let you suffer when I know I can do something to help. So shut the fuck up sit down and let me do what I need to do. I promise when I finish, I’m leaving.” I promised him not wanting to stand here a second longer than I needed.

When he didn’t respond, I looked at the first aid kit he had opened and began cleaning his wound. When I cleaned his face from the blood, I applied alcohol on the outside of the scar avoiding the opened wound. “Do you have anything to numb the area before I stitch it up?” I whispered softly, concentrating on his wound.

He shook his head “Just do it” I looked at him shaking my head before I sighed knowing he wasn’t going to let me numb it either way and began stitching his wound up. He gripped the

side of the table as his eyes shut due to the pain, but he didn't let out a single noise of displeasure. I was impressed at his pain tolerance and his ability to compose and control his emotions so well, no wonder it was so hard to read him.

I brushed my finger over the stitches as I finished, "All-" I spoke up I looked at him and my voice suddenly became mute, when I realised how close I was to Vincenzo "done" I whispered continuing my sentence. I gulped slowly lowering my hands to my side our faces were inches apart our eyes locked and for the first time I noticed how gorgeous his eyes were.

A silver grey, it looked as though I was staring at the moon, I let out a shaky breath before I nodded my head, unable to manage to speak.

I felt my body fire up with anticipation, my mind going against me recalling the events from the club and the restaurants. I looked at his lips, I watched him lick his bottom lip making me bite my own, my heart skipped a beat remembering how they felt against mine. I suck in a breath and slowly look back up at Vincenzo. Alarms ringing in my head, that this is a bad idea. That I should leave that this could only end badly, but the rest of my body didn't want to listen. So, I stood there like I was in a trance never breaking eye contact afraid that if I looked away or moved an inch that he'll disappear.

"All done." I whispered again trying to walk away from the sudden tension that rose in the room, I took a small step back, bowing my head as I went to leave just like I promised. As fast as I turn around Vincenzo grabbed my wrist pulling me back into him, my chest smacking his, I placed my hands on his chest steadying myself while looking up at him.

His hand on my lower back and without hesitation he softly pulled me towards him by the back of my head I leaned forward he placed a soft kiss on my forehead. He stayed like that for a moment, he rested his forehead to mine looking at me, "grazie, Leonessa" he whispered his voice came out husky

and rigid. I felt my chest rise and fall, my heart skips a beat. My stomach had a zoo go off, I smiled softly.

We stayed like that for a while, neither of us complaining simply enjoying the rare tender moment. I closed my eyes feeling my body immediately relax under his touch, I inhaled slowly taking in his scent, he wears the smell of blood and death like perfume.

A smell I never thought would be such comfort as it did right now. There was a fire in his eyes, and ice running through his veins. But despite all that I finally realised there is something about him I just couldn't resist.

I slowly open my eyes and catch him looking at my lips, I lean in almost giving him permission to kiss me. He rests his hands on my waist and tilts my chin up, our lips inches apart before the door flies open.

I jump away from him as I clear my throat. "Vincenzo, I- Oh?" His mother cuts herself off abruptly. Great, it's his mother. I look up at her then back at Vincenzo. "Mum he is a big boy just leave him alo- oh, oh, ohhhahahaha" Ariana cuts herself off doubling over in laughter as she realises her mum walked in on something she shouldn't of.

I sprint past his mother as I push Ariana out of the office with me.

Hearing the doors shut behind me, I slap Ariana on the arm "Seriously!" she hasn't stopped laughing since she walked in. "You could cut the tension with a knife" I couldn't help the eye roll. "Isabella, Boss wants to see you." I look back at Ariana and she had the same confused yet curious expression I had.

"Isn't his mother still inside?" He nods his head "both of them request you" I look back at Maria with wide eyes "She's planning my death, isn't she?" I blurted out, this time it was Ariana who slapped my arm "Go." she pointed towards the office.

I walked back into the office and saw a very angry Vincenzo and a ticked-off mother. Oh great. I want to be here. Kill me. Kill me now. “You asked for me, your majesty?” I mock the two of them walking in, His mother crossed her arms ignoring my remark, “Did you stitch my son?” I didn’t know if I should respond so I just nodded. “How did you know how and what to do?” she asked curiously.

“We could use your skillset.” I sighed knowing where this was going, another thing they could use me for. I felt my blood boil the tender moment vanished.

All I wanted to do now was scream, yell and break everything in my sight. I am not a thing that can be used whenever it’s convenient and especially by his mother.

After she walked out the door, I looked at Vincenzo. “Go get dressed.” I did a double take at him then looked down at myself “I’m sorry I didn’t realise I was naked” I sassed him, He rolled his eyes not pushing it.

“You’re coming with me to a charity event tonight hosted by the mayor. The dress should be on your bed.” He sits down and goes back to doing whatever it is he does. “I’m not going” without looking up at me he lets out a displeased groan “Yes you are” I went to object and suddenly he was on his feet glaring me down.

“We can do this all day; you say you are not going. I say you are. Then you say something to make me angry, I get all up in your face to intimidate you but instead, you get wet because you’re a good girl.” He groans out, I looked at him shocked and slightly embarrassed.

I crossed my legs tight looking away rolling my eyes, “How long are you going to ignore that problem of yours” He looks at me smug, clearing out my throat I look back at him cautiously “what problem?” I ask oblivious.

His smirk widened “No matter how much you clench your legs together it doesn’t stop the fact that you’re dripping” His eyes trailed my body, licking his lower lip he lets out a cocky

laugh he leans forward placing his hand on the desk slowly sitting back down in his chair.

Still smirking he looks away then back at him whipping the inner corner with his thumb. I sigh frustrated cocky fucking ugh!

I turn away charging for the door, I looked at him ready to fight him but am silenced turning around our face's inches apart. I stop breathing for a second, he slowly steps closer to me backing me up against the doors. He lifts my chin up "Leonessa" He whispered seductively leaning in slowly until our lips were slightly touching.

Teasing me, he opened the door for me to leave and turned around. "Go get ready" he ordered me from the tone of his voice he seemed all too satisfied with himself. "idiot" I muttered before turning my back and walking out of the office.

Walking into my room I see the dress laid out on my bed. It truly was breath taking, I took it out of the box to examine it further, It was a clean white dress, that crisscrossed over my chest, a split that went down both sides from the front. The maxi dress flowed with a silk like feel.

After spending an hours in the shower and on hair and makeup. I was finally ready. I brushed my fingers through my loosely curled hair and checked my makeup one more time before standing up.

I looked over at the noise of my door being opened and felt the air punch right out of me. He looked irresistible in his attire. Black pants a white button-ups shirt complete with a black leather jacket, and do not get me started on the 4 rings he had on. All I could imagine was his hands around my neck I bit my bottom lip looking at him.

"You clean up good Italy." I complemented him, He scratches his beard before finally making his eyes back up to my face, "we need to leave now" he quickly blurts outs.

Arching one eyebrow up "why the rush?" I tease, He steps closer to me pulling me into him by my waist, "because if we

don't leave now, I'm going to rip that dress off of you and fuck you like you've never been fucked before. Until the only name you'll ever want to scream out is mine." He let out a low growl looking at me, his eyes were full of lust, desire he looked very territorial, and it turned me on.

"no tricks tonight, if you try anything I will not hesitate to punish you leonessa." He warned me, I nodded my head softly examining his features lost in every aspect.

THE SONG

The car ride to the event was dangerously quiet. Vincenzo was deep in thought the whole car ride, although I suppose I was too. We got to the reception Vincenzo handed his keys to the bell boy and intertwined our hands as he guided me up the stairs.

I looked down at our hands a million emotions rushing through me. I tugged at my hand trying to free it from his I didn't want the thousands of emotions I had washing over me to get even more confused than I already was. He turned his head and gave me a warning stare, ***"if you try anything I will not hesitate to punish you leonessa."*** His warning echoed in my head like a bad song. I let out a sigh and decide to behave tonight because I didn't want to lower his reputation and I really didn't want him to do anything to me in front of a million people.

We climb up the most gorgeous staircase I have ever seen in my life, everything about this ball screamed elegance and royalty. I felt like I was in a Disney movie, we enter the main room and around three men come rushing towards Vincenzo. "Mr King, pleased you decided to join us ... Oh, who is this gorgeous lady." He kissed my hand before Vincenzo stepped in front of my hiding me from the gaze of the men behind his big masculine frame.

The man who flirted attempted to redeem himself as they started speaking about work, I zoned out as soon as they started talking business. I took the time to look around the gorgeous ballroom. Every lady was in the most exquisite gown and all the men were dressed in a suit. A live band sang and played filling the room with music.

People were dancing, toasting and looked happy. I continue to examine the room and my eyes land on a man in the corner of the room. He looked so familiar, but I couldn't put my finger on where I'd seen him, he kept staring at me not breaking eye contact, I started fighting trying to avoid his gaze feeling uneasy and extremely uncomfortable. Snapping out of my trance I felt Vincenzo's hot breath on my neck "Dance with me" his gesture was more of a demand than a request.

The man started singing 'So this is love' but in Italian, it made the song sound much more romantic and majestic the way the beautiful language just transformed the song.

He pulls my hand up slowly while guiding my other hand to his shoulder. He uses the back of his fingers to slowly trace mine while he pulls me in closer with his other hand on my waist.

Our chests now touching having nothing in between us, not even the air, he takes the lead as we begin to move our bodies in sync with the music. Stepping out of his embrace he pulls me back in and dips me. Taking advantage of the position his hand grazes my thigh.

Pulling me back upright his lips inches away from my ear as he hums the song, "E' questo allor" (so this is) his voice sent shivers down my spine, "Quel dolce ardor" (that sweet ardour) he neared his lips closer to my ear "L'incanto che si chiama amor" (the enchantment which is called love)

when he sang amor he placed a light kiss on my neck as our bodies continued to sway to the beat. "Adesso so hmmm" (now I know) he grabs my hands and guides them up to his neck as his hands rest on my waist, "Che ormai non può" (that

my heart can't no more) he glides his hand on my thigh then rests it on my ass.

I look at him with a questioning stare earning a devilish like smirk. "Null'altro sognare il mio cuor" (dream about anything else) he slightly raised his voice gaining the attention of the crowd. His voice was deep but smooth, making me feel calm.

The music stops and so do we, we lock eyes and for once everything felt perfect? Calm and normal our breathing in sync, leaning in slowly before we were interrupted. "Boss Frank's here" clearing my throat I looked down pretending to fiddle with my dress and Vincenzo kept his gaze fixated on me. "Boss?" he puts a finger up and shushes them "He can come to me"

After his men hesitantly walk away leaving us be I master the courage to look him in the eye again. "Whose Frank?" he looked at me with a rather confused expression. I roll my eyes "If you are planning on keeping me as leverage the least you could do is fill me in on a few people."

An amused expression overtook his features as he began to explain who Frank was, "Frank is a gang leader, he runs a few of our territories enforcing our rules, hosting illegal street fights and selling our basic drugs." I nod along as he explains Frank's role.

"How do you keep him from enforcing your rules and staying loyal?" I asked him genuinely. He sighs "Aside from the obvious being threats and death. Loyalty isn't something you can command rather it's something that is earned. To receive loyalty, you must give it back. A leader is nothing without people to lead, I'd give my life to my mafia and my people, just as they would. We're a Familia before anything. Besides, there are many perks to having the King's as your friend than as your enemy ... Something you ought to remember leonessa" He teases jokingly a giggle escaped my lips, followed by an instinctive eye roll "I'll try keeping that in mind Italy." I smiled shaking my head.

“Besides aside from the fact I am a very fair leader, I pay generously, and I return the same amount of respect and loyalty, that’s the mistake a lot of don’s make they become power hungry, stingy and selfish they forget that a **hungry dog is never loyal.**” I looked at him admiringly, hearing him talk about his mafia with such passion and seeing how serious he takes being a leader and a provider to the rest of his men and women made me view him in a light I never imagined possible.

An average height medium man approached us alongside a few men, “Boss.” Vincenzo nodded his head in acknowledgement, “I needed to speak to you about a gang from Spain. The leader wants to run New York and is planning an attack on you and your family.” he quickly blurts out.

Hearing his words made a sick feeling stir in my stomach, “Who?” was all Vincenzo stated. “**Serpiente de Sangre Gang**” my eyes widen in fear as I clutched Vincenzo’s hand, and my breathing became heavy and harsher. Vincenzo quickly grabbed and held me by my elbows “Isabella?” worry evident on his face trying to figure out what was wrong, but my mind and heart were racing. He found me.

I cannot and will not see that man again, not after the torture he made me endure and not after I almost killed him. If he sees me, he will either kill me or torture me until I die. Guilt consumed my entire body as I remember shooting him to wound him instead of killing him. Stupid Stockholm syndrome.

“Isabella!” I look up at him with pleading eyes, “He found me” I finally speak up alarmed. I looked up at him pleadingly, he looked down at me confused, worried, and furious. “Please let me go” I let out a soft plea begging him to let me go. Anger taking over his features he looks back up at his men after me makes sure I’m steady and able to keep my balance on my own, “get information on him, spread the word to allies I want him alive.” Vincenzo gives out orders.

“No need to send your men, I’m already here” No. My entire nervous system begins shutting down as I feel my palms getting sweaty, my heart continued to pound against my chest as my breathing became uneven and rapid.

Vincenzo stood in front of me pulling me behind him, Vincenzo squared his shoulders to let him and everyone else know his alpha and is not to be messed with. The music stops and everyone practically ran out. Fucking take me with you please. Vincenzo’s whole persona radiated power, and confidence even without uttering a single word he could make any man cower before him.

Xavier cleared his throat as he took a step forward in Vincenzo’s direction. Just then five of Vincenzo’s men who were at the event took out their guns and aimed them at Xavier’s head. Xavier let out a nervous laugh as he clears his throat “I’m not here to start a war gentleman, I’m here to reclaim what is rightfully mine.” Vincenzo gestured for his men to lower their guns “and exactly what is that?” He asked.

“The gorgeous Isabella Knight, the lady standing behind you.” I grabbed a fistful of Vincenzo’s leather jacket in my hand holding onto him as my life depended on it, “A human being is not an object you can claim.” He spat, Xavier lets out a cold chuckle trying to be intimidating but failing, “She was mine and I intend to get her back, I much rather you just stand aside but if you resist, I will be prepared to go to battle for her.”

Vincenzo looked down on the floor smirking as he slowly lifted his head looking back up at Xavier before a maniac laugh overtook him. Showing him how to be intimidating, “Do you honestly believe that your threat has the least bit of importance?” Vincenzo takes a step towards Xavier they were now inches apart as Vincenzo grabbed Xavier by his throat and slammed him to the nearest wall.

He watches Xavier struggle for a moment, guns drawn at Vincenzo until his men drew their guns out aiming it at Xavier’s men. Vincenzo smirked looking at him, before his smug expression turned hard and cold as ice. “I However,

don't like to be threatened especially by a gattino. (kitten) Get out of my city through your own will or you can leave in a body bag. If I even allow you the privilege of one." He realises his grip on him and walks away intertwining our hands and walking towards the exit, he gives me a reassuring squeeze.

"Did you miss me, Isabella?!" I stop dead in my tracks as he speaks, catching up to us outside "be careful of that girl Mr King, there's a fire burning behind her eyes, she can make kingdoms fall and monsters wish they were never born. Isn't that right Isabella? or should I say Dragon?" he taunted. Not turning around I froze, Vincenzo looked down at me giving me a reassuring nod he guides me back in the car and takes a glance in my direction before driving off.

The car was filled with tension so thick you could cut it with a knife, Vincenzo's scowl hasn't left his face, his grip on the steering wheel not losing evident by the way his knuckles turned white from the deadly grip. I sigh knowing he is waiting for me to talk.

"It was a long time ago" I mutter finally breaking the silence. Vincenzo keeps his eyes fixated on the road still not looking at me. I sigh feeling as though I need to explain the basics of the story since he may be going to war against him. "He did an inhumane thing to my parents, then to me. You know about my past, or whatever you managed to gather. I'm like an assassin although I had more responsibilities, I ran his gang. What many don't know is how" I sighed putting an emphasis on 'how'

"He tortured me for months on end. I did go to him with the intent to kill him for what he did to my parents. But with the continuous torture, rape and mental games and lack of any human interaction I was so weak. I just wanted salvation so when he offered to free me in exchange for work."

I swallow hard, feeling the lump in my throat beginning to form and the burning sensation in my eyes. I blink away the tears and let out a shaky breath "I had to do negotiations, interrogation, I ran the illegal fights, and I was in charge of the

gang's narcotics. The more responsibility he gave me and the more I was with him the more I forgot about what he did. He made me believe I was falling for him ... one of his many mind games." I continued explaining.

I look over at Vincenzo trying to get a read on him, his knuckles were turning white the more he gripped the steering wheel and the more I spoke. He continued avoiding looking at me.

"Once his gang grew, and his reputation grew due to having me. So did his name on the streets, but the more power he got the more things he wanted me to do ... the more numb I got" I took a deep breath trying to stay as calm as possible "He wanted me to cut a deal and help him become partners with my parent's drug empire he also literally threatened Maria's life if I didn't comply. It was then when he had the gun to Maria's head that my life flashed before my eyes and all the awful things he did to me and my family it all came flooding back." I drift off into the distance, remembering the events of that night.

"That was when I grabbed his gun and shot him three times ... I tell myself it was a miracle he survived but a part of me knew I missed the vital organs on purpose... but by then it was too late the guilt ate me up it still does knowing that I worked, killed, tortured for him when I should have killed him"

I hang my head in shame as all the memories begin to re-enter my brain. "Dragon?" I slowly lift my head back up and rest it in my palm of my hands "that was what everyone called me, when I started to really get into the crime scene, I was nicknamed dragon for my power, loyalty and fire I was hate and pain. I lost sight of who I was, dragon was like an alter ego an escape. My imaginary friend used to call me dragon when I was younger for the power and fire I had in me. That's the main reasons behind that nickname." I let out a sigh looking at him.

"it's a part of my life I can't say I'm not proud of it because it was a time in my life that made me the person I am today. For

that, I do not regret it.” I looked at the side of his face “it shaped me and taught me to rely on myself, and to never be a damsel in distress”

Vincenzo stayed silent looking at the road ahead, the rest of the car ride was silent, nothing filled the air other than the noise of the tires gliding along the road. The car came to a final stop, and I looked over to Vincenzo who still looked to be deep in thought. “It may be better if I leave. I don’t want to be the reason you go to war.”

“No, you and your sister are not going anywhere especially now. Besides I still need you, you bring us more advantages than misery.” At this moment I felt more like an object than a person, the second he is done using me I’ll be thrown out on the streets.

Slamming the door as I got out of the car. I push past Vincenzo and walk straight inside standing angrily in the living room Vincenzo’s parents. Rolling my eyes, I continue my walk to my cell. I could faintly hear them scolding Vincenzo about Xavier and his threat, but I couldn’t care less I needed to get out of here.

Stripping out of the dress I grab a pair of black shorts and an oversized white T-shirt. Laying on my bed I bury my face in my pillow and scream as loud as I can, trying to rid myself of all my frustration, misery, sadness, and anger towards the world.

A light knock snapped me out of my screams, “go away” the door opened revealing Ariana, “I’m sorry did you say come in?” rolling my eyes I bury my face back in the pillow.

“Come on, I heard what happened and a little bit about your past. You’re the most feared and biggest badass in our line of work. Every criminal family knows about you, you’re the baddest bitch of all and you screaming in a pillow?” She wasn’t wrong but for the first time in my life, I felt so powerless, not being in control of my own life. Having to rely on Vincenzo and ask permission to leave was like forcing me to drink boiling water.

“Come on get up put a jacket and shoes on let’s go” she grabs me by my ankles and drags me out of bed, I let out a yelp before landing flat on my stomach. “ARIANA!” she innocently shrugs and throws my red leather jacket and some combat boots.

Letting out a groan I realise it’s pointless arguing with her she’s as stubborn as her brother. We walk past her parents and brothers in the living room, before they begin to yell Ariana gave them a warning glare and they all fell silent. Mafia princess.

Driving off she looks my way all giddy and excited, she gives directions to the driver before sitting back in her seat. “Where are we going?” I look at her cautiously, I have a weird feeling about this.

“Underground street fight, I want to see Dragon in action. Besides it’s a good place to relieve stress”

THE TRUAMA

Ariana proving day by day how alike she and Vincenzo are we arrive at the underground fight. Stepping out of the car, the familiar view of people placing bets, the leather jackets and smell of booze, the chatting amongst themselves, the excited the fighter’s adrenaline pumping through them.

The mere sight made my body tingle with anticipation, excitement, and the feeling I fear most adrenaline the type you get just before you get in to fight. I never realised how much I missed this until now.

Taking me out of my daze Ariana pulls me towards the crowd we each sit and watch as the fighters begin. It felt like I was back home back where I belonged? I was on the edge of my seat watching them intensely their footwork, how they threw the punches judging from their stance and technique I was always able to point out who was going to win.

“Come on, you’re practically about to fall off your seat. Get in the ring” I looked over at Ariana with hesitance, “If I go in, I

risk letting out old memories and reopening a lot of wounds.” Ariana inched closer to me and with a devilish smirk “You can’t run from your past forever, learn to embrace it” she whispered encouragingly. “I don’t think the worlds ready for that” I laughed softly. “Give the world hell Isabella.”

“WE HAVE A WAGER OF 100K FOR ANYONE WHO CAN DEFEAT SNAKE” My head snaps towards the announcer, the crowd dead silent. “That’s Vincenzo’s ex-fling she’s one of the many who are obsessed with him.” I tilt my head as I examine her, scoffing I roll my eyes. “Your brother needs a new pair of eyes.” She let out an all-knowing giggle, giving her a warning stare, she laughed harder.

“Come on whose got the balls to jump in the ring with me?” she calls out. The crowd once again silent no one volunteered, and the rest of the fighters remained oblivious. “She’ll do it.” Ariana shouts out pointing at me. “Her?” she mocks as she examines me. “Oh yeah, underestimate me. That’ll be fun.” I mutter under my breath.

Stepping up to the ring I duck in, “what makes you think you can beat me?” I snifle a laugh as I look up at her “Put your money where your mouth is. Triple the bet.” The crowd began whispering “Done, easy money.” She smirked getting in her stance.

“Hate to think what your boss will say when you lose” I wink. She looked at me shocked before quickly shaking it off regaining composure. The announcer came towards me as he asked for my name. I stayed quiet for a minute “Dragon.” The crowd roared in anticipation some gasps were heard for those who recognised the name and reputation. People raced to place their bets on the winning fighter. “You ready bitch?” really? “I hope you fight better than you talk” I laughed out getting in my stance.

The bell rang right on cue, she stepped forward and threw a left punch which I caught. I held her fist before giving her a challenging smirk. The one thing I loved about these fights

there was no rules. I twisted her arm forcing her chest up, kicking the back of her knee.

She fell to her knees after losing her balance I kicked her back causing her to fall face first. I placed my foot on top of her back keeping her down “come on, this was too easy get up.” I took a step backing allowing her room, she lunged at me attempting to throw a right hook, ducking I uppercut the side of her ribs then hooking her jaw.

I quickly regained my balance as I push kicked her in the stomach, she groaned bending down to hold her stomach. Grabbing her by her hair I brought her face to my knee potentially breaking her nose and insuring myself a knockout.

As she fell flat on the ground the crowd roared in admiration and cheers. Whispers, whistling, comments, yelling, and applause was all that was heard. Adrenaline pumping through my veins, I haven't felt this alive in what's felt like years. I wanted to go for more, to finish the job. Like I use to, but I knew if I continued there was no stopping until she was dead.

I jump out of the ring to be greeted by a bear hug, noticing Ariana's jet-black hair and familiar Beyonce perfume I hugged her tighter. “I never knew you could fight like that” I couldn't help the smile that took over my lips, “being underestimated is a blessing because when you deliver, they never expect it.”

Letting out a squeal she re embraces me in a tight hug. “Dragon, always so fierce. So deadly” my heart stopped as the venom in his voice began to invade its way into my brain. Letting go of Ariana I spin towards the voice.

“deadly indeed” I smirk as I eye him up and down, he's a lot shorter and less masculine than I remember. “No need for threats bebe.” I instantly cringe at the sound of him calling me anything affectionate. “Xavier, I thought I made myself clear at our previous encounter.”

I watch him as he itches his skin as though he is in deep thought. “I thought I made the terms of my conditions clear. It's you or war.” Scoffing, “Me or war? We both know your

gang isn't powerful enough to even attempt an attack on the Kings. Going to war with them is a suicide mission."

"Perhaps ... but that won't change my mind. even if all my people die." Hearing how he spoke about his people reminded me of Vincenzo, **'A leader is nothing without people to lead, I'd give my life to my mafia, my people, just as they would. We're a familia before anything.'**

The difference in leadership is remarkable, it's admirable.

"It amazes me how you speak so carelessly about your people, and yet you still have men." Shaking my head I grab a hold of Ariana's hand indicating it may be time to leave. Two of his men stood in front of us. "You see the two of you won't be leaving until I get what I want, and I don't mind using force."

Xavier takes his gun out and aims it directly at Ariana, following his moves his four men copy but aim their guns at me. "Don't do it." I warn "You pull that trigger and I promise you I will end you like I should have a long time ago" Balling my fist I look over at Ariana who is staring at me with a concerned look, "Isabella it's fine. I've handled worse" my stare and attention were fixated at Xavier and his gun.

The place cleared out the second the guns were in plain sight, "Drop. It." my voice was low and threatening, Xavier smirked looking at me like he was reminiscing. "There she is ladies and gentlemen. Dragon." He waits for my response but all I do is continue staring at him warning him.

"Isabella their armed and were not, it may be dangerous" I looked at her trying to desperately communicate with my eyes, if she gets hurt because of me I will never be able to forgive myself. Her family would be left without a daughter and a sister. Flashbacks of my parent's death and us having to do life without them made me stiffen.

Xavier sighs in admiration "Oh Isabella how I missed that sparkle in your eyes, how it lights up when someone says, 'it might be dangerous.'" I slowly turned my head to face him smirking, I felt myself resorting back to my old methods.

The dragon in me got tired of being caged she's making an appearance. "They tend to sparkle just before someone dies, that sparkle should scare you ... you remember what I'm capable of with the right motivation." I reminded him feeling the familiar powerful surge take over.

"There are four guns aimed at your head and you want to reminisce?" he let out a mocking scoff, "you made your choice Bebe, you chose force ... I will get you back even if your dead when I do" his threats made me laugh.

"I forgot just how much of a joke you are. You have had that gun and the rest at our heads and yet-" I shrug winding my eyes for dramatic effect, "nothing. I'm beginning to question your commitment" I innocently tilt my head giving him a smile causing Ariana to let out a giggle.

"Really?" oh no, there goes his male ego. Xavier don't be an idiot. He adjusts his stance and pulls the trigger, when I don't feel anything, I look over at Ariana as I see her brush her hand against her side, seeing the blood on her hands.

Her body gives out as she falls. Horrified I looked at Ariana laying on the floor in her own pool of blood. Flashes of her body lying flat on the floor were replaced with my parents.

I shook my head to gain focus, and all I felt was fire erupting. My entire demeanour shifting as I slowly stood back up looking at Xavier and his men.

"Hombre muerto" (Dead men). "Dragon..." Xavier whispers terrified recognising my stance, the sparkle in my eye. He knew I was out for blood. That's right baby dragon.

Two men were standing on my side while the other two were in front of Xavier. I look to my right and grab the man by his wrists, pulling him towards me but stepping out of the guns range.

Twisting him around having him in a choke hold, I use his gun to fire at the man standing in front of Xavier. Kneeing him in the groin then the nose. I push the man to the floor in a swift motion taking the gun out of his grip completely. I aim my gun

at the back of his head ... I push him around with my foot “I want you to look at me, don’t say I took you like a coward” I pulled the trigger.

“Killing someone from behind is a cowardly shot.” My imaginary friends voice echoing in my head. Sometimes I wonder if he was real or not.

Their men aim their guns at me, I step to the side and dodge the bullet by an inch and shoot the man to my left. Ducking down I look up and shoot the last remaining man protecting Xavier in the head the sound of their bodies hitting the floor sent Xavier running shortly he was nowhere in sight.

“COWARD” I roar every bone, every cell, every fibre in my body was on fire. I will kill him even if it’s the last thing I do.

Snapping back into reality I looked behind me and quickly rushed towards Ariana, “Ariana, Ariana.” Kneeling by her side I hold her in my arms and apply pressure to the wound on her stomach. “Ariana, come on keep your eyes open.” tears began escaping my eyes falling on my cheeks as I sobbed for her to stay awake. “Don’t you dare let him win, stay with me come on.”

The sounds of footsteps alarmed me, and I quickly grabbed the gun and aimed it and their heads, “easy Isabella” I drop the gun realising it’s just Fico and Marco. “We need to take her to the hospital” I managed to choke out, both shaking their heads. “We need to get her to the hospital on the estate now.” They grab her and look around at the dead bodies, “Isabella did you manage to kill all four men?” I look at them astonished that they just stopped to ask me that.

Sensing the death stare, they quickly rush to the car, “Call boss, tell them to get ready” they continued to talk and chat between themselves. fearing the bosses rathe.

I take a hold of Ariana’s head and lay her on my lap. “Hey Hermosa, keep those eyes on me.” She coughs blood as she squeezes my hand, giving me a reassuring smile. “I won’t let him take you from me as well.” she shakes her head “I’m ...

n-not going anywhere” she manages to say through deep breaths.

She gives my hand another reassuring squeeze, “D-don’t think ... this will get you out of shop-shopping t-tomorrow.” letting out a pitiful giggle my eyes full of tears and my cheeks stained from the tears that rolled down my face. “I think we might have to reschedule that.” I smile at her. She shakes her head and whispers tomorrow. Stubborn just like her bloody brother. Nodding my head I agree “tomorrow”

She slowly begins to grow tired, “No, no come on look at me” The car quickly comes to a halt, thank God. The men quickly open the door and rush Ariana carefully onto the gurney, taking her away. My body giving out I fall to my knees and brush my hands through my hair as I ball a fist full of my hair. I saw Vincenzo, his brother and his parents rushing right behind her. This, this is all my fault.

I felt the familiar embrace “Isabella are you okay” Maria whispered concern evident in her voice. I immediately hug her back “It’s all my fault Maria” I cry out. she hushes me “It’s not your fault and it’s not Ariana’s fault either. It was simply bad timing ... hey, hey. She’s going to be fine”

“She’s right ... Doc says judging just by looking the bullet didn’t do damage.” I look up through blurry eyes and see Lorenzo with a sympathetic smile. “I’m so sorry” I stand on my feet “You shouldn’t be if you didn’t kill those men. You both would be dead; I know it doesn’t look like it but you saved both of your lives.” I look behind him and storming towards me was an Angry Vincenzo along with his parents. Whispering “I don’t think they agree.” He turns around and stands in front of his parents trying to calm them down.

Vincenzo walks past him grabbing hold of my arm and pulling me inside. Maria starts yelling to let me go but gets stopped by Lorenzo. We go up the stair as he pulls me inside his office, he throws me to the side causing me to land on my side. He slams his doors shut and picks me up by my shoulders slamming me against the wall.

How can eyes so grey, look so black and demonic. He clenched his jaw, as he eyed me. "Do it." I spit. He does nothing he continues to stare at me in a way that made me feel so vulnerable and exposed. He lifts his hand up, I shut my eyes in anticipation when I hear his fist colliding with the wall inches from my head.

"Believe me ... I want to. I knew you both shouldn't have gone out tonight. HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN. ARIANA ISN'T LIKE US. SHE'S PURE HOW DID THIS HAPPEN ..." He paused letting me go, he brushes his hand through his hair stopping dead in his tracks. Hands still in his hair he turns to look at me. "This is all your fault. He wanted you not her."

Finally exploding I yell "YES, YES. HE WANTED ME, THAT BULLET WAS MEANT FOR ME... IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN FOR ME. SO DO IT VINCENZO DO what he failed to" I break down looking between him and the gun tucked in his waist band.

I grab the and point it at my head. I had yet another person's blood on my hands, this isn't being dramatic this is guilt. It was eating me alive, and it wasn't soul because of Ariana. My parents, Dante and now Ariana. Whoever was connected to me somehow gets taken from me and always at the hands of Xavier.

"I killed them, for harming her." my eyes watered as I spoke, my body heating up and my grip around the gun tightened. Vincenzo's features softened seeing me in this state. "He hurt her, and all she wanted to do today was cheer me up ... she doesn't deserve any of this." I shake my head as the guilt of even being able to breathe made me nauseous. "Leonessa ... put the gun down"

Completely ignoring him I look back up at him "He has taken everything away from me. He took my parents, my life, my sanity ... " Without realising it Vincenzo was now standing in front of me, he put his hand above mine lowering the gun then taking it off me completely. Breaking down I let out a cry, a painful and a cry for help.

Vincenzo embraces me as I cry in his chest. "I'm so sorry" I cry he hushes me whispering "I know leonessa, I know" Pulling away from him, his features softened almost returning to normal.

The doors fly open. "I want her dead" his mother spits, "Anna, calm down. Ariana is okay. She saved her life" Vincenzo spoke up. She looks at her son then back at me in complete hatred. "HER LIFE WOULDN'T NEED SAVING IF IT WASN'T FOR HER. VINCENZO YOU SHOULD HAVE GIVEN HER TO HIM AND SAVED US THE HEADACHES."

"Anna if it wasn't for her Ariana wouldn't be alive" Lorenzo chimes in, trying to reason with her and calm her down but it did no good. "If Vincenzo just gave her to him, it wouldn't be Ariana facing death"

"don't" I state pointing a finger at her. She goes to retaliate "how dare you-" "I SAID DON'T" I scream. Alerting everyone around us. "Do not act like you know me, do not treat me like an object to be passed around and then kept when convenient." Pausing I stare at Anna, "Ariana is like another sister to me, what happened to her will not be forgotten and I will carry that guilt with me forever. But do not dare for a second act as though you know me."

"Or what I've been through because I can assure you it was a lot worse than a bullet to the stomach" I spat.

"What is there to know, an ex-assassin one who is highly feared, lost her parents at young age and sent to America with her ... twin" she spits disgusted, like from those three aspects she knows my entire story.

My entire body was shaking, I step away from Vincenzo as I approach his mum. "How long?" I question her. She looks at me confused "listen i-" putting my hand up cutting her off. "I said, how long?" I look at her daring her to answer me.

"Hmm?" I hummed losing patience. "How long do you think it would take you to break if I simply left you in a cold, dark cell

to rot?” I tilt my head at her then look around the room painful memories flashing back.

“I know the answer” I state sarcastically, raising my hand up. Anna’s chest tightened looking me up and down trying to figure out where I was going with this.

“Humans need company” I murmured as I took a step back daydreaming slightly. “You go a little crazy without it. You hate me so much, perhaps you’d prefer to be left on your own, hm?” I hummed looking at her waiting for her snarky comments.

She opens her mouth to speak before I cut her off mid breath “No parents, no siblings, no family... completely cut off from the world. Having no one knowing where you are and enduring all kinds of torture physical, verbal, and mental. ” Tilting my head slightly remembering the thoughts that circulated my head.

“I always imagined that’s what death would be like. A cold, dark cell, unable to move or do anything. Trapped in your own head with no one else to guide you out of the dark places you end up in. An eternity of conscious nothingness.” I look down at my feet.

“Yes, I may be an ex-assassin. I am one of the most feared if not the only feared women in the crime scene. Whose parents were killed in front of her. If it was just that simple. The man that shot Ariana, killed my parents. Tortured me for months on end he did ... a lot. Then I was forced to work and help my parent’s killer’s gang grow. I killed for him because I was desperate to get out of that cell, desperate for human interaction.”

I took a breath before looking up at Anna again. “I’m a lot more complicated than id like people to know” I took a deep breath and narrow my gaze to hers “I may be an ex-assassin, but I can still kill you and get away clean. Next time you threaten me watch out for a red light” I warned her sternly.

THE DRINKING GAME

I barely got any sleep last night; I kept tossing and turning for what felt like hours. My mind kept wandering to Ariana and her mother. Forming some sort of alliance, nothing made sense to me at this very moment. What does she expect me to do? Does she even want me to do anything? Would Vincenzo even allow me to do anything? Not that he would have a say in what I can and can't do.

I checked the time 10 am, Ariana should be awake by now. I grab my grey sweats hanging on my chair and throw on a black tank. Walking out of my room I put my hair in a high ponytail before knocking on Maria's door. I heard muffles coming from her room ... is she in there with someone?

I open the door and to my horror, Maria was on top of Lorenzo both half-naked. I couldn't help the dramatic scream that left my lips as I stood at the door completely scared.

Jumping at the sound of my voice Maria jumps into bed covering herself with the blanket while Lorenzo lays down looking smug. "Oh, I think I'm gonna be sick." I place my hand over my chest and lean down. "Oh, come on chica, we are quite the view." Maria slaps Lorenzo on the chest causing him to let out a dramatic gasp holding his heart like he had just been shot. "I stand corrected Kinky Chica"

My mouth hung open as my eyes widen, the sound of footsteps broke me out of my gaze as I saw a shirtless Vincenzo approaching. Now my eyes and mouth had another reason to be wide open. "Why were you yelling and what cazzo" he sighs as he comes into view.

"Great I didn't know we were having a floor show GET OUT," Maria screams in horror as I and Vincenzo continue stare at them none of us moving an inch. "Yeah, were busy" Lorenzo mummurs as he goes in for a kiss. "AYE, AYE, AYE. LORENZO FUCKING KING, HANDS AND MOUTH WHERE I CAN SEE THEM." I shout stepping inside slapping his hands off my sister.

“Gross that’s my sister. If you insist on kissing, do it when I’m not around.” he nods understandably before plastering the fakest smile known to man “Chica, get out.”

“I can’t do that” I state, Vincenzo looks at me with furrowed eyebrows confused on why I would want to stay in the room.

I looked between Lorenzo and Maria then back at Vincenzo. “Wha- If I leave he’ll fucking kiss my sister” I whine looking at Vincenzo. Maria by now melted all the way into the sheets of the bed, Lorenzo was dying of laughter before stating “Oh well be doing more than that” and before I could even utter a word someone comes up from behind me and in the calmest but judging voice states “Oh and what will that be?”

Damn his mum has such amazing timing, I snifle a laugh and Vincenzo gave Lorenzo a good luck stare before walking away uninterested. “I think I’ll just be leaving now,” I say before hurrying out of that danger zone. I make my way to the door I felt like taking a walk and then check in on Ariana. I go to grab the door handle but jump started when the door swung open. “Oh, Im s-” I cut myself off as I see who’s at the door.

The bitch from the strip club. “What are you doing here?” she spat. Smirking I sensed an opportunity “Oh you know, my job” she looks at me confused before looking at me horrified “You’re a stripper but” she states the obvious trying to piece the puzzle together “Yeah and I’m at the bosses house.” I smiled wiping the corner of my mouth and sucking on my thumb for affect.

realisation overcame her features before they harden into complete jealousy.

“Stay away from my man” she clenches her jaw before storming past me. Her and Roxy need to have a chat looks like Vincenzo is everyone’s man. I balled my hands in a fist frustrated while she walked past me and straight for Vincenzo’s office. I continued my walk across the estate towards the hospital.

I guess she arrived to give Italy ... cringing at the thought of anyone making him moan or touching him it made my skin crawl. I wasn't jealous it's simply because of her. She rubs me the wrong way, and what does he even find appealing about her.

Whatever it's his life, if he wants a clownfish sucking on his cock then by all means have it. I couldn't care less; I need to focus on the main objective here and that's the solid fact that no matter what I'm simply a convince.

Maria has become a priority as she's fallen for Lorenzo in the short amount of time we have been here. Me on the other hand all I am a means a tool to get deals and form partnerships with Spain's highly respected drug cartels.

I cannot and will not go near Xavier again. The trauma that follows him can make anyone want to end their life. My life went south the moment he killed my parents then continued to mentally kill me and make me a puppet for his pleasures and his little gang. If I do ever agree to go near him, it won't be for a chat.

I need to get out of here, I've just run out of ideas. "Is she awake?" I asked one of the nurses, she nods her head and informs me of Ariana's condition. "Ariana?" I whisper as I enter the small room, she turns her head in my direction before smiling "Isabella, thank god." As I approach her my eyes slightly tear up as the guilt begins to eat me alive once again. I couldn't help but blame myself that she's in this condition.

"Hey, stop that. Bella look at me I'm fine" not wanting to burden her or make this situation sadder than it already was I changed the topic and explained to her the horror of what I saw this morning. She bursts out laughing placing her hand over her wound. "Oh, I would have paid so much money to see that."

"That's nothing, your mum saw them" she looks at me in pure shock before once again laughing "Mama always did have impeccable timing when it came to these kinds of situations ... I'm so teasing them about this once I see them."

Rolling my eyes, we continue to chat for another hour before Vincenzo walks in. I immediately fall silent, remembering who came over this morning to pay him a visit. My blood began to boil, and I became irritable it was hard to sit still.

Standing up I give Ariana a quick kiss on the cheek promising to come back later tonight before existing. Vincenzo grabbed my wrist stopping me from leaving. He analysed my facial expressions “I kicked her out” he whispered so only I could hear him, I let out a sigh of relief but then hardened my features yanking my wrist from his grasp and walking out.

x

I walk upstairs into Maria’s room; I open the door placing one hand over my eyes and stretching my free arm out to make sure I don’t bump into anything “IS IT SAFE FOR MY POOR EYES TO LOOK” I yell out.

I laugh as I felt the impact of a pillow being thrown to my head, looking at her I smirk. “It’s funny, you tell me to stay away from Vincenzo and I catch you in bed with his brother.” I plop on the bed next to her.

“I’m a hypocrite like that.” she shrugs smirking. The way her face lit up at the mere mention of his name made me ache, the pure admiration she shared for me made me want that type of relationship. I’m always feeling crazy every time I have an encounter with Vincenzo one second his sweet and caring and the next, he’s cold and distant.

“I cannot believe you finally did it” I stated blushing she hides her face in her hands causing me to let out a teasing laugh.

“Spill it” We sat for hours talking about her and Lorenzo, she explained the details of how their friendship over the month developed into something more. She found his sassy side funny and cute, making me laugh and telling her if she found him funny to laugh not sleep with the guy. Causing her to slap me.

Maria and I haven’t sat and talked to each other in a few days which wasn’t like us. Getting hungry we run towards the

kitchen seeing the chefs at work, my favourite was the head chef Mira she is the cutest soul in this house.

“My Pumpkins, come sit. You both need to eat, you too thin” she pointed at us with her tongs. “Maria duck, Mira’s armed with tongs” she giggles hugging us both before ordering the other cooks to get our meals out. “The only thing keeping me from trying to shoot my way out of this mansion is your food” I state rubbing my stomach.

“Oh pumpkin, this house became more cheerful when you and your sister joined” She places the plate of food in front of us, she sat with us for a minute while we talked and ate.

After we had dinner, the sun started to set, I sat on my bed staring out the window. Huffing I flop on the bed bored out of my brain.

I sit up and quickly run towards the bar downstairs. Lorenzo and a few men were having drinks and playing a game of pool. “Hello boys” Lorenzo looks at me fear written all over his face “You’re to not go near the alcohol” he states pointing a finger at me. I blow the loose strand out of my face “Look, I’m drinking and you’re not gonna do shit about it. You know why?” I question

He doesn’t utter a word but continues to look at me “Because whoever stands in my way of getting piss drunk will have their ball sacks ripped off.” As if they felt the pain all the men immediately grab a hold of their areas and wince. Smiling I quickly brush past them and grab a vodka bottle. “Anyone up for a game?”

They look at one another and all surround me, feeling giddy I grab the shot glasses and pour “Now it’s dared or shot. If you don’t do the dare you need to take a shot.”

“Me first, Lorenzo we’ll start off simple. I dare you to give anyone in this room a lap dance for a minute.” He looks around the room shrugging “You know what I’m already sorta drunk” he stands up and goes straight to Fico, probably the

most attractive man here. He stands in between his leg and grinds on it. The guys started to whistle while I screamed.

He sits next to me “Ok I got one Isabella; I dare you to drink this entire bottle of straight whiskey” I stare at him “what? we are all wasted you need to catch up.” He points out, rolling my eyes I take the bottle from his hand I drown the bottle in five gulps. “IT FUCKING BURNSSSSSS” I scream as the liquid goes down my throat.

Everyone by now is laughing as we took body shots, the guys warmed up to me. An hour later we started getting bored. “This pl-placeeee is massive. wh- why don’t we ...” I paused for a minute trying to remember how to use words. I gasp “LETS JUMP IN THE POOL” Everyone screamed agreeing.

Fico picked me up and threw me over his shoulder as we all ran outside. “NOT A GOOD IDEA TO RUN” I yell as I place my hand over my mouth. Of course, no one hears me, we ran through the living room and straight outside.

Placing me down for some reason I looked up to Vincenzo’s office windows, upon seeing his silhouette looking out and straight at me. I bite my lip and take off my sweats and tank leaving me in just my underwear and bra.

I look back at the boys “READY SET GO” we all run and jump in the pool. The feeling of the cold water shocked me awake, swimming back up to the surface. Lorenzo swims to the edge grabbing the remote to the speakers turning it on blasting music.

Beyonce single ladies came on causing us all to break out in song, “ALL THE SINGLE LADIES PUT YOUR HANDS UP” our hands all went flying up “LAST TIME I CHECKED IM THE ONLY LADIE HERE” all the men put their hands down and pull their underwear after they saw their own goods, they all cheer and high five.

We played volleyball in the pool, sang and scam at the top of our lungs. We are all pissed drunk so volleyball was a lot funnier than it should be. Fico neared me getting friendly, I

smirked knowing his stare was still fixated on me. I wrapped my arms around Fico's neck and pulled him closer to me. "You're so hot" I slurred out tracing his bare chest.

"Isabella" his deep voice sent chills down my back as I looked at the edge of the pool. Vincenzo stood in front of me staring at me with hunger and anger in his eyes, "Oh Vincenzooooooooo its you, come on get in the pool" I beg, he raises an eyebrow "Are you sober?" he questions knowing the answer to that is a no.

I let go of Fico and lean my head on my arms at the end of the pool, "I'm moderately functioning" I state giving myself a hard nod, before looking back at Vincenzo "I'll take that as a no" I giggle "your accent is hot"

"Isabella g-" I cut him off pouting "I don't like it when you call me Isabella" He looks at me like I've officially lost my mind, "Leonessa" he corrects himself. Smiling I look up at him lustfully, this whiskey really gives a girl a lot of confidence. "That's better Italy now jump in the pool!" I demand "how much have you had to drink? are you all there?" he questions.

"Physically yes silly, but mentally uh its debatable" I answer shaking his head "Come on you're getting out" I stare at him horrified that he just told me to get out "NO, NO, NO, NOOOOOOOOOOOO IM A MERMAID" I scream and I dive back into the water swimming away. I emerge back up next to Lorenzo "LORENZO THE BAD MAN WANTS TO TAKE ME OUT THE WATER."

Lorenzo stands in front of me before pointing his finger at Italy "THAT'S NOT VERY NICE, NOW APOLOGISE" he puts his hands on his hips as he stares at Vincenzo. Vincenzo clenches his jaw before walking around the pool towards us.

He leans down and grabs a hold of my arm and pulls me out of the water. "AHHHHH HELP FISH OUT OF WATER FISH OUT OF WATER C-AN-T BREATHEEE" I scream struggling for air. The boys begin splashing water to keep me

alive getting Vincenzo soaking wet. “Cazzo” mmm the way he whispered sounded so sexy.

He grabs the clothes that were on the floor and wraps me in a towel before dragging me upstairs to his office. He pours me a glass of water “Drink” I scrunch my nose and shake my head he grabs my hand and makes me take the glass.

He stands in front of me waiting for me to drink, slumping my shoulders feeling defeated I take a sip of water before spitting it on him bursting out laughing. “ISABELLA KNIGHT” he screams. I double over laughing, the towel falls off my body as I grip my stomach. “You should’ve seen your face” I burst out laughing all over again.

He grabs the towel from the floor drying himself before wrapping me back up. “Stop laughing leonessa.” I bite my lip to stop myself from laughing but I smirked at him amused. “Quit it, I’m serious” he yelled I threw my hands in the air “I’m not smirking”

“Well stop fucking laughing then” he yells but I know he wanted to laugh his lip was curving into a smile.

“I’M NOT LAUGHING” He eyes me down “then quit whatever it is your doing” I stare at him with such a hurt expression on my face as I place my hand over my chest “This is me with a cheery on top, I am a ray of fucking sunshine in the midst of bleakness. Don’t put a cloud over my sunshine” I point my finger at his chest.

“Your drunk actually, and that’s just an excuse to laugh at me” he states. Pointing my finger in the air “RAINY CLOUD” I scream at the top of my lungs. Rolling his eyes, he bites back the smile emerging on his lips.

“Awe could it be the big bad Vincenzooo King smiled?” he shakes his head.

“Leonessa, you need to sober up.” I grabbed the bottle of water and chugged it down, “There ... now Italy tell me. What are your wildest dreams” I say as I stare at him with big eyes. “Cazzo ... this is gonna be a long night”

I shrug “You could let me go back to the guys,” I say “No” he answers immediately “Why?” I question “You are not hanging out with a bunch of men ... looking like that” his breathing started to become heavy.

Suddenly I felt myself sobering up at the sight of his jealousy, “You didn’t mind me hanging out with them when your bitch was over” I state as I roll my eyes. “Are you jealous Leonessa?” He teasingly questions. “Are you?” I fire right back at him.

He ignores my question and sits at his desk. Thank God for the alcohol in my system, I wasn’t drunk enough to not know what’s happening, but I was drunk enough to have the courage to encourage what was about to happen.

I walked up to him and placed my hand inches from his head and leaned the chair back. Our faces inches apart “I asked you a question, Italy. Did. You. Get. Jealous.” He sucks in a breath before making eye contact with me, “No” he sharply answered. “lies” I stand upright and unwrap the towel, his eyes intensely watching my every move and following the towel as it dropped to the ground. His eyes ranked my body “Then I’m going swimming.” I sate

He stands up grabbing my wrist, gently backing me up against the wall. His eyes dart to my lips then back to my eyes. Going on my tippy toes I place my hands on his chest and lean forward so that my lips are only inches from his ear, “Kiss me” I whisper.

“The problem is,” he said as he leaned in, our lips inches apart. “If I kissed you, I don’t think I’d be able to stop.”

I tilt my head up, our lips ever so slightly touching as I whisper “who says I want you to stop?”

THE LUST

**(DISCLAIMER YES, SHE IS INTOXICATED
HOWEVER SHE IS NOT DRUNK TO THE POINT**

WHERE SHE IS UNAWARE SHE NOWS WHAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN)

(Sexual scene)

His intense stare only intensifies as those words left my lips, he tried to ready me almost making sure I wanted this. I'm not sure if it's the alcohol but that answer was clearer than ever, I wanted him, I wanted him more than I care to admit. I was drawn to him in ways I didn't understand. "You're drunk Isabella" he whispers shaking his head. "No believe me I'm aware ... I want this. I want you"

He smashes his lips to mine, my hands immediately find their way to the back of his neck, slowly making my way to his jet-black hair. I tug at it gently tilting his head. "Cazzo" he groans at my gesture, our tongues fighting for dominance. This was pure lust, hunger, and aggression. There was nothing gentle about it.

He drags his hand from my waist down to my thigh squeezing it, he travels towards my already throbbing pussy. Slipping his hand under my underwear cupping me. A soft moan left my lips, he chuckled as he tilted his head to the side, face still inches from mine "You're throbbing for me already leonessa"

My legs turn to jelly as he takes full control, he started to run gentle circles, teasingly, a frustrated sigh left my lips. The smirk never leaving his.

His eyes never leaving mine, he wanted me to know who was in control and who was pleasuring me. He reconnected our lips as he inserted a finger, gasping into the kiss I lean my head back in pure bliss, with his free hand he pulled me by my neck bringing my mouth back to his "I'm going to kiss you until the only name you taste is mine."

Goosebumps begin to appear all over my skin as his words sent chills and sparks of electricity throughout my body. "I'm going to fuck you until the only name you'll ever want to scream is mine" my breathing hitched hungry for him to take me.

He traced the tip of his tongue along my lower lip, causing me to moan his name out softly. Enjoying the reaction, he got he deepened the kiss, sucking my lips as he kissed me harder and began pumping his finger faster. "Fuck" I moaned breaking the kiss. Arching my back, the action was just as intense as the bulge in his pants, threatening to rip out as he took his finger out and aggressively dry humps me.

He pulled me over to the couch, he gestured for me to sit on his lap to which I happily obliged. I teasingly grind myself into him arching my back letting out a soft moan feeling his cock on my wet pussy.

He left out a harsh groan, frustration visible on his features now it was my turn to smirk. Tearing his button up shirt, I admire his toned chest covered in tattoos. biting my lip, I bring his face towards mine by his chain necklace. "Already so hard for me" I purr in his ear as I nibble on his ear lobe.

I kiss just the corner of his lips teasing him, placing my hands on his chest I push him down until he was lying flat on his back. I slowly bring myself down on him as I left a trail of sloppy kisses on his jawline, going down lower to his neck, I made sure to leave a hickey "Mine" I whisper as I continue tracing his rock-hard chest with my fingers I kiss each peck then one kiss in the middle of his chest.

I lower myself further as I reached his abs, making sure to kiss each one

"Joderme" (screw me) I seductively whisper as I plant a sloppy kiss on one of his abs, moving across "Solo ... Mis ... Labios ... pueden ... tocrate" (My lips are the only ones allowed to touch you) I continue to whisper in between kisses. Stopping at his V line, I look up from where I was, he stares at me his eyes hard and full of lust.

Smirking I stare up at him with innocent big eyes as I bit my lip. "You want me to play with you Italy?" He lets out a harsh groan and I take that as my cue. Unbuckling and unzipping his pants, stopping to caress his length through the fabric, teasingly.

I kiss the tip of his hard-on through his boxers causing his dick to twitch “leonessa, don’t be a fucking tease” he harshly breathes out. I trace his head with the tip of my tongue.

Giggling as I can sense his pure frustration, I take his cock out from his boxers and with the tip of my tongue tracing his head, licking up and down his length before I take him whole in my mouth a hot moan leaves his lips as he grabs a fistful of my hair and bobs my head.

Wiping my lips, he picks me up and slams me on the couch now I’m laying flat on my back, while he towers above me. He slowly traces my body with his tongue. Grabbing my boobs with his hands he squeezes my breasts, massaging them as his face was in now nearing between my legs. He licked my throbbing pussy through my panties with the tip of his tongue before his fingers found their way to my back and ripped my bra off. Arching my back at his movements I moan slightly, his mouth quickly found its way back up to my nipple, sucking on it I arched my back letting out a loud moan “oh fuck, Fuck me”.

Circling his tongue around my nipple, while his fingers played with my Pussy. “You’re fucking perfect,” he said huskily, his accent much more arousing than ever. “Please,” I begged softly, seeking release. My pussy was dripping wet and throbbing like a madwoman I can feel myself dripping.

Vincenzo hummed loudly against my chest, as his tongue trailed my body and over my pussy. He teasingly licked my clit through my underwear. “FUCKING HELL ITALY” I moan both frustrated and pleased, he starts to suck on my clit while fingering me. “OH ... FUCK DON’T STOP.” “Say my name Isabella” biting my lip as he continued his pace. “Tsk, tsk. Remember what happens to bad girls leonessa.” he whispered darkly.

‘Bad girls don’t get to release’ He took a hold of his dick and entered me in one swift motion without warning. I screamed his name as he filled my pussy with his cock, he was bigger than any man I’d ever been with. He held me down by my hips as he pumped in and out at a reasonable speed.

“Fuck, fuck fuck” I moan out as he increases the speed, He was fucking me relentlessly, my breasts were bouncing with each deep thrust. He bent down never losing the rhythm, his lips were on my chest once again. Biting and sucking on my skin, leaving his mark. My walls started to clench around his dick as I was nearing my climax.

The only sounds that filled his office are the sound of my own moaning, Vincenzo’s grunting, and the way our bodies slapped against one another, stretching me, feeling him with every thrust.

He quickly removed himself from me not allowing me to reach my climax, I groaned and gasped out of frustration and lack of contact. My pussy was burning for release, it was sensitive to touch as I touched myself to bring myself to the release. Vincenzo slapped my hand away as he knelt in front of me, opening my pussy wide to devour it like a hungry animal. He licked and sucked on my clit mercilessly. “Don’t stop ... please ... fuck just like that ... Oh Dios” my chest heaved as my hands gripped Vincenzo’s hair to stop him from pulling away.

Vincenzo’s voice vibrated against my core, “Come for me leonessa ... be a good girl and come for me.” My pussy instantly obeyed his commands and released moaning in pleasure I arch my back as my whole-body shudders in pure satisfaction. My legs felt like jelly I stood up pushing Vincenzo on the couch, kneeling in front of him with the tip of my tongue, I teased the head, licking my own wetness mixed with his pre-cum. Causing Vincenzo to realise. He pulls my face to his by my neck.

(End of sexual scene)

As he was about to reconnect our lips someone started knocking violently “VINCENZO KING UNLOCK THIS DOOR NOW” He rested his head to mine “my mother and her timing never fail to amaze me” letting out a giggle. We rush to get dressed, he turns around making sure I’m all clean and clothed before opening the door.

“VIN- why’s the door locked” she walked inside before stopping dead in her tracks at the sight of me smirking “I see my timing hasn’t lost its touch” oh dear mother of Jesus take me now. My cheeks flush red as I begin fidgeting with the hem of my shirt.

“Anyway, let us get to business, I have news on Xavier. He is stupidly still in town and is planning on attacking one of our hideouts in hopes to send some sort of message.” she waves her hands in the air as she speaks. Vincenzo crosses his arms over his chest before a puzzled expression takes over his features “We have over ten hideouts for our men, how are we supposed to know which one?”

I looked up “well Xavier isn’t one for originality, he’ll go to the most basic hideout he can find.” Vincenzo raises an eyebrow “His going to the abandoned warehouse” I nod along.

“Xavier was never a person who liked doing things outside the box, attacking a more secluded hideout, on the off chance he will get caught and or abused. The abandoned warehouse sounds perfect, not big enough for too many surprises and not hidden meaning it won’t require much work to figure out who it belongs to and where it is.”

“We need to warn the men about this, so they’re prepared. Vincenzo, kill the little dwarf.” A much deeper voice fills the room, his father. “For everything he did to our family ... and to Isabella.” he adds. I looked at him shocked he included my pain in his reasons. “Don’t worry ... I will” Vincenzo snarled.

leaving the office I enter my room; I feel so sticky and gross. Turning the shower on I adjust the temperature to my liking, stripping the steam of the hot water that fills the room.

“I’ll never understand you, females, you shower is hell fires water.” Jumping I quickly cover myself “Vincenzo how did you get in? Get out” he tilts his head ranking his eyes over my body that smug smirk never leaving his lips. “Leonessa, it’s nothing I haven’t seen before.”

It suddenly got way hotter in here, “Vincenzo” I warn in a low whisper. Shutting my eyes, it wasn’t my body I was insecure about it was the scars that covered my body. The scars that I forgot where there.

He stepped closer, now inches apart. “Get in” he instructed “O-okay” I stuttered as his grey eyes bored into mine. A small smile tugged at the corner of his lips as he chuckled “that’s all it takes to shut you up huh? Close quarters” the lack of alcohol in my system began leaving me more and more aware. He grabbed my arms moving them away from my body as he took a minute to admire every inch of me.

He traced his fingertips from my neck kneeling he continued to softly touch me, on one knee he kissed the scar of my hip, then the scar on my inner thigh. Closing my eyes at the level of intimacy I bite my lip to suppress any moaning. He stood back up and moved my hair from my face using his finger he tilts my chin allowing access to my neck as he leans in planting a soft kiss on my biggest scar.

“Bellissima” he gently whispered, before looking at me.
“Don’t ever try and hide from me again”

“I’ll worship each and every scar of you leonessa ... Isabella”
He traced the long scar across my stomach before standing up right slowly.

With that said he let me go and walked out. Leaving me with a million feelings and my hyperventilating self, did he just ... woah. My skin on fire where his lips lingered, and it felt like the air just got knocked out of me. My scars for some reason looked a lot better on me now.

“What just happened.” I breathed out still looking at the door he just existed from.

THE HORSES

I woke up feeling happy this morning, I quickly got dressed and went to the kitchen to get something to eat. I skip in the

kitchen opening the fridge, the cooks staring at me like they just saw a ghost. “I won’t bite boys go back to work” they all quickly shuffled returning to whatever it was they were doing.

In walks the boys from last night looking horrible, “How do you not look like vomit?” Lorenzo nods along “You drank double us, how the fuck are you ... normal?”

Giggling I shrug my shoulders “You girls were playing Mama’s game. I have a high tolerance.” Lorenzo groans and shoves his head in his hands, he calls for a man named Stefano who I’ll assume is the butler. He hands him and the rest of the men aspirin while they all get a glass of water.

Fico sits on the chair to my left and rests his head on the tabletop, trying desperately to hide my laugh I rub his back “aw, you poor baby” I coo as he groans from his headache, Mira places everyone their breakfast “eat, food good. You drink crazy is not good for the stomach. Ah, pumpkin good girl she didn’t drink.”

Smirking at the boys “yeah boys be like pumpkin” Lorenzo opens his mouth to out me I quickly grab his pancakes and shove them in his mouth. “Eat, it’s good for the headache” I wave my hand pursing my lips as I resume my seat.

Maria comes down and joins us for breakfast, obviously taking a seat next to Lorenzo. She plays with his hair as he rests her head on his shoulder. I shake my head at them smiling, I’m happy for the two of them.

The sight of them makes me remember Vincenzo, I wonder where he is. “Men” the sound of Giovanni makes the boys straighten their postures “we have a shipment coming in tonight, it’s the new guns for the armoury. The feds are on our tail, so we need all of you in and out. Vincenzo and I will also be coming with you.”

“Lorenzo, eat I need you to head downstairs and run up numbers and check inventory in the armoury” I watch as he walks away, and I stare at Lorenzo “Can I help?” I ask with a

pleading look. He stares at me with wide eyes “absolutely not” He quickly shuts my idea down.

“Fine, I’m gonna do it any way but I’ll walk away leaving you to believe I won’t” I jump off the chair putting my dishes in the sink, I walk upstairs going towards Vincenzo’s Office doors.

I open the door and see him at his desk phone to his ear, it looked important judging from the way his entire body was tense. He didn’t even notice me in the room. Closing and locking the doors behind me I walk closer to him and lean on the desk, smiling I tilt my head, he shakes his head and indicates for me to leave.

(Sexual scene)

I shake my head no, I walk around the desk, so I’m standing right in front of him. I hold my hands and innocently eye him. I lick my lips as I get on my knees, Vincenzo’s eyes went wide as he cuts himself off, giggling I point at the phone reminding him he’s still on a call.

I spread his legs open as I inch closer, I trail my hands down his hard toned chest. Biting my lip, I slowly feel his hard-on through his pants, Vincenzo’s breathing became harsher and rougher as he tried to finish his meeting. “I expe- ahem expect the contracts to be ...” He grabs me by my throat pulling my up to him and eyes me warningly.

I bit my lips as I continue toying with him. The man over the phone calls his name making him loosen his grip on my throat as I return to what I was doing. I unbuckle his belt and slide his pants off.

I kiss his throbbing dick through his boxers, it twitches as I place small kisses on it. With the tip of my tongue, I lick it from top to bottom, causing Vincenzo to grip the side of his chair and his phone “Listen I-” he sucks in a breath not able to continue his sentence, I slide his boxers off and take him length in my mouth.

“Oh fuck” he leans his head back on the headrest as he groans out. “Oh no not you, I just remembered something I had to do.” He quickly mutters out, feeling victorious that I was finally in control for once and he was the one who was in a vulnerable position. I lick his head with the tip of my tongue as I trace the tip.

I started pumping him faster, taking in his entire length. My head bobs up and down as he struggles to form words. “Cazzo ... something- fuck ahem. Somethings come to my attention I’ll call you back.” He quickly hangs up the phone as he rests his head on the headrest and takes a fist full of my he keeps me still for a minute before offloading.

“Cazzo” he purrs. I look up at him wiping the excess off my mouth with one finger. “You looked stressed” I shrugged as he tried to regain his posture.

(end of sexual scene)

“I was in a meeting Isabella” I shrug and let my hair loose. “Made it more fun.” I smiled up at him. He rolls his eyes before grabbing my hand and planting me on his lap. “How about I take you out tonight?” I look at him confused “Don’t you have that shipment coming in tonight?”

“I forgot about- how did you know that?” he questions, “Your dad paid us a visit in the kitchen” he nods his head before a smile takes over his features, “How about now?” now it was my turn to be speechless, “I’m not ready! Look at me” I exclaim, he looks me dead in the eye as he whispers “I am” I shake my head trying to not let the smile overtake my features.

“Fine, but I need to wash up and change first” Vincenzo laughs before gesturing to himself “A wash up is desperately needed” I jump off his lap and quickly rush to get to my room. I go towards the bathroom, washing my face, I apply the bare minimum of makeup seeing as I have no time.

Adding some eyeliner to finish off the look, I walk towards my closet... I’m too indecisive “MARIA” I call out, the door slowly opens Maria peaks her head ever so slightly “You

called?” I look at her desperate “I need a cute basic outfit, you’re the fashion model pick me something simple, but that says im not trying to impress you but you should thank whoever you believe in I’m here with you and not someone else” I ramble on, Maria looks at me completely dumbfounded before shaking her head gesturing me to step aside.

“He finally taking you out?” she asks as she goes through the potential outfit choices. “I guess so, this may be like a first official date?” I answer her question, but my answer sounded more like a question than anything else. She hands me my outfit smiling “I’m amazing, now dress go have fun and I want to hear everything when you come back!”

I change into the white tank, the loose grey pants and white air forces. I quickly blow dry my hair before walking out. I go downstairs and see Vincenzo talking to Lorenzo. I approach them quietly before eyeing Lorenzo, “You look less like vomit” he turned his head towards me with that ‘this is all your fault stare’

“Chica shut it. Before I go all Latina on your ass” I purse my lip laughing “Latina? Your Italian” he continues staring at me with a blank expression. I squint my eyes “You don’t scare me pretty boy” He rolls his eyes before flicking his non-existent hair and walks off.

“I worry about him” I laugh out as I turn to look at Vincenzo who is already staring at me. “Bellissima” he whispers. Looking down I try my best to hide my face so he can’t see me blushing. “Come on” he grabs me by my hand as we walk towards his car. Like he was in a rush “why the hurry?” I asked curiously “because if we don’t leave now, I’m going to bend you over that couch” he harshly breaths out.

My eyes going wide with excitement “not a bad idea” I point out “Where are we going?” I question, “You’ll see” he smiles. “Oh come on just say it” he shakes his head as he drives out of the driveway, I stare at him as the puppy dog expression takes over my features, “Pleaseeee”

“No, don’t give me that look.” He shakes his head refusing to look at me. I huff before crossing my arms over my chest, “Fine” The rest of the car ride was silent if you didn’t count my random outburst as I tried to guess where we were going.

We finally got to the destination, I quickly jumped out of the car as I looked at the scenery in awe. He took me to a Horse ranch, clapping my hands I run back towards Vincenzo and hurry him along. “MOVE COME ON”

He laughs at my childish behaviour, the place was empty as we approached the barn with all the horses, Vincenzo walks straight towards the black one, he stroked its head as he leaned his own head on the horse. I tilted my head and as an aw left my lips.

“Isabella this is, Mercy. Mercy this is Isabella” I shake my head laughing at him, “Nice to meet you, Mercy.”

The old man who owns the ranch walks towards us, “Welcome back Mr King” He greets Vincenzo before he extends his hand out to me, “Isabella” I answer his unasked question shaking his hand. He nods “First time riding a horse?” he asks me. I shake my head no “My Grandpa use to take me and my sister all the time as kids.”

“Why’d you stop?” My smile becoming slightly smaller “I got shipped to America and my horse stayed back home”

“Oh I’m so-” I shake my head stopping him from apologising “Oh no don’t be it’s okay.” One of the horses neighed I turned my head to the noise seeing a gorgeous brown horse, I walk up to it and it was a little startled, “That’s a new horse dear, he scares easy I wouldn’t get to close” completely ignoring him, I still approached the horse.

I put my hand out and began stroking him, “It’s okay boy” The horse settled down under my touch, “She has a stubbornness issue.” Vincenzo informs the man. I turn to give him a look before he shrugs carelessly. “You ready to ride?” Vincenzo asks me, smirking back at him “maybe tonight” I respond to his question.

Looking at me confused, I continue staring at him waiting for it to dawn on him. His eyes widen at the sudden realisation as the old man bursts out laughing. I shake my head as the man comes and helps me get the horse in its saddle. We take the horses to the open field, stepping on the little ladder, I get on the horse.

I stroke his head a little, Vincenzo strides next to me on his horse. He eyes me before a genuine smile overtakes his lips. He lightly kicks its side causing the horse to traut. He sees me on his tail, causing him to go faster.

Now neck and neck we both start to slow down, “Come on I want to show you something”

“Where are we going?” I ask since I can no longer see the ranch in view, he shakes his head “can you not let anything be a surprise?” he questions. Looking his dead in the eye “Not with a man who runs a mafia, for all I know I can be riding to my death.” shaking his head “If I wanted you dead Isabella, believe me, I would have done it already” raising one eyebrow up “That’s ... reassuring” I sarcastically mutter out.

Looking straight ahead I hear what sounds like a stream, I look back at Vincenzo and see him smiling, I honestly don’t think I have ever seen him smile so much in the entire time I’ve known him. He stops the horse causing me to stop mine from going further, He hops off the horse and helps me off mine. “Almost there” he takes the lead walking closer to the sound of the water. We come into clear sight of the most beautiful river. He guides both the horses to the river so they can drink some water.

He comes back towards me pulling me closer to him, like he was scared I was going to run away, as we walk to the right, I see a small picnic laid out on the floor, my mouth drops as my eyes soften at the effort.

“You didn’t” I turned and looked at him. “It’s nothing major” he shrugged “You’re a little softie when you want to be” He rolls his eyes before guiding me to the blanket laid on the floor.

He started talking about how he first found this place on a ride, as he spoke, I couldn't help but think back to the first time I saw him, the first time I stared into his eyes. There was nothing but hate, darkness and evil, but now I see a small light deeply hidden behind.

"It's peaceful," he says in the softest tone, I look around us taking in the scenery. "In my world, it's easy to get caught up in the darkness. I like coming here, looking at the horses the flow of the stream, and allow myself to remember it's not all dark."

I tilt my head smiling at him as he finally starts opening. "I haven't been here in years ... I got caught up in work." he recovers as if he almost let something slip his tongue. "I just got caught up in being the King, in order to be the king, I needed to shut off a lot of things that resembled humanity. I needed to be feared to be taken seriously. So, the light was overtaken ... and now there's no going back" his face resumed his hard expression as he lost train of thought and started at the river in front of him.

I inch closer to him before connecting our lips, he wraps his arms around my waist pulling me in tighter. I break the kiss and rest my forehead on his.

X

It starts to get really dark as we lay on the blanket staring at the sky, this is the most cliché moment, but I didn't care, it was such a simple, thoughtful and beautiful day. Then I remembered Vincenzo had to go to the shipment. "Italy, don't you have the shipment coming in?" he shakes his head "It's too early, the feds expect the shipments to arrive at seven. That's why I pushed it back to ten."

He sat up opening the picnic box taking something out of it.

"The first day you entered my office, you reached for a book. I grew curious and so I read it. It was a novel that resembled Tangled."

He hands me a lantern, “so I figured what better way to end the night?” He lights both of our lanterns, as we each whisper something over it “if anyone is going to drive me to insanity let it be Vincenzo King” before letting it go.

THE THREAT

I wake up to a loud annoying knock on my door, I burry my head further into the pillow covering my ears. Trying to desperately fall back asleep, “GO AWAY!” the knocking stops, I lift my head to get a peek and see Lorenzo inches from my face.

“OH SHI-” I jump back a little, “Well hello to you too.” I pinch my temples, “why are you in my room?” I sit up rubbing my eyes, “just want you to wish me good luck.” I look at him with the most confused expression on my face waiting for him to elaborate. “Oh, yea we are off to the docks for the gun shipments” My mouth forming an O as I realise what he is talking about.

“You thought it was the next day, didn’t you?” a smirk overtaking his features as he raises an eyebrow at me. “No” I drift off. Not believing me he stays staring at me with the same expression, “Don’t make me punch that look off your face.” I threatened him, a hurt expression replaced his previously smug look, he dramatically placed his hand over his heart acting hurt.

“Oh, boo you whore” I quote the iconic Regina watching him look proud at my choice of words. “Listen chica, no need to be calling names. You’ll miss me if I was gone.” I brush my hands through my hair, “No. No, I don’t think so”

“I admit I’m a lot to handle ... but I’m a lot to lose too. So ... what are you doing write this down” he claps at me, grabbing my pillow I whack him over the head with it. “OUT” he rubs the side of his muttering curse words as he exits my room.

I sniffle a giggle at his childish behaviour, jumping out of my bed I open my door to get out before colliding into someone.

“Ow,” I look up and see an unfazed Italian. “Seriously Italy, what’s under they’re rocks?” shaking his head he throws me his signature smirk before extending his hand out. Taking it, he pulls me up, I dust myself off. “You, okay?” I nod my head “I’m fine thank you” I shake my head rolling my eyes at him before my annoyed expression is immediately replaced with a smile.

I clear my throat “are you leaving?” I ask he simply nods his head yes, “just wanted to say goodbye before I go.” I look at him with a concerned expression “why did you say it like that?” He lets out a sigh before tilting my chin up with his finger. “With our line of work, we have no idea if coming back is a reality, things can go wrong. So my dad used to say goodbye every time before leaving.” He caresses my cheeks with his index finger “just in case.”

I grab his hand as I lean into it “not to sound clingy or dependent. But promise me no matter what you’ll find a way to always come back to me.” He leans his forehead on mine before whispering “leonessa finché mi aspetterai, ti prometto che troverò un modo per tornare a casa” he gives me a kiss on the forehead and leaves. (as long as you’re waiting for me I promise ill always find a way to come back home)

I stand at the doorway for a few minutes before recapturing my breath and walk out, walking down the stairs I stop midway and see Lorenzo and Vincenzo saying bye to their parents and sister. I run down the stairs and go straight to the kitchen, “Pumpkin.” Mira acknowledges my presences. I smile at the cute nickname “hola, missed you today.” She lets out a giggle as she continues preparing the most mouth-watering food, the smell alone will make anyone go from normal to I haven’t eaten for a year starving.

“Hey, stranger” I look to my left and see Ariana and Maria entering the kitchen. I smile and hug Ariana and my sister. “How are you feeling?” she smiles and reassures me she is feeling brand new. “Now that I’m not drugged up and dying. You are quick with a gun” I shake my head “old habits, it sorta just came back to me seeing you like that.”

“I haven’t seen you be Dragon since we left home” Maria states before popping a cherry in her mouth. “I’d be lying if I said I didn’t miss it a little.” Ariana looks at me with wide eyes “you should totally get back into it. Vincenzo could use a badass like you”

I raise an eyebrow as I part my mouth slightly “I think your brother has the whole psychotic; scary, intimidating thing covered.” She shrugs her shoulder “every King needs a Queen.” I shook my head trying to change the subject. “What? What is it?” Ariana questions seeing my frown. I look up at her hesitantly shaking my head “I was in a dark mindset for so long, I did a lot and was numb to everything I’m scared if I go back, I won’t know how to come back”

Maria nods her head knowingly, being there to experience a few unfortunate moments from my past. “You’re scared you’ll go numb again?” Maria questions. I nod my head “What happened to you?” Ariana whispered softly.

“A story for another time” Maria announced seeing me still deep in thought. Truth be told I’m not fully ready to speak about anything yet even Maria doesn’t know everything.

“Mira, what’s cooking?” Maria asks gracefully changing the subject. We spent the next 20 minutes talking about food, and I kept getting hungrier and hungrier. “Ok enough talk, my stomach is starting to eat itself out.”

Hours go past and we are all seated in the living room waiting for the men to get back. Giovanni paces back and forth worry clear on his face, the door opens revealing Vincenzo, Lorenzo, and their men.

After seeing him I let out a breath I didn’t realise I was holding in. Their mum and sister rush to her them analysing them for wounds. Once she is satisfied, they are okay. Maria rushes to Lorenzo and jumps in his arms. Vincenzo’s eyes lock with mine as he gives me a reassuring smile, he mouths ‘promise’.

Shaking my head smiling like an idiot, he turns around to the rest of his men giving orders about the shipment they received. My attention was shifted as I heard a scared man call out for help, I look around the room before the same man locks eyes with mine sending a chill down my spine. He wasn't a man he was a boy he looked to be in his early twenties.

He stares at me shocked pleading for my help before getting my attention "Dragón, soy Alex" my eyes widen as I finally recognise him. One of Xavier's men.

I look back at Vincenzo as does everyone else, "we caught him spying on us at the docks." Vincenzo looks at me "Do you know him?" he asks, all I do is nod, before I run and follow where he went. "Isabella!" Vincenzo calls out but I was already gone.

I followed them all the way down to the basement, Vincenzo's men stare at me not knowing what to do, not caring I move them aside and walk up to the boy tied to the chair. "Alex?" I asked, he looked up at me answering my question without speaking. Oh my god it's him.

He looked up at me tears threatening to fall from his eyes. My heart ached for him. Alexandro was my favourite among Xavier's men, he was the youngest and sweetest kid when I left he was one of the two who helped me when I was kept captive and stood by me when I went through my dark phase.

"What happened?" I asked him softly bending down to his level. He looked at me his eyes telling a thousand stories, their blood shot red, and streaks of tears started falling from them as he finally answered my question. His voice full of pain he cried "You left" his voice cracked before he fell silent.

My mouth opened to say something, but nothing came out, "Isabella get out" I didn't move, I couldn't it was as though my feet were glued permanently to the floors. I couldn't do anything but stare at Alex, guilt began to overtake all my emotions. Feeling like it was my fault he ended up like this.

“Isabella” Vincenzo grabbed me by my wrist as he pulled me out of my trance, he narrowed his eyes his stare was harsh “Out,” he demanded, I pulled my wrist out of his grasp not moving an inch.

“boss” his men called on him waiting for instructions to drag me out. I shook my head, and we continued our stare off. He knew nothing was going to get me out of this basement and whoever tried was going to get hurt.

He ushered the men out of the room before turning back to look at me “not a word” he warned me. Before I could say anything, he walked off towards Alex. My heart dropped seeing the scared expression on Alex’s face, my mind immediately flashed back to when he was 13 I couldn’t let Vincenzo hurt him, screw it.

Getting lost in my thoughts the sharp scream of Alex made my head snap towards him, Vincenzo had cut Alex’s chest with a blade. “Isabella please” Alex begged as tears streamed from his eyes. Vincenzo questioned him when he didn’t answer him instead, he called for me again, Vincenzo went to scar another part of his body with the blade. “STOP!” I screamed desperate to get Vincenzo’s attention.

I rushed in front of Alex shielding him from Vincenzo, “Get. Out. Of. The. Way.” I shook my head “No” Vincenzo’s eyes grew darker by the second as a wicked like smile overtook his face. Sending chills down my spine, I swallowed down my fear and stood up straight. I never seen a smile like his one that can make your entire body shiver it was a warning and you knew exactly what was about to happen when you saw it.

“Move” I shook my head again, but this time Vincenzo flung me to the side, landing on my side I winced at the pain that shot through me. Vincenzo came to aid me feeling guilty, “Vincenzo, I will kill you and everyone here if you so much as scare him one more time” I warned him. He looked at me laughing “You?” He mocked.

I narrowed my eyes “me” I confirmed. “I wonder what will get you killed first Leonessa, your stubbornness or your loyalty”

He point out waving his knife around. I stood on my feet smirking “I guess we’ll going to find out”

Ignoring me he lowered his face to Alex, as he stared him down. He dragged the blade slowly down the middle of his chest stopping just above the belly button. Alex’s pricing scream sent a chilling feeling down my spine. I pushed Vincenzo away, using all my body strength to do so. “ENOUGH” I yelled. “GET OUT OF THE WAY ISABELLA”

I grabbed one of the many knives he had laying on the table of torture and pointed it at him. “I’m not moving” I warned him. Maybe it’s time I go back to my ways ... maybe I should let Dragon peak out a little. “You’re going to leave him alone. Listen to me and shut the fuck up” I demanded. He looked at me with pure amusement as he cocked his head back and laughed “I don’t know what the fuck you think this is, but I’m the don. I’m the one in charge, you my dear are only alive because I want you alive”

He slowly approached me before grabbing me by my throat and pulled me up a little, “Do not think for a minute I won’t kill you”

I replicated the same manner as I whispered “Do it” I test him like I first tested him at the strip club. His stare only intensifies as he narrowed his stare intensifying his anger. He slams my head against the wall never loosening his grip around my neck and never losing eye contact.

“Now where’s the fun in that leonessa” He whispers. I smirk “You’re right where’s the fun” I headbutt him catching my breath as he stumbles back his nose bleeding. “Come on boss, show me what you got” I teased him.

As long as I could control myself it was okay if the demons pocked their heads every now and then. He grabs the knife in his hand throwing it at my head, his frustration and anger clouding his focus. I catch ahold of the knife the blade piercing my palm the blood flowed its way down my arm as droplets fell to the floor. He looked at my palm shocked and

for the first time he looked at me like his equal an emotion I never thought Vincenzo was capable of ... fear.

Smirking I throw the knife up catching it mid-air so now the bloody blade was facing Vincenzo. I threw both knives towards his head the knife pierced the wall directly behind him both mere inches from his face.

“I’m not alive because you want me alive” I whispered. “I’m alive because I chose to be. You and your men are alive because I chose to quieten my demons” He looked at me shocked his breathing growing heavier. “Though quiet, they are never silenced. Calm as they may be they wait patiently, for a reason to wake, take an overdue breath and crawl back to my ear. You and your men will only be alive because I chose not to kill you all.”

He looked at me knowing from what he saw I was capable of a lot of things he originally overlooked.

He flips the table to his left as he calls for his men to come back down. He orders them to stay here with Alex and grabs me by the back of my neck dragging me out.

We pass his men in the living room along with his parents and Ariana. “Vincenzo what are you-” Ariana tries to quickly rush out, but Vincenzo completely ignores her.

Going upstairs we enter his office; he throws me inside as he slams the doors shut locking them. “WHAT THE FUCK IS WRONG WITH YOU” he roars. “The big boss losing his temper?” I mock watching him, yell and break things that were in his way. “V.K the most feared man in New York the man that has everyone on their knees. Losing his temper? You may be losing your touch Mafia” I licked the roof of my mouth sitting on his desk.

he rushes towards me again we are now face to face and Vincenzo had steam practically coming out of his ears. He put the palm of his hands on the edge of the desk blocking me in. “Isabella, you are not the only person in this room who can be intimidating my leonessa. Do not play this game with me” He

warns me his voice low and deep. His Italian accent once again grew stronger the angrier he got.

“Maybe your just mad because you finally found someone who knows how to play this game” I narrowed my eyes to his, he knew I was right, and I knew it to. Vincenzo is the most feared man in the world not just in New York he was not use to anyone standing in his way or threatening him, until me.

“You stopped an interrogation, you undermined me in front of a hostage, you completely disregard me as head of this mafia, you made me appear weak in front of him and my men who were out the door. Do you understand what you did? You made me seem weak the reputation I’ve built will be gone my city, my mafia my kingdom ... gone. I will kill before I allow that to happen even if that means you, so I will ask you one more time and do not make me repeat myself. What was that?” I go to speak but bite back not wanting to indulge more about my past than I already did in his office the other day with his mum here. I didn’t say anything I stood there frozen as I stared at Vincenzo, my silence irritating him he pushed himself off me before screaming in frustration and punching the mirror shattering it.

I looked at his hand blood was running, I sighed and grabbed the first aid from his second draw, I grabbed his hand and dragged him back towards me. He tried to get his hand out of my grip, but I tightened my hold and looked at him with pure concern mixed with pure annoyance. His features slightly softening he gave in and let me clean his wound.

“His name is Alexandro” I began explaining the reason behind what I did. “When I was locked up by Xavier in that dark cell, he would come and give me water and food. He never showed his face, but would always say my name ‘Isabella Knight’ I never knew why though”

“Looking back at it I think he wanted to humanise me, he wanted me to remember who I am” He winced slightly as I wiped the blood with the alcohol wipes and cleaned his cuts, “Xavier... he did a lot to me in that cell, mentally and

physically. I told you before humans need company. I was starved and mentally insane I needed contact I needed human interactions, and I was desperate to escape the torture” I swallowed a lump in my throat trying not to let my past affect me now.

“He let me out of the cell once he knew I was broken. His condition was that I work for him, I make his laughable gang the biggest threat in Spain. So, I took it and that’s what I did.”

His face remained expressionless as he stared into space, “how are you-” cutting him off I knew where he was going with that question. “It took me a long time to recover, and I’m still not fully there yet I still have nightmares, flashbacks and I’m still terrified of thunder. It would echo in the cell I was alone naked cold and terrified ... I was only 17” I cleared my throat and refocused my attention on his hand while I continued.

“I started to get more involved in the criminal scene I was the boss of that gang without the title, but I was the most feared assassin since most of my missions involved killing someone and that’s when ‘dragon’ was invented. I was feared, I was powerful, I was completely numb. The killing, the torture everything I did I didn’t care. He broke me ... I was in a daze I wanted to keep busy to make me forget everything, my parent’s murder, the cell, and the emptiness I felt then-”

He cut me off finishing my sentence for me piecing the puzzle together “Alex” I nod my head smiling softly “Alex approached me he was so young only thirteen years old ... he looked at me and said, ‘Isabella knight’, his voice unlocked something I tried desperately to bury. The sound of his voice made me remember who I am. He refused to call me anything but Isabella Knight always using my full name. If I forgot who I was he made sure to never forget or let me fully kill her off”

Wrapping his hand up in a bandage I let out a slight sigh “for the next few years, I took care of Alex. Not letting anyone in the gang touch him, scaring bullies away taking him under my wing like my baby brother. I loved that boy he was my only link to any emotion even though I hide it everyone knew Alex

was off limits. Then Xavier and I had a fight, nothing out of the ordinary. He threatened to kill Alex, because he saw how fond of him, I was. He was very possessive, I never showed him any emotion and the fact that I showed Alex he was jealous.” pausing for a second I look at Vincenzo and whisper “Long story short when I left ... when I ran” I corrected myself locking eyes with him. “I left Alex behind, and god only knows what Xavier did to him.”

Packing the first aid kit away I turned around putting it in the draw, “You want to know why I won’t let you touch him? Because he saved me, he never gave up on me and I won’t let anyone touch him. I won’t leave him ... not again.”

“Leonessa ...” He drifts off as he grabs my wrist and turns me around so that I’m facing him, immediately Vincenzo pulled me into his chest as he held me. “Why don’t we use him to our advantage, if he can and wants to we can let him go back and be our spy. Well, send him with one of your men saying he helped him get out before your men got a hold of him. That way he will have a King’s men as protection and be able to give us information about Xavier”

THE CEO

Slowly opening my eyes to the blinding light of the sun, I wince as I shut my eyes again. Getting out of bed I walk towards my bathroom and brush my teeth.

After hearing me out Vincenzo realised just how beneficial my idea was, even if he didn’t want to admit it, I knew he knew I was right. Alex was safe and I didn’t care about anything else, it was practically free and reliable information on someone we both desperately want gone.

Vincenzo set the rules for Alex to which he happily agreed, Xavier is not the best leader he has no idea how to organise or have the courage to lead properly. He shows no loyalty to his people, so it isn’t surprising when they finally wake up and

turn against him. His idea of leadership is very old fashioned and never lasts long.

After he agreed Vincenzo finally sent Alex back with one of his favoured men Fico and I think he just wanted to get Fico away from me, after the pool incident. Fico was one of the best in combat so I know Alex will be in good hands. Everyone went off doing whatever it was they were doing and Ariana, Maria, and me went for a well overdue to shopping spree.

Then came home and crashed straight on my bed, my god Ariana can shop. By the time we got home mine and Maria's feet were threatening to snap off. I am the most exhausted I have been in a while but on the bright side we got a lot of clothes and even better we got it all with Vincenzo's money.

Rinsing my mouth out, I look back up at myself in the mirror brushing my hair and applying minimal amount of makeup. I was feeling more and more like my old self every day and honestly, I'm not sure if that excited me or scared me. What happened with Vincenzo yesterday gave me a familiar tase that I craved, the power the freedom to let my fire burn as bright as I wanted without fearing id lose control like I did in Spain.

I put on my white singlet mini dress with white Nike air forces. Staring at the mirror for a hot minute I decided to straighten my hair quickly changing my mind adding red lip stick.

I walk towards Vincenzo's office to ask if I can use his men to find some stuff out Hacker's skills would be perfect right now to figure out a few things about Xavier. I go to open his door before his men alert me his not here. "Where is he then?"

"At the office" I looked at them dumbfounded them realising my puzzled expression "Corporate office, he owns his own line of technology, phones, computers even has his own model cars." No wonder they get away with pretty much everything, they can money launder their profits through the amount, of businesses he owns.

If he is smart, he could advertise the products to the criminal rank. Simply apply falsehood, this phone has high technology blocking tracking from government officials and crazy exes to make it sound like a joke to the public but as all criminals are aware of Vincenzo King, they'll believe it.

"I just need to talk to hacker where is he?" Both men shook their heads "even if you go to hacker now without direct orders from boss, he won't help you" I roll my eyes, before. a specific sarcastic man strolled passed me. "Lorenzo wait where you off to?" following him downstairs. "I need to oversee a deal going down, why?"

"I need a ride to Vincenzo's office business place" Not knowing what to call it "Nope" Gasping I slapped him on the arm "Why not" he slapped me back "First of all OW, and second of all no one has ever been allowed inside if you think his anal about his at home office you haven't seen the half of it" Slightly judging Vincenzo right now I looked back up at Lorenzo "You're telling me your brother has another level?" all he does is nod his head slowly and exhausted. I laughed at his expression poor thing.

"It's fine I'm going I need to talk to him as soon as possible." He gestured for me to walk in front of him as he held the door open for me, making our way down the stairs into his black Range Rover "What's so important you can't wait until his back?" I buckled my seatbelt as I fixed my hair, "killing Xavier"

"Oh so normal stuff" he sarcastically replied, nodding my head "pretty much" I casually responded. The car ride grew silent as I lost myself in train of thought, "Oh a warning, Roxy works as Vincenzo's secretary" my head automatically snapped towards Lorenzo "she what?" I spat grinding my teeth, "Isn't that bitch a stripper?" He nods his head looking slightly terrified "well she turned out to have a lot of qualifications in the corporate world, besides she was good at other aspects if you know what I mean" he winked at me.

But immediately sucked in a breath when he realised what he just said, “Like what?” I spat knowing full well the answer, “Can you stop staring at me like that ... it’s creepy” Huffing I sat back in my seat as I crossed my arms over my chest. “Chica, trust me no one knows Vincenzo as well as me. He can’t stand the bitch; she was just convent for a few minutes then became completely useless again. Not that she cared.” He pauses to look over at me upon seeing me not amused he continues hesitantly.

“What I’m saying is the second he saw you at the airport he automatically grew fascinated by you, then when your ass stormed in the private dance room, your dominance and ability to get in his face with no fear was something no one will forget. He never looks at anyone the way he looks at you and that’s special.”

“whatever” I mutter as I take in what he just said, I mean Vincenzo is so to himself hearing what Lorenzo just said felt like such a wakeup call. a giddy smile crept its way on my face. “There we go” Lorenzo cheers seeing me smile. “You know you are a pain in my ass, but I don’t think id survive without it” Looking at him he stares at the road with a serious expression “You good?” he hums in response “just trying to decipher if that was a compliment or an insult” Shaking my head laughing I continue to stare out the window until we arrived.

x

Lorenzo parked me right outside his building before wishing me luck and leaving. I looked up at the building, it was so high up it gave the illusion of it touching the clouds. Mastering up the courage to walk in.

I opened the door and walked inside, seeing all the workers buzzing like working bees. They were all so polished, girls in midi length black pencil skirts and tucked in black silk button ups. I stated to fiddle with my fingers, as I felt so out of place.

“Excuse me Ms can I help you today?” One of the female workers asked, clearing my throat I nodded “I need to see Mr

King” she looks taken back before telling me to go to the highest floor and ask his secretary to inform him of my presence and see if he allows me inside.

Even his employee knew how anal he is about his office; I go inside the elevator and press the 60th floor. How high is this building, after what felt like an hour the elevator dings open, stepping out I take a second to analysis the floor. Polished white with a black desk at the end of the floor, and black furniture surrounding the middle of the floor.

Along with red roses, this place screams money. I walk towards the desk seeing Roxy and another lady at their computers, trying to desperately not vomit at the sight of Roxy I approach the other lady and offer a friendly smile to which she returns. “Welcome to King’s INK. How can I help you?”

“I’m here to see Vincenzo King, if you just let him know Isabella is here, please” she smiles nodding as she goes to pick up the phone to buzz Vincenzo, but before she grabs the phone Roxy slams her hand back down hanging up the phone. “Afraid not sweetie, Mr King is busy in a meeting and does not allow anyone in his office.” Closing my eyes trying to remind myself to count to ten, “I need to see Vincenzo now, and so help me if you try to start something ... I will kill you”

She looks taken back by my threat before shaking it off and regaining composure “You are not important nor significant enough to be allowed inside, do yourself a favour and show yourself out before I do” Rolling my eye’s I look back at the other lady who seems taken back by both of us and smile “please call him”

she nods her head slightly intimidated by my tone of voice before Roxy again slams her phone shut. “So, help me god if you do that one more time. I will pull your body over this desk and beat you until every bone in your body is broken, every inch of you is covered in blood or bruises.”

She quickly removed her hand off from the lady’s phone, turning my head to the left slightly I smile at the lady and indicate for her to call him. “Fucking slut, If I don’t kill you

my names not Roxy” Roxy yells, before I could react. A loud roar came from Vincenzo’s office as he screamed Roxy’s name. The lady had to move the phone from her ear, oh no. I’m guessing he heard her little comment on the phone, she shut’s the phone as she tells me he is waiting for me inside and he wants a word with Roxy after I leave.

Smirking I wink at Roxy “you’re fucked”

Leaving I go to his office making sure to close the doors behind me before I walk around his desk and hop on the edge of his desk crossing my legs. His eyes immediately dart to my legs as I start tracing the side of my thigh, he quickly regains composure, coughing he shakes his head and leans back in his chair.

“I wasn’t expecting to see you here” He states, leaning back slowly I look at him tilting my head “I never knew you ran a company on the side, but I’m here to ask a small favour” He leans forward waiting for me to state what I needed from him.

“I was wondering if I could use hacker to find out some dirt for me.” He nods his head “like what?” I straighten my back getting somewhat serious “I haven’t exactly been active on Xavier’s tail since I left Spain. I just want to be updated on everything I missed. His contacts, number of men, who he talks too, where his been and gone and some of his drug deals.”

He nods his head “Okay, but I want to know everything as soon as hacker finds out.” Clapping I jump off his desk and sit on his lap “Thank you thank you.” Kissing his cheek, he looks at me like a fuse just popped in my head, laughing I roll my eyes “I be nice and you look at me like I lost my mind, I threaten and throw knives at your head and still you’re mad. Is there any winning with you?” He lets out a chuckle before calling hacker telling him I’m going to see him in a hour.

Fiddling with my fingers for a second I cross my arms over my chest “I see Roxy is working here too. Even though that puta is only qualified at sucking dick.” Letting my bitterness

overtake me, Vincenzo stands up putting both his hands on the desk trapping me. “Are you jealous Leonessa?”

Shaking my head “No, but does she have to be everywhere you are. She’s like a puppy” I roll my eyes seeing his pure amusement “Leonessa she works under me” Scoffing “Yeah I bet.”

He puts his hand on my lower back and the other on the back of my neck as he pulls me closer to him “She was merely a one-off fuck, she’s nothing. You being jealous of her is like you comparing gold to a piece of wood. It makes no sense”

Rolling my eyes, I look at him and go to lean in for a kiss but stop mid-way “You’re cute when you want to be Italy” grateful our fight didn’t completely ruin anything. Getting up I straighten and dust my shorts and give him a quick peck on the cheek, “I’ll see you at home?” he hums in response. “Let me take you down” I shake my head “No it’s okay you look busy” I say looking at the paperwork scattered on his desk.

Ignoring me he puts his hand on my lower back guiding me out, I go to walk to the elevator before he grabs my hand and guides me to the other side. “You have a personal elevator?” Why am I not surprised. Shaking my head, I step inside as he presses the ground floor.

Letting out a laugh I look at Vincenzo with a puzzled expression of my face “what?” I ask checking my appearance, “You’re hot when you’re jealous” rolling my eyes “I’m not jealous” I bite back. He inches closer to me pinning me against the door of the elevator, my breathing picking up as my legs start to turn to jelly. “What are you-” I barely breath out. If these doors open and people, see us.

“Admit you were jealous” Shaking my head “I wasn’t” smirking he pulls my dress up and spins me around now my ass is firmly planted on his growing erection I arch my back pushing my ass further into him. I feel his hand on my hips. “that’s not what it looked like Leonessa.” He purred in my ear

(SMUT WARNING)

I don't answer him, so he slips in two fingers and viscously pumps in and out my mouth hangs open as I as I begin to grind into his fingers "fuck". Grabbing my throat, he pulls me further into him as I arch my back and lean my head on his shoulder in pure bliss. "Don't fucking stop" In complete satisfaction I grab his hand from my pussy and suck the juices off his finger, "fucking hell Leonessa" he moans. Using the tip of my tongue his two finger up and down before sucking them again for a few seconds.

"Hmm tell me how bad you want my soft lips around your cock baby." I purr wiping the corner of my mouth, as I bite my bottom lip looking at him with pure innocence. I rub his throbbing dick through his pants suit inching closer to him my breasts now firmly blanked on his as I look at his lips then back up at him waiting for him to answer my question.

"Do you really ... need me to answer that" he breaths out, I bite my lip and nod my head slowly. "Wrap those pretty lips around my cock so I can fuck that pretty little mouth of yours." If I wasn't turned on before I one thousand percent was now, I unbuckle his belt and pull his cock out of his boxers.

Spitting on his cock I take his length in my hand wrapping my fingers around his growing erection. I start pumping him while licking the front of his length, he leans his head against the elevator door.

I put his entire cock in my mouth, as I'm sucking him off I can feel his tip hit against the back of my throat.

I look up at him making sure he knew exactly who was making him go crazy "Fucking hell" he curses rolling his eyes back.

He grabs my boobs pulling them out from my dress squeezing it, while he thrusts his cock in my mouth. He cups my breasts giving my hard nipples a tight squeeze before he slaps them, I take his dick out of my mouth to catch my breath placing it in

between my breasts, He starts to pump my breasts faster and faster.

“Fuck ... do you like how your dick feels between my tits boss?” He pumps faster, feeling like his nearing his climax, I kiss the tip of his dick as It reaches my lips and take a hold of it again pulling away he groans at the lack of friction, he pulls me up by my hair and spins me around.

My chest completely against the cold metal pushing my ass out trying to feel him against me. His tip firmly pressed against my wet pussy I moan out an all too familiar feeling settling in the bottom of my stomach waiting for him to claim me. He teases me slapping his cock against my dripping wet pussy “tell me what you want leonessa” he whispers as he uses his free hand to squeeze my left breasts as he sucks on my neck. “I want to feel every inch of you throbbing cock inside me” I whimper

He rubs his cock on my throbbing pussy, “fucking tease” I curse out. With one swift motion his entire length enters me, I let out a gasp my eyes rolling to the back of my head. He starts to pick up the pace, my tits bouncing with every thrust “Oh fuck, just like that. Fuck, fuck fuck. That feels so ohhhhh” I moan out pushing myself against him needed more.

He grabs both my tits as he goes faster, I extend my arms back grabbing ahold of his arm. My tight pussy wrapped tightly around his throbbing cock, he roughly pumps in me and holds my ass in place, “Jódeme Muerto ... fuck” (Ffuck me dead) my voice getting a little high pitched as I cursed. I grind myself further into him swaying my hips I arch my back as I lean the back of my head in the crook of his neck. Grabbing the back of his neck as I thrust in and out. He rubs my pussy both of us finishing in sync.

Pumping in and out so fast I couldn't breathe, “Holy fuck”

(End of sexual scene)

We quickly hurried to get dressed again, buttoning his shirt back up and zipping his pants, I straighten my dress putting my tits back in place quickly checking myself in the reflection fixing my hair and making sure everything is in place.

My legs felt like jelly, they were about to give out at any second. My breathing was still harsh and so was Vincenzo's we both smirk at one another before he presses the stop button again the elevator dings as it resumes its journey to the garage.

The doors ding open after a few minutes and we both step out, "if that's how it's going to be every time you visit me at work ... then by all means come every day" Giggling I give him a quick peck on the lips before leaving to get in the car.

His driver takes me back to the estate I get out of the car and race inside, I need a quick shower then I'll make my way to Hacker, I rush to my room and strip my dress and very wet underwear off. I stepped in the shower as I felt the hot water land my skin, I stayed there for a moment letting my body melt away with the hot water.

x

Stepping out I blow-dry my hair and quickly change; I grab a pair of grey sweats and a white tank my black lace bra slightly showing through. Putting my hair in a high ponytail I make my way outside and walk to the men's house on the estate. Only a few of Vincenzo's strongest and most reliable men stay with him and his family in the house the rest have a house next to ours on the estate. It was a five-minute walk, I'll never get use to how massive his land is ... never.

Hacker is Vincenzo's most trusted and valuable men, but he stays at this house because he needs a different room full of computers, security cameras and well his own tech lab I like to call it. I opened the door to the house and all the men inside went dead silent and froze like a statue. Okay?

I eye them curiously as I walk inside, they look petrified of me "You boys, okay?" I asked before a voice behind me spoke up "Your Vincenzo's girl" I turned around and looked at him how

did ... man word travels fast around here. "So?" I asked completely not understanding the situation. "If we so much as get within a few inches of your Boss will have our dicks ripped off" I looked at them with a pained expression.

"Okay ... It doesn't mean I can't talk to anyone with a dick." No one uttered a word, rolling my eyes I look at them "look I just need to see hacker, can someone point me in his direction please."

"I'm here" I looked at the bright blue hair "how did I miss you?" I asked, laughing he shakes his head and ushers me to come "don't mind these idiots, their all idiots" laughing I walk inside and am taken back by all the computers, laptops, highly advanced technology. "Wow this is overwhelming" I mutter, he looks back at me and laughs "you get use to it ... what can I do for you?" I shake my head as I look back at him and smile "I need a small favour, after I left Spain I lost all ties with Xavier, I need to know his contacts, who he formed alias's with, where he goes and comes what is he hiding. The works." I briefly explained.

He slowly nods his head "too easy I'll get you what you want in a few hours" I looked at him taken back "You're that good?"

"Oh, baby I'm that good" Laughing I jokingly hit him on the shoulder "thank you, I owe you one"

"Don't mention it, it's nothing." Smiling I go to leave the room before he calls my name out, I spin on my heel and look at him "Thank you" I furrow my eyebrows confused "No one has ever been able to make Vincenzo feel so powerful yet so vulnerable, you made him remember there was more to him than just the mafia don. For that ... thank you." Not knowing what to say I smile at him and make my exit.

Everyone keeps telling me how much I've impacted Vincenzo and how he changed when I came into his life, but nothing feels different, or maybe I'm just not seeing it. He has his moments I shrugged. I smile remembering the first night we did it, how he got so jealous. Then when he took me to the

horse ranch, he was so gentle and caring ... maybe he has changed but I was too oblivious to see it right away... or maybe I'm just too scared to acknowledge it if I give it attention it might go away.

I re-enter the house and am greeted by Maria "There you are!" she embraces me in a tight hug and rushes me to the kitchen "you're getting skinner than me and it's pissing me off eat" Letting out a laugh I look at her with teasing eyes "you are starting to sound more and more like Lorenzo everyday" She rolls her eyes and smiles before pushing my plate in front of me.

"I didn't realise how hungry I was" The smell of the creamy pasta made my stomach growl, come to mama. I twit my fork in the pasta and go to eat it before it gets slapped out of my hand "WHAT THE FUCK" I yell looking at the creamy deliciousness that's now on the floor, turning back to my right I death stare Lorenzo.

"WHY! WHYYYYYY?" I yell as I grab his shirt shaking him. "YOU CAN EAT AFTER YOU FINISH THE CALL" I look at him confused "what call?" He grabs his phone from his pocket and hands it over "You just slapped food from a hungry Spanish woman ... do you understand the danger you put yourself in"

"Oh, come on ... when you finish you can eat" continuing to death stare him he starts to avoid eye contact looking around the kitchen. Before finally caving and giving me puppy dog eyes "pleaseeeeeee" rolling my eyes I snatch the phone from his hand and put it to my ear. "You love me" rolling my eyes again "I hate that I love you ... puta"

I spoke to the man from Spain on the phone about what drugs the kings wanted how much and negotiated the pay, "Si, gracias" I hung up the phone and threw it in Lorenzo's face before and attack my food. "OW YOU BITCH" he curses rubbing his temple.

"SUCK MY DICK" I shout back eating my food, "SUCK MY VAGINA" Lorenzo retorts, Maria and I look at him before she

starts laughing “you too are idiots” Lorenzo looked back at Maria and put his hand over his chest “bitch” he summered hurt. We both slapped him on the back of his head.

“You two are fucking mean” we both high-fived laughing and went back to eating our food. We sat and spoke for what felt like hours, I updated her on Vincenzo and me and she did the same with her and Lorenzo.

“Can’t believe we share a face and now we are dating brothers” I shrug my shoulders, she looks at me as realisation comes on her face “wait oh my god” shaking my head laughing I get up to put the dishes in the sink, before saying thanks to the cooks.

“Hi pumpkin” Mira speaks up “Hi pumpkin pie” I replied looking up thinking about the nickname that flowed out my mouth. “Yeah, that works” I say laughing. She giggles and give me and Maria a tight hug “Do you mind taking this plate up to Vincenzo. He won’t eat” She asks me with hopeful eyes.

I look at her confused “when did he get back” I asked oblivious she informs me his been back for an hour but went straight up to his office with his phone glued to his ear. I make my way up the stairs with his plate in hand, I look at the men guarding his door “Boss doesn’t want to see anyone.”

I roll my eyes “Move it before I make you both move it” they laugh as they exchange looks, I stand there rolling my eyes, impatiently resting my finger against the side of my head waiting for them to realise and just move.

With the plate of food still in my hands I inched closer towards them and grabbed one of the guys guns from his pants.

Pointing it at his head “you want to move now kitten?” I teased smiling, both eyed me warningly and stepped aside, I tossed his gun back at him and went inside. Proud of myself.

“Italy time to eat” I speak up he looks up from his desk and ushers me to come closer and close the doors. “I swear I told those idiots outside to not let anyone in” Rolling my eyes I place his plate of food on the desk in front of him, “to be fair

they did try.” I shrugged defending them. He looked at me with one eyebrow raised “I don’t even wanna know” he quickly spoke up shaking his head. Giggling I go to leave him before Fico and Alex come bursting through the door.

“We have massive news” Vincenzo stands up from his desk waiting for them to drop the bomb. My eyes go wide looking at them waiting for them to continue. “When we got back, he didn’t suspect a thing, the whole day was normal. He was training a few newbies then that morning at 5am he wakes up and sneaks out of the house.”

“We followed him, and he goes into some old, abandoned factory. We followed him inside we didn’t see anything, but we heard a voice”

“Whose voice” I ask losing patience with this long story.

Hacker bursts inside the office “You’re never gonna guess what I found out” he quickly rushes out looking at the four of us in the office.

THE ABANDONED

I stood there waiting for someone to say something, but they just stood there looking at each other. “SPIT IT OUT” I yelled making them to flinch, “his hiding someone in an abandoned factory” hacker quickly blurted out. Growing frustrated “we know that already we need to find out who” I state.

Vincenzo remaining calm sits back in his chair eating his food, I look back at him in shock. I knew Vincenzo always remained calm, giving him the upper hand in many situations but I was dumbfounded at just how calm he was right now. I looked back at Hacker “did you find out who?” I asked him, he started scratching his arm looking down “No”

“But I can, I just need a bit of time.” He quickly rushes out, Vincenzo looked up and gave Hacker the ok to take his time and dismissed everyone from the office. I turned on my heel and looked at him like he just lost his mind “how are you so calm?” this is the biggest news we got on Xavier maybe

whoever he is hiding out there is important to him, maybe the person can be used as leverage.

“What’s the point of getting agitated, he needs time. Hacker is the most skilled in his field don’t worry.” He calmly assures me going back to his food. Staring at him I quickly rush to him putting my hand over his forehead “what are you doing” he asked annoyed swatting my hand away “checking for a fever” I sat worried.

“I don’t like you like this.” I state, he was acting like nothing happened and I have no idea if that made him more intimidating that he was so calm or just annoying? I shake my head and go to leave the room. I need to know what’s happening, I rush outside trying to catch up to Alex and Fico, but I missed them, “fuck” I looked around and saw Hacker walking back to his place.

I ran after him calling out his name so he can stop, after hearing me he looked back and waited for me to catch up. “what’s up?” I looked at the file in his hands “I need to see that” I went to grab the file before he quickly snatches it out of reach.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea, you don’t want to do anything you’ll regret” he quickly warned me. Huffing I look at him annoyed “I don’t regret anything, give it” I retorted reaching for the files.

He stood there the files still in the air as he eyes me septicly “don’t make me take it from you” I warned him lowly, feeling defeated he hands it to me. I skim through the paperwork and read over his contacts, whereabouts, his hideout and finally my eyes skim over the address of the abandoned factory. ‘19 Dudley St, Yonkers, NY 10701’

Trying to remain discreet and normal as possible I hand the file back disappointed “How exactly are you going to find out who he has inside?” He takes the file from my hand and offers me a reassuring smile “ill hack surveillance cameras in the area along with street cameras we need to know exactly who

and what he has inside, how protected it is and eventually whoever he has inside he is going to have to take him out”

“We need to know exactly what we are dealing with before going in with a hot head” he looked me up and down after he stated his comment. Huffing slightly annoyed “all that’s great but I can’t wait around for Xavier to maybe take the person he has inside out of the factory” I said.

Hacker shrugged his shoulders as he looked at me motionless “it’s not always action and running after the bad guy Bella, you’re in the big games now we have to wait it out. otherwise, you’re going to get yourself and whoever helps you killed”

He walks away and leaves me standing there trying to figure out exactly what he meant, did he say that indicating he knows my past? How I usually just got shit done and didn’t bother waiting anything out.

Shaking my head, I walk back to the estate, and I need answers. Going back inside Ariana and Maria are sitting watching Friends, Vincenzo’s parents are in the kitchen I rush upstairs and make sure Vincenzo’s still in his office.

I go towards Vincenzo’s bedroom and slowly open the door; I quickly rush inside closing the doors behind me. “key’s, key’s, key’s.” fiddling in his drawers I finally found the keys to the garage. “Yes!” I whisper shout, quickly walking towards the door. I go to open it before seeing the doorknob move. Shit, I ran back towards his bed.

“Where the fuck do I hide” panicked the door opens slowly, I drop flat on my stomach and roll under the bed, oh please don’t be Vincenzo please go away. The door slowly gets closed again and I inch closer to the edge of the bed to get a clear view on who’s inside, looking around all I can see is someone’s legs, “OW FUCK” shaking my head I move back under the bed before he sees me. Fucking Lorenzo ... why is he in his brother’s room.

“Wants to take my fucking squirt gun, umm I think the fuck not” he curses reemerging through the draws. biting my bottom

lip to suppress my laugh, oh for fucks sake. I roll my eyes of course that's why he is in here. Still under the bed waiting for him to leave I rested my head on my arms gripping the keys.

“FOUND IT” he screamed “LORENZO YOU BETTER NOT BE IN MY ROOM” Vincenzo's voice booms through the halls. Lorenzo jumps and drops the gun near the bed, “mother fucker gave me a damn heart attack” he mutters to himself placing his hand on his chest, “its beating faster than Isabella's vag when she sees Vincenzo” My head shot up at his words, oh I'm gonna fucking kill him.

The door flies open, Lorenzo I'm assuming shat himself and his first instinct was to jump on the bed. “Oh, hey bro ... funny seeing you here” Lorenzo blurts out. “Lorenzo Uscire” (out)

“Oh, psh yea of course lemme just” he slowly squats down to reach for the squirt gun, shit. “Lorenzo” Vincenzo warns him he huffs and puffs like a child. Crossing his arms over his chest he stomps out of the room while throwing a tantrum “YOU NEVER LET ME HAVE ANY FUN, I WANT MY SQUIRT GUN. MUM LETS ME PLAY WITH IT ... MUUUUUUUUM VINCENZO WON'T LET ME SHOOT HIM” He yells out his voice slowly fading.

Vincenzo bangs his head on the door frame before letting out a laugh, “idiot” he mutters before closing the door. I flip on my back and let out a relieved sigh, rolling out from under the bed I slowly make my way to the door. Cracking it open I look around the hallway making sure no one's there. After making sure the room was clear I sneak out and quietly close the door behind me. I rush to the elevator and click the G for garage.

Stepping out of the elevator I walk up towards the tall black metal walls and open the doors with the key. He had a massive garage ... a museum for cars and motorbikes. I rush towards the motorbikes; I needed something small and discreet. I grabbed the keys for it from the rack and open the back garage doors with the remote.

“I need answers” I turn the motorbike on hearing it roars to life brought back a small part of me to life. 19 Dudley St, Yonkers, NY 10701 here I come.

X

The streets and cars where a blur, I zoomed past everything I was on a mission I needed to know who it was inside. Whoever he is can be my ticket to finally killing Xavier finally setting myself free. I go faster thinking about the night.

FLASH BACK

I sat handcuffed to the chair dry blood stains on my inner thigh, and my face. My body feels numb I can't fucking do this anymore. Crying to myself I bang the back of my head against the metal pipe. Screaming at every hit “FUUUUUUUUUUCK” Tears streaming down my cheeks the door's fly open as he comes back in here.

“NO NOO FUCKING STAY AWAY FROM ME” I scream kicking trying to get away as I see Xavier inching closer and closer to me. The feeling of that man touching me again made me sick to my stomach. “Shhh” he whispers softly, my screaming toned down a bit at his sudden shift in character, I edged back bring my legs closer to my keeping them shut. “Don't touch me” He lowers his head before looking back up at me again “Isabella I never wanted to do any of those things to you, but you didn't give me a choice. You came here to kill me”

I looked at him like he lost his mind, “YOU KILLED MY PARENTS” he looked taken back and covers his eyes with his hand before dragging it down his face “I regret that decision every day, how I forbid you from your parents and family. Isabella you are such a special girl, I really am sorry for everything. You can't blame me though”

I looked around me still sitting in pitch darkness, only a small flickering light hung in the middle of the room. I looked down at my legs and cried really cried. Was this all my fault? I was the one that was actively seeking him. I was the one that

wanted to kill him, if someone tried to do this to me I might've done the same thing ... "it's all my fault" I cried as I hung my head in shame. Forgetting the key reason why I wanted to kill him.

"Hey hey hey shhh it's okay I forgive you" I don't know if it was my need for human interaction or the fact that I've been locked up in here for three months. but his sudden shift from being my torture and captive to a soft gentle person. I let a small smile take over my lips.

Being stuck down here drove me to a different kind of madness, "how about we help each other out" I looked up at him curiously eyeing him.

END OF FLASHBACK

I jumped off my motorbike as I parked it behind a bush near the abandoned factory, shuddering at the memory, I cry for myself at that age I was only sixteen. After being in complete isolation for three months on end, enduring torture any kind of human touch that was gentle was like a blessing, even if it was from him.

I cringe at that time of my life, but I wouldn't do it another way it turned me into the person I needed to be. It was the most traumatic time of my life, and I don't wish it upon anyone... except Xavier.

The closer I walked towards the factory the slower I got; this seems all too easy. "Who the fuck are you?", I kept my head down and quickly rushed inside the building. I probably should have run back for my bike, but I need to know who's in here.

I heard footsteps coming in at full speed, "Fuck" I run to my right climbing up the stairs and going into another room. I shut the door behind me and looked around I see medical equipment, hospital beds and wheelchairs.

This place is an abandoned hospital? or is this just the medical room for workers. I shook my head what this place isn't exactly a pressing issue. My head shoots towards the door as I

can hear the man breaking down every door looking for me, I rush towards the medical equipment and grab the surgical knife from the tray. I duck down behind one of the beds beside the door. The door flies open the man slowly enters “I know you’re in here.” He sings out going towards the beds on the far right while I hid behind the beds on the left. “Come on” I pushed the wheelchair next to the bed to get his attention. He quickly turned towards the noise, taking my cue I stood up and threw the knife aiming it at his neck.

The blade pierced the middle of his Adam’s apple he struggled trying to breath as the blood kept squirting out. Still got it, I patted myself on the back. “Kitten” I purred out rushing out of the room jumping over his almost dead body.

I stopped dead in my tracks hearing a voice, it was so faint I couldn’t make out what it said or if it was a guy or girl. I looked out the broken window seeing Xavier getting out of the car. “Shit” I curse running towards the door but before I could get out, I saw his shadow approaching slowly.

Thinking on my feet I rushed towards the nearest room and hid behind the door. “Honey I’m home” he yelled as he made his way upstairs, waiting for him to be out of sight I made my exit. I stepped outside and let out a sigh of relief calming my heart rate down a little. “WHAT THE FUCK, WHOSE HERE” Shit I think he saw his men. Hearing his roar, It jolted my body into flight mode I ran like my life depended on it. I heard him rushing downstairs but thankfully I was too far for him to get a clear view of who I am. I grabbed my motorbike and purred it back to life.

I took off at full speed, zooming past the building onto the busy street. His going to change locations now. Hackers face just popped into my head as I hung my head in shame. I arrived at the estate, I looked at the guarded gates slowing down the bike I looked around the heavily guarded land “fuck I left the remote for the garage in the garage.” maybe I left it open I thought to myself going around I saw the garage door open. Feeling slightly victorious I brought the motorbike inside.

Hoping off I quickly closed the garage door and turned the motorbike off hanging the keys back up. “Where were you?” Jumping I looked behind me, “Oh hey hacker ... what’s up?” Fucking hell what’s up with the sneak attacks.

“Oh, uh I was just checking out Vincenzo’s collection” He looked at me unimpressed and not believing a single word that left my lips, “you went, didn’t you?” I bite my lip and looked at the floor.

“Did you get caught?” Still looking down I didn’t dare to answer his question. “Fucking hell Isabella now his going to change locations and hell” he drifted off before looking back up at me with a smile is this where he kills me? that smiling is slightly unsettling “he needs to take out whoever it is inside. FUCK ISABELLA” He screamed realising what I did could help speed things along.

My eyes grew wide at the realisation, “so we’ll see who it is through the cameras you were talking about?” he nodded his head rushing out, following behind him we run past everyone in the house and towards his place into his security room. He starts typing a bunch of random codes and letters onto his laptop and suddenly thousands of camera angles popped up on the screens, we scanned each area before hacker sees him “there” he zoomed in on that security camera leaning back in his chair defeated.

all we saw was Xavier and his two men, I recognised both. They were Xavier’s puppy’s doing everything for him like a puppy to its master they were loyal. “He already put whoever it was in the car, we missed it”

“The footages are all live?” I asked hoping there was some recordings he shook his head “now I don’t know where his next location is gonna be.”

“Take down the number plate and maybe have it followed? or like wait and add a GPS to it when its spotted again” he nodded his head slowly before looking back up at me again “remember what I told you before, this Is the big games you

need to play it smart no more running and doing your own shit got it?" I nodded my head before exhaling "fine"

"You're a part of the Kings now. We don't do anything behind each other's backs. We're all in for each other" He explained looking up at me "What about you Isabella? You all in?" He asked. I looked at him taken back ... was I apart of them now and was I really all in. Or am I still all in for myself.

Before I could answer Hacker Vincenzo walks inside the room looking at us confused "where have you been? and what are you both doing in here" he asks looking me up and down.

I looked back at Hacker with a pleading expression if he finds out what I did he's gonna fucking kill me. "Well?" Vincenzo was growing impatient watching us look at each other unaware of what to say.

Hacker stayed quiet, letting out a shaky breath I look back up at Vincenzo "I was-"

"Helping me find some dirt on Xavier" Hacker cutting me off before gesturing Vincenzo to come closer while he shows him the footages of the car and explains he changed location probably for procurement. "Keep an eye on the car we need to know what his hiding. People with vulnerabilities are easy to manipulate" my heart about to explode from my chest I try to control my breathing. "Isabella we are hosting a party in the back. I need you to get ready, its dad's birthday and this is a traditional thing. Hacker alert the others and I'll get Lorenzo to appoint men to guard the inside and outside of the house more heavily."

THE DRUNK ONE

Everyone was rushing to get ready for tonight, the cooks were busy in the kitchen making the food and snacks for the visitors, maids were cleaning and preparing the ball room I didn't even know we had, and the guest of honour was getting dressed and ready for tonight.

Me Maria and Ariana were in Ariana's room getting our hair and makeup done. I said I can just do it myself but Ariana being Ariana wasn't going to take no for an answer. I was just getting my hair straightened and eye fox makeup, it suited the silk cream jumpsuit I'm being told to wear tonight it was gorgeous simple and elegant. It hung low the straps pulling it up enough to cover my boobs from the front but exposing the middle of my chest and side boob.

"Ariana just how big are your dads' parties?" Maria asked Ariana while she was getting her hair curled, "um ... normal big, I guess. Like you remember that movie where that girl came to the ball and lost a slipper" she said using her hands to exaggerate the story.

My head shot up at her as I squinted "bitch are you talking about Cinderella" she looked at me confused before me and Maria burst out laughing. "Oh, great we are having a bloody Disney ball downstairs" Maria huffs as she fiddles with her dress. Maria isn't good in big crowds, but she manages.

"No nothing like that our parties are way bigger" both mine and Maria's head snapped straight towards her, my eyes were about to fall out of my socket, they're gonna have a party bigger than Disney? Oh, I can't wait to see that.

The girls got lost in conversation while my head drifted to what happened in Hacker's security room, he really saved my ass by not telling Vincenzo the truth about where I was and how Xavier is now changing locations. If he found out I don't even want to imagine what he would do to me, I've broken his rules before, but this compromises everything.

I hung my head at my impulse to just go and do stuff on my own, hacker was right I think I just need to start learning how to play with a team and how to play nice. The ladies finished our makeup, and the gents finished our hair as we all got up to get dressed.

I stood in front of the mirror analysing my appearance, my hair was under my ass giving a nice healthy shine, the feeling

of the silk on my skin felt like absolute heaven. My white strap heels really completed the look as I looked over at the girls.

Ariana being her dad's little princess wore a stunning mid length baby pink ball gown, it puffed out slightly and had the most amazing details on the top. Maria like me kept it simple and elegant and was told to wear a plain baby blue dress with some accessories.

Knocking on Ariana's door was the maid letting us know the party has officially begun and the guests started arriving, Ariana nodded dismissing her as we all went downstairs. Me and Maria waited with the rest of the guests while the kings waited upstairs and got ready for their announced entrance, damn it really was like a Disney ball.

They announced the King family for authority, to remind the guests that although they are friends, they are still above them. That's the only thing that made any sort of sense that and it's cool to be announced as everyone waits for you to walk down the stairs, but something tells me their use to that sort of attention.

Maria and I walked hand in hand around the place, within seconds the place was swarmed with guests. All of them looked so important Maria and I felt like outsiders being we didn't really have any key roles in the criminal world anymore. We both walked towards the bar and got a drink.

"This feels wrong" I looked at Maria taking a sip out of my drink I raised an eyebrow at her. "A few months ago, I was warning you to stay away from Vincenzo, now we live with them. I also was never going to go near Lorenzo now I'm sleeping with him. A month ago you were trying to kill and shoot your way out of here, you got kidnapped and tortured and yet we both feel no sense of danger, are completely calm dancing and attending a party for their fucking dad in a place sworn with criminal mafia bosses, drug lords and even gang leaders and we are acting like it's another Tuesday drinking a martini" she nervously finishes off her sentence by throwing the straw behind her back and taking a gulp of her drink

I stared at like the same way I stared at Ariana when she said their parties are bigger than Disney “you have a point” I continued as I tried to take her drink from her hands before she starts over drinking, I will not be put on drunk baby-sitter duty. That’s the guy’s job I plan on getting as drunk as I can.

“I HAVE A POINT!” Maria yelled and everyone’s head turned towards us, widening my eyes I put my drink down and drag Maria through the crowd of people towards a table and sat her down. “Maria why are you acting like a ... ticking time bomb” I needed to try and find the right words to explain her current state.

It’s very rare Maria gets like this unless she ... realisation overtook me as I grinned at her. “Who dropped the L bomb first?” she looked back at me shocked raising both her eyebrows as her eyes went as wide as possible. Doubling over laughing I clutch my stomach “OH MY GOD HE SAID IT FIRST DIDN’T HE” I couldn’t breathe, Maria started to slap my arms shushing me. “Isabella shhhhhh” she brushes her hand through her hair as she exhales a breath ” I wanted to say it back holy fuck I really did but it wouldn’t leave my lips. Flashbacks of everything just came flashing back and I froze”

I eyed her knowingly “you froze? Maria Knight what did you say?” She hangs her head in shame as she mutters “thanks” Covering my mouth to stop myself from both laughing and gasping “you did not” she nods her head yes, she did. “I feel so bad, I love him I really do I just it was out of the blue. I wasn’t expecting it yet” I shrugged my shoulders “it’s been a good month and a half”

“I need to talk to him”

“Well looks like you will soon” I pointed up at the stairs a man came out to get everyones attention before announcing the Kings. “Ladies and gentlemen, Mr Vincenzo King” The doors opened and out walked Vincenzo. Biting my bottom lip, I eyed him up and down taking in his appearance, He was in a tradition attire nothing special, but he made it look like a million bucks. The white button up shirt was just right fitting it

showed off his toned body, he walked to the side as he waited for the rest of his family.

“Mr Lorenzo King” the doors opened as Lorenzo strikes a pose laughing, I shake my head of fucking course I looked over at Maria as she started giggling. It was both a nervous giggle and a genuine giggle. He matching Vincenzo is wearing the same thing.

“Principessa Mafiosa Ms Ariana King” giggling the room as a joke all bowed at the mention of her name, she really is her father’s little girl she giggles, her and brothers walked down the stairs and waited at the bottom as they announced their parents.

“Ladies and gentlemen Mrs Anna Marie King and our guest of honour Mr Giovanni King” they walked in arms locked as everyone started clapping and cheering. “This is so extra” I whispered to Maria who nodded agreeing with me. “Wish you were up there?” she whispers back “Yea, you?” she pauses for a moment “yea” laughing we both high five.

“Leonessa you look ... beautiful” eyeing him suspiciously I giggle “not so bad yourself Italy” I say admiring his tall frame, I look over my shoulder and see Lorenzo and Maria awkwardly exchanging compliments “I love your- uh I didn’t mean love I meant like- but no wait I did mean love but I-” doing him a favour I cut him off “Lorenzo you couldn’t find a nicer pose” He looked at me grateful before replacing it with a hurt expression “puta you wish you could rock a room like me”

“How about you go and rock the bar” Lorenzo snaps his finger and links arms with Vincenzo “come on boo lets go” Vincenzo looks at Lorenzo like he lost his mind and then back at me signalling for help before I shrug my shoulders and laugh. Looking back at Maria Ariana eyes her carefully before coming to the same realisation I did a few minutes ago “OH HH MY GODDDD NOOOO” she gasps as she takes a seat and pressures Maria to spill.

I looked to my left as I saw Roxy talking to an older looking gentleman near the bar, I eyed them both closely. He looks so familiar who she talking to? I thought to myself as I edged closer to approach them and get a better view a man that looked like a lot like Mateo walked past. My body went stiff as my mind flashed back to him.

FLASHBACK

After Xavier offered me a job in his gang in exchange for my freedom, I took it in a heartbeat. It took me over a month to readjust to the light and human contact and interaction. I was starved for affection and emotion, but it become sacred to me that when I got it I felt like I needed to fight and scream.

Mateo helped he was extremely patient with me, “Isabella” I cringed at hearing my name “dragon” I looked up and smiled, after my parents’ death and Xavier torturing me while calling out Isabella made my entire body shutdown at the mere mention of my name. Dragon replaced Isabella in more ways than one.

Mateo was one of the few men in this gang besides Alex whose company I genuinely enjoyed, Mateo slowly helped me regain myself . . . in front of him and Alex I was really myself I was Isabella, but to the world it was Dragon. Only Dragon.

“We have a guy who is refusing to pay up, his in the interrogation room. Boss wants you to handle it” I nodded my head and grabbed my red leather jacket and put it on, when I had this jacket on it always meant someone was either going to die or get extremely hurt.

I walked inside the interrogation room and saw Xavier trying to intimidate the man by aiming a gun to his head “YOU DON’T SCARE ME MALDITA PERRA” he spat at Xavier. I smirked feeling in my element I watched as Xavier’s veins began popping in his forehead and his entire body began shaking. He both was agitated and helpless he had no idea what to do or how to show authority to a man who wasn’t starved and trapped in a cell for a month.

“No no no, you got it all wrong. You need to make it fun” I chimed in shrugging my shoulders and rubbing my hands together before I got closer to them both. Both looked at me with fear and that made me smile, the girl that was trapped in that basement died.

Now it's just Dragon. I snatched the gun from Xavier and grabbed the keys for the man's handcuffs, “I don't like doing shit like a coward” I eyed Xavier indicating I wanted him out of the room, he eyed me for a minute before I slightly tilted my head staring him down.

He finally broke and left; I looked over at the man sitting in front of me smiling “what's your name?” I asked him as I eyed the seven shot ‘Nagant’ M1895 revolver gun as I poured out the bullets on the floor.

“I'm not fucking telling you shit” he spat as he went to stand up looking at the gun, I grab one bullet placing it in the revolver before spinning it and shutting it. “You see I'm not Xavier I don't take shit, nor do I get flustered. If you do not sit down, I will personally make sure you are unable to sit for the rest of your miserable life.” I calmly stated as I played with the gun waving it around and throwing it from hand to hand.

sensing the unsettling calmness in my voice he sat back down, “Now I like to play games ... do you like to play games?” I asked him as I inched closer to him with the gun resting under his chin. “I believe the lady asked you a question” Mateo muttered, I forgot he was in the room. My eyes followed him as he moved to the right side of the room, then went back to the man. “No” smiling I laugh, “well too bad. I love games, it makes everything so much more ... fun”

“Now my favourite game is Russian roulette, I'll be asking you one question and if you don't answer you test fate.” I aimed the gun to his face and tilted my head to the left so I can see his face, “why are you not paying up?” I asked him, he stubbornly stayed silent and eyed me daring me to pull the trigger. Smirking I pulled the trigger, it clicked empty ... the

man jumped back in his seat as sweat started to pour down his face.

“See how fun that was, the suspense” I exaggerated the word suspense, I nodded my head indicating him to answer my first question. “My boss doesn’t want to give money to your gang no more” he slowly stuttered out shutting eyes the entire time.

“Why?” I pressed ... no answer again clicking the gun ... empty “Come on you never know when your luck may run out”

“He wants to overrun it” he quickly yells.

END OF FLASHBACK

Mateo was an absolute gem the most caring soul in that pathetic gang before his wife died then he did a complete 360. He wanted to desperately do what I did at that time and escape my past, its troubles and trauma he wanted to kill himself and come back new.

But like I learnt it’s not that easy, ignoring Roxy and whoever it is she is talking to I rush behind the man who looked like Mateo. “OH, LOOOOOOK VINCENZO ITS ISABELLAAA” My arm is suddenly being dragged down as I almost lost balance.

I turn around and see a very drunk Lorenzo “OH HEYYYYY ISABELAAAAA, HEY LOOK LORENZO ITS MY GIRL” My head snaps to Vincenzo “oh no no no no nooooooo please tell me you’re not drunk”

He tries standing up on his own but loses slight balance as he stares at me with a childlike grin “ok ... ok wait ...” he scratches his forehead as he snaps his fingers and screams “LIGHTBULB” my eyes go wide ... this is not fucking happening.

“I am nooooooot drunk” he says and gives me the biggest smile “how’d I do?” he asks me. Lorenzo cheers and whistles “YOU DID FUCKING GREAT BRO”

They both high five each other as they wander off again, oh no, no, no, no. I go to run after them but turn the other way and rush to get Maria. I might be obliged for Vincenzo but I in no way need to handle both tweetle dee and tweetle dumb on my own.

“Maria, you made Lorenzo get piss black drunk and now he got Vincenzo pissed out drunk. THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE ME” I yell as I point at my chest crying out. “Now I got to babysit him” I fake cry.

Maria stands up as she turns me around to Vincenzo and Lorenzo. Suppressing a laugh, I cover my mouth with my hand as my eyes widen. Vincenzo and Lorenzo are having a throwing contest with a girl’s wig as the basket. “Are they throwing nuts into that lady’s wig?” Maria and I turn around. “You know one thing I love about them both having significant others now is I no longer need to baby sit them when they are like that” their mum gestures towards them before laughing and wishing us both luck.

“Use look stunning by the way” she gives us a kiss on the Cheek before walking off to greet the rest of the guests. Maria and I look at each other and exchange worried glances before we quickly rush over to the boys. “For reference that should be me throwing peanuts into a lady’s wig, and Vincenzo and Lorenzo running after us” I scold Maria.

We both approach the men as we grab the peanuts out of their hands and put them down, “Hey heyyy I was winning” Lorenzo whines. Vincenzo scoffs “you wish” I feel like I’m witnessing their childhood, “would you two stops acting like kids and come sit down” Maria scolds them. Lorenzo jumps up and punches Vincenzo in the chest “Yea Vincenzo grow up”

Vincenzo throws the peanuts he snuck back in his hands at Lorenzo’s face. Shaking my head putting my hand over eyes I cry “this is not happening” I look back at the boys who are now slapping each other like teenage girls, fucking hell for mafia and Italian’s they suck at holding down their liquor.

“Isabella, can you hit him with your knife?” Vincenzo asks me as he starts shaking me by my shoulders. “I think the technical term for that is ‘stab’ Vincenzo” his eyes go wide with realisation as he widens his eyes and mouth like a child begin given chocolate “That sound so much coooler do that do that stab him Leonessa stab him” he says as he jumps and does the action of stabbing someone.

Lorenzo starts jumping up and down as he begs for Maria to stab Vincenzo. By now we have gained a lot of attention, “we need to get them upstairs” I whisper shout to Maria she nods with a desperate look in her eyes. Giovanni approaches us as he hugs both me and Maria before going towards his boys.

He stops midway and me and Maria are trying to desperately avoid eye contact, looking around the place admiring the people and decoration. “Are you two drunk?” they both look at each other than back at their dad “define drunk” Lorenzo states as he rests his chin on his knuckles mimicking the thinking statue.

“Yup that pretty much answers it.” Giovanni gives me and Maria a tap on the back wishing us luck as he leaves. “LORENZO LET’S PLAY A GAME” I slap Vincenzo and Lorenzo on the arm “No more games! Sit down and have some water” they both slouch and sit down on the bar stool before Lorenzo completely lost balance and falls flat on his ass. Vincenzo and I burst out laughing “I don’t care that was fucking funny” I gesture to a very annoyed looking Maria.

“Whoever falls off the chair loses ... LORENZO YOU FELL I WON” Vincenzo screams fits pumping the air, as he waits for me too high five him. Rolling my eyes, he looks so fucking cute so I high fived him. Maria gives me a what the fuck stare “oh come on look at that face” Vincenzo and I both give her puppy dog eyes. “NO FAIR THATS CHEATING” Lorenzo yells as he tries to sit back on the bar stool. “I prefer the term creative” Vincenzo clarifies.

“No, you’re a bitch that’s the term” Lorenzo mutters as he sits on the chair sulking crossing his arms, “you look like grumpy”

I comment on his current state, Maria slaps my arm “can you not anger it” I shrugged my shoulders before gesturing at Lorenzo “He is already angry”

The live band began singing some songs and apparently it just happened to be Vincenzo’s favourite song. everyone got up and was on the dance floor with their significant other, as they swayed on in sync. Vincenzo eyed me with puppy dog eyes like Lorenzo eyed Maria. Both of us not caring anymore caved in as they rushed us to the dance floor.

we began to sway to the beat of the song, but the boy started to lose balance and we were falling all over the place. “Okay nope” Maria and I both stated as we dragged the boys away from the dance floor and up the stairs. “I don’t wanna go upstairs” Lorenzo cried out, “yea we wanna stay here and party with the humans” I eyed Vincenzo as I helped him up the stairs “the humans? why what the hell are you?”

He expanded his arms as wide as he can and shouted, “I’M AN EGAL” Lorenzo laughed encouraging him “THEN JUMP” he stated.

Panicked Vincenzo tried to squirm out of my grip and jump off the stairs “no nooo noo. You can fly another day”

Lorenzo made a sad face and walked inside after Maria slapped him at the back of his head for giving Vincenzo that stupid idea. Vincenzo sulked at he walked in front of me letting out a sigh of relief we took the guys to their bedrooms, Vincenzo gasps as he reaches his hand out and turns around, oh for fuck’s sake. Placing both my hands on his chest I start pushing him “LORENZO THERE TRYNA SEPERATE US” tryna? did he just use an acronym.

“YOU MONSTERS, IS THIS BECAUSE I SAID I LOVE YOU AND YOU DIDNT SAY IT BACK YOU’RE TRYING TO SEPERATE ME FROM MY BROTHER” Maria looked up and Lorenzo with pure confusion and slight embarrassment Vincenzo stopped trying to go towards Lorenzo as he winced and placed his hand on his cheek shaking his head.

“Maybe you should go, THAT WAS COLD MARIA”

Vincenzo yells before clapping his hands and walks to his bedroom. Shaking my head, I mentally whine that should be me acting like an idiot and him shaking his fucking head.

Blowing the loose strand of hair out of my face, I walked in his room and grabbed the water from his tray in the car right corner of his room. “My room is big” he states looking around the place. He wasn’t wrong “that’s not all that’s big” he says as he gives me a goofy smile.

Not being able to control myself I grin as I laugh it off, he isn’t wrong about that too, I mentally note. I hand the glass of water to Vincenzo as he eyes it sceptically “what kind of alcohol is this?” He asked before he looks up at me. “Uh it’s ... a magical drink. It tastes just like water, but it’ll make you more drunk” I state he excitedly takes the cup from my hand as he chugs it down. After he finished, he scrunches his face and looks at my while he sticks his tongue out “that tasted bad”

“I’m gonna murder you! I should be the one drunk and saying water taste bad NOT YOU” he looks at me with pure confusions before he grabs his phone out of his pocket and checks his calendar. “What are you-” he cuts me off my putting his finger to my mouth to silence me. He nods his head confirming whatever it was he was looking for “murder was not on the agenda!” He says with full confidences as he gives me a sharp nod.

Raising an eyebrow at him “it’s not on anyone’s agenda” I state he stares at me with innocently? That a new look I didn’t know he had in him. He grabs his phone and shoves it in my face “no, it’s on mine, see? It’s just not until next Thursday” He scratches his head as he looks back up at me.

You got to be fucking with me? “Oh, okay that’s right, we’ll that means you need to get your rest if you want to be do that” He smacks his head before nodding “smart” I help him to the bathroom where he brushes his teeth while singing an old nursery Italian nursery rhyme.

He finishes and starts stripping, now that's what I'm talking about. I eye him up and down as he takes his shirt off. He turns around and finds me staring he pursues his lips and widens his eyes "can you like not look?" Taken back I look at him about to burst into laughter, deciding to just turn around I look at the door as I wait for him to jump into bed.

"Okay you can look now" I turn back around and see him tucked in his bed, letting out a sigh I smile "okay now gets some sleep I'll make sure someone leave you some painkillers and water for tomorrow morning" lord knows you'll need it. He grabs my wrist not letting me leave "Can you stay here with me?" I look at him debating the idea. I tilt my head in pity as I go to reject "listen I may be drunk but I'm still stubborn"

Rolling my eyes my feet were throbbing and honestly, I was exhausted and not prepared for a fight. "Fine." I take my shoes off and strip out of my jumpsuit. I was completely naked as I looked through his closet. I turned around to ask where he puts his boxers and t shirts, but I see him with his mouth hanging open with the pure admiration written on his face. "You are the most angelic, beautiful and sexy women I've ever laid my eyes on ... and I've seen a lot of naked women" Shaking my head, I smirk lightly; he was doing so well. I find a pair of boxers and a plain white t-shirt. Throwing them on I go towards Vincenzo and slip under his covers and lay flat on my back as he shuts off the lights.

We laid down in silence as I calmed myself further by listening to the sound of Vincenzo breathing half asleep my eyes begin to drift shut, "Isabella?" I hum in response "I know when I sober up, I'm not going to say this, so I'll say it when I'm drunk. My life's crazy ... I'm crazy. I can be a dick and a pain but I'm only like that to protect you. To protect everyone ... so I never have to lose anyone again" he drifts off.

Lose anyone again? Did he lose someone? I turn on my side as I watch his facial expression shift to sadness as he reminisces over his past lost. "My world is a lot to take, I burn a lot of people and I've set fire to the world ... but remember one

things Leonessa. I'll never let a single flame burn you" he closes his eyes as she starts to drift off. Smiling I snuggle into him, now I'm happy I wasn't drunk. Smiling I drift off to sleep, before I felt a stick poking me ... "Vincenzo" I drag out. He says nothing but lets out a childlike laugh.

THE DARKNESS

I woke up feeling a strong arm wrapped around me, slowly blinking trying to adjust to the light that entered the room. Memories of last night come flooding back, Vincenzo is the polar opposite when he is drunk and honestly, I'm not sure which side of him I prefer.

I try lifting his arm off me so I can slip out of the bed, he starts to groan and flips over to the other side closing my eyes I bit my lip waiting for him to move again. Letting out a quick sigh of relief I slowly get out of the bed and grab my clothes from yesterday.

I feel like I'm doing the walk of shame, slowly opening the door I quickly rush to my room. Smiling to myself as I recall all the memories from last night come flooding back into my head.

"so, I never lose anyone again" his voice echoed in my head like a catchy ringtone. I couldn't help but wonder who he lost and how. My head was throbbing trying to decipher Vincenzo and understand him. Maybe whoever he lost is the reason he is the way he is. The pain you experience losing anyone from your life especially if they hold major significance is a pain that no human should have to endure.

Turning the shower, I start taking off my clothes and enter standing right underneath the water. The hot water trickled at my skin; goosebumps rise as I felt the hot water slowly melt away all my problems. Closing my eyes, I look up letting the water fall all over my face as my mind wandered to that night.

FLASHBACK

Smiling at the view of the beach, I felt at peace. Although many fifteen-year-olds do not have as many worries as I do. The beach was a minute walk from home, whenever anything became too much our family would take a walk along the beach as sit without any interruptions.

“Isabella Vamos” I looked up and saw Papa’s hand stretched out, smiling I quickly stood up and grabbed his hand as we walked back towards the mansion. A sudden gunshot was heard from afar than suddenly, all that could be heard were gunshots.

My heart dropped as we realised the sound was coming from the home. Papa gave my hand to Mama and warned us not to come. He took the gun he had tucked in his back pants and ran towards the violence.

“Mama we can’t stay here” I quickly rushed out she looked at me with a helpless expression as she shook her head. “Stay here both of you, I’ll be back” she quickly ran off after my father as me and Maria anxiously waited for her and papa to return.

After a few minutes, the sound of gunshots began to die down until there was no sound at all. Maria and I exchanged looks of worry before we both took off running towards home. Upon entering the gates Maria let out a horrific scream seeing the dead bodies lying on the floor. Each was covered in their own blood.

Diego our father’s right hand came rushing towards us begging the both of us to calm down and leave with him. The only thing I had on my mind was my parents I couldn’t find their bodies on the floor in front of us. That means they’re still alive. “I need to get mama and papa” I asked tears threatening to fall he looks at me quickly shaking his head. “No, Isabella your father wants both of use to be safe let’s go.”

The sound of My father’s screams echoed in the now quiet mansion, getting my arm out of Diego’s grip and run towards

the noise. "ISABELLA" both Maria and Diego screamed, but all that was on my mind was my parents.

"PAPA! MAMA!" I yelled trying to find them.

"aquí adentro" an evil man purred, as I slowly entered the room, I saw my parents on their knees in front of an old-looking man. "Isabella get out!" I shook my head, tears now falling from my eyes as I stood frozen in place.

The man snickered never looking at me as he extended his arm and aimed a gun at my parents' head. "This empire will be mine" he mumbled. "I'll be nice ... any last words?"

My parents both looked at me with a pained expression on their faces "Isabella, our sweet girl. Our absence will be strong and warm, and it will hold you. It will teach you how to miss, how to be without and how to survive anyway." Papa spoke out as my tears now began flowing out like a waterfall, "Cry if you must, then let your grief be taken over by love. Remember the love we had for you and Maria, let it guide you. Let it comfort you and never let it die. We might be leaving you now, but we will always ... always be right there. Watching over you, protecting you and watching you become who you were destined to be."

"No, because you're not leaving me" I cried out.

"Isabella baby, never forget how much we love you. No matter what we will always be by your side, watching over you and your sister. Throughout the rest of your life we will be right behind you. You may not see us but be sure we were there, watching you grow, hugging you when you're sad, kissing the pain away and protecting you for all eternity. Nothing's changed! The only thing that will be different is we will have wings while we watch over you and Maria ... and no matter what we are proud of the both of you."

"We love you"

"NO" I screamed as he shot both of my parents one by one, they fell to the floor hands intertwined. My breath got caught in my throat as I fell to my knees unable to breathe. I look at the

floor with a hand on my chest before I focus my eyes back on the sight of my parents “NOOOOO” a high-pitched cry left my lips as I saw the blood slowly surrounding my parents bodies.

The man looked at me before swiftly leaving, I shook my head refusing to believe the sight in front of me as I stood up and ran towards my parents, falling to my knees as I rested my head on their intertwined hands and sobbed.

“No, please ... please” I softly begged them “Wake up ... look at me. You promised to never leave ... don’t you dare break that promise” I slowly closed my eyes as I felt my heart completely break and all my cells in my body shut down. “please”

END OF FLASHBACK

X

I got out of the feeling suffocated as I couldn’t catch my breath. Wrapping a towel around myself, I leaned on the sink as I tried to catch my breath and slow down my heart rate.

Some days, I feel everything at once. Other days, I feel nothing at all. I don’t know what was worse drowning from the waves or dying from thirst. I slowly closed my eyes as I slowly controlled my breathing. I looked back up at myself in the mirror and looked behind me picturing my parents hugging me from behind calming me down.

I walked towards my closet pulling out an outfit. I grabbed my mini leather skirt and my black long-sleeved crop top and threw it on. Deciding to do something different to distract myself I style my hair. Half up and half down, curling the ends and blow-drying the side bangs, before leaving my room.

“Good morning” I scream in Lorenzo and Vincenzo’s ears. They both groan as they cover their ears and lean their heads on the kitchen table. “I hate both of you for ruining yesterday” both shot me a warning stare, but I didn’t care, innocently biting an apple I smile as I shrug my shoulders. “It was the

first civil evening since I've been in this jail cell of a home and you both ruined it.”

Lorenzo lifted his head as he looked at me “reminded me to kill you. Please” I shook my head “murder is marked for Thursday” I smile as he smashed his head back on his arms then groaning from the pain. “Boy you both really need to learn how to handle your liquor” I stated as I sat next to Vincenzo.

“On a serious note, how are you guys feeling?” Maria asked the boys “we don't have enough middle fingers to express how we are feeling” Vincenzo mutters as he turns to rest his head on my shoulders. Smiling at the sight I massage his head a little.

His body slowly starting to relax at my touch, he mumbles something under his breath before getting up and answering his phone. “Where's Ariana?” I questioned seeing she's missing from the table, “with the dogs” My eyes went wide with excitement as I grabbed Lorenzo by his shirt and pulled him to me, “Dogs?” he looked at me with both terror and amusement “Yes Isabella ... dogs” shaking him by his top I scream “WHERE WHY DIDNT I FUCKING KNOW ABOUT THIS” he points to the door while he covers his mouth with his other hand “Oh shit” I forgot he's hungover.

I let go of him immediately and dart to the door, “Remind me to kill her please” he mumbles again to Maria as she tries to help him. Vincenzo following behind grabs me by my arm as I'm inches from the dog, “They don't like strangers” he warns me giving me a cold stare, I eye his expression before deciding to not listen. I inch closer to Ariana as she sits with three Dobermans.

They quickly stand-up alert of my presence as they stare at me, I inch closer extending my hand out “Isabella” I can hear Vincenzo warning me in the background, but I muted him out and kept my hand extended as I patted the dogs, surprisingly they immediately reacted in a friendly matter.

My smile grew so big it was hurting my cheeks as I giggled as I began playing with the dogs, “What’s the point of guard dogs if they are not going to guard against strangers” I shot Vincenzo an ugly stare before turning back to the dogs kissing them “they are better judge of character than humans it seems” I say in a baby voice as I keep playing with the dogs.

I turn around to see Vincenzo staring at me, I turn my head back to the dogs again saying goodbye before getting back up. I wasn’t sure if it was just me, but Vincenzo’s mood did a complete 360 since before, he was so calm yesterday he may have been drunk but even a few seconds ago he was laying down on me. “What’s wrong with you?” he rolls his eyes before going back to the kitchen mumbling that he is fine.

“Vincenzo?” My head snaps towards the door as I see a tall, tanned woman at the door, who is this? Her long black hair complementing her tanned complexion while her eyes sparkled in the sunlight. Why is she calling Vincenzo? My head automatically snaps back to Vincenzo my eyes going wide as I bit my lip in annoyance, brushing me off he invites the lady in.

“Aria, come in what’s wrong?” she brushes past me completely oblivious to my presence, my eye starts twitching as I shoot my head towards Lorenzo who jumps back slightly and points to maria “Coming”. balling my hands into fists I brush past both Vincenzo and Aria and run after Lorenzo.

He turns his head and sees me running towards him and takes off, “LORENZO” picking up speed I rush towards him while he runs towards the door, “STOP CHASING ME”

“GET BACK HERE” I stop midway as look at the dogs “get him” without any hesitation, they immediately stand up and start chasing Lorenzo “Oh that’s cold, the one biting him is his dog” Ariana says as she sucks in air and wincing at the site.

I calmly walk towards Lorenzo and kneel down, “Tell them to get off me... there scary” I grab his jaw and turn his head to me slowly “trust me it’s not the dogs you should be scared of” I made the dogs leave him as he stood upright “who is that” he

looked down at his feet as he played with his fingers “I don’t wanna say” he stated as he looked down like a child being asked who took the last cookie, “Lorenzo I’m asking nicely” he sucked his lips in before shaking his head no. “Lorenzo I swear to god my bite hurts more than the dogs”

“Vincenzo’s ex” I pushed my head back as my eyebrows raised, “I thought he never had an ex” now Lorenzo was back to looking everywhere but me, as he started talking to the air in hopes id feel pity and let him go. “Why is she here, what does she want and so help me god if you tell me she’s part of this mafia ill lose it”

Within two seconds this man runs for his life screaming for help, “WERENT YOU HUNGOVER” I shouted wondering where this energy came from, “YOU SCARED IT AWAY BITCH” he shouted as he quickly ran inside the house.

I walk back into the house and see Vincenzo still talking to Lexi and they looked deep in conversation as she started to brush her fingers along his arm. Smiling to myself thinking this girl has some death wish, I walk up to both of them “Hi we haven’t met” I get in between the both of them, she smiles showing off her perfect white teeth before introducing herself. “I’m Aria, um sorry I didn’t catch your name” snapping back into reality I smile “Isabella” she nods her head slowly as she examines me from head to toe.

“Isabella, I need to talk to Aria alone I’ll see you in a bit” He grabs her hand and leads her upstairs. I shake my head looking at their hands. “Isabella” I look over my shoulder and see Vincenzo’s dad, “sir” he ushers me to come forward “Tonight we need you to take the code of silence, Omerta” I tilted my head as I looked at him “isn’t that for those apart of or joining the mafia I’m still like a hostage”

“yes, but you’ve been here longer than I thought so you need to take the code or you can leave the mafia in a body bag.” this is the first time I’ve ever been threatened by Giovanni and it made me feel slightly uneasy.

“Fine” he informed me that Maria as well needed to take it seeing that her relationship with Lorenzo grew each day while mine apparently was confusing to him, I let out an airy laugh as I mumbled yea for me too.

Not being able to take it anymore I walked up the stairs and straight for Vincenzo’s office, I open the door and both of their heads shoot straight towards me both looked rather pissed off. I shot Vincenzo an I don’t give a fuck look before walking straight towards them leaning on the desk. “Your dad requests your presence boss” He cocks an eyebrow and forces a smile “Aria we can finish this conversation another time” She rolls her eyes at me before smiling at Vincenzo and walking away.

“Come on” is the confusion and anger on my face not registering in his head? Letting out a frustrated groan I grab him by his arm and stop him for leaving. “Vincenzo” I whisper softly looking him the eyes trying to get any sort of emotion from them. He looked down at my hand then back up to me “Isabella” I shook my head begging him with my eyes to tell me what’s wrong. Giovanni walks through the doors “Son lets go” without another word Vincenzo looks at me and ushers me with his head to leave. I follow him out of the office as he leads us all to the basement, Maria Me Lorenzo their parents and Ariana all stand.

The family all stand behind Vincenzo as he asks me and Maria to step forward. Being that Vincenzo is now the mob boss he was in complete control of everything. He stood tall and confident as he eyed me and Maria. No expression was being registered on his face as he became completely serious.

“Isabella and Maria. The both of you have become members of the King family, within any mafia Omertà, the code of silence is a form of loyalty to your boss and the mafia. Omertà is a Southern Italian code of silence and code of honour that places importance on silence in the face of questioning by authorities or outsiders”

“Today Isabella Knight and Maria Knight will take Omerta the code of silence. This code is extremely serious and if broken is

punishable by death, do you accept?” Maria and I both hesitantly nod our heads as he asks for our hands to be extended. He whips out his knife as he slices both our fingers and places a picture of a saint A catholic alter card and placed them on both mine and Marias hand over and lit it aflame.

“Tonight, Isabella Knight and Maria Knight you are born again, into a new life and to La Cosa Nostra if you betray your oath, or you violate your oath you are going to burn in hell like the saint is burning in your hand. Do you accept?”

“Yes,” we said in unison, as the burning card became ashes in our hands, “You are now binded by blood to the Kings. If you go against us and betray the code of silence, you will be killed”

Without another word, Vincenzo walks out of the basement as His father gives us a reassuring nod and follows Vincenzo out. “That was different” Maria mutters nodding my head agreeing with her, I’ve never seen him so serious about something, I’ve always known this code exists, but I never knew this was how it was done.

We all leave the basement as I follow Vincenzo once again but this time to his bedroom, “Isabella what do you want?” he sighs out frustrated, taken back I eye him “what’s with you?” he shakes his head and mutters something under his breath before walking to the terrace. This conversation is not over.

Following him out I stare him dead in the eye “what’s with you” I asked him again he hangs his head low as he leans on the edge of the balcony. “You Isabella you’re what’s wrong with me”

once again taken back “Me?” he shakes his head before turning his entire body towards me and yelling “IM BECOMING WEAK BECAUSE OF YOU” before storming out and slamming the door shut.

FLASHBACK

“He wants to overrun it” the man quickly rushes out in one breath; I bring the gun back to my lap as I press “why?”“He

stays quiet not daring to say another word, something tells me that whatever it is will either anger me or Xavier. Wickedly smiling I stand up “ok ... since you don’t want to talk how about we play another game” I place the gun to the side and gesture for Mateo to strap the man down.

He started squirming, letting out an alarmed cry. “I love to experiment with different drugs ... let’s say I got that side of me from my past.” I inch closer to him “Since you don’t want to talk it wouldn’t hurt to make you lose a few sensations, would it?” I innocently asked as a sly smile began to overtake my features.

“Rumours spread Xavier is losing power, he is no longer taken seriously nor feared.” I looked at him with a confused expression, “if these rumours were true Xavier would have been ambushed by now by many rival gangs. How come no one has done anything yet?”

He stays silent “oh I love it when you boys try hard to obey your masters” I insert a needle into his neck slowly, “Don’t worry,” I muttered as I stroked his face “it won’t hurt for long. You can feel it, right? Breaking down all your defences?” I simpered, watching as his eyes widened and tensed within seconds. With his eyes still wide and tense he barely mutters. “Because they fear you” he speaks.

I slapped his face and upon getting no reaction from his glazed gaze, I smiled wickedly. “And they should” I purred.

Xavier bursts inside the room and harshly drags me out by my arm, Mateo went to grab me, but I shook my head warning him to not come. “THEY FEAR YOU?!” He yelled in my face before slapping me, he roughly grabs me by my shoulders and slams me against the wall, eyeing me up and down. **“IM BECOMING WEAK BECAUSE OF YOU”**

“Oh, believe me that’s one area you don’t need my help with” I spit back at him, he tightens his grip as he stares me down, I tilt my head watching his expressions change. “You were born weak, and you’ll always be weak. The only time you show dominance is when your prey has been strapped to a chair and

starved ... that's the only time you can be dominating. You're pathetic"

I smirked as my eyes lit up with power. I let out a mocking laugh as I push Xavier off me. "don't be sad ... kitten"

"Your life is ending before your very eyes, by a person you tried so desperately to break. Now she's breaking you" I spoke in the third person as I flip my hair subtly to the side as I tilt my head and smile watching him cower like a true kitten.

"What makes you think your life is worth more than mine?" he asks as he stares at me with a cold glare wanting to kill me but fearing to do so, if I'm gone, he is exposed. Smiling, I let out a short airy laugh before I resume my posture and stare at him with a stone-cold expression "what makes you think your life is worth anything at all?" I retorted.

"Who the fuck are you?" he spits, I inch my face close to his, so we are only inches apart and harshly whisper, "Who you were meant to be"

END OF FLASHBACK

Snapping out of it I let out a frustrated yell and run after Vincenzo and follow him to his office, The guards at the front door went to stand in my way but upon seeing my face they decided to just move aside.

"BECAUSE OF ME?" I shout getting up in his face, "Isabella get out" he annoyingly shouts as he rubs his head from stress. "No not until you start talking. What happened to you? You did a complete 360 just yester-" he cuts me off as he screams "Yesterday was the biggest eye-opener for me, you made me soft. I can't **protect** everyone if I'm soft. I can't run a mafia if I'm soft."

"I made you soft? I made you a decent human being I reminded you there is more to the world than gun and killing-" throwing his hands in the air he matches my tone and volume "maybe I don't want to be a decent human being. Maybe I liked how I was. How stupid are you? I'm fucking holding you hostage and yet here you are."

I stepped back as I registered what he said, “then let me go” I state as we are both now staring at each other, “what?” I shook my head and yelled “LET. ME. GO.”

“If I’m making you weak, then do it. Let me go, get rid of your weakness. Do it” I egged him on as I watched his entire body tense with every word that left my mouth. “Go on prove it to me, prove to me that you’re as heartless as you say you are.”

“I may be heartless, but you’re naive.”

I looked at him shaking my head as I felt a tear fall and glide on my cheek. “Those heartless people who claim to not need love? You all lie. You want so badly to be loved by someone who cares. But you fell you don’t deserve it or can’t ever be loved. So, you break your own heart before someone else can. I may be naive but at least I’m not in denial.”

“I have a Mafia and a city to run Isabella. I’m feared by all, and it will stay that way. You distracted me from my role, and I’ll be damned if I allow it. If I’m distracted, they can attack which means you can get hurt. It’s better this way”

I laughed as I inched closer to him “because this doesn’t hurt me?”

THE SERPIENTE

I stormed out of his office and went straight outside in the garden, sitting among the flowers I let out a breath I didn’t realise I was holding in. This entire situation felt like de ja vu, it was a repeat of my whole life just fast forward a few years.

I hate you, Vincenzo King. **“I may be heartless but you’re naive”** I grabbed a rock lying next to me and threw it as far as I could screaming. How could I be so naive to think Vincenzo King could ever change. He’s a weapon, a killer. You can use a spear as a walking stick but that doesn’t change its nature.

In a weird way I admired him he knew who he was and who he wants to be, he won’t stray from it even if that means having to lose the ones, he valued the most. I sarcastically

chuckled to myself realising we said we hated each other before ever saying I love you. Maybe there really was no love maybe it was all an illusion to keep me in this prison because you know what they say. To keep a prisoner captive, make him forget his in prison. Standing up dusting off the grass from my thighs I sighed.

I won't forget ever again. Walking back inside everyone froze and watched me with caution, I shook my head feeling too tired to even mention anything I brushed past everyone and headed straight to my cell, collapsing on the bed I scream into my pillow. A knock on my door broke me out of my tantrum, "GO AWAY" I shouted in return, but the door opened anyway, "Bella?" I looked up and saw a concerned Maria, smiling at her she shook her head sensing the fake smile and embraced me in a hug.

"You were right" I mumbled into her shoulder, she shook her head and kept me in a tight embrace, "don't ever say that again, that was scary" I peeked over Maria's shoulder and saw Lorenzo at the door. Rolling my eyes I break the hug and lean back into the bed "Lorenzo I'm honestly in no mood to see a King right now"

He dramatically gasped placing a hand over his mouth, closing the door behind him he sits on the bed in between me and Maria. "Are all the kings fucking stubborn?" He simply shrugged before a serious expression overtook his features and he pulled me in for a hug.

My body tensed up before slowly easing into the hug as I wrapped my arms around him, "I still hate the Kings" I stated before letting go, "what happened?" Maria asked me, sighing I began to explain the situation as briefly as possible. I needed to vent but at the same time, Vincenzo was a private person if he knew I blabbed about every detail god knows what he will do.

"But why what happened all of a sudden?" I shrugged my shoulder at Maria "I don't know" I looked at my fingers

fiddling with them as I thought, **“You’re making me weak”** a phrase I heard all too well, a phrase that will haunt me forever.

FLASHBACK

“You’re making me weak” Xavier shouted again for the millionth time today, “Xavier, I’m not making you weak has it ever occurred to you that maybe you are weak?” I shouted out of frustration, forgetting about the consequences.

He harshly grabbed me by my throat slamming me against the hard brick wall, I winced in pain as my head connected with the brick, “Isabella it sounds to me like you missed the dark cell?” My eyes immediately widened with fear as my entire body began to viciously shake, I shook my head “no no no im sorry” I quickly muttered out.

“Good girl” Xavier purred as he began kissing my cheek then trailing down to my neck. Squirming and feeling uncomfortable I push him off of me. He pulls at his hair obviously frustrated “that wasn’t part of the deal” I spat, after he let me go, I agreed to join the gang and do everything in exchange he doesn’t touch me.

He raised his hands up in the air shaking his head, “let’s go” He ushered me towards the bar in front of us. Xavier had a meeting with fellow members from a few different gangs. They tend to gather at different clubs all over Spain to not attract attention from the police and only have meetings with a small number of leaders.

I stepped inside the door and immediately felt sick from the smell of smoke, mixed with alcohol and what seemed like vomit. Xavier kissed my cheek making sure everyone in the club saw so no one would approach me, I immediately tensed up as I inched away from him. He went to the back of the club leaving me alone, I wandered towards the bar sitting down. “Vodka” I ordered the man eyed me up and down with a confused expression.

“Dragon” I spat, the man’s eyes widened as he handed me my order, I took the shot before ordering another, “aren’t you a

little young to have that?” I looked to my right and saw a tall tanned man sitting down next to me, he looked no older than 17. I shook my head eyeing his features. Tan, jet black hair, clean features, and an expensive looking suit. “You scream Italian mafia” I commented he looked down at his dress code before chuckling. “And you scream badass underboss” I shook my head allowing a smile to overtake my features, “hey you stay outta my business. I stay outta yours.” He let another airy chuckle out before agreeing.

“Good to see you again Bella” he laughed, I cleared my throat “good to see you too Dante” giving me a hug I tensed but eventually eased into it, I turn back around and take another shot. If words get back to Xavier I touched another man, he will not hesitate to kill him especially now that he feels the need to prove to Spain, he is more dangerous than me.

“Sorry, it’s a long story” I commented at my tense behaviour, I wasn’t used to people approaching me let alone having anyone besides Mateo or Alex to talk to. “How are you Bellissima?” he spoke, I smiled not sensing a flirty behaviour rather a tone of genuine concern, but he spoke as a joke to not anger me.

I looked up at him and smiled “also another long story” I let out a low chuckle before he spun me on my chair and looked at me with worry in his eyes, “we have time” I looked at the door biting my lip contemplating on what to do.

Xavier’s meetings genuinely lasted a good three hours, closing my eyes I let out a sigh. “I’m stuck with a devil wanna be” I stated, “please my brother is the devil” he joked, I smiled as I tilted my head analysing him. “Then we have that in common” he nodded his head using jokes to make me feel comfortable.

“I experienced a great traumatic experience last year when I went out on my own to rid me of my guilt” I started off, something about this man was calming like he was in control of everything. He had a peaceful side to him that could make anyone feel at peace and comfortable enough to share anything with. So, I did, for the first time in two years, I spoke without fear about everything that happened to me.

His expression changed and immediately saddened “I’m so sorry” he whispered making me emotional seeing his genuine concern for me. I immediately wiped my tears off my face. Dragon doesn’t show emotions. I reminded myself if I was caught by anyone in this state I’d be disgraced.

“Isabella, you are by far the strongest person I know and believe me I know a lot of people,” he stated I furrowed my eyebrows at him confused by his statement. I smiled before looking away, “no one should have had to endure what you went through, for that I’m sorry ... let me help you?” my head shot to him as my mouth slightly parted.

help me? I questioned in my head, “I wish you could” I replied in a low whisper, “the person I’ve become doesn’t run away, even if I desperately want to. Besides if I get caught, he won’t kill me, but he will kill you ... I can’t let him do that.” I felt hopeless, I was finally being offered a way out and I couldn’t take it. I smiled at him trying to reassure him I was fine.

“If I get out, I’ll get out on my own terms” I stated he studied my facial expressions before shaking his head feeling defeated, he let a sad smile take over his lips as he held my hands, “I tell this to my younger brother and sister and sometimes even my older brother. I only ever say this to them because I feel as a family, we are special. You will now be the first outsider I will ever say this to. Isabella ***you weren’t born to be soft and quiet, you were born to make the world shatter and shake at your fingertips.***” my eyes welled up as tears began to form hearing those words leave his lips, I smile as I squeeze his hands. “I know that now it’s time you know that ... and make everyone know it too. I don’t want every meeting of ours to be like this, I want to see you happy”

I hugged him as tight as I could and stayed like this for a minute before letting him go, “I can’t leave you here” he whispered like a concerned older brother. I looked him dead in the eye smiling with tears in my eyes “you can, and you will”

“You are the first person my heart opened up to since everything, the first and most likely the last person ... and in

the short amount of time I've known you I know one thing for sure. I can't lose you and I can't allow your family to lose you either." I saw the door of the office slowly open up I quickly stood up as I let go of his hands and walked away hoping Xavier didn't see Dante.

I quickly wipe my tears away as I hid all signs of emotions and waited for Xavier, "dragon" I looked at Xavier and faked a smile. He told me he had to finish something quick and for me to stay outside.

Ten minutes passed and he finally appears in front of me again, "Can we go" I frustratingly yelled in a hurry to leave. "Why are you in such a rush to leave?" he questioned eyeing me as if he knew something, my stomach twisted with worry as I continued to stare at him with a blank expression. "I felt sick inside, the smell was horrible" I answered him walking ahead.

"So, it wasn't because of that boy you didn't want me too, see?" My body immediately froze as my heart dropped to the bottom of my stomach. I did a sharp turn "what boy?" I asked trying to act oblivious. He shook his head laughing like an idiot, "what boy?! THE ONE YOU WERE HUGGING AND HOLDING HANDS THAT BOY." He roared as he began waving his knife in the air that was covered in blood. My hands immediately covered my mouth as I screamed, without thinking my I ran as fast as I could to find him.

Xavier stayed put allowing me to run past him, I ran behind an alleyway and saw a bloody man lying flat on the floor, "NO NO NO NO" I yelled feeling like I was reliving my nightmare, I grabbed his body and placed his head on my lap as I cried, his eyes slowly opened as he smiled and held my hand "**let them know bella**" he whispered before closing his eyes shut as I watched him die right in front of me. My cry became louder and harsher.

END OF FLASHBACK

I wiped the tear that escaped and quickly shook my head, "Isabella?" Lorenzo called out. "You zoned out for a good ten

minutes are you okay?" I smiled and nodded my head "I've been doing that a lot lately ... I'm fine don't worry about me" I smiled as I gestured for them to go outside. "I need to get out of this room, I'm feeling a little suffocated," I stated as my breathing began to become harsher.

We all got up and walked outside and sat in the garden as Lorenzo and Maria tried to desperately make me forget all that happened. Lorenzo suggested we all played monopoly laughing we agreed. Ariana also came to join the fun.

That was before Vincenzo decided to interrupt and fuck it all up. "Get your bags ready" all of our heads shot in his direction in complete confusion, he eyed me as a crazy smile appeared "time to use our bargaining tool. We leave tomorrow morning." Without a second glance he leaves, a frustrated sigh leaves my lips as it dawns on me that Vincenzo King is back to his old self, and a man of very few words.

Not feeling like playing anymore I stood up and stormed my way inside all the guards and men immediately moved out of my way, as soon as I approached the office doors his personal guards eyed me not moving. "Whatever threat he gave you trust me ... mine is worse" they both exchanged looks before slightly making room for me to open the door, staying calm I look at them both giving them a final warning.

In an unsettling calm voice, I order them "move" quickly moving to the side I open the door and burst in, "Spain? Tomorrow? Bargaining tool? Tell me what kind of world you're living in" I shouted the second I opened the doors, and to my surprise I see Aria sitting on his desk.

letting out a fake laugh I walk up to them within seconds and grab the girl by her arm and throw her out, "you can either wait outside or leave. This is gonna take some time" I turn to the guards who stare at me with a shocked expression, "do. not. let. her. in." They sharply nod their heads as they stand guard, "sometimes I wonder if they work for me or you" Vincenzo mutters, I turn on my heel and plaster a smile approaching his desk.

“I asked you a question, answer it” He looked at me takeback as he stood up and was now staring me dead in the eye, “who do you think you are to demand anything from me?” he questioned scoffing I smile “who do you think you are using me as a bargaining tool? Especially after everything.”

“Isabella get over it, you know exactly why you were kept here and you’re finally fulfilling your entire purpose of being here” I closed my eyes as I tried to calm myself down, **let them know** his voice echoed in my head.

“How about you get rid of that stick you have up your ass and wake the fuck up. I’m not a fucking toy you can play with when you’re bored or a thing you can use when it’s convenient for you” he shakes his head before walking back “You knew the reason for your stay here, don’t act like this is news to you ... Isabella I’m the boss my responsibilities are this mafia.” I cut him off “Responsibilities?” I shout, “How about your responsibility to me?” I shouted feeling the anger I bottled up from before finally coming out now.

“I’ll never let a single flame burn you” I repeat his words to him feeling the tears in my eyes begin to develop, looking up to stop them from flowing down. I look back at him as his emotions completely change, guilt. My features softening as I stared at him, shaking my head I quietly sat down on the couch. “I’m burnt.” I stood up to leave and felt Vincenzo’s hand grab my arm as he spun me around pulling me in him.

I look up at him “The difference between me and you ... I wasn’t afraid to try” I snatch my arm from his grasp and walk out. Aria was still at the door, rolling my eyes I walk past her “next time you throw me out like that you won’t be happy” I stopped in my tracks and spun around smiling at her. I slowly walked towards her until our faces were a few inches apart, I intimidatingly tilted my head slightly to the side as a sly grin overtook my lips, “your mind is playing tricks on you, don’t ever threaten me. Never ever think you’re capable of that.” I inched closer to her ear and in an unsettling whisper “I promise you will lose every time” winking at her I walked away.

It was almost 10 pm when all of a sudden, all the men began rushing out of the house, we all stood up on high alert. I saw Vincenzo putting his gun in his back pocket as he adjusted his leather jacket, I grabbed his arm to stop him from leaving. “What’s going on,” his mother asks, “that stupid gang is at our shipment causing trouble, Isabella’s ex” I instantly cringed hearing him call him my ex. “Not my ex, and what do you mean?” I asked as a sick feeling began in my stomach.

“The guy’s called and said Xavier’s men were there and were fucking everything up and wanted to send a message” my eyes widened at the familiar setting, “Vincenzo what did Xavier’s men say to your men” I spoke feeling rushed, “**serpiente**” my stomach dropped.

“**Serpiente**” I repeated “Vincenzo it’s a trap” I quickly rushed out. He took his arm out of my grasp before shaking his head “there is only a few men there” I shook my head again more viciously “that’s what they want you to think, Vincenzo, trust me it’s a trap”

“Isabella with all due respect stay out of my son’s business, he’s the boss, not you. If he say’s only a few men then that’s it.” his mum spoke out, frustratingly I ball my hands in a fist as I turn on my heel, “do you want to see your kids harmed? Or even having any of his men’s death on your hands?” I questioned her, not giving her time to reply I turn back to Vincenzo “Trust me on this one”

He shook his head and left.

THE TRAP

I stood there frozen as I watched him leave without another word, my mind was spinning, and everything felt fuzzy. “Vincenzo” I called out as the door slammed shut, “Vincenzo” the worry and fear laced his name as it left my lips in a hurry. as I went to hurl myself at him. Maria grabbed me from behind

along with Ariana as I fought them both to get out of their grip. “VINCENZO” I yelled as the fear officially sunk in.

Getting out of the girl’s grip I run outside to try and catch them, but the cars already took off, leaving nothing but a trail of dust in the air. I stand there as tears begin to blur my vision and fear of losing people dear to me overtakes me. I look over to my right and take off to the one person I know who would be able to help.

I rush into the house; all the men again immediately step aside as I dart for Hacker’s security room. “Hacker” I called out breathlessly. “Woah Isabella you, okay?” he asked as he stood up seeing my current state. I shook my head and grabbed him by his arms and ushered him to sit back down, “I need you to track Vincenzo now” hacker did a double take as he stared at me like I have officially lost my mind. “You want me to track the boss?” he asked trying to make me realise how stupid I sound to him.

I grabbed him by his shirt and started shaking him back and forth “HACKER NOW” I let go and he eyed me suspiciously before doing as I said, “why?” he asked as he was typing in the codes. “His being set up, wherever he’s going is a trap.”

“How can you be so sure?” he asked me I let out a sigh
“Serpiente”

FLASHBACK

I jumped on my motorcycle and speed off, the wind prickled at my skin as I increased my speed. I smirked feeling completely new ... completely free. When I watched Dante lay on my lap dying, that was also the day Isabella Knight died. I am and will always be Dragon, a girl who broke her heart before anyone can break it.

Xavier tried to break me, and he did, months in that dark cell. No human contact, torture and no sleep as the fear of what would happen if you simply shut your eyes and let your guard down were scarier then staring the devil in the face. Xavier

broke me, but he broke the wrong parts of me. He broke my wings, but he forgot I had claws.

Life taught me that it's not a fairy tale, it will drag you through hell and it'll whisper **you're not strong enough to survive the storm**, what you whisper back is what will determine your life. I zoomed past the cars and in and out of lanes as everything began to blur together.

I smirked as I realised what my answer is, I whispered to the air **"I am the storm"** as I accelerated. The smirk never leaving my lips. Finally arriving at the abandoned warehouse, I step off my bike taking off my helmet and quickly brushing my fingers through my hair. I grab my guns out as I aim both of them at the guards on each side as I slowly approach the doors.

"Pst" getting their attentions they both turn around in shocked and go to reach for their gun's but they were too slow, shooting both of them in the head I walk up to the wall and press my back up against it waiting for the man guarding the other door to spot the men laying on the floor in their own blood.

"que carajo" he rushed out as he reached for his gun. Kicking it out of his hand then aiming both my guns at his head I pursed my lips as I warned him to be quit. "Shhhhh" the fear in his eyes as he stared at me sent shivers down my spine as I smiled enjoying his current state. "Open the door" I demanded in a whisper. He swallowed his fear in one gulp and stood up slowly, "no intentes nada estúpido no tengo ningún problema en matarte ¿Entendido?" (don't try anything stupid I have no problem killing you got it?)

He nodded his head as he opened the door, immediately I noticed five armed men. I stayed on the side hidden from sight as I nodded at the man to move, he took out his gun and aimed it at my head. Wrong move.

I shot him in the head faster than he had time to put his finger on the trigger, I stepped into view as the man falling to the ground alerted the rest of them. I extended my arms as I shot

two of the men who stepped towards me, going inside I flipped one of the tables taking cover as bullets began flying my way. I looked to my right and shot two guards then quickly peaking over the table and shooting the remainder two in the head.

Everyone on the floor dead I stood up and saw his men trying to get him out of here before I kill him. Looking around the warehouse trying to come up with a plan I smirk as I jump and pull myself up by the pipe and swing myself on the next floor as I stand in front of them.

Grabbing my guns from my back pocket I aim it at their heads as I smirk, “¿A dónde vamos chicos?” (Ready to play girls) I asked excited as I waited for them to answer, they aimed their guns at me as I shot both of them in the hands resulting in them dropping their guns. I watch as their guns land on the bottom floor smiling, I look back up at them.

The grip their hands in pain as they let out a scream, “Oh how their screams make me tingle.” I walk closer to them as they stand up to fight me, to protect that scum standing behind them. Throwing my guns behind me, I duck one of the man’s hooks and twist his arm behind his back and I kick the man behind me in his stomach. Pushing the man off the floor his body falls to the bottom making a loud smacking sound. I turn around and knee the man as he grips his stomach.

He falls flat on his stomach probably passed out; I push him off the floor as well. No witnesses. I heard footsteps as my head snapped back up as the coward tried running away. Slamming my fist on the rail I let out a groan. Running to the opposite end near the door I jump off and land in front of him.

“Going somewhere?” I spat out as I grabbed him by his hair and threw him outside, I aimed my gun at the man’s chest as I watched his chest rise and fall at a fast pace, “Where is she?” I asked as he kept his mouth shut, I aimed my gun at the sky and shot. His body jumped at the sound as he tried to move back and far from me. Kicking his face as he stayed on the

floor looking at me as he pleaded with his eyes for me to let him go. “Were. Is. She.”

“Inside the locker” He pointed at the locker inside as I eyed him suspiciously, “open it” I spoke back calmly as I ushered with my gun for him to get up. He stood up slowly as he walked towards the locked locker, taking out a key he opened the lock and opened the locker revealing a shaking girl tied up, with a gag in her mouth and material wrapped around her eyes.

Smiling I look back at the guy who kidnapped her, shooting him in the head. The girl jumps as she lets out a muffled scream. I put my gun back in my back pocket and quickly take the gag out of her mouth. She screams “please don’t kill me, I was just looking for my sister” My heart tugged as I heard her words. I shut my eyes as I grabbed her arm and helped her out of the tight locker. Her body was trembling as I held her, I walked her outside and saw cars swerve and park in front of me, men coming out holding guns as they approached me. Smirking at Xavier I pointed at the warehouse then pointed right indicating where his stolen goods were stashed.

He eyed me up and down looking at the girl, he went to touch her I gripped his arm as I pulled him down to me and stared at him. I tilt my head upwards, my eyebrows slightly raised as my eyes widened and my lips in a straight line. I shook my head slowly before letting go and taking the girl with me.

I put her in one of the cars and closed the doors, I turned to Mateo and pulled him aside so she wouldn’t hear me. “I need you to take that girl back home, reassure her in the car that she’s okay and nothing will ever happen to her. Make sure you leave the material on her eyes until you reach city streets. Call me when she gets there” Mateo eyed me, but didn’t ask any questions knowing I wasn’t planning on answering anything. “Go” he nodded his head and headed in the car, I watched as they took off and smiled. **“I was just looking for my sister”**

I walked back inside and saw Xavier looking at all the dead bodies on the floor, then back at me as he shook his head “you

took on all these men alone ... and you don't even have a scratch. How?"

"Be like a snake, mesmerising to look at, soft to touch but full of venom." I answered him, "a snake?" he asked as he eyed me full of judgment. I laughed and pointed at him

"you see that right there, your arrogance. Your readiness to step on anyone or anything you don't understand. Your arrogance to look down on what you deem worthless. That's what will get you bitten ... and that's what got them bitten" I gesture to the bodies lying on the floor.

I turn on my heel and walk away getting on my motorcycle Xavier stands in front of my bike, "finish" he demands, sighing I place my helmet on my lap and lean on it, "**Serpiente**" I whispered, he looked at me with his full attention as he grew interested in every word I had to say. "**Serpiente** was an ancient term to allow men within their groups to know there planning a sly attack on the enemy a phrase not many use anymore ... Snakes are sly creatures, they move about without a sound. Nothing to let you know or warn you of its presence. The only time you are aware of the Serpiente is when it wants you to know ... and by then it's too late." I shrug my shoulders, "you already fall prey to its bite and once its locked its fangs in you the only way out is to die." I smiled remembering my dad telling me the story as a little girl, I look back up at Xavier as I study his facial expressions. He looks amazed by the meaning behind Serpiente, "**let's bring back the tradition**" **He smiled.**

END OF FLASHBACK

"That's how I know it's a trap ... he wanted me to hear the message, because he knows only, I would understand it." Hacker nods his head slowly as he lets my story sink in, shaking my head I look at the computer screens understanding nothing as a million codes appear. "Got it" he shouts, sending me the address now.

I rush out of the house and towards the head sniper his names Michael but everyone calls him by his nickname Bullseye, he

never misses. He looks at me with a slightly terrified expression knowing how unpredictable I am. “you’re coming with me” I smile at him, “now” I demand. He looks at me with caution before deciding it would just be better to listen to me than fight me. He nods his head and asks me to lead the way, I jump on the motorcycle I’ve come to adore and order him to go by car and meet me at the location I sent him.

Grabbing what he needed he puts his rifle in the car and takes off behind me. I only had one thing on my mind, get them out alive. Increasing my speed every time the feeling in my stomach worsened. The closer we got to pier 57 the more I felt sick, parking the bike in front of the abandoned two-story factory I usher for bullseye to follow me to the roof, close behind we walk up the flight of stair as my eyes immediately search for Vincenzo.

When I see him alive my nerves calmed down.

Vincenzo’s POV

The entire ride to the pier, consisted of me thinking about Isabella. The lightning of electricity that shot through me when she grabbed my arm, the way my body lit on fire when I saw the worry in her eyes that I was being led to a trap. Never in my life did I allow myself to feel things like this, and she came out of nowhere and interrupted my entire world and I didn’t care ... and that scared me more than anything.

Isabella Knight, a force to be reckoned with. A girl who holds so much power but restrains it out of fear her flame is too hot, if only she knew I was ready to burn. I stared at the open road as I replay everything in my head. Aria coming to see me and alert me of talk amongst rival’s that they finally found my weakness, that they will use her to take my throne.

I couldn’t care less about my seat, but I couldn’t be selfish ... not with her. I had to let her think she wasn’t of any importance to me because if she believes I don’t care, then the rest will too. It’s funny how we both expressed our hatred to one another but never love, I shook my head trying to gain focus.

Lorenzo parked the car as we all stepped out, we had a few men with us not to many seeing that it was only two of Xavier's men on our territory, I wave my men away and usher them to let go of the boys they're holding down. I usher at Lorenzo and Luca as they approach the boys and kick them in the back of their knee and make them kneel. Four men standing behind me I look down at the boys "did your boss really think two of you can ruin a Kings shipment?"

"Of course, not" I looked over my shoulder and saw him approaching. "Xavier" I stated as I studied his posture. "Hello boy, funny seeing you here" he laughed out as he plastered a cocky smirk sending my stomach to twist and turn. Something felt off, I kept silent as he continued talking. "How's my Bella" he asked, my hands balled in a fist and my jaw clenched automatically at the mention of her name coming out of his mouth.

"If I hear you say my girls name one more time, I'm going to break your jaw." I threatened him calmly as I calmed down, knowing she's at home safe. I shook my head praying that she for once stayed put.

"Ah I see you're a little touchy about her son" he drifted off as he looked up at the sky then back at his shoes like he was reminiscing. My body tensed up, narrowing my eyes as I stare at him with pure disgust. "She went through a lot, granted it was because of me, but did she make a lot of enemies along the way. A smart woman is a beautiful woman, a beautiful woman is a dangerous woman. Granted again she was only a girl when I had her" he smirked as he looked down then back up "until I forcibly made her a women-" My fist collided with his jaw in an instant hearing those words come out of him.

Lorenzo pulled me off the bastard as he spat out the blood and looked back at me "She's dangerous ... intimidating and those reasons alone are too much for some. She cared though; she tried not too but she cared ... for a while she carried some of the dead weight she swore to shed. It wasn't easy letting

everyone and everything go as she become who she was ... Dragon.” His eyes bulged as he spoke of her criminal name “After all you can’t force a flower to bloom, it does so at its own pace, under the right conditions. In her case death, torture and darkness helped her become dragon. And there was no going back, only growth. Only forward, I suppose that’s what the thorns were for. Whether you could handle her or not, you sure as hell would feel her.” He finished off as he wiped the blood from his mouth.

“You stand here proudly speaking of the trauma you put her through, and you wonder why she never loved you?” I spoke as I stared him down, “I made her what she was destined to be, a weapon” I shook my head as I wiped the corner of my mouth with my thumb. “Now you will watch as she destroys you for destroying her” I spat. He nodded his head “I’m surprised she wasn’t here with you ... did you not give her my message” he smirked as realisation sunk in.

It’s a trap.

THE INITIAL D.K

Vincenzo’s POV

“È UNA TRAPPOLA” (it’s a trap) I yelled out as we all drew out our guns. His men came out from behind the docks as they began shooting at us. All our men were down Lorenzo stood by me as we had our guns aimed at Xavier and the men.

Xavier put his hand up and told the men to stand down, “pleasures all mine” he pulled out his gun and aimed it at my head, Lorenzo then aims the gun at Xavier’s head daring him to pull the trigger. I put my hand up telling Lorenzo to stand down not wanting to get him killed because of me. He hesitantly put it down cursing in Italian.

“Lorenzo go” I demanded, he looked at me like I officially lost my mind. “GO” I roared, he walked back and then began running to the car. I’d never forgive myself if he got hurt

trying to protect me, I rather die than him get a scar because of me.

“What are you waiting for? DO IT!” I roared, veins in my neck popping out as my entire body tensed up. As he goes to shoot, he drops the gun holding his wrist as blood pools out of it. One by one his men begin falling. Faster than you can count, they were dropping like flies. “Dragon” Xavier whispered as he ran off along with the men who survived.

I stand there and look up at the abandoned warehouse squinting my eyes, I see a black silhouette on the roof before it disappears. “Vincenzo” my head snaps turning around, and Xavier shoots his gun. With the air being knocked out of me I fall to the floor. “VINCENZO” I faintly heard Lorenzo yell and then not being able to breathe I **surrender to the light**.

Isabella’s POV

As I saw Xavier hold the gun to Vincenzo’s head, I knew it was time. I shut my eyes as I allowed myself only for a moment to go back to my old self. Opening my eyes, a sadistic smile formed on as I pulled the trigger hitting Xavier in the wrist to drop the gun.

Then one by one taking out his men, before they all scattered like little rats.

I stood up and quickly packed the gun away and handed it back to sniper. “If anyone asks, you shot them. You did it, take the credit okay? I was never here” he shook his head as he went to fight me “but it wasn’t me, you saved boss. I don’t want the credit.” I shook my head “I was never here” I repeated adding more of a dominating tone to my phrase as I started him down point my finger at him.

He let out a sigh and nodded his head “You’re just as crazy as he is you know that?” I smirked “but more terrifying” I winked smiling at the distant memory. He stayed silent as I ran past him and hopped back on my motorcycle and went home.

I sighed as I quickly snuck back in the house, peaking through the kitchen door everyone was sitting on the couch looking worried. I took in a deep breath as I prepared myself for my performance.

I stormed inside like a madwoman, “shouldn’t they be back by now?!” I yelled, everything looked at me worry still never leaving their face. “They probably are talking with the men that came to pick up the shipment. That’s why they’re taking longer” his mum tried to reassure herself, I flung my hands in the air “It’s a trap. I’m telling you, and you are all acting so ignorant trying to convince yourself that it isn’t. IS IT SO HARD TO BELIEVE ME?” A small part of me was no longer acting as my frustration level’s rose.

Maria phone rang, and I closed my eyes as I felt my heart tug. I hissed in pain as I crouched down a little and held my chest with the palm of my hand. “Lorenzo are you-” I looked up as my facial expressions dropped. “Vincenzo’s been shot and he’s unresponsive” My entire body went into shock, and I yelled “WHAT”

“Where are they?” Maria asked Lorenzo and he explained he needed to take him to a local hospital not wanting to risk his brother’s life and take the time to drive all the way back here. We all gather our stuff and immediately rush to the door, but I froze in my spot hearing the cry of his mum.

I turned around “are you not coming?” she shook her head in a state of panic as her entire body began shaking at the thought of stepping out of her estate. My head swarmed with emotions as I watched her in such a state. I’m so used to seeing her polished and always with her head held high but right now ... she looked like a wounded puppy. “If I can’t leave now, when will I ever leave” she cried to herself. Ariana pushed past me and went to aid her mum, “Isabella go, I’ll catch up” she softly called out. I nodded my head and turned around to go “Isabella” his mum called out my name, halting I look back “take care of my baby ... please” I nodded my head and rushed to one of the cars.

Maria sat next to me as she clutched my hand. I looked at our intertwined hands as my mind went blank, how? How! How did this happen? I was there I left, and he was the only one standing. I lost my touch, tears began streaming down my face at the thought of premaritally losing him, the thought made me want to ram my head through the glass.

“He’ll be okay Bella” Maria whispered as she kissed the side of my head, closing my eyes the tears poured down my cheeks as I prayed for the best. Please don’t leave me ... please.

x

The car came to a halt jolting me awake, we all swarmed out of the car like bees as we ran inside the hospital. I stormed to the receptionist, “Vincenzo King” I called out she looked at me and asked for my relation, “where is he!” I cut to the chase. “Ma’am I’m not permitted to disclose such information until I know the-” I cut her off slamming my hands on the desk “WHERE IS HE” feeling every single rational part of me fade away as I slipped into the darkness.

“Isabella” Lorenzo called out, Maria quickly ran to him and embraced him. I walk up to him and point my finger at him “where?” He nodded his head as he escorted us to the waiting room and explained to us what happened. My eyes burn with tears hearing the truth behind his fall, Xavier.

Once again, he was the one eliminating the people in my life until I’m alone. I stood up frustrated balling my hands into a fist I slam them down the glass table shattering it. “I told you. I told both of you. It was a trap. IT WAS A TRAP, BUT NO ONE LISTENED. NO ONE TOOK THE WARNING AND NOW LOOK WHAT HAPPENED.” My anger, sadness, frustration every single emotion crawling up my throat.

Blood flowed down my fingers as tears streamed down my eyes. My face was hot, eyes slightly widened as my lips fall into a straight line. “Isabella-” Lorenzo goes to calm me down, “NO. NO.” I pointed my finger at him yelling “What? Isabella what? WHAT” I look up as I feel my chest tightening.

The surgeon comes out and approaches us. We all focus our attention on her in an instant “is he okay?” She nodded her head slowly “The bullet wound just missed his heart. He’s going to be okay, but he needs rest, it also might take time before he is upon his feet. Trouble walking is common, and you’ll need someone to change his gauze” We nodded our heads and asked if we could see him. “He’s currently sleeping but you are allowed to see him, no longer than five minutes. He needs to sleep” we nod our heads and walk into the room.

I stopped at the door as the sight of him lying in the bed helpless and vulnerable made my insides turn and my heart stop beating. He could’ve died because of me because Xavier is after me. Like the rest of them, he died because he was fighting for me. I closed my eyes shut; I will make hell rain on you Xavier.

Lorenzo and Maria walked up to me hesitantly, “you need to get some rest” I shook my head wiping the tears off my face and taking a deep breath “I’m staying. You guys go home and get some rest” they nodded their heads not wanting to push me further as I’m already on the edge of raining hell on earth.

Taking a slow deep breath I walk closer towards Vincenzo, standing at the edge of his bed I couldn’t help but break down, I sat down on the chair next to the bed and leaned my head on the metal stand. “Vincenzo, I told you don’t go. Not to boss you around, but because I was scared” I whimpered. “I was scared of this very situation. Please be okay” I whispered as I gripped his hand and getting no reaction back.

Biting my bottom lip to stop myself from crying, I let out and looked up at the roof as I drifted off.

FLASHBACK

I sat at the edge of the hospital bed, as I watched Alex’s heart rate. Feeling completely numb, I shook my head and sat down with a blank expression on my face as I contemplated why I

don't feel anything at all. Not fear, not sadness, not anger ... nothing.

"How is he?" without even flinching or moving a muscle I answered Xavier, "like you care" I spoke in an ordinary tone as I continued to look into space, "look at me when I talk to you" he spat. Not giving him a reaction, he grabbed me by my jaw and forced my face to look at his.

I pinch his nerve on his wrist and twist his arm behind his back and kick him behind his knee. He knelt and I bent down to his ear "I'm not that little girl you left to die anymore." I harshly whispered as I twisted his arm further, he let out a groan of discomfort. "Touch me again, and I will make hell look like a walk in the park compared to what I will do to you. You're getting weak old man. Remember that" I let go of his arm and pushed him down.

I walked back up to Alex on the bed as I stroked his hair, all he did was ask if I was okay and the bastard shot him. Why? to remind me he is in control that anyone who shows interest in me will be killed in cold blood. That he was the only one allowed to do anything when it came towards me.

That was when I shut off all emotions towards everyone and everything. I was numb all the time, the only thing I knew was anger, I turned around and looked at Xavier who was still on the floor. "You put everyone I love in a hospital bed... or a grave. I won't love anymore" I stated and then bent down to his level as I put his chin up with my index finger. I smiled baring teeth "you smile" he commented as he thought I was being affectionate towards him. "Most species bare their teeth, as a threat. As a display of aggression ... of leadership. It's a reminder that these clenched jaws can and will tear open your throat." he gulped and tried to cough to hide his reaction as he pulled at his neck. Smirking "I want you to think of this the next time I smile"

END OF FLASHBACK

I sighed at my memory, years ago I stood in a situation that almost mirrored this one, but this time I was petrified. I closed

my eyes as I smiled to myself in pity thinking about my state.

I have never been ashamed of my past and I have never been ashamed of myself especially when I went by Dragon. It was a time of pure darkness, I let out a puff of air as I smirked. What is darkness? The definition is the absence of light. You cannot see darkness. Darkness cannot exist with light. Darkness cannot be explained, darkness only comes when everything else has gone. When you no longer have light ... darkness is nothing and then ... it becomes everything.

I look at Vincenzo as he still layed their unconscious, I inched closer and smiled. "If you could see yourself right now, I can just imagine the tantrum you would throw" I giggled softly imagining him throwing a fit to leave and put on clothes that don't expose his backside. I sat and stared at him for a while, as creepy as it sounded, he was so calm and serene.

I looked up at the window then back at him "When I was in your office, I saw a bunch of books... one looked particularly warn out so I read it ... do you want me to tell you the story?" no answer, just the sound of him breathing and the heart rate machine filled the room. Smiling through teary eyes "Well you're not awake to fight me and I can't keep quiet or still otherwise I think I'll have a breakdown." I chuckled imagining his aggravated response to me talking too much.

"On Mount Olympus a young deity paraded herself. She was the goddess of spring, and her youthful beauty attracted the male deities. Her name was Cora, but she would go by Persephone. Demeter her mother was overprotective and shielded the young girl from the Olympic gods, she wanted her young daughter to maintain her purity and virginity. So the goddess of agriculture kept Aphrodite and her son's arrows away from her daughter. The divinities of love did not want to have another divinity in Olympus immune to their influence and planned an attack on the young goddess." I smiled as I traced the king tattoo on his hand.

"Far from Olympus in the depths of the earth was another god who lived free from the influence of the gods of love his name

was Hades. The king of the underworld. The endless tasks of managing his kingdoms never allowed Hades to think of anything else but his work” I stopped as I saw resemblance in Hades and Vincenzo.

“But a great trimmer disturbed the kingdom of Hades. He then rose to the surface to see what was happening the Edna volcano was erupting a sign that taylor the monster imprisoned by Zeus was unhappy. That was when Hades heard a sweet voice coming from a nearby forest, in the woods Persephone sang without realising that anyone was watching her. Aphrodite and her sons noticed Hades’ interest in Persephone, and wanted to take the opportunity, the god of passion and love shot the heart of the god with one of his golden arrows which instilled desire and passion in the heart of Hades.” I continued as my mind drifted off imaging the scene taking place in front of me.

“Consumed by passion Hades approached the spring goddess, who did not feel his approach. Hades tried to flirt with the young woman, but she resisted. Hades then grabbed his beloved and the earth opened so that he can return to his domain. With the goddess in his arms, the god of the dead descended into a tunnel to his kingdom. Persephone was very agitated and was locked in a room in Hades’ palace until she became calmer” I laughed at the irony, as I smiled and closed my eyes trying to stop myself from crying and continue.

“Although she felt attracted by the god, she was still trying to push him away, despite his confession of love. Her mother started to get stressed not knowing where her daughter was. So, she wandered the world in search of Persephone, after much searching she found one who used to accompany her daughter and explained how Hades kidnapped her taking her to the underworld. Her mother was furious and would not forgive Gaia goddess of the earth, who had been an accomplice to her daughter’s abduction.” I went to continue but my throat grew dry, and the lump began to form.

“You need to wake up so we can find out how the story ends” I whispered, as I was about to let go of his hand, I felt his grip

tighten around mine as I laughed out through tears.

I called the nurse as they rushed in making sure everything was okay internally, after alerting me that he should wake soon and that he was okay they left the room. I rested my head on his chest as he didn't ease his grip around my hand, I slowly fell asleep.

x

I felt someone stroke my hair, causing me to slowly open my eyes. Through blurry vision I didn't see anyone in the room, I jolted awake as I sat upright and saw Vincenzo awake. I smiled as a relieved sigh left my lips as I hugged him. He winced slightly and I immediately got off him "sor-" he cut me off and pulled me back down to him.

I closed my eyes as I rested my head in the crook of his neck, I heard him deeply inhale then exhale as he tightened his grip on me. I stood upright as I smiled at him through exhausted eyes, he looked at me with pity "Have you been here all night?" I nodded my head slowly "Couldn't leave you here all alone" I smirked as he shook his head "I'm used to it" he muttered my smile dropped as I saw a more broken side of him shine through.

I shook my head as Lorenzo, Maria and Ariana walked in, "You're awake" Lorenzo stated feeling relieved. "Fratello" Ariana calls out as tears escape her eyes as she bends to hug him. Maria stands next to me as she whispers in my ear "you killed his men didn't you" I looked at her as I shook my head "I was at the house" Maria lets out air as she looks at me "PFT year okay, Isabella no one knows you as well as me, you can't stay put to save your life ... I mean that literally" hinting at the times I risked my life by putting myself in dangerous situations.

I shook my head as I heard the heart monitor go to a flat line, my heart beating fast I snap my head at Vincenzo seeing him throw a tantrum about wanting to leave and how he is fine. He struggled sitting up, so Lorenzo bent down and helped him sit up straight and immediately Vincenzo went quiet as he looked

at us with raised eyebrows and slightly widened eyes “What-why do I feel a draft on my back?” I muffled a laugh as I covered my mouth. I told you he would chuck a tantrum, I mentally told Maria as I smirked. He let out a painful groan as he lifted himself up using the metal steel, I aided him and helped him stand up “you can barely stand up, would you just sit down?” I begged “I’m fine and don’t need to be here, Lorenzo get my clothes”

Cops walked in as they smiled at Vincenzo “Vincenzo” they greeted him, he smiled timidly as he muttered curse words in Italian. “Officers”

“We have a few questions if you don’t mind” He nodded his head knowing he can’t refuse and sat back down slowly, “how did you get the gunshot wounds?” he looked at the bandaged wound on his chest then back up at the officers “wrong place wrong time” he answered him short and sweet. “Where were you?” Vincenzo wandered as he looked down with furrowed eyebrows, “I- I really don’t remember” the officers looked at him before nodding their heads. They continued to ask questions which Vincenzo dodged and went in circles before they stood up to leave, “if you remember anything give us a call” He nodded his head as the officers left.

“This is why we have our own personal hospital on site.” He told Lorenzo, Lorenzo shrugged his shoulders laughing “It was nice seeing someone interrogating you for a change and not me” I shook my head “can you help me put him back down, ask the cops for handcuffs if you got to” Lorenzo laughed and snapped his fingers pointing at me.

“Not a bad idea, OFFICERS SIR” he called out before Ariana slapped him on the back of his head, Lorenzo looked at her with his mouth parted as he rubbed the back of his head “you bitch”

I rolled my eyes as I sensed a sibling fight, Vincenzo still upright grabbed his clothes and went to walk in the bathroom to change, “Vincenzo you can’t-” he cut me off “If you won’t

help me leave.” He snapped wanting to just get out of the hospital and back home. I stared at him for a moment “fine”

Knowing no one else was going to help change him and if I didn't, he was going to do it on his own and most likely hurt himself even more. I sat him down on the chair in the bathroom as I took off his gown, leaving him in only his boxers. I sucked in a breath looking at his frame, trying to rescue myself I coughed as I grabbed his black T-shirt and slipped it over his head, he threaded his right arm through as I aided him with his left. I guided his arm through the hole of the T-shirt inches from his face. I stand there for a second as his eyes never leave mine.

I looked down and bent down and threaded his feet through the black jeans, pulling them up. I grabbed his hands and helped him stand up as he gripped the sidebars while I lifted his pants up.

Still, on my knees, I help the hem of his jeans as my eyes trailed up and looked at him while I bit my lips. He shut his eyes closed sharply breathing in while I zip up the jeans and button them closed.

Slowly standing back up straight inches from each other, I grew uncomfortable at the sudden closeness after our harsh breakup I step back a little and brush my hands through my hair. “Come on” I whisper as I grab his hands again and escort him out of the bathroom and on the wheelchair Lorenzo got. “I got it, Isabella, you beat us outside in the car” I nodded my head and rushed out with Ariana and Maria while Lorenzo and Vincenzo get discharged.

We sat in the car waiting for the guys to come as Ariana stares at me sadness in her eyes, “Isabella ... I'm sorry for how things ended with Vincenzo” I looked up at her and tried to plaster a smile I shook my head “It's not your fault, I'm fine” I lied as I looked out the window and tried to drift off.

“I know my brother; you could see the love he has for you simply by the way he looks at you. There has to be a reason why he left you, it cant be because of his statuer ... there's

more to it” she drifted off, not really caring I kept my gaze fixated on the window as I watched the branches of the trees flow in the wind and the flowers as I smiled reminding myself there is beauty in this world if you look for it.

The door opened and Lorenzo helped Vincenzo in as he put the wheelchair in the back and sat down. My eyes peaked at Vincenzo as I watched him sit with his head leaned on the headrest. He balled his hand in a fist as he clenched his jaw, he was in pain but didn’t want to show it.

I shook my head focusing back on the window as I watched as everything flew by as we drove. He was good at hiding his emotions, wonder how long it took him to master the art of deception, but it was hard to hide deceive a deceiver. Vincenzo got on a phone call immediately going back to business, “we won’t be able to attend the meeting tonight in Spain, can we reschedule it for tomorrow night?” he went quiet before thanking the man on the phone and hanging up.

“Guess you won’t be able to use me yet huh?” I muttered not looking him in the eye, “not yet” he responded. “Not ever” I bit back. “I really don’t see how you have much of a choice” still looking out the window I smiled “Don’t underestimate me Italy, I can many things, but your bitch is not one of them.” I lifted my head off the window as I turned my head to him “remember that”

I saw his eyes glaze over as it looked like he went into deep thought as he sat back and got lost in whatever he was thinking about. After a few minutes, I see the gates of hell, as his men armed slowly open up the gate of the house to let us in. Parking the car Lorenzo helped Vincenzo out as I darted towards the dogs sitting outside, a genuine smile overtaking my lips as I pet them before I sense Vincenzo’s stare and walk inside.

I go to my room and get in the shower and take a nap feeling the exhaustion completely take over.

“Isabella” I felt someone shake me awake as I looked up and saw Lorenzo inches from my face, grabbing a pillow I smack him across the head with it. “Fuck” he falls “did I scare you?” I smirk in the pillow closing my eyes “Nope”

Feeling the impact of the pillow I jolt up “what? the sight of you freaked me out I thought Shrek was in the bed” he shuddered earning a death stare from me as I fixed my hair.

“What do you want?” I asked frustrated, “Vincenzo needs a shower and uh ... No amount of money is gonna make me shower him.” I stared at him with wide eyes “No” I shook my head “I just told him I wasn’t his bitch, now I’m going to go shower him? Ha, I think not” Lorenzo pleaded with his eyes “No Lorenzo, get one of the servants to do it.” I lay back down on the bed as I close my eyes trying to go back to sleep.

“I’ll probably just ask Aria-” I practically flew up as I stood on my feet, “No, no. It’s fine I’ll do it the poor thing just got shot. I’ll help him” I rushed out not wanting her anywhere near Vincenzo, the thought of her touching him and being in such quarters made my blood boil.

I walked into Vincenzo’s bedroom as he sat on the chair on the balcony blowing out smoke. I raised my eyebrow at him and lightly knocked on the frame of the door before walking on the balcony next to him, “what are you doing here?” he asked more confused than anything else, I think I was the last person he expected to help him. Well I thought I’d be the last person as well but he was the first person to help me whenever I got hurt or wounded.

“Don’t push it” I warned him, he went quiet, but a sly smirk came over his lips I smiled and shook my head choosing to ignore it. As I leaned on the edge of the railing staring out at the view. “I didn’t know you smoked” I spoke up turning my head to look at him, “sometimes we need to kill ourselves a little to stay alive...” I looked at him curiously as I asked, “So which part of you are you killing tonight?”

How can someone smoking be such a turn on? I bit my bottom lip watching him as he dragged out a breath and slowly

blowing the smoke back out, “fear” he answered me. I tilted my head slightly “from what?” I asked curiosity getting the better of me.

He put out the smoke and looked back up at me “you” I straightened my head and slowly straightened my posture as I put a strand of my hair behind my ear, “Come on” I helped him stand up as we walked to the bathroom.

I adjust the temperature of the water to his liking and slowly undressed him, our eyes never breaking away from one another. I looked at the water and realised to shower him I’m going to have to go in and I didn’t want my clothes wet.

Taking in a deep breath I slowly pull my shirt over my head and toss it to the side; Vincenzo’s eyes rank my body as he studies every inch of me fearing this might be the last time, he’ll ever see me. I take off my tracksuit and toss it near my shirt. Standing in front of him in just my bra and underwear I let out a shaky breath and help him inside.

The water falls on both of our skin I sit him down on the chair as he closes his eyes looking up at the showerhead. I admire his physic and his utter vulnerability at this moment. I walk behind him and grab the shampoo bottle squirting a bit in the palm of my hand as I slowly massage the product in his hair.

He hummed as my fingers massaged his scalp, “close your eyes” I softly whisper as his head goes under the water to rinse the shampoo out of hair, I repeat the same process with the conditioner.

Grabbing the body wash and squeezing it on the luffa as I scrubbed his back. The bubbles covering his many tattoos, tilting my head to calmly analysis the permanent ink. I stand in front of him as I hear him breathe in my scent and relax his body under my touch. I scrubbed his chest softly then travelling down.

I stand upright as I feel his hands softly rest on my hips as he pulls me in. Closing my eyes, I bit my lip. This type of affection was new for Vincenzo, he was vulnerable a part of

me yearned for this moment but now that it's here I had more questions than anything else. I stayed in this position before resting my forehead on his.

Our lips were inches apart my heart rate surprisingly calm as I felt relaxed in his arms, "I'm becoming weak because of you" his voice echoed in my ear as I snapped out of it and stepped away. "Isabella-" I cut him off softly "Come on" I turned off the water and wrapped him a towel and walked him to the bedroom.

I quickly wrapped myself in a towel before I approached him. He sat on the bed with the towel wrapped around his torso, "Come on" I softly whispered as I grabbed his clothes out, "Isabella don't do that" feeling completely helpless and numb I snap.

"Do what Vincenzo? DO WHAT?" He closed his eyes tensing his jaw, "This" he waves his hand between us I shake my head laughing "This" I wave at the distance between us "Is what you wanted remember?"

I put my hands up "I refuse to fight you for not wanting me, I won't be that girl that begs for you. I'm here to help you and once you get better, I'll be back to how it was when we met. Cold and distant" He fell silent as he looked down closing his eyes.

I shook my head not in the mood to argue as I approached him with a plain white T-shirt "Come" I inched closer to him as my hands traced over one of his tattoos as my heart stopped. "Vincenzo" I softly spoke his name, he looked up and followed my gaze "what's the meaning behind this?" I asked terrified of his answer.

He smiled softly "It's something my brother told me once" my heart picking up speed as my breath got caught in my throat, he read out the tattoo "**You weren't born to be soft and quiet. You were born to make the world shatter and shake at your fingertips. D.K**"

Dante ...

THE LETTER

Isabella's POV

I felt my heart trying to escape through my throat, my head was in chaos as my entire body tensed. "Isabella?" he called my name his tone laced with concern and confusion. I go to open my mouth but couldn't form words as I felt like it was impossible to appropriately function. Dante King, my eyes laced over in tears recalling his last moments in my lap.

I shut my eyes closed as the guilt I buried away resurfaced; my stomach was in a knot my heartbeat was racing like it was going to break free at any given moment. "Isabella" he grabbed my arms trying to register what was wrong with me I kept my head down and eyes shut feeling too ashamed to look him in the eye.

Your brother died because he cared about me, he died because he wanted to help me, he died because he was concerned about a 16-year-old with a dangerous criminal background, he died because he was worried about a girl who was being abused by a middle-aged man. I killed your brother.

A lump formed in my throat as I suddenly found it hard to breathe, I stand to keep myself steady placing my hand on the floor as I felt my chest beginning to tighten. "No, no, no" I was panting, and my breathing became harsher and harsher. **YOU KILLED HIS BROTHER. HIS BROTHER IS DEAD BECAUSE OF YOU. HE DIED BECAUSE EVERYONE THAT ENTERS YOUR LIFE GET'S SWALLOWED IN A PIT OF DARKNESS. YOU. KILLED. HIS. BROTHER.**

"Isabella" he called my name trying to get me on my feet. Feeling overwhelmed I cried, he immediately embraced me in his arms as he stroked my hair to calm me down whispering in my ear. I pushed him off me "no I don't deserve your warmth." I harshly spat feeling disgusted with myself.

I looked up at him as the shock finally kicked in, I looked him in the eye and my heart ached even further seeing his genuine

concern and worry for me. I swallowed any lingering emotion of guilt and chose to be selfish and stay quiet. “I- I just re-envisioned my parent’s death, sorry” I whispered softly. He seemed to calm down slightly as he embraced me in a hug, I sunk into him feeling safe in his arms.

But my heart broke knowing if he knew the truth he would spit in my face. I would spit in my face. I wiped the tears away and stood up as I finished dressing him, I smiled and got up to leave. “Isabella ... I’m here” he whispered, “you can talk to me or not talk to me, but I’m here.”

I looked at the floor chewing my bottom lip before I looked back up again “I know” I smiled and closed the door softly. I felt a stone sitting on my chest as I shut my eyes closed, I rested my head on the door before sinking down and hugging my knees.

How can I look any of them in the eye? I can’t stay here. I quickly rushed to Maria’s room as I sat on her bed. “Maria” I whispered shaking her awake. She slowly opened her eyes as the look of confusion was immediately replaced with worry.

“What’s wrong?” I shook my head and offered her a pity smile to keep her calm. “I ... need to get out of here” She shook her head “Isabella, Xavier is hot on your tail. If he finds out, you are no longer under the King’s protection the first thing he is going to do is track you down and make you pay for what you did to him.”

Letting out a sigh as I tried to desperately avoid her stare, I didn’t mind. “He won’t find me; I’ve gotten pretty good at avoiding him. Maria, I can’t stay in this house any longer. I need to go” She shook her head as she held my hands. “Then I’m coming with you” I shook my head “NO. You need to stay, Maria for the first time in years I’ve seen you smile, laugh, and genuinely enjoy your life. You found someone you want to spend forever with, you created a strong bond and made your first best friend with Ariana. You’re beaming with light I can’t and won’t allow it to go away.”

“Isabella, there is no happiness in my life if you’re not in it” I cupped her cheeks as I smiled at her, “Maria, the only thing I want in this world is for you to be happy, If I go on the run again, I’m going to open a target on my back for anyone and everyone. I would never forgive myself if I put a target on your back. When I’m gone, I know you’ll be safe here, Maria por favour. If I decide to run don’t follow me”

“Is this because of Vincenzo breaking up with you?” she asked desperately trying to figure out what was wrong with me, I shook my head “no” I drifted off. “Isabella, I know the situation between the two of you is strained but don’t let it be the reason you run.” I winced at the mention of our current relationship, it is strained and bipolar but if he finds out I’m the reason his brother died. I don’t want to imagine the type of anger that will come from him.

“Maria-” She cut me off desperately trying to keep me here, “At least give it time ... Vincenzo was shot and is too stubborn to allow anyone else to help him.” I looked at her for a moment listening to her words. I sighed knowing she was right he was too stubborn. “Fine, I’ll stay until he is back on his feet” She embraced me in a tight hug.

“Come on” she moved her blanket making room for me to sleep next to her, smiling at her innocence I jump in and snuggle next to her. “goodnight hermana” (sister) she whispered slowly drifting off. “Goodnight hermana” I whispered back. She gripped the side of my shirt scared I was going to leave her. I smiled letting out a low laugh, when we were younger Maria feared the dark and she would do this to make sure I never left her in the middle of the night.

x

I slowly opened my eyes, “what are you doing in my girlfriend’s bed” I jumped noticing how close Lorenzo was to me, “Get-” I pushed him away as I sat up huffing, “How you deal with him willingly is beyond me” I held my hand to my chest trying to calm my heart rate down. “Says the girl that is willingly dealing with Vincenzo Pain in the ass King” He

sarcastically responds, “I hate you” I mumbled “Why? I’m lovely” he smiled putting his finger in his dimple as he looked to the side. I muffled a laugh.

he plopped himself on the bed in between me and Maria, getting under the blanket. “How big is this bed” I whisper yelled. “Oh Isabella, Vincenzo is trying to walk on his own and I can almost guarantee his stubborn ass fell.” I looked at him like he lost his mind “Did you think to help him?” he widened his eyes shaking me “HE WAS NAKED” I burst out laughing shaking my head “I helped him get dressed last night he wasn’t” He stared at me shocked “That fucker ... I’ll be back” and like a true drama queen, he stormed out of the room.

I quickly got up and rushed after him, “Where you are going?” Maria quickly spoke out following me. “He really is naked; this is the time he showers” I explained. We stop around the corner, putting my hand out to stop Maria as well. We peaked our heads around the corner. “VINCENZO, LEMME HELP YOU BITCH. I JUST WANNA LOVE YOU” Lorenzo bangs on the door then forces his way in trying to move the bodyguards out of his way.

Finally breaking through he walks in, and I waited for the scream. Edging our heads further out with our ears pointed up. “MY EYES” bursting out laughing I held Maria’s hand. “MY INNOCENT EYES” Lorenzo runs back out of the room covering his eyes screaming about his purity being taken away.

My stomach started aching from laughing, “Oh I really needed that” I laughed out as tears started forming in my eyes.

Lorenzo came up from behind me “I hate you” he mumbled, “No you don’t” I smiled and winked at him. He stayed quiet as I stared at him “SAY IT” I yelled he bit his lip and looked up. “Lorenzo King says the line” He shook his head. “Lorenzo” I warned, he looked at me and let out a sigh caving “I hate that I love you” I nodded my head smiling “Good boy” I patted his back and walked past him and towards Vincenzo’s room.

I tilted my head seeing him sitting on the floor laughing, “how your mum dealt with you two is beyond me” he shrugged his shoulders as he tried lifting himself up, I quickly ran up towards him and helped him up. “I know this is hard for you to do but stay put” He let out a puff of air looking at me “you’re one to talk” I shot him a glare before going to get him his clothes.

I helped him put his boxers on and my heart stopped as my eyes met his tattoo. I looked away trying to slow down my heart and breath. “Men, can we get the parallel bars I had you order yesterday” They nodded their heads and quickly went to get what I needed. “What?” I looked up at Vincenzo “You need to start physical therapy” I stated the obvious looking at him, “When-” I cut him off “in the hospital I couldn’t sit still” I explained looking down.

The men came in and placed it in the middle of the room. I smiled and thanked them, “Come on” I helped him up on his feet as he gripped the bars, I held onto his waist and guided him forwards keeping a stronghold to make sure he doesn’t fall.

x

For the next couple of weeks, this was the routine I would wake up and make sure I would help Vincenzo with his physical therapy. There was obvious tension between the two of us, we were the definition of toxic and confused. Whenever Vincenzo felt like he was getting too close he would become cold as ice, and I had a secret I was hiding from him and was constantly tense around him. My heart would melt at his progress and the smile he would get when I’d get excited then we would both immediately catch ourselves caring and go back to a blank expression.

I walked to his office and opened the doors, still feeling on edge every time I was near him, but it was time to change his bandage and do his treatment. I was responsible for so much of his troubles and I never noticed it until recently.

Xavier me. Dante me. His gunshot wound me. I step through the doors and stop Immediately seeing Vincenzo walking on his own, “Oh my god” I squealed out and quickly rushed to him. “You’re doing it” I smiled looking at him, he smiled and nodded his head “Feels like a baby learning to walk.” He joked. He looked at me smiling and I admired his strength before we both quickly looked away.

I coughed awkwardly “I need to clean your wound and change the bandages” He nods his head and goes and lays flat on the couch “I’m so thankful you stopped fighting me on this” I muttered remembering the battle we went through for him to sit and let me just help him. “Stubborn” was all he muttered. I shook my head trying to hide my smile as I helped him take his shirt off out of habit. I started cleaning his wound, every time my finger would brush his skin, he’s breathing would become rigid and he would tense slightly.

I helped put his shirt back on as I finished, and my eyes grazed over his tattoo. **“You weren’t born to be soft and quiet. You were born to make the world shatter and shake at your fingertips. D.K”**

I’m so sorry Dante. I mentally cried and looked back at Vincenzo who was now sitting up and looking at me intensely. I quickly got up to leave but he grabbed my wrist. “Isabella-” I cut him off shaking my head “don’t” I begged.

“Isabella I-”

“No, Isabella nothing. Vincenzo you can’t do this” I begged him not wanting to fall into the same fight. “You sit there to explain how you don’t like the distance when you created it. Then you give me hope that we could go back to what we were then you kill it within a second” I looked at him while his facial expression remained blank.

“I thought I had you.” I cried out “For a slight moment, I thought I had you. I thought you and I would be different. That we would take over the world, we went from hate to whatever it was. You went from the person who held me here against my will to the person protecting me. The man who saved me. I

for a second thought you cared. I thought we could be something. I was wrong. Because the second I started threatening your image you dropped me like it was the easiest thing in the world. Days going onto weeks going onto months with little to no contact. But I know one thing. We made an impact on one another and we will always be in each other what if. The memories will live with you and me forever but unlike you, I won't look back with regret because I was ready to give us whatever it takes. You chose to give up. You were scared while I was ready for every hell, we were about to face ... if we faced them together. Now you can sit and deal with the distance YOU created." I finally spoke what I wanted to say the second he left me; I felt every emotion rising to the surface with every word I spoke.

"Look at me and tell me you don't regret it. Tell me you didn't care" I yelled out, not believing he left me because of his image. "TELL ME" I yelled in his face as he stood up and towered over me. "I DONT CARE" he yelled. I looked him dead in the eye as I smiled "liar." I harshly whispered.

"Isabella it's not easy-"

"Vincenzo, I never needed it to be easy" I cried out, "I just needed it to be worth it" I hit him on his chest making sure to avoid his wound. "I DON'T DESERVE YOU OKAY" he yelled. "THAT'S YOUR PROBLEM YOU THINK YOU DON'T DESERVE SOMETHING SO YOU CHASE IT AWAY"

"You're not what you think you are-" He cuts me off walking away pulling at his hair before looking at me "Do you hear yourself? I never had the chance to be anything but a killer, a leader. I was always bloody knuckles and shards of glass. I wanted people to be afraid of me." He hit his chest as he looked at me with widening eyes and a smile that sent shivers down my spine.

I shook my head "Look me in the eyes tell me you regret everything that you never felt anything towards me. That it was all a lie" He winced at my request then quickly recovered.

A sadistic smile laced with venom took form on his face sending my body to shock as fear began rising in my throat. "It was all a lie" He muttered. Liar I mentally whispered. "Okay." I answered back "Okay? okay what" He angrily spat "You wanted me to hate you? You wanted me to not be able to stay in the same room as you? Congratulations Vincenzo King, I hate you." I spat harshly.

"The feeling is mutual Isabella Knight"

I slapped him across his face, and I pushed him away "LET ME GO THEN. LET ME LEAVE. LET ME GO" I yelled feeling my world collapsing underneath me. "I can't do that" he whispered. I looked at him and shook my head. "I understand you more than you understand yourself." I wiped the tears from my face as I continued "Okay I'll stay not that I have a choice. We will be the death of each other"

A sinister smile took over his lips as he looked up at me "**To insanity**" mimicking him I frustratedly agreed "**To insanity**" Hacker rushed in the room looking out of breath, "Boss I have the surveillance you wanted" He spoke out breathless. I looked at him confused "bring it over" Vincenzo walked to his desk and Hacker followed behind him showing him the footage. I walked behind him as my heart completely stopped as I watched the horror of that night unfold once again in front of me.

“NO, NO, NO, NO, NO” a girl cried out holding a dying body in her lap. As she looked down for a split second before screaming out watching the life leave his body. As an old man approached them with the knife in his hand “You’re mine and only mine Dragon”

My body went completely still as I felt my body being lit a flame. No, no, no, no. I cried in my head this isn’t how he was supposed to find out. I jumped back as I hit the wall, I cried out a cry of pain. “Isabella?” he called out desperately trying not to believe the footage he just saw. “I did it” I yelled he looked at me with hatred and fear. “He was stabbed by a man in Spain for getting too close to a girl” he yelled “I WAS THE GIRL” I shouted feeling the world crumble at my feet as the tears escaped my eyes like a waterfall and the anger rise.

“He died. Because of me Vincenzo” I cried out feeling the guilt swallow me whole. “SHUT UP” he roared not wanting to hear anything as the veins in his neck began becoming visible as he shut his eyes. He grabbed the glass of water on his desk and threw it against the wall, Hacker quickly giving me a pity smile before leaving. “Xavier killed my brother in cold blood because he was talking to you?” he spat.

“I tried to not let him see u-” He cuts me off “You’re telling me you knew the risk of my brother talking to you ... and you didn’t stop it?” Vincenzo’s anger rising. I closed my eyes shut not wanting to look at him right now “LOOK AT ME” He shouted.

My lips formed a straight line as tears ran down my face, I looked at him, and for the first time, all I saw was rage, anger ... hatred. My heart twisted as I saw the disgust in his eyes. “Vincenzo I-”

“You what? The big bad Dragon. The person who practically had Spain cowering at her feet, let my brother be stabbed and bleed to death. YOU PUT HIS LIFE IN DANGER KNOWING HOW YOUR BOSS WOULD REACT.” He roared anger radiating off his body.

“He was the closest person to me at the time the only person I looked forward to seeing every couple of months at these stupid meetings, HE WANTED TO HELP ME” I yelled feeling the heat rising to my face with every word, “In the short time I knew your brother I loved him, I was calm for the first time. For the first time Vincenzo, I introduced myself as Isabella, not Dragon.”

“My brother is dead. Because you were too selfish to tell him to leave”

“He died in my lap, and that day a piece of me died with him,” I whispered, trying to desperately allow him to see the pain I experienced as well. That it was not just another death to me that I cared for him as well and that his death would haunt me forever. “The day he died was the day I died. Imagine looking in the mirror every day and be reminded of your identical twin brother. Who was killed ... and not being able to do anything.” He whispered back, I winced at his calm voice. His eyes began to fill with tears as he looked at me “Leave.”

“Vincenzo pl-” He punched the mirror in his office causing it to shatter as he stared at himself through the broken glass and looked at me standing behind me. “Go” he whispered lowering his head.

Feeling defeated I slowly left his office.

I was selfish, I finally found someone who saw the other side of me. Someone that made me feel human again and knowing he might die because of that I chose to talk to him and not let him go. I killed him. I buried my head in my pillow as the guilt continued to eat me alive.

x

My head throbbing as I slowly wake up, I get up and walk to the bathroom staring myself in the mirror as the memories of last night flood back in my head. Closing my eyes, biting my lower lip the tears begin flowing down my cheek again. “I’m sorry Dante” I whispered to myself as I washed my face and

jumped in the shower hoping the hot water can burn away my pain.

I got dressed and walked to Vincenzo's bedroom, I stood in front of his doors hesitating ongoing in. Taking in a deep breath I open the door slightly. Seeing him laying down on his bed I opened the door fully and walked in. **"My brother is dead. Because you were too selfish to tell him to leave"** Slowly blinking the tears away I cringed at his words, although painful it was the truth.

I knelt next to him on the bed I stared at him in awe, my heart tugging in my chest. I placed my note on the nightstand as I moved a loose strand away from his hair, "I can't be selfish with you ... to insanity Vincenzo King" I softly whispered to not wake him. I planted a soft kiss on his forehead and left his room.

Sneaking into Maria's room I quietly place another letter on her nightstand and kiss her on the forehead. I close the door softly behind me. I stand at the door for a second feeling a familiar wave of sadness creeping back up. Letting a final breath, I sneak out to the garage and hop on the motorcycle and leave.

Feeling my tears rushing down my face as the cold air hits my skin, I felt trapped. No matter where I go, I leave the ones I love in a pool of darkness and misery. I was the reason Vincenzo's brother died, I was the reason Xavier was after him. I was the reason Vincenzo got shot everything that's happened in the past few months is because of me.

When I debated on Maria, I knew if I told her what I was doing she would try and talk me out of it. I knew she would come with me and she's finally happy. She's finally in a time of her life where she's genuinely smiling, I can't take her down with me. I can't let her pay for my mistakes.

So, I'm finally doing what was supposed to be done a long time ago. Grabbing the file Hacker gave me last time. I take in a deep breath and leave.

Vincenzo's POV

I woke up feeling a strong pain in my shoulder, I winced as I adjusted to the light in the room. I slowly lifted myself up, groaning at the pain I rested my head on the headrest as the events of last night are still fresh in my head.

I remembered the time we finished the meeting; it was our first time with dad. I and Dante were only seventeen at the time, Dante left the meeting to go use the bathroom. Hours passed and he never came back, after we ended the meeting, I remember a sick wrenching feeling settling in my gut. I'll never in my life forget that feeling, the sickening feeling that something bad happened and there was nothing you could do.

We walked outside the meeting and asked around if anyone saw Dante, then in a matter of seconds, one of our men starts shouting they killed him.

FLASHBACK

Come on Dante dove sei? I pleaded to myself trying to find him. My head snapped in the direction of the screams. "NO" I yelled refusing to believe it, getting angry I keep shouting "NO" as I ran past the crowd and outside.

"DANTE" I desperately called out, "DANTE" I cried out feeling the life beginning to drain out of me as I got closer to what looked like a body lying on the floor in a pool of blood. Tears escaping my eyes as I angry shook my head in denial. "No, No. NOOO," I ran towards the body as the air got knocked out of my lungs. I fell to my knees and held Dante on my lap as I cried out. "Dante Per favore, wake up. Don't you dare leave me like this? Dante open your eyes. You can't die. DANTE PER FAVOURITE WAKE UP" my desperate cries went unheard as he laid lifeless in my arms.

"Dante please wake up. You're okay. Open your eyes. Come back to me. It's okay. It's over now. You're ok. Damn it wake up. Per favore. Please wake up. Don't do this to me. What am I going to say to mum and dad? What am I going to say to

Ariana? What am I going to tell Lorenzo? Dante, what am I going to tell myself? Damn it wake up. Please don't leave us like this" I cried, for the first time I cried. I allowed myself to scream out, to cry out. My brother is gone... Dante, please.

END OF FLASHBACK

A tear rolled down my cheek as I remembered the events of that night, I wiped the tear from my face remembering Isabella's face when I read my tattoo out, as her face turned pale, and her body began to shake. **"Isabella, please. Just go"** I winced remembering her face fall and her eyes red from how much she cried.

She wasn't the one who killed him, but she was the reason behind it. I don't blame her, but I needed time to process the information she gave me. I need time to look at her the way I did. She'll always be my weakness and It seems I'm falling into the same fate as my brother.

I looked up at the ceiling as I whispered out, I miss you. I turn to my nightstand to grab some water and see a note that read Vincenzo.

That same feeling that I felt when something happened to Dante began to creep its way back as I held the note in my hand.

Vincenzo,

I'm so sorry for my part in your brother's death, but I want you to know that not a day goes by where I don't regret it. The guilt will be with me forever, your brother was a special human being he was the only person at that time of my life who was able to remind me of who I am. Who I was ... before the hatred and the darkness, he touched my heart and made me feel less alone in the world and I selfishly kept him with me because I was scared if he left, that the feeling would creep its way back up my throat. He died out of the goodness of his heart and his genuine concern for me, and that's something I can never make up for. I thought that you were the monster, but it turned out all along it was me who was the monster. I can

never make up for what I did but I can try. I need to go because wherever I am I leave grief and death behind me. You were shot because of me; you lost your brother because of me. Your mafia is being threatened by a gang because of me ... I can't be selfish with you.

To insanity, Vincenzo King.

Isabella.

NO Isabella no, I got shot out of bed throwing some clothes on as my mind began creating a million and one scenarios in my head. "LORENZO" I called out, my door flies open seeing a distraught Maria.

I look at her my heart in my hand as she whispers through tears "Isabella's gone"

"Maria, what do you mean gone?" She shakes her head as she crumbles to the fall, whispering no repeatedly. I lower myself down and embrace her in a hug. "Maria, I need you to breathe. Copy me" I instructed her as he copied the flow of my breathing.

After she calmed down, I pulled her off and looked her dead in the eye "What happened?" She waved the note in my face "she said she left, and took the darkness with her. That she didn't want to burden any of us with her demons. That she loves me more than anything in this world and did this for me and ..." she drifted off as she looked at the floor.

"And?" she swallowed the lump in her throat and whispered "to protect you" the feeling of sadness, anger and frustration now were replaced with guilt. "No" I spoke out and stood up, I stormed to my office as I waved one of the men over one of the men "Get me hacker" they nodded their heads and immediately took off.

Lorenzo stormed into the office shutting the doors behind him. "What the fuck did you do?" He yelled I stood in front of him keeping a blank expression. "What. Did. You. Do." I shook my head "Lorenzo not now" I yelled agitated. I was

experiencing a million emotions at once and having my brother interrogate me was not helping.

Lorenzo was the clown of the family, always cheerful and happy. When Lorenzo was serious it meant something big. Lorenzo is the only person in my family that could put me in my place and fear nothing. “What happened” he looked at me concerned. “She was the reason Dante died” I yelled “We argued, and I told her to get out” I explained briefly.

Lorenzo looked taken back before he looked back up at me “Did she kill him?” I shook my head no. “Dante from what she told me was concerned and wanted to help her. Xavier saw him close to Isabella and didn’t like it so he killed him.”

Lorenzo shook his head letting out a mocking laugh “Vincenzo the girl was what? Sixteen! She was scared and alone and Dante had a way of making anyone and everyone feel calm. SHE DIDN’T KILL HIM. DANTE CHOSE TO SIT. This isn’t her fault and you’re a piece of shit for making her feel like it was. You are no different than Xavier, making her believe that every death was in fact her fault. When it wasn’t”

I slammed my hands on the desk staring at him “I KNOW THAT” I yelled “I KNOW! DON’T YOU THINK THAT CROSSED MY MIND. I KNOW AND IM A DICK FOR LETTING HER THINK IT WAS HER FAULT. IM A DICK FOR NOT COMFORTING HER BUT WHATS NEW LORENZO”

Lorenzo grabbed me by my shoulders and forced me to look at him “it sounds like your mad at yourself, not just for chasing her away. You’re mad at yourself for letting her go in more ways than one. After everything that happened between you two, she never left your side. She was there at every step from the hospital to your personal nurse and caretaker.” He explained I looked at him as my vision became blurry, I blinked the tears away.

“You love her. You won’t admit it but we all see it, she loves you but like you she is too stubborn to admit it. After Dante died you went into a tunnel of darkness and chaos. You

emerged yourself in your work to get to the rank you're at now. You lost sight of who you are. When you look in that mirror all you see is a monster. But when she looked at you, she saw YOU."

"That scared you and excited you all at once. Although her past is as dark as yours you saw her not as that monster, she also views herself as but as Isabella ... just as Dante did." I shut my eyes in pain as his words sunk in.

I pulled him in and embraced him in a tight hug. "I know you left her to protect her, but if anyone is capable of protecting themselves it's her" I chuckled against his shoulder. "She's intimidating huh?" I laughed out he looked at me like I lost my mind "Intimidating? That girl is bat shit scary. She's the female version of you"

We both laughed out "Thanks" I breathed out looking at him, he smiled and patted me on the back "sempre." smiling I whisper back "sempre"

"Let's find Isabella" Lorenzo smiles widely as he embraces me in a quick hug. Hacker quickly walks in waiting for me to give an order while looking at me with worry. "Lorenzo gather the inner circle. We need to get to her fast" God knows what's going on in her head.

"Here hold my moral's." He holds his hand out, I look at him than his hands. He widens his eyes as he looks at me than his hands. I roll my eyes knowing he won't stop until I just go along with it. I acted like I took whatever he had in his hands and held it.

He rolled his sleeves up "I have some shifty shit to do" He walks straight for the door, "Vincenzo just don't taint them. I would like to remain innocent" I grab the pillow from the couch and fling it at him.

His back I shake my head laughing. "Hacker pull up all footage from today" Wherever you are Isabella I'll find you. I'll always find you. I rested my head against the headrest of the chair reminding myself that she is capable of everything.

That she can take care of herself, but I still couldn't shake off the feeling that no matter how strong she is I need to help her. I wanted to. Per favore stai bene ... (please be okay)

To insanity Isabella Knight.

x

Isabella's POV

I looked down as I felt the blood dripping down my hands. I smiled sadly as I whispered to myself **to insanity, Vincenzo King.**

THE THUNDER

Vincenzo's POV

I had Hacker start tracking Isabella's phone and pulling up surveillance before she managed to escape. "How did she manage to escape the estate without being stopped" I frustratedly cursed out. "In case you forgot Isabella isn't an ordinary hostage" Lorenzo muttered out. I shot him a glare before turning back to Hacker.

"I want the surveillance of the house and hack every street camera! Track her every move, spread word to our men on the streets and our recruits to keep an eye out for her. Once you get a live visual alert me immediately" Hacker nods his head quickly rushing out of the office to his security room.

I take a second to look at the state of the house, everyone in the mafia was distressed and on edge, even the guards missed her threatening them. My siblings were burying themselves in work to find her and even my parents seem upset I wasn't sure they were capable of such feeling's. Maria was also a wreck but was surprisingly keeping a strong facade.

I turn around and see the broken mirror and for some reason, my body completely freezes. I tilt my head staring at my reflection in the broken mirror. It forces the person who shattered it to stare at themselves through the cracks, the sharp shattered glass I believe it's because they see themselves in the same light... broken.

You can know a lot about a person when they look at themselves through the reflection of broken glass, if one stares too long, they are staring down the monster within them the thing that broke and bent them. If one winces and tears up, they're reminded of the thing that broke them or perhaps it's to reminded them of a loved one who views themselves in the same light as the mirror. But the ones who stare at a broken mirror and smile ... they're the ones to be feared. They stared hell in the face and won.

I shook my head going back to my desk, picking up the note and re-reading it. I can't be selfish with you ... I flung the note back on the desk resting my elbows on the desk rubbing the side of my head with my fingers. "Where could she have gone," Lorenzo asks, I shrug my shoulders feeling completely helpless. Maria walked into the office she looked exhausted; her eyes red from crying her body looked slumped as she approached the desk.

"I don't know why you left her ... I don't care but if anything happens to my sister, I will personally make it my mission to make your life hell" She threatened in a low voice, I was taken back by her sudden change in personalities. Like Lorenzo, Maria was a bubbly friendly and sweet girl from my time knowing her she hates everything that includes threats and even death.

I inched closer to her face, "I'm not in the mood to be threatened" my voice low and stern, she smirked "I wasn't in the mood to lose my sister for the second time, shit happens"

"Maria get out" She shook her head laughing "No, do you know why? Because I actually care about my sister, I want her to come back so we can BOTH leave this hell hole. The moment we met you everything went south. WE WERE HERE FOR A FRESH START TO GET AWAY FROM ALL THE EVIL THAT WE HAD TO DEAL WITH. THE EVIL ISABELLA HAD TO ENDURE FOR HER WHOLE LIFE" She yelled tears threatening to spill at any given moment.

“We were Sixteen when our parents died, she was sixteen when she watched our parents die in front of her eyes, unable to do anything. She blames herself every day... do you know that kind of guilt? She spiralled into complete madness into an endless pit of darkness. She spent a good three months tracking down who killed our parents, killing, bribing, drugs and torture. Only to find out who he was then be imprisoned and tortured by him for three months. Then forced to work as his right hand to escape the torture.” I shut my eyes not wanting to hear anything Maria was saying, my blood boiling hearing what she had to endure at such a young age.

“Imagine being blinded and desperate for human contact that you accept to work for the man who killed your parents in front of you? The only way for her to do that was to kill herself first. She needed to allow the monsters to win. All she knew was kill, torture, work. She forgot me ... I CAN'T LET HER FORGET ME AGAIN” She yelled falling on her knees. I lowered my head in silence as Lorenzo quickly went to her side to aid her. “Vincenzo ... She managed to escape the first time and come back to her senses when she saw my face and a gun pointed at my head. Please bring her back” she whispered the last sentence.

I walked around and knelt “I promise” I whispered. She looked up at me with glossy eyes as tears ran down her cheeks she smiled slightly. “You and her are very alike you know that? You both have darkness embedded in your veins but you're both scared of tainting the other ... when in reality it looked like you were saving each other from the darkness that swallowed you both”

FLASHBACK

Pulling the trigger, I watch as the bullet hits the glass bottle shattering it into a million pieces. “I want an epic love” Dante speaks out, I let out a laugh “with a face like that? Doubt you'd get a text back” I laughed out. Dante looked at me with confusion as he furrowed his eyebrows “we're twins” He yelled. Letting out a laugh I look at him shaking my head.

“You caught me on a technicality” I joked back shrugging my shoulders, I looked at the gun and re-loaded.

“Do you think we’ll ever get to experience it?” I shrug my shoulders “They say the type your parents are a good indication of the type of love you’ll settle for ... because it’s all you know” He stays quiet while I fire another shot, “If our parents are the indication of the kind of warmth we’ll get when we get older I don’t want it” Dante spoke out seriously joining me on the field.

We both extended out our arms, aiming the gun to the far-left target before shooting simultaneously. The two bottles shatter the sand erupting as the bullet penetrates it. “Who says we got to settle when it comes to love?” Dante reopens the topic, I laugh and shake my head going to grab a bottle of water and throwing him one.

He sits next to me on the chair, “I believe there is a person out there for all of us, one special person who can make you feel so alive but also scared” I furrowed my eyebrows waiting for him to elaborate “scared?” I questioned. He turned and looked at me “Terrifying because it’s completely out of your control. When you finally found that one epic love, she’ll have you questioning everything ... you’ll do things you never imagined yourself doing. She’ll become a drug that you can’t get enough of. You’ll know she’ll be the death of you, but you don’t care because it’d be better to die with her by your side than to die without her insight. It’s a love that consumes you. and most of the time it happens through fate, it’s unexpected but there’s something that draws you to her and you do everything in your power subconsciously to keep her in your life **until you finally figure out that the insanity, you’re feeling is Love**”

I smiled imagining a kind of love like that “Who knows maybe we’ll get to experience it” Dante smiled before his face dropped into a frown “Promise me something” He sat up straight looking at me, I squinted my eyebrows confused before leaning in “anything”

He hesitated before continuing “Promise me, we won’t end up like mum and dad” I lowered my head before looking back up I grabbed the back of his neck and pulled him closer towards me “I promise we won’t end up like them”

“I can’t see you with a girl” He laughed in my neck before I pushed him off laughing “You see me with a guy?” I joked he shook his head laughing “Not just any girl I meant, whoever you end up with is going to be a very special kind of girl. She’ll drive you insane” I laughed shaking my head **“If the love isn’t madness, then it’s not love”** I spoke out as a smile took over my face.

END OF FLASHBACK

To insanity indeed ... I slowly came back to my senses looking at Maria who is still staring at me trying to read my eyes, I shook my head and stood up trying to cover up the emotions that suddenly flooded out. I shook my head trying not to read too much into the memory that popped in my head and what Maria said.

I looked at the door and saw Anna and Giovanni storm into my office “Mum, Dad” Lorenzo formally greets before shooting me good luck and taking Maria outside and closing the doors behind him. I rested one hand on my hip as I massaged my forehead with my free hand feeling a headache coming on.

“Son” I looked up with a blank stone-faced expression waiting for them to continue. “Why are we making a big deal over her disappearance. She wanted to leave, why are we chasing after her” Anna mutters out, I laugh at the irony of this conversation as Giovanni chimes in “Granted she might have been a good tool to have in our favour, but she isn’t worth any of this ... If you find her kill her”

My head snaps in both of their directions “Do you people hear yourself when you talk?” I frustratingly speak up. “Your father is right; she went against the code”

“No, she didn’t, she hasn’t broken her silence. That’s not the point, however, your answer to everything is to simply get

over it? Get back to work? or kill the problem?” I yell out feeling the emotions I’ve bottled away a long time go rising to my throat ready to unleash hell.

Hacker bursts inside and stopping in his tracks “I can come back” I shake my head “NO, come in, please. What do you have?”

“I figured after the Dante situation, that she would have spiralled from then so. I pulled up footage after she left and heard her talking to herself that she will leave so I fast-forwarded it and minutes before she left, she enters your room along with Maria’s. The interesting thing is before she leaves, she grabs a folder containing from what I see locations and data. Whoever she’s after or is going to for help ... She knows them and is well prepared.” I nod my head slowly “Did we find out who the folders are for?” Hacker shook his head “I tried catching a name through surveillance, but the footage was too blurry, she was also smart when she went on the streets she steered clear from security cameras both on the estate and streets. We catch her a few times but not enough to pinpoint a location”

I nod my head frustrated “The file looks like the ones you create, go check the system and see whose folder is missing” He sharply nods his head giving me a sympathetic look before shaking his head and leaving.

“What did he mean when he said the Dante situation” Anna speaks out, “Was she the one who killed my baby?”

“You’re baby?” I questioned angrily “where was this reaction when he died! WHERE WAS THIS CONCERN WHEN YOUR SO-CALLED BABY WAS KILLED AND I WAS GRIEVING” I yelled out, feeling every emotion “You diminished and belittled every emotion I had ... do you remember your exact words? Hmm?” I probed them both as I inched closer towards them both looked completely void of emotions as they stared at me.

“you’re a criminal act like one” I coldly repeated to their faces, now inches away as I finally allowed all my emotions to

rise to the surface. “None of you cried. You didn’t care. You were both drunk off your faces. You left everything to me, you left Lorenzo and Ariana to me. Per l’amor del cazzo you even MADE ME ARRANGE MY OWN BROTHERS FUNERAL.” I cursed out, “Instead of being parents for a second or once in your life you decided to be children constantly fighting and yelling and making me the parent AND TELLING USE TO FUCKING GROW UP”

“I LOST MY BROTHER AND YOU TWO DIDN’T EVEN ASK IF I WAS OKAY ... My own mother didn’t hug me and tell me things were going to be okay. My dad said it was all in a day’s work. Then convinced me that emotions and my grief were pazzo. You’re the reason for my demons. The reasons I have no connection to any emotion other than anger.”

“WE MADE YOU WHO YOU ARE” Giovanni yelled out slamming his fist on the table, I laughed out in irony “No, I made myself who I am. You made the demons. You both made the monsters, but you did not make me. I built myself up, Dante’s death broke me ... you two you finished me” I whispered finally accepting the truth, that I’m broken that I’m full of demons and monsters created and installed by someone else.

“But I can’t fully blame the two of you ... I chose to listen, to allow the demons and monsters to consume me until it was all I ever knew.” I let out an airy laugh and looked back at them. They both stood there a few feet apart and I tilted my head at the distance. “Now the one person I cared about ran away. The one person who was with me not for power ... or strength. but for me, she accepted the monsters and my wounds and chose me anyway.” I looked down at my feet blinking the tears away as I silently prayed she doesn’t do anything stupid.

“I am your mother” Anna spoke out, I shook my head does she really think that’s a valid argument for anything? I mentally yelled out. “You may have birthed me but that doesn’t make you a mum ... You were never a mother to any of us and you weren’t a father to us either” I cringed at the mental images of Giovanni beating us as boys when we would show any sign of

emotion other than what he perceived to be the emotions of a man.

“Dante made me promise to never let any of us become like you ... I finally understood what he meant, and I’ll be damned if I break that promise” I sat back down on the chair going through the surveillance Hacker gave me staring at her holding the folder.

“If it wasn’t for us ... for the demons we installed in you. You would have never become the leader you are now without us” Giovanni spoke out staring me down as he uses to when I was younger to intimidate me. I stood up towering over him as I smirked “That won’t work anymore old man. I became the leader I am today, for Dante to make him proud and to make sure no one ever touches our family again. **I became who you were meant to be” I spat.**

Closing my eyes, I calm myself down and sit back down staring at Isabella with guilt circulating my veins as I looked at her fragile state. To anyone else, she looked cold and merciless in this still shot but I knew her, she’s clutching the folders making her fingers go white. She feared wherever she was going but her straight posture demonstrated she had no regret, she knew what she was doing.

“So, what are you going to do?” My mum probed me. “Are you going to run after a girl who doesn’t want you or are you going to own up to your role and be a fucking leader” She cursed out now inches from my face, the alcohol reeking off her breath. I stood back up and looked at her in both sadness and disgust. “I am being a leader. I’m getting her back So to answer your question I am owning up ... I owned up a long time ago”

“Oh, seriously Vincenzo when are you going to get over it? Are you going to hold me and your father accountable for the demons and monsters we installed in you? THEN COME ON! WE ARE RIGHT HERE COME FOR US!” She yelled, and for once she said something useful. I jolted up grabbing the laptop and looking at the folder one more time.

FLASHBACK

I stood at the door watching Isabella demand to see the file from Hacker, “I need to see that” She demanded extending her hand out waiting for him to pass it along. I shook my head, that girl really can never sit still. I watched as she scanned over the folder.

She was going to make Xavier pay for what he did to her, even if it was the last thing she’ll ever do.

END OF FLASHBACK

She’s going after Xavier.

Isabella’s POV

I looked down as I felt the blood dripping down my hands. I smiled sadly as I whispered to myself **to insanity, Vincenzo King.**

I looked back up and smirked at the men standing in front of me, all cowering on their knees as their blood gushed from the side of their heads. “You gonna be good little kittens and tell me where he is?” I purred as I flirtatiously dragged my finger down one of their cheeks. “We had no idea you were back” One of them spoke up, I turned my head in his direction and let out a little giggle “Oh baby ... I never left” I threatened in a low whisper.

“Where is he?” They nodded their heads in sync. They quickly stood up one punching me in the stomach while the other one kicks me on my side causing me to fall flat on my stomach. I lift myself up slowly as a sadistic smirk overtook my face as I felt myself going back to myself.

Faster than any of them were able to comprehend I put my foot behind one of the men’s legs and pulled causing him to fall flat on his back, getting up I headbutted him in the nose while I roundhouse kicked the man behind me. Grabbing the man that oversaw these two I pinned him against the wall. “What the fuck are you?” He spits out trying to free himself as I tighten my hold on his neck. The rest of the two men on the floor unconscious I tilted my head inching closer “Who

knows” I drift off looking up at the sky then back to him “But I can tell you one thing, sometimes even the devil sits back and admires my work” I knee him in the groin then hook him before grabbing him by his jaw and forcing him to look me in the eye.

My body and face are completely void of any emotion as I stare at him with a pissed-off expression, “I don’t like repeating myself kitten” I threaten as my heart tugs as I subconsciously referenced Vincenzo. I shut my eyes and shook my head regaining my composure. He looked up at me ready to give me a response other than the answer I was looking for. **With blood still on my hands, I placed my finger on my lip shushing him.**

He winced in pain finally feeling defeated he told me where he was. I smiled and gave him a kiss on the cheek “that wasn’t so hard now, was it?” I winked and left him on the floor as I took off on my motorcycle.

After 10 minutes I arrived at the location, I looked up at the building and saw Xavier in one of the windows. “YOU MISS ME?!” I shouted grabbing the attention of Xavier and his men. His men on the floor all came charging at me with their guns but in a swift motion, I shot them all in the head without so much as blinking an eye. I walked inside and everyone had their guns drawn at me. I smirked licking the corner of my lip “you know I love a good game” I spoke out in a sarcastic catty manner as I raised an eyebrow looking up the stairs at a cowering Xavier. “But you know I’ll win, and everyone will be lying in their own pool of blood ... isn’t that right Xavier. You know what I can do”

Xavier finally emerged down the stairs as he smirked looking at me like he was victorious. “I see Dragon is back” he cocked. I shook my head “That’s not something you should be smiling about.” I threatened as I stormed up the stairs towards him.

He started running as I got closer; he ran upstairs into the nearest room. I watched him smiling. “Xavier” I greeted he

nodded his head slightly out of breath as he greets me back
“Dragon”

“Glad to see you still remember me.” He smiled as he ranked my body from head to toe, I let out a dry laugh before I inch closer to him “You are the reason I have blood on my hands. The reason I no longer hesitate to pull a trigger. The reason why, even now, years later, I can’t sleep at night. Yes, I remember you” Now inches from one another, just being in close quarters with this man made me want to vomit, my traumas that were caused by him began reappearing in my head.

I cringed at the mental images before shaking my head to regain focus. “You killed my parents, you killed my youth, you killed my innocence ... you killed Dante” I whispered the last part as I felt myself tearing up. “Now I think your death is long overdue.”

“I don’t think so” He banged on the wall and suddenly all the lights in the room shut off, as I was barely able to see him. My heart started racing as I searched the room for any sign of light. I let out a horrific scream clutching my head as I inched back hitting the wall. No, no, no. I cried out feeling my biggest fear was happening once again.

Then suddenly my mind drifted to a calming place like **he** taught me

FLASHBACK (never mentioned scene of Vincenzo and Isabella)

I sat on my bed as I smiled looking out at the view from my windows. I calmly let in a breath as I watched the city lights of New York beam in front of me. Then in an instant, my entire room goes black, no sign of light was to be seen.

I felt my heart racing against my ribcage ready to burst out, my body shaking as I started getting choked up. I shook my head terrified of the dark ever since Xavier kept me in a cell for three months, on never-ending torture and no sign of light

the sounds of thunder would echo all night throughout the hollow cell.

I let out a scream for help as I felt my body ready to give out and my chest tighten. as the unholy memory re-entered my head. “She’s traumatised of the dark because of that sick son of a bitch” I heard Maria curse out trying to get in my room.

My door flew opened as I felt a strong pair of arms grip me in a tight embrace. “Shhh” I sat there shaking in his arms as I cried in his chest. I shook my head trying to push him off me screaming and crying, “I- I can’t I-” he cuts me off holding me tighter and rocking me back and forth, “Demeter was driven mad, and as the goddess of agriculture Demeter was responsible for soil and fertility. To punish Gaia she decided to make the earth infertile.” He spoke in a soothing tone, as I teared up realising, he heard me tell him the story when he laid in the hospital bed.

“The goddess cried because she missed her daughter and due to the great sadness, she felt she started to neglect her tasks, Zeus got worried as this started affecting the planet. Because if Demeter didn’t perform her tasks again chaos would take over the world. The great god tried to convince Demeter to return to her tasks, but she said the world would remain infertile until she had her daughter back.” My heart rate began slowing down to a much calmer pace as I rested my head on his chest and closed my eyes listening to the sound of his voice.

“Meanwhile, it was said that Hades had beautiful gardens built for Persephone and she was treated with respect and compassion she saw a side to Hades that no one else had seen before and she began to fall i-” He gets cut off as the lights turn back on. I opened my eyes feeling calmer than I did before as I smiled. “Many people tried comforting me in that state and you were the only one who manages to succeed ... thank you” I whispered as he smiled at me. “The darkness isn’t scary... it’s in all of us. But without it, we wouldn’t be able to see the gorgeous sight of the moon, or the stars that shine in its mercy” He smiled looking out the window. “Next

time you find yourself in a dark place, remember me and my voice. Keep this story in mind” he softly spoke out.

“How did the story end,” I ask him even though I knew the answer, he looks down at me and smiles “I guess we’ll find out soon”

END OF FLASHBACK

I blinked away the tears as I opened my eyes, I’m not afraid of the darkness anymore. It’s in all of us, and it helps light up what people find to be the most admirable sight. Many people gaze and watch the moon accompanied by the stars. People wait for the darkness to come, and now I could finally say I was one of them. Thanks to him.

“You’re trapped. There’s nowhere to run now” he spoke up triumphantly as though he won. I looked up looking for his silhouette smirking as I spotted him, there was a dim light in the room but barely existent. He drew the knife and pointed it at my heart, instead of whimpering like I was or intimidated by the knife pointed at my chest I stood there confident, as I began to laugh, doubling over.

His smile fades, “Why aren’t you scared?” he asks now slightly fearing what’s to come next. I straighten up and with a grin. “I have no need to run. Because you see,” I gesture around the small, dimly lit room, “I’m not trapped in here with you.”

Faster than he can comprehend, he found himself somehow disarmed and pinned against the wall, his own knife now being held at his throat. I whisper the rest of my declaration in his ear “You’re trapped in here with me.”

I go to slice his throat and like the coward he was, he pushed me off him causing me to bang my head against the wall as he runs. I let out a grunt “Corre perra CORRE” I yelled out as I stood up and chased after him, he runs up to the roof his men accompanying him.

I stand on the roof face to face with his four men and him. “You really think only four men will be able to stop me?” I

laughed out mockingly. “You’re going to die today, just like you killed everyone I’ve loved YOU TOOK IT ALL AWAY FROM ME,” I yelled waving the knife. “Now I’m forcing you to face the one thing you fear most. Your death” I spat out inching closer.

“What if I told you I had information you could find very useful” He quickly yelled out, I cocked my head debating the idea before shaking my head no. “No” I shook my head there was no easy way out of this.

His men came towards me, I snapped my neck and smiled let the fun begin. “Que comience la fiesta” (let the party start) I laughed out. I grabbed the knife in my hand smiling ready, I missed this a lot more than I cared to admit. “Dragons back” I sang as I got closer to one of his men and stabbed him in the leg ducking his punch then stabbing him in his neck.

Pulling out my knife I kicked the man to the floor, as I flung my knife hitting the other man right in the neck. I kicked the man coming at me from behind off the roof. Quickly rushing to retrieve my knife from the guy’s neck I point it at the man’s chest “Say bye-bye” He gulped as I stabbed him in the heart.

I looked over at Xavier smirking, “Your turn”

I go to stab him as I hear gunshots downstairs, my head snaps at the sound.

“ISABELLA!” my eyes widen hearing his voice. The door bursts open as Vincenzo and Lorenzo emerge. “Wha-” Lorenzo cuts himself off as he looks at the pile of bodies on the floor I smirk and nod my head to my right shrugging my shoulders looking over he sees the remaining dead bodies. “I was right ... you are batshit crazy” He states aloud looking at me.

I smirk shrugging my shoulders “what are you doing here?” I stare at Vincenzo. “To get you” I shook my head “No, I’m not going anywhere” he shook his head inching closer to me “Isabella ... let’s go home” I laughed out looking at him

“**Isabella?** Do you honestly think that’s who you’re talking to!” I looked at Xavier.

“It’s Dragon” he spoke out, I pressed the knife further on his neck. “**ISABELLA!**” Letting out a frustrated yell I looked at him. “**WHAT! ISABELLA WHAT?! YOU DON’T KNOW A THING ABOUT ME, YET YOU JUDGED. HE KILLED DANTE NOT ME! HE KILLED ME, MY PARENTS. AND NOW HE’LL PAY FOR IT**” I yelled feeling all my emotions heightening as tears threatened to spill.

“**YOU’RE RIGHT!**” He yelled out causing me to halt, looking at him through blurry vision. “You didn’t kill him. I’m sorry for blaming you for that. You were a scared sixteen-year-old girl. My brother saw you for you. Not for the monster you and everyone else saw ... just like how I viewed you” He glanced at Lorenzo for a split second then back at me. My eyes softened as I lowered my hand.

“I might not know a thing about you.” He spoke letting me win that one, even though we both knew he knew more about me than anyone else. “But I know one thing, when you kiss me, I feel alive again and my whole world becomes something different. It was heaven and hell, brought together in my head. You’re my very own secret world. And I intend to burn there”

I laughed through tears smiling at Vincenzo. “I hate to break up this tender moment, but I got to go.” and within a second my world flashed before my eyes as he pushed me off the roof.

“**NOOO**” Vincenzo roared.

THE SPILT VODKA

“**NOOO**” Vincenzo roared as he lunged towards me, I shut my eyes waiting for the impact, upon not feeling my body implode on landing I peeked looking up. Vincenzo missed my hand but just caught me by my leather jacket. He gripped the small brick railing pulling me back up onto the solid ground.

He pulled me into him tightening his grip around me, I closed my eyes slowly before allowing myself to relax into him as a

small smile took over. “Lorenzo bring me him” Vincenzo’s tone was stern and livid. Lorenzo already took off chasing after Xavier.

“Are you okay?” He asked checking me for any cuts or injuries, I laughed and slapped his hands away. “I’m fine” I smiled; he stood up extending his hand waiting for me to take it. I looked at it then back up at him and pursed my lips to the side as I sat there thinking for a while.

“Leonessa take my hand” I smirked looking at him, “You haven’t called me that in a while” I stated before finally taking his hand, he pulls me up and my body collided with his hard exterior. Inches apart I looked up at him with puppy dog eyes.

“Don’t ... don’t look at me like that” I continued my stare waiting for him to speak. “Fine, I was an idiot.” I raised an eyebrow crossing my arms over my chest as I continued to stare at him. “Was?” I questioned. He looked around the roof before smiling like a child looking back at me “Am” he corrected “But I’m officially your idiot leonessa”

I shook my head laughing before pushing him off me and walking downstairs, “No, no. You need to work for this” I stated leaving the roof, running down the stairs to see if Lorenzo managed to get ahold of Xavier. “That bitch pushed me off the roof” I yelled. Then stopped seeing the dead bodies on the floor, “What happened?” I questioned looking and Vincenzo who was now hot on my tail. He innocently shrugged his shoulders smiling “What? You think only Dragon can leave dead bodies?” He ushers to his men to start the clean-up.

We walk out of the building and see a very frustrated Lorenzo, throwing what looked like a rock. “What happened?”

Vincenzo asked as he looked at his brother, “son of a bitch ran. We got plates, I already sent them to Hacker, but he escaped.” I rolled my eyes completely pissed off. “It’s fine as long as no one got hurt” I whispered out frustrated in the next breath Vincenzo’s men carried dead bodies next to us. I shook my head at the irony before falling silent.

“Are you okay?” Lorenzo inches closer to me analysing me like his brother, slapping his hands away I laughed “Like I told Italy, I’m fine” he lets out a sigh of relief hands on his hips looking up at the sky. I tilt my head to the right looking at him, “Oh good” I raise an eyebrow and turn my head to the right.

“This. Is. For. Scaring. The. Ba-Jesus. Out. Of. Me” He spoke in between slaps to my arm, “Ow- OWWWW” I yelled out pushing him off me. “DON’T DO THAT SHIT NO MORE” He yelled out. “IN MY DEFENCE YOU WERENT SUPPOSED TO FIND ME” I yelled back. He looked at me with the most confused expression I have ever seen from Lorenzo. “Chica what’s that got to do with what I just said” I shrugged my shoulder smiling.

Vincenzo string at us with both his eyebrows furrowed while pursing his lips, as a confused expression also overtook his facial structure. I shrugged “Don’t stay like that It’ll freeze that way” I warned both of them while pointing.

“Get in.” Vincenzo demanded me to get in the car, I shook my head “I got my own ride” I flashed his motorcycle keys in my hand winking at him. He shook his head snatching the keys from my hand and tossing it to one of his men.

“Get in” He looked at me with a stern expression. I gasped watching the man ride my motorcycle away. Bitch I thought before looking back up at Vincenzo. “No” I replied. “Get in!” he began getting frustrated. “NO” I yelled back, I wasn’t going to make this easy for him. “Now!” His low tone of voice making my legs turn to jelly as I felt my Pussy beginning throb at his dominance.

“Make m-” He quickly covered my mouth with his hand. Inching closer that his lips were hovering over his hand that covered mine. “Trust me, leonessa. That’s a sentence you do not want to finish” My entire female system was ready to burst as I watched this man with an intense gaze. What if I want to finish it? I teased in my head. I pushed his hand away as he helps me in the car with a victorious smirk.

I relaxed into the seat, as I listened to Vincenzo and Lorenzo talk. “Call Ariana, let her know Isabella is fine and we are on our way” Lorenzo seemed taken back “Shouldn’t we call Maria? Let her know you kept your promise?” He asked, I moved my head back ‘promise?’ What promise?

“Let her be surprised, if you tell her now she won’t stop calling and pasteurising staff and our men until we get there” If anyone saw us right now after what we just experienced making jokes and going on about the day as though I didn’t just kill like five people and almost die. We would all be in an asylum. I shook my head curiosity getting the better of me “What promise?” I asked they both kept quiet.

“Hello?” I saw Vincenzo looking at me from the review mirror, “I- I can see you looking. Just tell me, we all know I won’t shut up” I stated the obvious waiting for their answer, “Vincenzo in order to calm down Maria he made her a promise that he won’t come back until you’re with him” I opened my mouth to speak but immediately shut it again when no words came out. I can see Vincenzo looking at me, trying to read my facial expression but I was in some kind of shock.

Vincenzo was never caring about anyone or anything. As a matter of fact, he doesn’t do well with any emotions, other than anger. He never really displayed the skill set to calm down anyone going through a state of panic. My heart melted at the thought of Vincenzo calming my twin sister down and making her feel reassured.

Then my heart twisted at the fact that I was the reason my sister was in that position in the first place. The car came to a stop and I immediately ran out and went looking for Maria, I found her asleep in my bed. My smile grew big as tears filled my eyes as I stared at my sister, and her tear stains on her face. I bent down to her level and wiped her tears with the back of my hand, causing her to flutter her eyes open.

After blinking a million times per second to make sure it was me, she latched herself on me. Holding me as tight as she possibly could. Making me wince as it felt like De Ja Vu

FLASHBACK

I stood in the middle of the basement, “Xavier what the fuck am I doing here?” I yelled out trying to calm my nerves, I’ll admit I’ve been acting out quite a bit. I don’t know if it was my yearning for my family or if the guilt officially began eating me up inside.

I looked around the empty basement and in the far-left corner, a girl roughly my age sat down tied up, blindfolded with a gag in her mouth. “I just wanted to give you some motivation to behave” Xavier snarkily threatened. He walked towards the girl and pulled out her gag. “SPEAK” He yelled. The girl jumped as her whole body began shaking. “I- I- I just want m-my s-s-sister” The girl helplessly cried out. I tilted my head still unable to understand what Xavier’s whole point to this was.

“What is your and your sister’s name?” he asked, “I’m beginning to grow bored of this game,” I whisper shouted. He put his index finger to his lip to shush me then pointed at the girl and gestured for me to listen. I rolled my eyes looking back at the girl, and suddenly I noticed small features that reminded me of Maria.

The birthmark on her neck, the beauty mark on her lip. “Maria, my sister’s names Isabella” her words echoed in my head, “**my sister’s names Isabella**” Maria. I stared at her for a minute as my head immediately snapped to Xavier as I gave him a warning to not do anything stupid. “I swear if you so much as touch a hair on her head, I’ll kill you here” I spat.

Maria’s head snapped in my direction; my stare however was fixated on Xavier. “Don’t” I warned in a low stern tone of voice asserting my dominance. My eyes were wide, my head slightly tilted up as my body squared ready to attack at any second.

He looked me up and down with lust in his eyes before he took out the gun from his pocket and aimed it at Maria.

Immediately I grabbed my gun out and aimed it at him “DONT” I spat aggressively. He smirked calling my bluff, he

really thinks I won't pull this trigger. I laughed to myself as I continued staring at him. Never breaking eye contact.

The gun clicked indicating its ready to fire if he pulls the trigger. Without thinking I shot him in the chest three times. Running to Maria, freeing her. Immediately After blinking a million times per second to make sure, it was me, she latched herself on me. Holding me as tight as she possibly could. "Please don't ever leave me again" She cried into my shoulder as she tightened her grip.

I smiled through the tears that were building up before realisation came over me. We need to get out of here. I grabbed her by her arm and ran for the secret exit and never turning back.

END OF FLASHBACK

I cried realising I did it to her again, I left "I'm so sorry" I whispered into her shoulder. She shook her head and looked at me "I know why" She explained, I looked down taking in a deep breath before looking up again. "He ruins every good thing in my life, even if he isn't in it" I whispered feeling completely broken.

Vincenzo's POV

I re-entered my desk, feeling a lot calmer than I was this morning. The doorknobs began turning and a smile forced its way on my face as I waited for her to come barging through. "Boss" Lexi and Roxy called out as I sat back down in my chair my previous smile now replaced with a disappointed scowl.

"Roxy? Lexi?" I questioned looking at the unusual duo. "We have news to report" Roxy stated, I looked at both of them. "It's about Xavier baby" Lexi flirted as I cringed at the use of the term 'baby'. "Boss is fine" I stated, scratching my chin. "What is it?" I asked becoming intrigued.

"It's about Xavier and Isab-" My phone started ringing cutting her off. I looked at the ID and quickly picked up the phone. "Vincenzo King" I stated. "Yes, that works out perfect for us

as well. See you soon” I hung up the phone looking back up at the girls.

“As we were saying-” They went to continue before I cut them off, “Girls if you had finished your sentence about Isabella, it wouldn’t have been the phone that cut you off. I have a business trip I need to go on. If you have any valuable information let me know when I get back” I pointed at the doors dismissing the two of them.

Isabella’s POV

After talking to Maria, we both decided to spend some time away from the guys and all the drama. Maria wanted to invite Ariana which I was happy with while I went and took a quick shower. Now I’m stuck deciding on what to wear I finally decided on a mini checkers skirt with a slit and a basic crop black singlet with some nude heels.

I fixed up my hair and touched up my makeup and walked outside going to meet the girls in the front. A yelp left my lips as I was being pulled into a room, I hit him on his chest and left out a puff clutching my heart. “I- sometimes I just wanna” I start punching my hand to demonstrate how badly I want to punch his head in.

“Leonessa get over it. Where are you going?” He raised an eyebrow ranking my body and outfit from head to toe before looking me in the eye again. It was now my turn to raise my eyebrow “What makes you think you have any right to ask me that?” He looked up at the roof pondering over his answer in more of a sarcastic manner than I would have liked.

“Vincenzo!” I yelled out getting irritated. “Isabella!” He yells back mimicking me, I squint my eyes at him “I liked it better when you were a bitter soul” He lets out a chuckle then pulls me into his chest by my waist. I put my hands on his chest keeping a good distance. “Nope. I told you, you need to work for all this again” I winked and pushed him back.

Making a swift exit I walked downstairs and saw everyone downstairs with suitcases. Giving Maria and Ariana a puzzled

look. Maria answers my unasked question, “Vincenzo pushed the trip to Spain to right now” she huffed out going upstairs to pack. “When?” I spat out shocked I was just- “about a second ago” Vincenzo now at the top of the stairs smiles at me, “You better change” He demands lowly, licking his lips. Smirking I shake my head “I’m quite comfortable like this thanks” I walked past him getting quickly packing essentials.

We run back downstairs and get into the range rovers. “You ready?” I look at Lorenzo and nod my head nervous. “As ready as I’ll ever be” I looked over at Maria who mirrored the same expression as I did. We haven’t been to Spain since I shot Xavier and our grandparents thought it best to send us away. We haven’t visited our parents grave in years, I don’t know how I was going to face anything waiting for me in Spain.

The car came to a stop, realising we arrived I let out a small sigh and got out of the car. Vincenzo intertwines our hands as he leads me up the staircase of the private plane. He let’s go taking a phone call and his seat, he indicated to sit next to him, and I oblige.

After a few minutes we were in the air, I blew out air bored beyond belief. I peeked at the minibar and a wide smile overtook my lips ... just what I need. I quickly get up and rush towards the tequila. “Hey stranger” I smiled “My drinking buddy!” I cheered feeling as everything was right in the world again. “I’ve missed you” Lorenzo pouted as I smirked shaking my head “When I got drunk with Vincenzo it felt like I was cheating on you” he admitted. I punched his arm “YOU DID!” I yelled at him.

I poured the shots, and we cheered before taking a swing. What felt like a hundred shots later my head started spinning as a lopsided smile took over my lips. “Isabella” Lorenzo slurred out making me laugh “Y-Yessssss” I answered him taking another shot. “Did you fall from heaven?” I furrowed my eyebrows looking at him funny trying to remember if I had ever been to heaven. “Because so did Satan” He shrugged throwing back another shot.

I squinted my eyes as an idea popped into my head. “Fine and I was going to kill that spider on your shoulder” I shrugged and walked off with a smirk. “WHAT WHEREEEEEEEEE AHHH. GET IT OFF. GET IT OFF. GET IT OFF.” Lorenzo started screaming and jumping as he looked like he was going to faint. His outburst alerted Maria, Ariana, and Vincenzo. Great I facepalmed.

“VINCENZO GIVE ME THE GUN!” He yelled still running in a circle, I shrugged let’s have some more fun “IT’S CRAWLING UP YOUR NECK” I dragged my finger up his neck to give him the illusion it’s there. “AHHHHHHHHH” He let out a girly screech as he started frantically slapping his neck and then banged the back of his head on the couch to ‘kill’ the spider.

I doubled over laughing, “IDIOTA” I laughed out holding my stomach. “I want in on this” Ariana blurted out grabbing some alcohol. I fist-bumped the air “that’s my girl” I go to get another shot before Vincenzo swings me back around. “No more for you” He points at me I smirk looking at him “Aw you poor naive baby, you actually think I’m going to listen, don’t you?” I pouted in pity and shook my head patting him on the chest, “Okayyyyyy, I’ll play along”

I turned on my heel “I DONT-” I opened my mouth and winked at Ariana “Want another drink” I put my thumbs up and looked back at Vincenzo “better?” I smiled. He rolled his eyes and sat me back down on the chair. “Sit” I squinted my eyes “WHAT AM I A PUPPY?” I yelled.

I looked at Lorenzo who was glaring at me “SPIDER” I yelled pointing at him causing him to jump and scream once again frantically dusting himself. “LORENZO SHES LYING” Maria yells out to get him to stop. I fall off my chair laughing “I HATE YOU!” He yells out I couldn’t stop laughing so I flip him off. “IM A BIT LOOPY” I laugh out.

I jump back on my feet and smile, “Ariana pour me another oneeeeeee” I slurred out trying to keep my balance in these

heels. “Wow” I lost my balance and grabbed Vincenzo’s arm
“Thanks Italy”.

“IM TAKING A SHOT” I sang out before drowning it down.
“IT BURNS MY THROAT, BUT IT’S SOOO GOOD. WOW
OHHHHH” I screamed out singing the first thing that popped
into my head. I looked at Vincenzo who was giving me a
disappointed yet amused scowl. I smiled innocently before
pointing at Lorenzo to put the music on.

Uptown funk comes on and the three of us burst out in dance
and song and Vincenzo and Maria stare at us like we are their
three-year-old kids on a sugar high. “UPTOWN FUNK YOU
UP UPTOWN FUNK YOU UP” we cheered taking some
more shots and badly dancing.

“Isabella come over here and have some water” Vincenzo
orders me I look at him with a mischievous grin. “I’M TOO
HOT” I sang out waiting for him to continue. I point at him
with a wide smile that reminded me of the ‘:D’ emoticon. He
gave me a blank stare as I kept my finger pointed at him and
my smile getting bigger with each passing second as I inch
closer waiting for him to cave. He lets out a sigh and with a
monotone expression breath out “Hot damn”

I snapped my fingers at him and danced “CALL THE POLICE
AND THE FIREMAN” I bobbed my head to the beat before
the plane had a stroke. Being very drunk I fell over spilling the
shot all over my tank. “WHAT WAS THAT” I yelled petrified.
“It was just a little bump in the road” Maria spoke out
reassuring me. I looked at her with wide eyes in shock
“WHAT DID WE HIT A DEAR? WE’RE IN THE AIR” I
cursed motioning to the plane tipping whatever remained of
the shot on the floor. I frowned looking at the spilt vodka.
“Damn” I slouched.

“Isabella is that blood?” Lorenzo looks at my leg, I squint my
eyes then widen them before squinting and staring at my leg.
“No?” I answered unsure of the red splotch on my leg. “That is
not a question you’re supposed to answer with another
QUESTION” I looked at him with a blank expression. “Do.

not. YELL AT ME” I yelled before trying to regain balance. I threw the shot glass at him and laughed as he dramatically fell to the floor. “Mariaaaaaa Isabella threw a glass at meeeee” He whined as Maria looked at me with a scowl. “WHAAA, HE STARTED IT” I pointed at him stomping my feet. “Nope, I will not be a part of this ... whatever the fuck this is.” Maria cursed sitting back in her seat.

I and Lorenzo exchanged cheeky looks before giggling covering our mouths. “What,” she said in a rather pissed off tone. We both stopped laughing trying to keep it in and hide our smirk. “What,” she asked through gritted teeth. “You said a bad word” Lorenzo whispered before we both burst out laughing. “Oh, I’m going to give you both a bad wo-” She stormed towards us before Vincenzo held her and spun her around calming her down. “HEY SHES MINE PAL” Lorenzo yelled stomping up towards them.

“NO HEY!” I yelled catching up to them. “Okay, that’s enough” Vincenzo and Maria both spoke out at the same time. I looked between them then back at Lorenzo “Maybe they’re the twins” I asked full of doubt.

“Come on” They dragged us apart and forced us to drink water. “I don’t want to” I pouted as Vincenzo held the glass to my lips. “Come on” he pushed, I sucked in my lips and shook my head. “I’ll buy you food when we land.” I looked at him interested raising my eyebrows. “I’ll get you whatever you want” I quickly obliged drinking the water. “BLAH BLAH LAHH” I quickly stuck my tongue in and out before wiping it. “That not nice” I uttered making the noise people do when they want to taste something.

“We have a long time to land. Can you just ... sleep?” Vincenzo asked me helpless. I looked at him with puppy dog eyes. “I’m all sticky” I motioned to the spilt drink. He grabbed a clean white tee and guided me to the bathroom to help me change.

He looked at me waiting for me to give him permission. I slowly nodded my head as he dragged his fingers up my arm

to the strap of my tank. I closed my eyes feeling dizzy as the heat in the bathroom just rose to a million degrees. He slips off the strap I let out a shaky breath as I can feel his eyes never leaving my closed ones. He grabs the bottom of the hem and pulls it over my head before putting his t-shirt on me. I open my eyes and look at him. "Thanks" I whisper feeling myself sobering up faster than I would like. He nods his head his gaze growing more and more intense.

x

After the heated moment me and Vincenzo had in the bathroom, I decided it best to quickly walk out of there before I was unable to stop myself from tearing every clothing off his body and having him fuck me until I couldn't walk.

I took a shaky breath as I sat back down on the seat still feeling tipsy, I looked down at the glass of champagne that is meant for Vincenzo and debated it as I pursed my lips like a duck. "Eh, It's not like I'm not already drunk" I grabbed the glass and drank it. Mimicking a chefs kiss I put the glass back down and saw Lorenzo holding a massive backpack. I laughed looking at him "What are you doing?" I questioned standing up to walk to him.

"Ah Madam your carriage awaits." He bows in front of me then kneels allowing me to get in his backpack. "Why thank you kind sir" I replied giggling as I jumped in the bag. He stood up quite literally carrying me in a giant backpack on his back. "If I was sober, I'd seriously start questioning you on where the fuck you got this from but ... FUCK IT. GO FASTER GO GO GO" I chant encouraging him to run around the plan like idiots.

"Heyyy Vincenzo! Look" He edged closer to Vincenzo like he was going to tell him the biggest secret, He looked around seeing if anyone was listening to him and whispers in his ear "I have a dragon in my backpack" he moves back and grins excited while looking around the room like a child in a candy store. I burst out laughing as Vincenzo stares at the both of us "Dragons don't exist that's Isabel-" Lorenzo cut him off by

putting his finger to Vincenzo's lips to shush him. "If they don't exist explain something to me" He looked down then back up at Vincenzo as if he is in deep thought, "Why is there one in my backpack?"

"Yea Vincenzo! Why is there one in his backpack then" I mimicked Lorenzo's tone as I tried to be sassy while falling and trying to keep my head up float in this bag. "Cazzo" Vincenzo breaths as he approaches me, he carries me up and holds me bridal style. "Bedtime" He demands more than asks. "But I'm not tired" I whine as I flop dead in his arms my head upside down.

I shot back up "ARIANA IS STILL DRINKING" I shout "That's not fair" I crossed my arms over my chest and roll my eyes. "Oh, don't you worry, I'll deal with her next. One drunk at a time" He sits me in my seat as he goes to walk towards Ariana who was trying to convince the pilot that she can fly this plan better than him. I frowned as the feeling of disappointment crept through that Vincenzo wasn't going to stay.

"I'll be back leonessa" He whispers probably seeing my disappointment. "Ariana ... Ariana. ARIANA STOP PUSHING BUTTOUNS" He yells. Making me burst out laughing, I look behind me and see Maria also trying to get water down Lorenzo's throat and put him to bed. Vincenzo came back carrying Ariana and strapping her in her seat, "Sleep" He demands "But" he looks at her with what I'm assuming is a scowl. "If you promise to sleep now, I'll take you shopping when we land in Spain" he bribes her. Without another word she quickly shuts her eyes tight and 'sleeps'

Vincenzo laughs as he bends over leaving a loving kiss on her head, "ti amo sorella" (I love you sis) he whispers as he walks away, she allows a smile to form on her lips but refuses to open her eyes and jeopardise her shopping spree. Vincenzo laughs as he stares at her with admiration before making his way back towards me. I close my eyes and fake sleep so he wouldn't catch me staring at him, he sighs as he sits next to

me. He lifts my head and re places it on his chest as he snags his arm around my waist pulling me close.

He lowers his head now his lips are inches from my ear, “I know you’re awake leonessa” he whispers amused, I peak a look at him and roll my eyes. “Shut up” I responded as I lifted my head to look at him, “You love her huh?” I asked referring to Ariana, he sighed a smile forming as he looks up at Ariana who is now fast asleep. “She’s like my baby” he admits. I propped myself up and watching him as he started at his baby sister “I raised her, she couldn’t sleep unless she was in my arms. When she was happy or upset, I was there. When she made friends, she couldn’t wait to introduce them to her big brother. She would blush and get all giddy when I would call her princess and then get angry when I’d call her by her name.” He trailed off, and my heart could explode from the way he talks about his family it’s a side to him you don’t see often.

A raw vulnerable side, he tries to act all tough and scary and don’t get me wrong he is but deep down he possesses the biggest heart for those lucky enough to be a part of it and it was easy to see his siblings were a major part of his heart. I looked down to his chest and wandered if I owned a part of his heart two. “Lorenzo and her would fight like cats and dogs, but in a funny way. He would purposely annoy her when I was giving her more attention than she would start punching and chasing him around the house. For such a little girl she was actually scary” He laughed causing me to giggle “I mean she was raised by you” He laughed nodding his head “Then she grew up” he tilted his head then looked back at me “I have to keep reminding myself she’s all grown up that she isn’t a baby, and is capable of handling herself and going places and -” he shudders “dating” he says disgusted. I roll my eyes and laugh at his behaviour “Even though she may not be a baby anymore, she’ll always be that little girl I use to rock to sleep, that little girl who use to force me to play tea parties. I’ll always protect her no matter what.”

He pulls me back down resting my head on his chest as he whispers for me to get some sleep, and I happily obliged as I focused on his heartbeat as my eyelids began getting heavier and I drifted off to sleep.

x

I was shaken awake “five more minutes” I turn around and cover my eyes with my arms, “Isabella we landed” I slowly adjusted my eyes to the light and looked at Vincenzo extending his hand out. I took it standing up we entered the car parked Infront of the plane and took off to the Vila. “Are we staying with people?” I questioned. “Yes, have you heard of Andres Lopez?” he asked looking at me. I cocked my eyebrow at him nodding slowly “He and my dad use to be close; he owns the second biggest drug cartel in Spain. Mainly famous for the basics but he lacks the business savvy my dad had. When he passed away Andres was probably just as sad as me and Maria” Vincenzo nodded his head and looked at me sympathetically.

“Well, we are invited to stay at his Vila since he wants to start a partnership with the kings. We need legal ownerships of a few businesses in Spain, and he needs customers aboard. Thought we could help each other out, we are staying at his Vila for a few days iron out details, percentages and finalise everything” He briefed me and the rest of us in the car. “He has humbly offered us his men if need be while we are here. I doubt we will need them however, Maria, Ariana and Bella if you leave the villa you will be having those men accompany you If Lorenzo or myself are not with you” We all went to object before he swiftly cut us off “Don’t even bother, we are sorta at Xavier’s turf he has people here and I will not risk the safety of any of you. So, you can bitch all you want but we all know you won’t win” He states ending the conversation sliding his glasses over his eyes going on his phone.

The driver informs us we are a few minutes from the Vila, Maria tugs on my arm and pulls me close to her “Can we visit-” I cut her off nodding my head already knowing what she’ll say. “Without a doubt then well go see abuela and

abuelo” She nods her head excited and sad all in one. We pull up to a gate as the man talks to the security, they open the gate letting us through.

The car comes to a steady halt as they open the doors for us, standing at the entrance are Andres and his Wife Sarah. I took Vincenzo’s extended hand as he helped me out, we approached the couple as they looked taken back and surprised to see me. “Isabella?” they asked shocked as tears began to form in Sarah’s eyes. I smiled as they embraced me in a tight hug, “How have you been? No, what are you doing with the kings? No, I’m sorry about your parents passing. No, are you okay? No scars? Oh, I can’t believe what Xavier did to you. Are you-” Her husband swiftly cut her off “WOOW amor breath at least give her a chance to step foot inside.” He laughed as he looked over at me “You look so much like your father” I smiled as tears began forming in my eyes, I sighed smiling “He would be so proud of you” he whispered as he gave me another tight hug.

He looked over at Vincenzo “So sorry” he apologised as he extended his hand for a handshake “Please come in” as we walked inside Maria looked at me confused, “Met them when I was training with Papa and grew a stronger bond when I was dragon.” I briefly explained, all the contacts and allies Xavier had were because of me when I vanished so did they. Xavier wasn’t the best to talk business with and was always very shady when making deals you can’t afford to be sly you need to be honest and upfront otherwise the deal will fall to pieces and you can cause a war with the opposite side.

Sarah turned to Maria and let out a squeal “Oh you must be her twin?” she asked as he embraced her in a hug. Sarah reminded me a lot of Mama I think that’s why I was so comfortable around her and why I loved her and Andres so much they both reminded me of my parents. Soft, comforting, kind, daring and not to be messed with.

“Andres if you don’t mind jumping straight into it, I’d like to discuss the basics today” Vincenzo looks at Andres “Of course son, but I hope to also get to know you on a level beside

business partners. Why don't you all settle in, and I'll get miles to grab you and bring you to my office in 10 minutes" Vincenzo nodded smiling. They exchanged a few words as Andres laughed and patted him on the back Vincenzo looked very calm and relaxed in his presence. It was odd seeing as he was the complete opposite with his own parents. It was nice seeing them two getting along, even though Vincenzo and I are not a couple it was reassuring and meant a lot he was getting along with Andres.

We are all shown to our rooms, Maria and Lorenzo are across the hall, Ariana's room is at the end of the hall while one room remained at the opposite corner of the hall. "I guess we are sharing?" I asked scratching my arm nervously, he let out a mocking laugh "Afraid you won't be able to resist me if we share a bed?" smirking at me. Yes ... I mentally answered. I rolled my eyes "No." I answered walking inside. It was breath taking because our room was at the end of the hall, we got a beautiful balcony. I opened the door as the wind blew, I smiled taking in my home city getting slightly emotional. "It's so beautiful" I whispered when I sensed Vincenzo's presence. He stand's next to me "it really is" he whispers staring at me.

I looked up at him and for a moment it felt like everything stood still, my body was yearning to feel his touch. It had been so long, and it was aching for his touch, for his lips my body was burning with desire and looking into his eyes I knew he was too. He leaned down, backing me up against the wall our lips inches apart. I bit my bottom lip looking at his lip then I look up locking my stare on his beautiful grey eyes. "if you don't stop biting your lip, I'll bite it for you" he growled I instantly let go of my lip before smirking and taking it between my teeth again.

Without warning he pressed his lips to mine with such hunger, passion, and lust. I moaned into the kiss giving him access. He deepened the kiss as my hands found their way to his hair tugging at it. He bit down on my lip as my eyes rolled back with pleasure. Not being able to control myself anymore I ripped his shirt as my fingers run over his toned chest earning

me a low moan. I smirked feeling victorious at the effect I had on him simply with just my touch.

“I think we need to get rid of this now” He spoke out breathless tugging at the T-shirt he helped me in on the plane. I smirked as he tore it off faster than I could comprehend, he let out a hum of pleasure as he started at my toned stomach his eyes ranking up. It felt like a light bulb went off in my head as I remembered the scars on my stomach from the torture and Xavier. I cringed and tried to cover them.

Vincenzo noticed as he grabbed my arms and pulled me closer to him, “Don’t” he whispered as he managed to move my arms away, he picked me up so now I was straddling him as he moved us over to the bed. He put me down as he climbed on top of me, his necklace just touching my breasts as he hovers over me. He lowers himself down to my stomach kissing each and every scar he could see, whispering in Italian.

“Your scars tell a story,” He kissed the one under my right boob. “They are a reminder” he places another kiss in the middle of my breast above my other scar. “A reminder of times when life tried to break you and failed” He kissed the scar on my side before he pushed himself up and looked me in the eye. His gaze was soft and made me melt beneath him. “They are markings of where the structure of your character was welded. The story behind them may be sad and cruel but it’s because of them you are the way you are. Strong, resilient ... and so damn beautiful.” My eyes welled up with tears as I pulled his lips to mine.

I never for a second would have thought of my scars in that manner but hearing it from him made me feel special it made me feel like a warrior. We broke the kiss both evidently breathless “To insanity” I whispered he smiled “to insanity” he whispered back as he leaned back down to kiss me. But before he could a knock on the door was heard, “Mr King, Mr Lopez would like me to inform you that he is waiting for you in the office” I smirked looking up at him, “Duty calls Italy” he rolls his eyes as he hangs his head low frustrated. I laugh at his behaviour “This isn’t over” he warned as he stood up. “I think

you need a new shirt” I pointed out. He shook his head smirking he took a clean shirt from the bag and walked out.

THE CALM BEFORE

Maria and I stood hand in hand as we looked down at our parent’s graves with tears streaming down our eyes. “En tus manos, oh señor, humildemente te confiamos a nuestros padres” Maria whispered through tears. (In your hands, O Lord, we humbly entrust you with our parents.) I mentally translated in my head as I took a deep breath to continue the prayer. “Abrázalos con tu amor, sálvalos del mal y concédeles el descanso eterno.” (Embrace them with your love save them from evil and grant them eternal rest). “Dales la Bienvenida al parasío, donde no habrá dolor” (Welcome them into paradise, where there will be no sorrow.) Maria whispered as I finished off our prayer “Sin llanto ni dolor, sino plenitude de paz y alegríá” (No weeping or pain, but the fullness of peace and joy.)

We knelt down to their grave as we rested our heads on the stone tears falling from our eyes like a waterfall, my heart breaking like I just lost them all over again as the memory of their deaths re-enters my mind and I let out a silent weep.

“I’ve missed you both so much” I whispered as Maria gives me a reassuring squeeze. “I wish you were here, so I could say one more I love you. One more I miss you, to give you both one more hug ... one more kiss” my voice cracked as I spoke. “The day you two left was the day our hearts broke, our worlds shattered, and nothing seemed meaningful all seemed lost. I wondered who was going to stroke our hair and whisper everything was going to be okay ... who was going to make jokes at inappropriate times to make mum mad” I let a small giggle remembering a faint memory for the two of them.

“What scared us most was time ...” I drifted off as I felt the tear sliding down my cheek then hang on my jawline. I sniffled as I wiped my eyes. “That in time we may forget your voices, how you sounded like ... how you smelt ... how you

lived and how you loved” I move my hand up and down the stone as I smiled with tears still streaming down my eyes. I looked up at the sky with tears burning my eyes I whispered “Their voices ... please don’t let us forget their voices”

Maria embraced me in a tight hug as she whispered how she misses them too. “You think they could hear you?” She asked through tears, I smiled “I do ... I also believe there watching over us, that they are always nearby. Watching us grow up ... I just hope they’re proud of us”

“If they were here, they would be” A man whispered as me and Maria snapped our heads in the direction of the voice. I let out a small gasp as me and Maria quickly stood up to hug our grandparents. “Abuela” I smiled hugging my grandmother. “Abuelo” Maria cheered hugging our grandfather.

They embraced us in a tight hug as they let out a sigh of relief, I hugged Abuela from the side as we all stood staring down at our parents grave. “We miss them too mariposas” they both whispered at the same time give us a kiss on our head.

“Come on back home with us” I froze in my spot as she suggested we go home, “Isabella?” my grandparents whispered. I haven’t set foot in that home since I witnessed my parent’s death, I don’t think I could set foot in that house ever again without them. Maria saw the panic on my face as she approached me telling me to calm down. “I’ll be fine let’s go” Our grandparents went in their own car as we went with the men from Andres as part of our deal. Vincenzo wouldn’t let us step foot outside that vila without them, honestly, there was no use fighting them.

We stopped at the gate as our grandparents gave us access to enter, we came to a stop in front of the fountain in the centre of the Vila. I got out of the car as I looked around my head started hurting as I began blinking rapidly. The water in the fountain turned red with blood as I imagined bodies hanging off and on the fountain. I shut my eyes tight shaking my head trying to get rid of the mental images.

I hesitantly reopened my eyes the water returned to its usual blue, “mariposa come on angel” Abuelo called out for me. I hesitantly walked up the stairs taking his hand as I gave him a reassuring smile, “I’m okay” he nodded his head unconvinced. We walked inside and nothing changed, the walls were still a light shade of pastel green. I smiled looking at our old baby photos laughing at the one of me painting Maria with whipped cream. “Your mum was about to have a heart attack” Abuela laughed as she saw us staring at the picture frame. “It didn’t help when your father started to eat the whipped cream off your arms” Abuelo laughed “In his defence, he was cleaning” We both let out a genuine laugh “Sound’s just like Papa” I smiled sadly. How a simple image could hold such memories and sadness all in one.

We caught up in the kitchen having something to eat, Maria updated them on our lives back at the orphanage, when we got adopted, our decision to move to New York, The kings and Xavier being back and after me. “Did none of you think to call?” Abuela asked as she rubbed her temples. “There isn’t anything you can do from Spain, and you can’t just up and leave. So, we both agreed there was no use making you both worry while feeling hopeless” I explained.

“Why didn’t you both come back?” I winced at the question and the hurt expressions. “Spain carries a lot more sadness and grief. I guess we both weren’t ready to face it all again” Maria explained. They nodded their heads understandingly “If you want an escape, please, don’t hesitate to come back home” We nodded our heads in agreement. We moved on to more pleasant topics as we discussed the advancements of the drug cartel and how they have put forth all of Dad’s plans. While also helping the people of Spain, giving charity in his and mama’s name.

We walked around the backyard slowly making our way back inside when we stopped by the room and my heart stopped beating as I stood at the door Flashbacks of their dead bodies reappeared in front of my eyes as I took a step back, their screams for me to leave to run. Their dead bodies lifelessly

holding hands as blood poured from them. “I- I can’t” I whispered breathlessly as I ran out of the house.

I rushed to the gate leaving the house, as I stood in front of our car. Maria caught up not far “You, okay?” I nodded my head slowly trying to slow my heart rate back down. “I- I just ... I couldn’t-” she cut me off shushing me “I know don’t worry, you saw things none of us did. Come on let’s go back to the guy’s yea?” I nodded my head. “Mariposa Estás bien?” I nodded my head smiling “Sorry I scared you guys” I replied a little embarrassed “I’ll see you two soon, well come to visit next time” Abuela hugged me as she whispered in my ear. I nodded my head grateful giving my grandfather a kiss on the cheek we said our short goodbyes as we hopped back in the car.

The car ride was a comfortable silence as we drove back to the Vila.

x

I walked into our room as I saw Vincenzo laying down asleep, shirtless. I sucked in a breath as I watched his chest rise and fall. I admired his psyche and how innocent he looked laying there. I smiled as I got closer, I kneeled and planted a soft kiss on his cheek as I stood up to go shower, I felt a pair of strong hands wrap around my wrist. He pulls me to him I yelp as I land on top of Vincenzo. “You think you could do that and just leave?” he asked eyes still closed. I let out a giggle as I got comfortable. wrapping my arms around his waist as I rested my head on his chest.

He hummed as he kissed my head wrapping his arms around me making sure I wasn’t going anywhere. “Are you okay?” He questioned I sighed, “Yes” I lied as I buried my head further into his chest. “Liar ... Leonessa you do know I can read you like a book” I rolled my eyes playfully. “I’m here,” he whispered into my hair. “You can talk to me or not talk to me, but I’m here.” I closed my eyes smiling at his change of attitude. Good to know running away works I joked to myself as I let out a small giggle.

I lifted my leg up rubbing against his cock, I felt him stiffen underneath me as I smirked. I readjusted myself purposely moving my hip back and forth. Vincenzo's breathing becomes heavy as I teasingly grind against him. He grips my throat pulling me down closer to him, our faces inches apart as he whispers slightly out of breath. "If you don't stop in the next 5 seconds, I won't be able to control what happens next" I smirked "who says you had to control yourself" I whispered back matching his dominance tone.

START

Within a split second he smashed his lips on mine, flipping us so now he was on top of me. My legs immediately wrapped around his waist as I pulled him closer to me. Breaking the kiss, he leaves sloppy kisses along my jaw then travels down. My fingers trailing his back leaving scratch marks as he dry humps me. Instantly he places his hand over my mouth "No talking, no moaning" he harshly commands, purposely teasing me.

I shut my eyes closed as I bit my lip to try and be quite. My pussy throbbing with every movement, I was so wet I could feel it drip. He was taking full control tonight and the power lurking in his eyes made me weak and ready to submit to whatever he wanted. "You going to be a good girl for daddy?" he spoke in my ear as he roughly dry humped me staying in place waiting for my answer. I nodded my head; he hiked up my skirt as he teasingly traced my pussy with his index finger he hummed in pleasure feeling how wet I was for him. "So wet for me baby" he purred.

My eyes rolled to the back of my head as I arched my back as he teased my throbbing pussy. "Please" I begged needing to feel him, needing more contact. "Look at me" He forced my jaw as I stared at him lust dancing in both our eyes. "I want you to see whose pleasuring you" I licked my lip as I stared at him, how can a person be so desirable. In one swift motion he inserted his finger in me. My eyes rolled back "Vincenzo" I moaned out as he grabbed my hair and forced me to look at him again. "Look. At. Me"

“The man who your pussy throbs for” He thrusts his finger, I bit my lower lip at the impact as I stare at him not daring to look away “Who your pussy gets soaked for” he inserted another finger making me gasp as he pumps in and out. Then stops before I could reach any real satisfaction, he smirks at me “who your body aches for” He whispers. He goes down he grabs my thighs giving them a squeeze before he pushes them back making my hip hike up. He leans over my pussy his hot breath on my clit “Vincenzo ... Fucking hell” I moaned out breathlessly. His being a fucking tease, he wants me to know he was in control.

“Oh, fucking hell” he groaned as he extended his tongue and started at the bottom and licked all the way upwards until the flat of his tongue licked my whole clit. I gripped the sheets of the bed as I arched my back thrusting my hips further into his skilful tongue. I let out a moan as he started fucking me with his tongue. He lifted my ass up giving him more access as he went back to sucking me dry. “D-D- Don’t stop” I barely got out as his pace quickened. He forced my hips back down as he hovered over me eagerly, I eyed full of lust and a hunger I never felt before.

Sex with me and Vincenzo has always been something amazing but tonight, tonight it felt different like he was making up lost times and in his own way making up for everything. I unzipped his pants as he continued to hover over me taking out his cock. I begin to slowly pump his entire length as I innocently stare at him. Licking my lips, I bat my eyelashes as I watch his eyes roll to the back of his head because of my touch. His body and cock visibly tensing at the movements.

“Look at me” I repeated his words to him, he eyed me amused as he smirked at my change in attitude. “Look at the girl who your cock immediately reacts to” I whispered as I started picking up the pace “The only girl who can make you ... fully satisfied” I purred as I went faster inching my head up so that my lips were only an inch from his. “tu buena niña” his good little girl.

Taking charge once again he flipped us back around so now I was on top of him, I re-claimed his cock as I hovered over it teasingly to get him back, my hot breath making it twitch in anticipation “mine” I whispered as I kissed the head. “Isabella Knight-” I cut him off taking his entire length. I took his length out trying to catch my breath as I pumped him, leaving slow licks from top to bottom as I teased him with my tongue on his head. Swirling my tongue around his head. I smirked watching his reaction each moan and groan made me deeply and erotically satisfied. I let out a low moan as I felt his cock hardening further it felt like a rock.

I sit on top of him he reaches over for a Condom. I grip his hand midway “I want to feel you inside of me” I plea as I watch him with puppy eyes. He helps put his cock in my tight pussy, “fuck” we both moaned out as his cock stretched me out, I started riding him my head rolled back in pleasure. Fuck, fuck, fuck. I cursed as he gripped my waist guiding me in specific motions. I smirked and moved my hips in the motion of my name. “I own it” I purred. He flipped us over as he started to fuck me “So wet for me”

He groaned picking up the pace he gripped my boobs and pushed me further into him. I gapped as I pushed myself up slightly gripping the sheets of the bed feeling my entire body fire up “**nobody but me dares touch you**” he threatened thrusting one last time before offloading quickly slipping his cock out. Both reaching climax I was sweating.

END

We both took a shower after we caught our breaths and cleaned the bed before the maid could change our sheets. “No one needed to see that” I muttered as I folded the now clean sheets and put them away. Mental note never gets In the shower with Vincenzo King, I have never met someone with so much energy. My pussy was throbbing the second he started bathing me, long story short we fucked in the shower.

We went downstairs as we were called for dinner. Sitting aside each other everyone’s eyes were on us, “where were you

two?” Lorenzo smirked at the both of us, I immediately buried my head in my hands my cheeks going red. “Oh you know just f-” I elbowed Vincenzo in his stomach “say it and no more for you!” I harshly threatened as he eyed me with a smug smirk.

I was grateful at Maria for changing the awkward subject, Maria asked how Andres and his wife met their story was so adorable and easy. I found myself looking at Vincenzo a part of me couldn't help but wonder how difficult our story so far had been, and if our story will have a happy ending like Andres and Sarah. Was he even thinking about marriage? About me? The future?

“While you are here as my guests, please explore the sights. It would be a shame if you flew from New York to Spain just to stay in your rooms.” I laughed as I watched Ariana applaud Andres for his comment. “YEAA come on you heard the man it would be rude to not listen” She pleaded with her brothers.

“Let's go on a date” Vincenzo surprised the table as he looked at me, “What?” I replied back shocked, “We never been on an official date, yes I took you out, but we weren't official” he stated. My eyes gone wide as I looked at him ... Lorenzo matching my expression “Are you asking Isabella to officially be your girlfriend” He dramatically emphasised the obvious. He nodded his head “If she says yes if not then I'm kidding” he joked. I laughed “after everything” I looked at him knowingly “Of course Italy” Smashing his lips on mine, I got lost in the taste of his lips as I dragged my tongue on his bottom lip. Coughs were heard from the table “GET A ROOM YUCK THATS MY BROTHER MAN” both Lorenzo and Ariana shouted covering their eyes, we broke apart “you'll be finishing this off later” I looked at him like he gone mad, “How are you not tired? You men aren't built like that”

“Vincenzo King is” he winked, sending a wave of anticipation through my entire body down straight to my pussy. “Let's not be cliché no restaurant dates ... let's go laser tag” Vincenzo suggested I eyed him amused “Seriously? A game of shooting?” I smirked amused. “You want to play a game version of your actual life?” He laughed out “Afraid you girls

are going to lose?” He teased. My completeness kicked in high gear “Ok you’re on, but let’s make this interesting” I spoke.

“A bet” He stated, all of us nodding our heads. “A bet” I agreed “If the girls win you boys have to take us on an all-paid shopping spree wearing ‘my girl won me in laser tag’ t-shirts” I smiled, as I watched the hesitation in Lorenzo and Vincenzo’s eyes before they reluctantly agreed. “Ok, but if we win you girls have to do whatever we say for 24 hours” I looked at the girls as we mentally exchanged thoughts. “You girls scared?” Lorenzo and Vincenzo stood next to one another as they teased us. “Deal” we agreed.

“But the teams are uneven” Lorenzo pointed out, “My son can join you two if you would like” we all nodded in agreement, and I swear I caught Ariana blush from the corner of my eye. His son Sebastián stood up. “let’s go”

We all hopped in the car along with a few of Andres men just in case and drove off to a local laser tag centre. Eagerly getting out of the car we go inside and get in our gear the girls are team Red and the boys are team Blue. The instructor gave us a briefing and rules before we could start. But all I could do was focus my eyes on Vincenzo as we playfully teased each other with the guns and gestures. It was different seeing this side of Vincenzo a goofier and more relaxed version of him, It was nice like he was finally letting a little light enter his darkness.

“Ok thank you for choosing us and have fun!” The instructor spoke as we all ran inside getting into various positions. The lights in the arena darkened we all split up and went for our targets, I spotted Lorenzo hiding behind a barrel aiming my gun I shot at him turning his light off “You. Bitch” He sassed. I giggled and winked “I think this makes you my bitch” I remarked before taking off. I saw Ariana shoot Sebastián I fist pumped the air, I moved around one of the courses and saw Maria and Lorenzo having a standoff. Such a unique couple I mentally laughed watching them.

So, if Sebastián is cornered by Ariana and Maria and cornered by Lorenzo ... where is Vincenzo. I looked around my

surrounding no light shined other than the light from the obstacles, sneaky bastard I yelled to myself where is he? I walked around shooting at the targets for double points. I stood frozen when I felt someone pin me against the wall, “Hey baby” he smirked aiming the gun at my chest. I smirked “Italy” he cocked his head to the side amused “any last words leonessa?” I tilted my head rubbing my chin “not really a word but” I grabbed his face and smashed his lips to mine; his hands immediately fall as he pulls me by my waist.

I break the kiss and shoot him, “Next time might wanna skip the foreplay babe” I laughed before taking off running. The entire game was spent us running and shooting each other a lot of threats and gasps. Lorenzo falling and me laughing at him, Ariana shooting her brothers feeling some sort of bliss “ARIANA” Vincenzo yells frustrated his Italian accent was so thick when he was mad. I laughed realising he was going to shoot me “NICE” I air high fived Ariana. Running away and Vincenzo was hot on my tail. “YOU’LL NEVER CATCH ME BITCH” I yelled running, “ISABELLA” He yelled shooting his gun trying to get a clear aim for the sensor to catch it.

I laugh running before tripping over a body, “FUCKING HELL LORENZO” I cursed realising he tripped me “GET HER” Vincenzo hovered over me faces inches apart “Ti ho preso” (I got you) his Italian accent sent shivers down my spine as I stared into his eyes he remembered the time he had to chase me out in the rain to get in his car when he beat up sam. I smiled like an idiot and whispered back. “Mi hai beccato” (You got me).

The lights turned back on, and our attention never left one another, I coughed slightly as he stood up and helped me up. “Ready to buy some print out T-shirts” I smiled “Ready to say yes for 24 hours?” he remarked “You know that bet counts towards Ariana and Sebastián” I smiled back innocently and kept walking to the main room as I watched him freeze in his spot. “Just to be clear I won that” I shouted as I kept walking. “THE GIRLS WON” he shouted as he ran towards us in the main room. “WE WON!” we cheered as we saw the scores.

I slowly opened my eyes to the sound of Vincenzo on the phone, I turned over watching him intensely engaged in the conversation “I’ll leave in an hour” he stayed on the phone for another minute before hanging up. “Leave?” I whispered disappointed. He looked down at me not realising I had woken up “I have business back home that needs my attention, I need to get an earlier flight.” I frowned disappointed “You’re coming back home tomorrow, enjoy your last day leonessa you’ll see me in less than 24 hours” he reassured me “you promise?” I whispered. I asked for reassurance as a bad feeling began to creep its way to my stomach.

“I promise” he kissed my forehead before getting up to pack and call a car. I stood up and looked at him “What exactly is this business that needs your attention” I asked knowing the answer wasn’t going to be reassuring. He looked at me hesitantly as he strolled the packed suitcase and stood it up next to him. My eyes following his every move while I stood in one of his buttons up shirts and long white socks. My hair fell loose he stepped closer to me and tucked a strand behind my ear.

Leaning down softly planting his lips on top of mine. The kiss was tender and gentle I hummed closing my eyes. “Promise you’ll always remember me” He whispered like this might be the last time I see him. I looked at him full of worry then sadness, “don’t make me promise that” I whispered feeling defeated. He looked at me his eyes fill with shock, sadness and desperation. “People only ask you to remember them if there planning to leave” I explained softly. “If you’re planning to leave ... please don’t ask me to remember it” but my heart already promised his ... it promised his heart and the man standing in front of me to never forget him no matter what.

We stood in front of each other in a comfortable silence as he hugged me “I’m not going anywhere; I’ll see home tonight” He reassured me. I smiled and nodded my head my gut feeling still eating away at my stomach. He grabbed his suitcase and left my eyes followed him until he was no longer in view. “Did

he have a bad feeling as well?” I thought out loud. I heavily sighed trying to push back the sickening feeling and go back to sleep. I hugged his pillow taking in his lingering scent as I slowly fell back asleep.

x

I woke up to the same feeling in my stomach but this time it got worse overnight, I shut my eyes shut as I gripped my stomach. I got out of bed and got dressed for breakfast and with every step the sick feeling got worse like something bad was about to happen. I walk downstairs dressed in ripped jeans and a distressed T-shirt. “Buenos Días” I greeted everyone at the table. I smiled at Ariana as I saw her talking to Sebastián. “Buenos Días” Andres and Sarah greeted me back. I took my seat and let out a heavy sigh. “Where’s Vincenzo?” Maria questioned. Just as she spoke i felt my gut twist I coughed and shook my head trying to distract myself from what I felt “He had to go back to New York, for an important meeting that wouldn’t wait. The private jet is set to be back soon though” they nodded their heads understandably.

“Let’s see what’s on the news” Andres flicks the Tv on as a visual of a private jet in flames appears on the screen. My heart tugs at my chest as I straighten my posture. “This just in private jet from company Air Global has just crash landed near New York city. The private jet caught a flame and is not known if there are any survivors.” The news lady spoke as I felt myself losing the ability to breath like the oxygen was no longer ... “No” I shouted tears pouring out of my eyes as I felt the pain in my heart. My hands interwind in my hair as I let out a blood curling scream “NOOOOOOOO” tears falling as the veins became visible in my neck as I yelled. I dropped to my knees unable to let any sound out. My mouth opens wide as I silently yelled, cried, cursed. This isn’t happening. “Isabella maybe it’s not his jet” I heard someone try to reassure me.

I clutched my chest as I felt my breathing become rapid, everything around me became dizzy as I heard the news anchor announce “Vincenzo King was on board, officials

haven't found his body but say the likelihood of his survival is a 40% chance" My eyes rolled to the back of my head as the room went black.

THE STORM

I sat in his bed crying for what felt like days. I was wearing his favourite silk button-up shirt finding serenity in his cologne. I shot my head up when I felt someone's hands on my shoulder, I stared at him with blurry vision ... "Vincenzo?" I whispered relieved. I jumped into his arms tightening my embrace in fear if I let go, he would disappear. A low husky chuckle escaped his lips as he held me burying his head in the crook of my neck.

"I- How? I thought the plane crashed, and you- we couldn't find your body. I- w-w-we thought you were de-" I hysterically cried out all the words escaping my mouth at once. "Shhh, I told you I'd come back home, didn't I? I never break a promise" He whispered.

"Then where were you? How did you escape the plane crash ... How are you here?" I asked nothing making sense to me. He pulled away smiling before he started coughing up water "VINCENZO" I screeched watching him.

My body shot up as I started painting, I looked around the room frantically realising he isn't here, and it was another bad dream. I hurried to my feet running towards his office, I spread out the map and hung it back up "I'm not giving up on you" I whispered, still panting my fingers gently stroked the paper circling and trying to determine a pinpoint location.

Lorenzo and Ariana walked in and stood in silence watching me frantically drawing over the map. "Isabella" Lorenzo whispered softly, I looked at him and my heart ached as I watched him look at the floor. Both Lorenzo and Ariana haven't been doing well, the loss of their brother impacted the entire Mafia, but it hit them the hardest. He was like their father a role model someone they could always count on being there but now his ... NO, no.

"Isabella" Ariana now whispered I stared at both of them their eyes puffy from crying their bodies looked weak none of us were able to find the will to eat. I shook my head tears threatening to spill "NO. HE'S ALIVE. I CAN FEEL IT. H-H-HE ISN'T GONE" I cried out feeling every single drop of hope slowly drain out of me as I watched them staring at me in a pained expression.

"Isabella he's dead" Lorenzo cried out, "NO HE ISNT! YOU'RE HIS BROTHER WHY ARE YOU GIVING UP SO EASILY" I yelled. Lorenzo looked at me with hurt in his eyes "Yes, Isabella he is my brother, and he will ALWAYS be my brother. Do you think it's easy for us? For us to accept the facts that he is gone! Well, it's not ... every day I wake up hoping it's all just a bad dream and he's sitting in that chair" He angrily pointed at the chair as tears started escaping his eyes

"But then I come in here every morning for the past 2 weeks and he ... he" He shut his eyes closed taking in a deep breath before finishing his sentence "He isn't there. That's my big brother OUR big brother, the man who raised us when our dad and mum were fighting nonstop, the man who would cover our ears to make sure we didn't hear the gunshots or the swearwords coming from our parents. The man who told us

bedtime stories, our brother the one person in our lives that was always there for us, who we could always count on to be standing behind us in case we screw up, or we need to talk, or we're upset, angry, happy the person who was our backbone, a safe place, our brother our best friend ... is dead. If he was here, he would tell us to move on, to finish what he started to cry for a few days then get on with life. Make memorise, smile, be happy. Because that's all he wanted from us when he was alive"

Ariana by now was in full-blown tears, she fell to her knees, and she let out a pained cry for her brother. I watched them my bottom lip quivering as I fought back my own tears. "He was my favourite person to ever live, my rock, the first person I loved, my big brother, my best friend. He taught me everything, he made sure I knew my worth and how I should be treated. He was there for me through everything, when I was small, he taught me to ride a bike, he would kiss my scratches, he would hold me when I felt sick, he would leave everything to take me shopping. He would no jokes tear apart the world if me or Lorenzo were upset. Growing up our parents only ever birthed us ... Vincenzo raised us he was our dad and big brother all in one. He was the person we would run to for everything ever since we were little. When Dante died, he told us that Dante was only dead when we stopped thinking about him, when we stopped remembering him ... when we no longer made room for him in our hearts, that as long as he was in our hearts Dante would live in each and every one of us. I think if he was here, he would've said it again but about him. Isabella no one wishes he was alive more than us ... but it's time" she whispered the last part and this time it was my turn to fall to my knees and break down in tears.

My head was spinning, my eyes were burning my nose was blocked, the pain in my heart was too much to bare my entire body was in complete shock and pain. I didn't want to accept it, that he died. I looked at Ariana and Lorenzo who sat next to

me embracing me in a comforting hug. “Okay,” I whispered feeling defeated.

We all stood up and walked to our rooms to change, Maria, Ariana and I in black laced dresses the Mafia men all dressed in black suits as we all walked outside in the backyard for his funeral. His body was never found but we wanted to remember him, taking time today to mourn his passing. We all sat in our seats as everyone stood up to speak, I looked around and felt disgusted neither his mum nor dad came. I prayed it was simply because they didn’t want to believe he was gone, but when we arrived from Spain their first concern was for Lorenzo to take over. I winced at the memory as I stared up at the sky with pure sadness. ‘I’m not giving up ... you’re not dead’ I mentally whispered.

Hacker suddenly stopped talking as he stared behind us, all of our heads curiously following in the same direction. My eyes went wide, anger began rising as I felt a fire light up. “Leave,” I demanded, Xavier cocked his eyebrow up as an amused smirk reappeared on his lips. “I’m just here to say my farewells” he replied with a sinister tone laced in his words. “Xavier unless you want to be the next person, we host a funeral for. I highly suggest you leave and never come back”

“It’s funny, Vincenzo made a similar threat before I bombed his plane” Looking to my side I noticed on the table that everyone put something on to remember him by, I saw Vincenzo’s knife. I grabbed it in my hand and flung it at Xavier the knife piercing his chest, I go up to him and twist the knife. His men drawing their guns i laughed as Vincenzo’s men stood up in an instant and aimed their guns to Xavier’s men’s heads.

I purred satisfied as I watched the pain in Xavier’s eyes as I twisted the knife “I promised myself that today was a day of peace, so we can all say our goodbyes. I want to kill you and oh I will kill you Xavier, but your death will be anything but quick. I’m going to watch as the life drains out of your eyes, watching in pure pleasure as your soul struggles to leave your body. You just declared war and one I will happily give to you.

I just hope old age hasn't ruined your memory, I'm Isabella Knight the dragon who is going to eat you whole." I sharply took out the knife from his chest as I watched the blood squirt everywhere, "LEAVE" I yelled as his men took him dashing to the door. "Tell the guards at the front the mansion is no longer open to all" I ordered one of the men as he hurried off to the gate.

"WHY DIDN'T YOU KILL HIM" Ariana yelled, I shook my head "Not today, but I promise I will. I know him too well; he is hiding something, and I won't kill him before I know what. Someone else was responsible for the bombing of the plane, he couldn't have known about it without inside help" I informed the group. Everyone went silent as I urged Hacker to continue his speech.

After the funeral was over, we all went back inside his men and women still mourning the loss of their beloved boss, after my long shower I saw Lorenzo, Ariana and their parents arguing in Vincenzo's office. "I'M NOT READY TO TAKE OVER, I WILL NOT TAKE OVER." Lorenzo yelled, "YOU FOOL! YOU'RE THE UNDERBOSS YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE THAT CAN DO THIS JOB" He yelled slamming his fist on the desk. "NO! I WILL LEAD OUR MEN TO THEIR DEATH! I CAN HANDLE THE SHIPMENTS THE LOGISTICS THE INVENTORY BUT I CANNOT RUN A MAFIA" I believed Lorenzo could run the mafia if he wanted to, he wasn't trained for it but if he had time to be properly trained, he would have been an equal boss to his brother.

Vincenzo ruled with an iron fist, yes, he was ruthless, merciless and some would say evil. However, he always showed kindness to his people, helping them off the streets, training them, paying them in incredibly high sums making sure they had money to feed their families. He owned 99% of New York but think of it yes everyone feared him because he's a King, but he was respected as Vincenzo. If you said his name on the streets everyone would run the other way, but if you needed help, he was the first name people would say. He was powerful, ruthless but he was noble a well-respected man

within the crime families. I shook my head trying to refocus as I went to walk away “ISABELLA” Lorenzo shouts stopping me in my tracks.

I turned around watching them suspiciously “yes?” I answered uneasily. “You!” he shouted like he just discovered something amazing. I walked into the office hesitantly and stood beside Lorenzo. “You need to take over, you need to become the boss of the Kings ... Isabella you need to be our Queen” he begged. I shook my head no “No, I can’t- I can’t take over the King’s Vinc-” Lorenzo cut me off “Vincenzo wouldn’t trust anyone more than you to continue his legacy ... to avenge his death. Isabella, there is no one more capable of running a Mafia in this room besides you, you have been shot in this line of work since you were small. You ran Spain, everyone cower, benefit you at the mere mention of your name just like they do when they hear Vincenzo’s name. You from a young age had to kill and rule over people without so much of a say! Isabella, I can’t do this, Vincenzo didn’t get to teach me this part of it and I won’t do it without him ... I can’t” He looked at me with pleading eyes.

“Isabella, you already have the King’s loyalty. Our men loved and protected you from day one, you slowly gained everyone’s trust. You managed to single handily train Roberto, Luca, Massimo, Hacker and even me how to shoot a m24 and an m25, you taught us skills none of us knew. You trained Ariana in combat; you taught her how to fight now she took on Snake our strongest female fighter and won because of your training. You today managed to throw a knife at a target Xavier and penetrate him in the chest without even thinking twice. You did that, our men jumped ready to die because his men had guns aimed at your head. Isabella, you might not see it but you’re our closest link to Vincenzo ... you both rule with an iron fist and are capable of a lot. You are a female version of our Vincenzo.”

I closed my eyes feeling the tears slide down my cheeks dangling on my jawline, I looked up at Lorenzo’s pleading eyes “For me, for Ariana, for our mafia ... for Vincenzo” he

pleaded. I looked at his parent's unamused faces when I noticed slight fear in his parent's eyes. I shook my head probably overthinking everything and looked back at Lorenzo "Ok" I agreed "But only until he comes back" I stated "Isabella-" Lorenzo tried to desperately remind me he wasn't coming back. "No, Lorenzo he isn't dead. Call it what you will, denial? delusion? Crazy? I just, I just know. I'm not giving up on him." I explained.

I stood up, "she cannot run our mafia" his mum spat. I turned around and looked at her "Can you?" I asked. She stared at me slightly taken back, I edged closer to her "Can. You?" I repeated myself, her husband went to fight me "How dare you, speak to her like a child" I looked at him amused "I believe my question was simple and clear, no hint of mockery just a question I still haven't heard an answer for" I stated, looking between both of them.

"Can you run a Mafia?" I asked once more, "Yes" she answered not confident. I smiled "Then go for it. Just remember this every time you wake up in the morning you are no longer waking up for yourself, but for an entire clan. You are responsible not just for your life but the life of the Mafia, the legacy of the King's lives and dies in your hands. Can you do that?" I asked her as she looked at me with an unreadable expression.

"You couldn't do that for your own children, I wonder how you'll care for the men and women your son has cared for." Lorenzo and Ariana stared at me with wide eyes, "I loved my children" I shook my head as I watched her "loved? your kids are right there" I pointed at them, "can you tell me anything about them? Something unique to them?" I asked as I watched her struggle, "Lorenzo has a wing-like birthmark on the back of his neck, Ariana has a beauty mole on her collarbone" I said, she goes to mock me before I continue "Ariana's favourite thing is singing, she has a voice of an angel, her favourite song is the song Vincenzo sang to her when she was a baby. A lullaby for a soldier. Lorenzo has a wish to travel with his wife and kids. He wants two girls and two boys.

Aurora and Sofia for the girls and the boys Francesco and Gabriele” I looked at the two of them as they stared at me in discomfort and shock.

“Vincenzo ... Vincenzo’s dream his desire was love. He wanted to feel it, wanted to give it but died before he could. He although might never admit he wanted kids, a wife a life he could be happy with. A life he could proudly tell Dante about, he goes out every night and talks to the sky on the balcony. Vincenzo wanted love, a love he never got from the two of you. He made sure this mafia only killed and attacked those who killed and harmed the innocent who just did it for sport. He took down human trafficking in many cities and was hoping to kill everyone who kidnaps people to sell in all of America then make his way around. He single handily housed so many people on the street anonymously so YOU” I pointed at his father “Wouldn’t see it as an act of weakness and tear the homes down, He wanted a life he could be proud of because he promised Dante that.” I watched as his mother’s eyes went from stone to soft, she let a few tears drop before she quickly regained her composure and shook her head.

“That has nothing to do with ruling a Mafia” he states. I smirked “Yes, but in order to rule over people, you need to gain their loyalty. You need to know them, you need to put in the work for what’s a ruler without people to rule” I looked at her, I smiled and laughed. “Okay, let’s put that aside. Have you ever held a gun? Have you ever killed someone? Have you ever had your hands stained with someone else’s blood? Have you ever had someone’s life in the palm of your hands? Have you ever had thousands of men and women waiting for your move? Waiting for your order? Waiting for you to lead them? Have you ever had to wake up in the morning and put aside everything to help the thousands who depend on you? Have you ever been able to do anything selfless? ... have you ever been able to look in the mirror and accept the monster within you?” I questioned her. She continued to stare at me with a blank expression while her husband looked at me astonished and once again fear.

“I didn’t think so” I finally broke the silence as I watched them walk out of the office. “For Vincenzo” Ariana whispers, “we need Dragon” Lorenzo whispers. I look at the both of them **“I am coming for all the monsters that ever touched him, I am coming for all the ones who twisted his stars into shadows, they turned him into a nightmare, So I’m going to be theirs ... and they’ll never wake up”** I threatened my voice was low and demanding. I felt myself once more saying goodbye to Isabella and hello to Dragon.

“If we are doing this, our first mission is finding his body and killing Xavier” I stated looking at both Ariana and Lorenzo. Both swiftly nodding their head in agreement.

X

It’s been a month, a month of searching for Vincenzo and we haven’t found anything. Hacker, Sebastián and Lorenzo, all stood around me as we looked over the map where the plane crashed. “We checked every inch possible; the only explanation is someone took his body. Hacker find me the nearest towns in the area, re-check every morgue and hospital

within proximity. Lorenzo, get in the car and your contacts call another search party but this time.” I circled the last possible location “Here, check for his body. If you can’t find it once Hacker finalises the nearest civilization to the crash site go and start questioning. Just see if anyone knows anything. Sebastián and I need to follow up on a lead, we have intel about Xavier’s right hand being at our local strip club. When Vincenzo and I were on the hunt for him we found out that he’s hiding someone, a secret weapon? or blackmail? We don’t know but hopefully tonight we will.” I let out a deep exhale and looked at the men “Thank you, I know we’ve been on edge b-”

Lorenzo cuts me off “But nothing, in under a month you managed to take down over a dozen human trafficking businesses save the girls and boys. You managed to triple our number of men while training them in firearms, shipment businesses and combat. You’re doing us and Vincenzo is proud, you’re finishing off his dream. None of us are on edge, we feel right at home. I told you, you’re our closest tie to Vincenzo with you in charge it’s like he never left”

I smiled nodding my head, I closed my eyes before opening them up slowly. Feeling like I changed personas. “Let’s go” I ordered the men off; I grabbed my long leather coat and tucked my gun in my stockings. Sebastián grabbed his gun and followed me out, Andres thought it would be of help if his son came and assisted me in a few errands. I rolled my eyes knowing Andres just wanted me to train his son, the second the crime families got word Dragon was back and running the Mafia Kings everyone has been on edge, excited, and terrified. The return of Dragon they called it, I was back and hungry.

We stepped out on the floor, I looked ahead to the right of the garden we had firearm training, then combat training. To our left, we had knife training and anatomy class. To get the best answers out of people sometimes you need to know what and where to put a knife or bullet through, that class was specifically reserved for those who have been in the Mafia for more than 4 years. Skills like that can’t be handed over to new recruits not yet.

I jumped in one of the black range rovers accompanied by Sebastián driving me, “Strip club?” he asked “Yes, and don’t get distracted” I ordered him. Men, I rolled my eyes. “Isabella, I know you hate it when I ask you this but are you okay?”

“Yes,” I answered, was I okay? I had no idea, but I didn’t care there’s no time to waste on stupid emotions, I was numb. “I got good at blocking out emotions a long time ago Sebastián, It just slows you down. I can’t afford to slow down” he went to say something before I shot him a warning glare to keep it to himself.

Finally arriving at the strip club, we park the car around back getting in through the back door. I walk inside and the workers all eye me, I smirked watching the fear. I walked up to the manager and told him the description to keep an eye out for, nodding his head we went and informed the rest of the staff. Was it wrong I felt good? The feeling of being feared again. The power I have ... was it bad I missed it?

“What is she doing here” I heard a familiar pitched voice; I spin on my heel and eye Roxy. I inch closer to her and the closer I get the farther back she goes. I grab her by her throat and slam her against the wall, “where are you going kitten?” I purred flicking my tongue on the roof of my mouth as I watch her squirm. “The next thing to come out of your mouth will result in my nails piercing your throat. Got it?” She nodded her head frantically, “I don’t know why or how but I know you’re up to something. If you prove your disloyalty to the King’s, I won’t hesitate to kill you” I warned lowly, the other girls watching us. I turn to them and smile “the shows over ladies” quickly hurrying to their business I look back at Roxy watching Lexi help her up.

I go to walk off before Lexi grips my arm, I turn my head to look her in the eye before my eyes trail down to her hand still gripping my arm. “If you don’t get your hand off me in the next two seconds you won’t have hands” She quickly removes her hands from my arm before rolling her eyes. “I’ll never understand Vincenzo’s fascination with you, he probably crashed that plane on purpose to get away from you.” Without

thinking I grabbed the beer bottle sitting on the dressing table and smashed it over her head, gripping her head before she could fall down, I pull her up then grip her neck. Pinning her against the wall applying pressure to cut off her airways, “Don’t. Test. Me” I warned lowly my voice laced with venom.

“I say I’m a fair boss, I pay you all well. I take care of all of you and am friends with all of you. However, the second you disrespect me. Is the same second I cut your airways off” I looked around the room then back at Lexi. “Should I kill you now?” She slowly shook her head losing oxygen. I released her neck and watched her body fall to the floor. “Roxy and Lexi get the fuck out, you longer have a place of work here.” I fire the two of them, they stare at me with wide eyes shocked at my words.

“I don’t care if you don’t like me ... but you spoke about Vincenzo’s death like it was nothing. That’s not tolerated, get. out” I grab a short black wig and leave the changing room. Putting on the wig I check myself in the mirror before walking into an empty private room, I grabbed my phone and messaged Sebastián ‘Anything?’

My phone buzzed, ‘manager is sending someone in’ I quickly put my phone away grabbing a mask to cover my face, “are you black fire?” A rather old man spoke, I smiled not saying a word and started the music. “Straight to the point, I love that” He sat in his chair while the sweet music began pumping through the speakers.

I played with the tie of my jacket swirling it around before slowly untying it is making sure the coat still covered my gun, I slowly walked up to him grabbing the knife I saw tucked in his pants out looking at his hand on the hand rest I smirk and stab his hand with his own knife. His hand impaled as the knife forced him still in the chair. He lets out a grunt, “YOU CRAZY BITCH” He yell’s.

I roll my eyes “yea, yea. Shut up, your voice is annoying” I pull up a chair and sit in front of him smiling. The way the wrinkles in his eyes curved reminded me of someone, I

analysed him for a moment “What’s your name” I asked, he kept his mouth shut as he squirmed in pain his face and body shaking from both anger and pain. I watched him curiously, “I’ve never seen you in Xavier’s gang before, and yet you’re his right hand why does he keep you hidden?” I asked.

In my years when I worked with him in Spain, I never saw nor met this man, which is making me wonder who he is and why I was never introduced to him. I still couldn’t shake off the feeling that I knew him from somewhere. “Okay, look either way you’re not returning back to Xavier. So, I suggest you tell me what I want to know. Otherwise, I have another method to get you to talk” I pull out his gun and aim it at his head.

He smirks daring me, like he wasn’t afraid of dying. I raised my eyebrows and remained my gun at his dick. Wiping away this smug smirk, “Whose Xavier hiding?” I asked, the man looked shocked like I just discovered a ghost. “Who is it!” I yelled. He flinched back looking at me, “How do you know about that?” I smiled and shook my head “No, no. I’m asking the questions” I informed him, he looked down at the knife stuck in his hand then back at me. “Why is this information useful to you?” He asked, I raised my eyebrow at him and took the safety off.

He gulped “Okay. Okay. Who Xavier is hiding is more of a blackmail.” I looked at him confused “Blackmail?” I questioned. “Someone he can use to control another member of his group” I looked at him, none of this made any sense. “Who are they?” I asked him. He grunted taking the knife out of his hand and stabbing me in my stomach.

I fell to the floor as I watched him hover over me victorious. He locked eyes with me for a moment looking smug, his chest heaved in unison before finally taking the knife out. “I win.” He spat looking at me in disgust. He stepped away, dropping the knife on the floor as he gripped his hand. A few months ago, I would’ve died here, but Isabella wasn’t the person he stabbed it was Dragon.

Without warning a wave of strength overcame me as I stood up, I gripped the man's arm, twisting it behind his back and shoving him so his torso was flush against a wall. My grip around his arm was iron, grabbed the knife and pressed it to his neck. "Wrong again."

I pinched a nerve located on his neck causing him to pass out. I can't kill him without getting the answers I need. I messaged Sebastián to come, he came in and saw my bleeding stomach. "Bel-" I cut him off quickly "No time, grab him and let's get home NOW" I yelled.

We got out from the back door, and I saw men approaching us, Fucking hell. "IN THE CAR NOW GO!" I yelled. Pulling my gun out I swiftly shot the two men in the head. I hide behind the car while the other two shoot at me. Looking underneath the car I saw their feet approaching, swiftly standing up I shoot them both in their head barely moving my arm an inch I watch in satisfaction as their bodies drop to the floor. I grunt and grip my stomach before jumping in the car "go"

x

Arriving to the estate I ordered three men to take the man downstairs to the basement and handcuff him in so he can't escape and stay with him until I arrive. "Isabella!" Lorenzo, Ariana, and Maria scream when they see my hand gripping my stab wound with blood pouring out. "IM FINE" I yelled, "any word on Vincenzo" I asked them.

They all shook their heads in disbelief, "You need to get that taken care of now" Lorenzo yelled at me and escorted me to the onsite hospital. It was more of a clinic but whatever. She cleaned my wound and stitched me up.

"You lost a lot of blood" she began, I swiftly cut her off "I understand your concern and appreciate the help but I'm fine. I have to much to do to rest, I can't afford to stop" I stood up exiting the hospital and getting a ride back to the main house, "ISABELLA" Hacker shouted. "I HAVE NEWS" my heart started beating as he approached me with a folder, "I did some digging and found out that someone took in an injured man

into their home before calling officials to send him to a hospital before he was transferred to a hospital in New York yesterday” I looked at him with wide eyes as tears began to form.

“He’s alive?” I asked, Hacker looked at me hesitantly “We don’t know it’s him Isabella, so let’s not get our hopes up.” I nodded my head, “Lorenzo, Ariana and I will check it out get us that address.”

I motioned for Sebastián to call them and meet me in the car now. I looked over at the training fields, I watched as sniper showed the newbies how to handle and operate a gun while teaching the oldies more technical firearms. I walked up to the site everyone stopped and stood in front of me as a sign of respect and acknowledgment. I smiled and nodded my head “How is everything?” I asked, as I watched the targets in awe and sadness about the distant memory of Vincenzo bringing me here to let off steam.

“Amazing the soldiers are learning quickly” I nodded my head, “can I see?” I asked eager to see them shoot. “Yes boss” I winced at the phrase boss, I didn’t feel like the boss, and I don’t want to its Vincenzo’s title not mine.

They stood in their posts as they took form and shot their guns, majority hit the stomach or neck, no one got a headshot. “For soldiers who only recently began training that is impressive, however, I need headshots. If you are in a death situation the quickest and easiest way out is a shot to the head. As we call it a death shot” I grabbed one of the guns from the table re loading it before aiming it.

Shooting each target in the head, I placed the weapon down and smiled at them “I’ll be back tonight to help train.” They smiled joyful as I looked at sniper “You’re doing amazing, thank you. I’ll be back tonight so you can rest” he smiled nodding his head “Thank you ... and Isabella thanks for everything” with that he walked off.

I yelled “EVERYONE THATS BREAK MEN TO YOUR ORIGINAL POSTS” everyone nodded their heads and

scattered off. While I waited for Lorenzo and Ariana, I went around briefing and tasking everyone with something to do tonight.

Shipment collection, distributing products, money collectors and territory runs. Underground fighting, dealing and so forth territory runs just to check up on our turf and make sure everything is okay.

“What’s going on?” Ariana asked me, “Hacker found something, we’re going to check it out” They nodded their heads as we quickly got in the car. I rested my head against the headrest trying to control my heart rate. “Could it be him?” Ariana broke the silence, I looked at her and shrugged “I really don’t know” I answered her “It’s been over a month what are the odds?” Lorenzo asked. I shrugged my shoulders again “I don’t know, I just ... I hope it is” we all fall back into a comfortable silence as we nervously wait to get to the location.

We run out of the car and into the hospital like mad, “Hi we are here for the JohnDoe, he was flown here yesterday and has serious injuries” the receptionist looked at us hesitantly “I can only allow you to see the patient from a far if you can confirm his identity and your relation you can see him” We nodded our heads as she guided us to his room.

My breathing hitched when I saw his lifeless body on the hospital bed, tubes and machines connected to his body. “Vincenzo ... VINCENZO” I yelled storming inside, Lorenzo explained to the nurse the situation and she left us. Ariana rested her head on his hand as she cried out. “You’re not dead. You’re not dead” but he wasn’t moving. “He’s been in this coma for the past month” Lorenzo filled us in from the information he got from the nurse. “He’s alive, that’s all I care about right now”

I sat down and gripped his hand tears flowed down, “Italy” I laughed out swallowing “please wake up, come back ... come back to **us**” I whispered. I jumped at the sound of my phone ringing, “Hello?” “The hostage wants to talk” “I’m on my way” I stood up and looked at the two of them and hesitantly

bit my bottom lip “Go, we won’t leave him alone” I nodded my head and hesitantly left the hospital and went back to the estate.

X

I looked at the doors and go inside, I take a deep breath feeling my wound starting to hurt. I calmly walk inside and up to my room to change. “Isabella” his father calls for me, I look at him unamused “Giovani, I’m really busy” I state, he looks at me nervously before scratching the back of his neck “Have you managed to get a hold of Vincenzo’s belonging’s yet?” I squinted my eyes and shook my head like he lost his mind. Why does he care about his stuff and not Vincenzo himself. Something wasn’t adding up “Until we find Vincenzo, we have no idea about his belongings” I decided to keep the fact that we found him quite for now. “Oh of course” we stood in awkward silence for a second “Okay” I stated and walked off.

I walked downstairs as I saw the man sitting up, his hand bandaged. I nodded for the men to leave, they nodded their heads and headed out waiting at the door. I grabbed a seat and sat down “I see they treated your wound” He nodded his head, “I’m getting old, I’m already sick and my days are near. So, after I found out who you are, I wanted to make sure I saw your face one more time before I died. My dear Isabella”

I tilted my head as I looked at him confused “how do you know me?” I asked the smile on his face grew wider, “Oh it’s not just me who knows you ... but you know me better than you think” I stood up and flung the chair to the side and grabbed his throat. “No riddles, who. are. you.” I threatened. “I have held this guilt in for years” he looked down his eyes full of guilt and remorse. “I did something to you that at the time I thought was justified but later found out I got it all wrong.” I backed away looking at him trying to decipher what he was saying and figure out who this man was. I felt like his name was on the tip of my tongue, but I couldn’t put my finger on it.

“I like many others was tricked ... Xavier is no ruler, but he damn well knows how to play mind games.” I nodded my head in agreement, he was a lousy ruler. Terrible at making deals but the one thing he was good at was getting in the heads of the weak. “What did he trick you about?”

“He convinced me that my boss was firing me, that he was the reason my wife and kids died. So, I helped him kidnap and hold hostage. I only recently found out that it was in fact Xavier who did all those things. When I asked him why he said because it was the only way to keep someone, he loved with him” my heart rate began picking up.

“I have regretted my actions for so long and I tried to make it right ...” He took a deep breath before he continued “My name is-” My phone ringing cut him off, I looked at my phone and saw Lorenzo calling. I hung up and messaged him I was busy and would call him back in a second. I looked back up at the man who was staring at me with admiration. My heart was now in my throat, a gasp escaped my lips as I looked at him. “Diego” I whispered. My phone slipped from my hand it felt like everything was in slow motion.

And all of a sudden, I felt really tired. Like the world had finally drained me for everything that I had. “No” I whispered. “NO!” I yelled. The men stormed back in as he uttered out the words I didn’t want to hear.

“The people he has, the ones he is keeping hostage are your parents Isabella ... I’m so sorry”

THE IMPACT

It felt like my world just came crashing down on me like the air was knocked out of my lungs as I tried to comprehend what Diego just said. “What?” I asked needing to hear him one more time. “Your parents are alive Isabella” without warning I

slapped him across the face and pulled him closer towards me by his shirt.

“You knew an attack was planned ... you knew they were going to kill every one of our men and women. YOU KNEW THEY WERE COMING FOR MY PARENTS ... you were the inside man YOU WERE THE RAT” frustration, betrayal and anger dominated my entire nervous system. I couldn't think straight all I saw was red. “You don't even deserve the option to be breathing right now” I spat letting him go pushing him back. “You sold my parents to that thing! Then you had the audacity to act as you loved us? That you ever cared about us!”

“Whose bodies were in my parent's casket” realisation finally started to take over my senses.

“I watched them die, how are they alive?” I shook my head trying to clear things up. “Isabella I-” I cut him off raising my hand up closing my eyes trying to stay calm. “Just ... how?” He gulped braising himself to speak “Xavier convinced me it was Mario, your dad who killed my wife and daughter all those years ago to gain contacts for his cartel. He showed me surveillance of him talking to my kids and wife and much dating evidence. The evidence I later found out was out of context and false. By then it was too late” I looked at him tears burning in my eyes urging him to continue.

“The plan was never to kill them, it was to hold them, hostage, for as long as he wanted you. The whole purpose behind everything he did was to get to you, Isabella. Even at such a young age, you showed more potential than any man or woman in our field of work, you were both smart and cunning. You had visions, tactics, and people on your side. You alongside your father helped grow the cartel to be the biggest and most powerful in all of Spain. He wanted you to work for him and he knew you'd never leave your parents so he-”

“He took them” I finished his sentence; he nodded his head slowly. “When you ran into that room disregarding my plea for you to stay, he was more taken by you. By your bravery and

loyalty, when he shot your parents, he didn't shoot them in the head he shot them in the chest. He never intended for them to die only to give you the illusion they were dead so you could look for him and execute revenge. That's when he planned to keep you hostage and weaken you enough to work for him and if you ever got out of line, he would reveal your parents to you and force you to do what he said in order to keep them alive and well"

I felt disgusted, my stomach turned, and I felt like vomiting. Never in my life have, I met someone as mentally disturbed as Xavier and that's saying a lot because I've met a lot of people. I felt a shudder go down my spine as I listened to the rest of his words, "But things changed ... he fell in love with you Isabella" I looked at him like he had gone mad "love? LOVE! Is that what love is to that sick bastard!

Kidnapping my parents and keeping them hostages for YEARS! Oh my god ... years" I whispered. This whole time my parents have been alive and instead of searching for them I was working for him; I gave up hope. I was in the same abandoned house as them and I let one of his men scare me off, I WAS THERE I COULD'VE STAYED! I COULD HAVE SAVED THEM MONTHS AGO

I felt myself slipping into a panic attack, my chest tightening the room began spinning. "NOO" a blood curling scream left my lips as I gripped my hair. This can't be true please don't let it be true. I was his hostage for months and I didn't make it out alive ... how they've been years.

Sebastián and the men burst inside and quickly aid me back up, "estás bien?" (you okay?) I nodded my head at Sebastián. "Bien" (good) I responded. "No one touches him! Keep him alive I still need answers from him" but not right now I couldn't bare hearing all of this at once I shook my head and left the room after telling the men to stand guard and watch him until I say otherwise.

I rushed into Vincenzo's office shutting the doors behind me wanting to be alone for a minute. I looked around his office and felt myself breaking, I really need you Italy, I need you to tell me what to do. I walked up to the previously shattered mirror and looked at myself. This represented my life broken, chattered, missing pieces. I shut my eyes and felt the anger boiling up inside me letting out a frustrated scream I punched the already broken mirror shattering it even more.

Crying I slid down on the floor, so much is piling up I don't know what to do. Vincenzo in a coma, my parents being alive, this mafia, Vincenzo's parents acting strange. Maria- My head shot up how was I going to tell Maria? I gritted my teeth, what if he's lying? What if it's just a ruse to keep himself alive so buy him time.

I let out a breath of air deciding to tell Maria only when I'm a hundred percent sure, no use giving her this information, her feeling hopeful just for it to be shattered all over again. I let a small smile take over my lips, being in his office made me feel somewhat peaceful like he was sitting in his chair talking me through everything. Like he was somehow guiding me.

I grabbed my phone out of my pocket to call Lorenzo before Hacker stormed inside the office "FIVE RANGE ROVERS STOPPED AT THE HOSPITAL" My eyes went wide before my heart began pounding, all self-doubt leaving my body. "Get the men ready. NOW!" Hacker runs out of the office assembling men, grabbing my gun I tuck it away storming out calling on men to follow me.

Getting in the car we all storm off, calling all five cars' "men" I announce they all respond "Boss" I cringe feeling like it's somehow a betrayal to Vincenzo before shaking off the feeling and focusing.

"We are entering a public hospital, Vincenzo lays in a coma and we have reason to believe Xavier's men are on their way. We are going to a public place meaning no shooting, no guns unless you deem it a hundred percent necessary, keep your head down from cameras. Use your combat training and knife

work to keep it quiet and quick do not let anyone go near the seventh floor. Team B” I called out, our most skilful team and our longest members “Yes boss”

“You will be in charge of getting Vincenzo out of the hospital and transporting him straight to our clinic on the estate, I already arranged for transfer papers, so his disappearance won’t be suspicious get him out safe and quick. Take him in an ambulance car along with our medics who are in your car to care for him”

“The rest of you I don’t want any of his men alive”

In union “Yes Boss” They replied, I had Hacker tell the men about Vincenzo’s condition when I found out to keep our men in the loop and so they can feel important that we are loyal to them as they are to us by being honest. I grabbed my phone and called for Lorenzo “Pick up, Pick up!” I yelled getting anxious, “Isabella” Lorenzo yelled out “Lorenzo Xavier’s men are at the hospital lock the door until we get there and keep Ariana safe!”

“Fuck, I’m on it” He quickly muttered out, I heard shuffling on the other end probably locking the door and closing the blinds. “Isabella, I see a few of his men approaching” He whispered, “we’re outside!” I hung up the phone as our men scattered around the hospital, we walked in normally heads down as I nodded my head to Team B towards the changing rooms.

I gave the rest of the men hand signals to search each floor, I made my way quickly upstairs to Vincenzo’s room, I saw a man approaching the door gun in hand. I quickly crept up behind him “Excuse me, sir, the doctors calling you” I spoke out pinching his arm behind his back moving him out of the camera’s view. Before twisting his head snapping his neck, I shoved him in the nearest bathroom and slowly made my way back to the room.

“Open” I whispered Lorenzo checked before opening the door, “Thank god” I muttered seeing them all unharmed. Doctors walked in the room, upon realizing it was our men “his men

are to be everywhere discreet and alert” They nodded their heads pushing him outside the room and going out through the back way of the hospital.

“Camera’s?” I whispered keeping my head down, Lorenzo acted scared and eyed each camera in the room with his hands up, Ariana mimicking his movements, I grabbed my silencer and shot the camera one by one. After I shot them all I took off my hood, “we need to get use out of here now” Both of them were unarmed and Xavier’s men were leaving this hospital with a King. Any king to avoid punishment.

“Take this” I threw Lorenzo my silencer, “Team B’s car is outside take it and go we got this”

They nodded their heads quickly leaving, following them a short while later with my hood back up, I overlooked my men and saw them subtly snap necks or stab them in their sides and shove them discreetly in a room.

I gave them a hand signal to move out, “That was too easy” I whispered to myself. We all re-entered our allocated cars. When my phone buzzed “hello?” I answered, “I see you figured out we were coming” Xavier spoke out in pain, I smirked remembering our encounter yesterday. “Xavier where the fuck are you?” I spat

“Where does one go when he has been stabbed, Bella?” I mentally cursed looking around my surroundings he’s here. “May God have mercy on you. cause I won’t” I shut the phone. I ran back inside and through the back ways where they took Vincenzo.

After a few minutes of running around, I couldn’t find them anywhere, I dialled the car’s built-in phone “men did team B leave in the ambulance yet?”

“No boss” Hacker spoke up. “FUCK” I hung up the phone and went for the roof, I froze seeing guns pointed at Vincenzo’s head as he laid helpless unaware of anything happening. “Let him go” I spat. “Boss want’s Vincenzo, we’re under orders” one of them spoke up. “Where’s my team” I spat they nodded

their heads to the side, and I watch in horror as they sat on their knees tied up.

They looked at me with shame, I smiled and shook my head reassuring them it's not their fault. I turned my head back at them and smiled "You understand you won't be leaving this roof with him, let alone alive" I innocently threaten. "Not even you can take on all six of us" He smiled underestimating me.

"Oh, you poor thing, who said I was going alone?" I smirked spotting Ariana from the corner of my eye, on cue she shoot's two of them. Pulling out my gun I aim and shoot the three in the head.

The remaining one hides behind Vincenzo using him as a shield, I hid behind one of the walls. I gave Ariana a signal to go around and free our men she nods and moves. I come back into view as he stands smug, "Throw it" He gestures to the gun in hand, I huffed slowly putting the gun down on the floor. "The great Dragon, bowing down and surrendering. I'll be famous and feared I killed the deadly dragon. People are going to worship me back home" He left Vincenzo's side and stepped closer to me gun aimed at my head.

"This should be a moment for the books, a great tale of the dangerous dragon being slayed" I looked at him like he was the dumbest person alive. "Isn't that like every Disney movie?" I questioned. He pressed the gun to my head harsher "shut the fuck up" He took off the safety and snickered "any last words?"

"Actually yes" I spoke. I grabbed his wrist pushing it away from me. I twisted his arm behind his back and pushed it up he yelled in pain dropping the gun. I kicked it behind me "You lose precious time talking" with that being said I twisted his head snapping his neck. Felt like I was in a vampire diaries episode "Grab him and let's go now! They would've heard the gunshots"

We got our men out first while me and Ariana left after them, they watched us behind the door. I nodded my head we walked into one of the rooms with the body we dumped and let out a

blood curling scream, grabbing everyone's attention towards us and away from Vincenzo and our men.

They left taking advantage of the situation while me and Ariana subtly backed away from the crowd and into the car. I called up everyone reassuring them and getting updates on the situation back at the hospital. Hacker was carefully monitoring the cameras along with a few recruits he is training and informed me we were out of sight.

I sat back finally feeling relieved. I placed my hand over my stomach and winced at the wound. It wasn't my first wound or scar but it scared me for more reasons than one. "Isabella?" I looked up and watched Ariana eye me suspiciously "I'm proud of you" I cut her off before she could ask questions. She smiled "Mafia princess" she joked trying to lighten the mood. I laughed with her and agreed "You truly are Vincenzo's sister" she seemed proud of herself smiling.

I watched her anxiously playing with her fingers "Ariana?" I questioned getting her attention. "Was this your first kill?"

She gulped and looked at me worried "Yes" she admitted softly. "Are you okay?" she nodded her head before shaking it no. "I know what I did was to save you and Vincenzo but when does it stop feeling gross when does that sick feeling go?"

I let out a sigh and sat up grabbing her hand "I won't sugar-coat it, that feeling can haunt you for a while if you look at it from an angel. You can't look at it like 'I killed someone' you need to re-evaluate It to 'I saved my brother's life' In our line of work this type of this is expected to happen. In a normal life, it's frowned upon and far from their day-to-day life. Ariana, you saved him, and you should be so damn proud of yourself I know if he was able to he would say the same" She embraced me in a hug and whispered thank you in my hair.

x

Arriving back at the estate all I could think of was Vincenzo. I rushed towards the hospital we had and ran inside. "Where is

he?" I rushed out, she pointed to the room and before reacting my feet already carried me to him.

I stood still as I watched him still connected to tubes and machine's; a tear escaped as I whimpered feeling hopeless. I rubbed my stomach feeling sick and scared. I approached him slowly and sat next to him asking the doctor inside to give me a minute alone. He nodded happily and left.

"Hey Italy, I don't know if you can hear me but ... I miss you; I miss you so damn much" I softly cried gripping his hand "the past month has been hell, I couldn't think, I couldn't eat, I couldn't stop stressing. I knew you were still out there; you weren't dead. That you wouldn't give up so easily."

"I needed you so damn badly the last few weeks, I found out my parents aren't dead" I confessed crying, sniffing back my tears I started chewing on my lip. "I don't know what to do, I don't know what to do" I repeated.

"I need you here to tell me what to do! This isn't my mafia; these men aren't my men. I will go to war if not with your men, then alone. It might be a suicide mission going along, but I can't make a call without you, I won't put your men in danger for my needs. I need you to wake up baby... I need you here I need you to tell me it's going to be okay, that we'll figure it out."

I wiped the tears away "It feels like lately I've been so lost; I don't know how I managed to keep going without you. You consumed every single aspect of me Vincenzo King ... I- I just need you to wake up ... please"

I leaned down and kissed his cheek whispering "To insanity, Vincenzo King" I stood up straight and left the room. I brushed past everyone in the living room and go straight downstairs to the basement. "Leave us" I order the men to leave "get something to eat" I whispered to them as they passed me, they smiled nodding their head's ingratitude. I smiled back at them and the second I looked at him it dropped it a straight line.

I grabbed a chair and sat in front of him “You’re going to tell me everything you know. If I like the information and it gets me what I want then you can leave alive, if you lie I will personally end your life right here”

He nodded his head agreeing to the deal, “How’d he do it, without anyone noticing”

“After he shot your parents, I escorted you and your sister out of the house remember?” I nodded my head remembering the memory “after making sure you both were no longer witnesses I allowed Xavier’s men to return and carry their bodies to the hospital to get medical attention. Xavier took it from there, the bodies we used for the caskets were men that died that day”

I closed my eyes trying to stop the tears from flowing down, I let out a deep breath before looking back up “how are they?” I asked feeling myself deteriorate. “After his feelings for you developed he started treating them well, regular meals and movement. When you left ...” anger, that’s all I was feeling anger.

“What” I spat frustrated, “He tortured them, nothing scaring just beatings. He would take out the frustration he had because of you on the two of them. Then would stop in fear that you wouldn’t come back” sick. Sick.

I flung my chair to the side feeling disgusted and angry at myself, “FUCK” how didn’t I know. Why didn’t he tell me he had them? Why did he never use them?

“Diego Where are they?”

He took in a deep breath before looking up at me “after someone found them at an abandoned warehouse, he moved them to a secure location.” I looked at him frustrated waiting for him to continue “WHERE?” I yelled

“I DON’T KNOW, ONLY XAVIER KNOWS” I stood up and went to hit him before stopping myself. “If I found out you know I promise you this won’t end well” I spat. He nodded his head feeling guilty looking down.

I stormed out of the basement and appointed recruits to watch him and two to get him food. If he is lying, he is a dead man.

I made my way outside and felt a sense of peace and pride watching our men and women training. I smiled feeling like I accomplished something, that Vincenzo would be proud of me. When I took over our main mission was finding Vincenzo everything else was on hold, Lorenzo still managed logistics and shipments and trained men. We all continued like normal, but we all had priorities.

I made changes and I don't know if it'll stick but I didn't care as long as he wakes up, I don't care. I lost myself in a train of thought when I saw Sebastián rush towards me in a hurry, "He's awake!" I grabbed his arms and dug my nails into him. "What?"

"Ow, OW, Bella nails. Nails, Isabella NAILS" he yelled in pain, I pushed him aside and took off running towards the hospital. Lorenzo in tears stood in front of me "Isabella, you can't go in"

"Why? Lorenzo move out of my way."

"Isabella, you need to know something before you go in" He pleaded with me to hold still so he can talk to me, but my head was spinning I'd waited a month to see him. I needed to feel his touch I needed him now. I pushed Lorenzo out of the way and rushed inside, I froze tears in my eyes as I looked at him sitting up on the bed. My breathing hitches as I slowly walk up to him, he stares at me confused as I finally stand in front of him. I reach my hand out and caress his cheek, "You're actually awake" I whisper.

"I am" He responds, I cry out and pull him in a tight hug. "You came back to me" I whispered. He pushed me off him as he looked at me with a scowl "**who are you?**"

My blood ran cold as I looked him square in the face, "What?" I whispered in denial. "Vincenzo now isn't the time for jokes" I desperately tried to get him to admit he is joking. Pleading this isn't happening what does he mean who am I?

“Why the fuck would I joke?” he spat irritated. He looked over at Lorenzo “Chi è quella e perché cazzo mi ha abbracciato?” (Who is that and why the fuck did she hug me?)

I shook my head aggressively no, NO. “No, this isn’t happening. No, you didn’t forget me, this is all a fucked-up dream. You’re still in a coma I must’ve fallen asleep somewhere.” I started slapping my face trying to wake myself up. Repeatedly my cheeks were stinging as I let out a scream. Not a scream of anger, or sadness a scream of desperation a cry for help.

Vincenzo got out of his bed and grabbed my wrists to stop me from hitting myself, I fell into him as I cried out begging him to admit this is a cruel joke. I was now in full tears it felt like I was losing him all over again except he was right in front of me, staring at me with a blank expression with those beautiful grey eyes that once began allowing light to shine through, those grey eyes now returned to its original sate dark and empty.

“Please” I begged, feeling myself get lightheaded everything went black.

Vincenzo’s POV

I watched her slapping herself to wake up and felt myself jump up and hold her arms down, she looked up at me tears streaming down her face as she begged me to remember her. Who is she? Why am I holding her in my arms and why does my heart ache to see her like this?

My head was spinning with so many questions and I barely keeping myself steady. She looked up at me her green eyes were so captivating it was hard not to notice them. Her eyes were bloodshot red her bottom lip quivering as she stared into my eyes, hoping to find a glimpse a sign ... anything she could cling to.

“Please” her voice was soft and helpless. I went to speak before I watched as her eyes rolled to the back of her head and

she felt lifeless. I held her up Ariana quickly coming to aid the girl in my arms. She calls for the nurse as they rush her out.

“How are you feeling?” Lorenzo asked helping me back in the bed, but my mind couldn’t help but wander to her. Why do I feel this urge to go to her like my soul is calling for hers?

I mentally killed myself as I shook my head trying to regain focus. “I’m okay” I answered Lorenzo he looked at me not convinced. “Do you remember anything?” he asked me. I sat up in the bed and let out a heavy sigh I didn’t, everything is fuzzy and a real blur nothing makes sense.

“The last thing I remember was getting on a plane. What happened before that or after that I don’t remember it’s like it vanished.” Just as I spoke up the doctor walked back in “How is she?” I asked feeling on edge “Isabella’s fine she just passed out from an overloading amount of stress”

Isabella, I repeated in my head, I felt a slight headache I winced in pain looking down rubbing my temples.

FLASHBACK

“Isabella” I whispered softly, feeling helpless as just as broken as her in this moment. “Look at me and tell me you don’t regret it. Tell me you didn’t care” she yelled out, not believing I left her because of my image. “TELL ME” She yelled in my face I stood up and towered over her. Mastering every ounce of courage, I had left as I lied straight through my teeth “I DON’T CARE” I yelled. She looked me dead in the eye as smiled “liar.” she harshly whispered.

END OF FLASHBACK

“Vincenzo?” Lorenzo called out. I shook my head trying my best to focus on the doctor. “When the plane crashed you suffered a big blow to the head, it’s a miracle you’re alive now. However, due to the brain injury unfortunately you are suffering from memory loss. You didn’t recognise Isabella and she entered our lives during the start of the year so I’ll make an assumption that you’re missing a year worth of memories.” A whole year?

“Is it possible to get them back?” I asked he nodded his head
“Yes but it’s a straining and dreadful procedure you’re
hopeless and not in control of when it comes back. Once your
senses pick up something it can trigger a memory, but you
can’t force it.” He keeps talking but by now I stopped
listening. I started taking out the needles and tubes off of me. I
can’t stay here I need to get back to work.

“Boss you need to rest” I shook my head no, “I need to work”
I stood up and got my clothes from the side of the bed and got
dressed. I stormed out of the room but stopped dead in my
tracks when I saw her ... Isabella sitting up on the bed talking
to my sister. She looked broken, my heart tugged an
overwhelming urge to go inside and hug her and reassure her
everything was going to be okay overtook all my senses.

What the fuck is happening, I don’t get this way about anyone
let alone a girl. Fucking hell, I don’t like it, feeling any sort of
emotion I looked ahead of me and walked straight out. My
men all froze watching me as I approached my doors, there
were over 10 groups all scattered in the garden. My men
training and teaching other recruits their skilled talent. I
squinted not recalling giving them this order. It’s smart and
efficient both teaching needed skills in the Mafia and creating
a family bond even stronger among my men.

They continue to stand frozen like they’ve seen a ghost,
“Boss” they all greet. I smile and nod my head each
approaching and welcoming me back. They all went back to
their training as I watched in curiosity. “Isabella!” a lot of the
men called out and greeted her with hugs. Who the fuck is
she? I watched as Hacker, bullseye and many of my men
approached her, “boss we have the information you need” I
tilted my head at them in shock, did they just call her boss?

“She’s not your boss” I state aloud, they bow their heads and
nod. She looks at me and laughs “oh but I am” she remarks,
taking the folder from Hacker she brushes past me walking
inside like she owned the place.

“Hey” I called out, without flinching or stopping she continued walking. “Oh my god Cenzo baby you’re okay” my mum came running towards me embracing me in a hug and checking me for scars. “Ok, ok!” I snapped not used to her being this touchy. I gaged when I smelt the alcohol on her breath, I shook my head choosing not to say anything and walked upstairs into my office.

I walked in and saw her sitting in my chair, my jaw tensed as my hands balled into a fist “So anal” she speaks up looking at my stature. I let out a dry laugh and slam my doors shut approaching her, I grabbed her by her arm and forced her up “no one’s allowed in my office” I stated. She pursed her lips and smiled “I’m not just anybody” She whispers in my ear and pushes me away.

I sit back in my chair and see unfamiliar paperwork scattered on my desk, “What is all this?” I asked annoyed, “While you were away a lot of business and work came your way” I rolled my eyes and looked up at her “It’s not like I was on vacation Isabella” her breathing hitched when her name rolled off my tongue. It came out so naturally, making me wonder who she is. “I’m well aware,” she responded hurt as she looked to her right.

I followed her gaze and saw a map stuck on a board, red pins, red circles, and strings covered it. I slowly stood up and approached it “what is all this?” She let out a sigh “When we found out the plane crashed, I went mad looking for you. Your body was never found, and I knew you were alive” I eyed her curiously “how?” she squinted her eyes confused “how did you know I was alive?” She scratched the back of her neck nervously “This is going to sound ridiculous but, I felt it. I felt you, your presence was still there. I guess I just refused to give up on you”

I looked at her for a moment our eyes staring deep into one another’s, I stepped back to go and sit back down she grabbed my arm and held me still. Her gorgeous green eyes looking into mine I kept my composure tensing underneath her touch. “You have no idea who I am do you?”

“I really don’t, to me your just some girl in my office” I shrugged her off and went back to my desk, it’s not normal for me to feel whatever it was I feeling, I need to focus on the mafia, I cannot afford to lose time with a girl no matter how much my body, heart and mind pushed me towards her.

I rolled my eyes as I mentally gaged, “You can leave” her broken exterior suddenly shifted like she became a different person she looked at me her brows raised as she laughed “I actually have work to do” She grabbed the papers from my desk and walked towards the couch and sat down going over the logistics. “Who are you?” I asked her. “A girl who will drive you to insanity”

I winced feeling a headache looking down holding my head.

FLASHBACK

“Get it through your head. You’re only here as a tool.” I spat; she shook my head not believing a single word coming out of my mouth. She was right she was more than a tool she was driving me insane, and I couldn’t get her out of my head “Look me in the eyes tell me you regret everything that you never felt anything towards me. That it was all a lie” she pushed. I winced at her request then quickly gained composure.

A sadistic smile danced on my face as I lied through my teeth. “It was all a lie” I muttered. “Okay,” she answered back. I moved back shocked and annoyed. Okay? she wasn’t going to fight me? Did she not care? My blood began boiling as I burst. “OKAY? OKAY? Okay, what?” She let out a dry laugh throwing her hands in the air. “You wanted me to hate you? You wanted me to not be able to stay in the same room as you? YOU WANTED ME TO HATE YOU! Congratulations. Vincenzo King, I hate you.” she spat. I looked at her and shook my head Liar.

“The feeling is mutual Isabella Knight”

She slapped me across my face Pushing me away “LET ME GO THEN. LET ME LEAVE. LET ME GO” She yelled. “I

can't do that" I whispered. "I understand you more than you understand yourself," she whispered, then you understand that I can't stand the thought of you leaving, that the mere idea of you not being close to me drives me insane. I know I can't have you but I will be selfish I won't let another man have you either. Mine or not you will always be mine, you don't even know it but I'm yours. In this life and every other.

She wiped the tears from my face "Okay I'll stay not that I have a choice. We will be the death of each other" A sinister smile took over my lips as I looked at her "To insanity" It felt fitting we were going to be each other's reasons for going mad. She huffed smiling. Mimicking me she frustratedly agreed "To insanity"

END OF FLASHBACK

I groaned looking back up at Isabella, comfortably sitting on my couch going through her paperwork. I studied her why would she stay? If that headache and what I saw was a real memory, why did she stick around? I let out a sigh pushing that nagging feeling to the back of my head.

I stared at my desk looking through all my paperwork and I felt lost, I let out a frustrated groan not knowing anything my memory of the past year was gone meaning every business deal, every new connection, shipment dates, meetings everything got punched out.

I heard Isabella giggle as she watched me satisfied "Something funny?" I asked not seeing the amusement in the situation. She rolled her eyes and sat up "Do you need a hand?"

"Does it look like I need your help?" I scoffed out, she looked at me with a playful expression almost mocking me. She nodded her head sarcastically, "What" I spoke out through my teeth, frustrated biting down, causing my jaw to tense as I watched her hold the same expression.

"Do you really want me to answer that, or would you like to maintain plausible deniability for later?" I huffed "What makes you know anything anyway?" her expressions now

turning serious “Who do you think took over when you were in a coma?” she asked genuinely.

“Lorenzo” I answered he is the underboss, I didn’t think he could handle the job but looks like he did a pretty good job, I applaud him mentally. She laughed shaking her head “No, but I’ll give you a hint ... she’s sitting on this couch judging you” She cocked her head to the side with a wide smile.

“You?” I asked shocked she nodded her head and stood up.

“You asked me who I am right?” I nodded my head completely drawn in. “I’m Isabella Knight, but I use to go by Dragon” she explained I was taken back she was- is dragon.

Although now that she said it in a way it made sense to me. How she sorts of splits into two, how she can quickly shut off any emotions and replace it with a cold hard exterior who doesn’t care about anyone or anything ... she numbs herself. “I-” she cut me off and stood next to me as she started explaining and going through what I missed out on. As she spoke, I was mesmerised by the way she took control, the connections she managed to make with powerful members aboard. A man walked in and asked to have a minute, I eyed him from head to toe as a slight sting of jealousy stung me.

I shook my head and rolled my eyes, Lorenzo walked in as Isabella walked out. “I see you’re settling in nicely” He sits in the chair in front of my desk, my eyes still glued on the door where Isabella stood talking to a man I didn’t recognise.

Lorenzo’s laugh broke me out of my train of thought as I looked at him, “what” I asked annoyed. “Even with your memory loss, you haven’t changed” I rolled my eyes “Don’t be an idiot, I don’t know the woman” I shrugged him off leaning back in my chair.

“You might not remember her, but she’s there.” He pointed at my heart, I scoffed “Seriously? Did you forget who you’re talking to?” I yelled getting frustrated. “You were different with her” he shrugged. “Whoever I was a year ago, I’m not anymore”

Lorenzo nodded his head slowly “back to the old Vincenzo” he spoke up standing up getting ready to leave. “It’s the only version of me” I stated. He shook his head frustrated “I know I should be understanding, I shouldn’t be getting mad but no that’s not the only version of you. She made you into a decent human, she made you embrace all your demons, and she fucking loved you despite everything. Since I could remember you carry more anger and pain than a thousand armies could ever bear. You were betrayed, deceived, hurt, forced to grow up. I was there so believing me when I say the only time, I saw peace in your eyes . . . in your soul was when you saw her. Isabella’s the only reason why you’re not just existing anymore you were living”

Isabella’s POV

I sat in my bed and looked down at my stomach, I smiled and rubbed it. I wonder how long It’ll stay in this flat before I start showing. I smiled in awe whispering **“I guess we are going to have to wait a little longer before we tell him about you”**

THE NOTE

It’s been a week since Vincenzo came out of his coma. A week of me trying to accept the fact that he forgot me and everything we shared. A week since finding out my parents are supposedly alive and a week of investigating. I needed to talk to Vincenzo, but I was scared, he’s been avoiding me at all costs which stung but helped me stay focused on finding my parents location.

I walked into Hacker’s security room and stood at the doorway “I’ll come back” I spoke out noticing he and Vincenzo were talking. “No bos-” Hacker recovers coughing “Isabella come in” he corrects himself waving me in. Vincenzo stood up straight like he was staring at a bomb about to go off. “Did you find anything on what we spoke about?” I asked him in hopes he is close to pinpointing a location on where Xavier

moved my parents. I haven't told Hacker that those hostages potentially could be my parents, I couldn't tell anyone until I accepted it myself. Until I was one hundred percent sure.

"What are you having Hacker do?" Vincenzo states annoyed. I chose to ignore him before I erupted, "when you find out anything! Let me know please" Hacker hesitantly nods noticing Vincenzo's glare.

He gripped my arm dragging me back to the house and into his office. He threw me in shutting the doors behind him. "Touch me like that again and you won't have hands" I threatened him. The frustration and stress I've been bottling up the past week finally reached the surface. "Do you know who the fuck I am?" He yells out pointing to his chest. I roll my eyes shrugging my shoulders "I do, I just don't care"

"Who do you think you are giving MY MEN orders" I scoffed at his comment he can't be serious "WHO AM I? WHO AM I? I'm the girl who stood up and took over YOUR PRECIOUS MAFIA when you weren't here. I'm the girl who through everything never left your fucking side. I'm the girl that in spite of everything, lo-" I cut myself off realising the words that were about to escape my lips. I bite my bottom lip and avoid eye contact. "Ugh" I yelled out frustrated throwing my hands up in the air.

"Finish your sentence" He spoke up, I looked up at him and let out a sigh. "I have nothing more to say to you Vincenzo" he rolled his eyes getting frustrated. I shook my head getting ready to leave, he blocks my way "Move" he shakes his head not budging. "Vincenzo, what is it exactly you want from me? You avoid me for two weeks and the second you speak to me you're threatening me, or should I say you're feeling threatened by me"

He shut his eyes tensing his jaw his body square like he was preparing himself for a fight. I stood in front of him tall and steady. His demeanour reminded me of his previous state before everything. Cold, distant, and cruel.

“Why are you still here?” He whispered like he was fighting an internal battle with himself. “I don’t know” I whispered back fighting a similar battle. “So, is this your final answer?” I scoffed and threw my arms in the air “I’m here because I can’t stop thinking and remembering and missing ... I tasted your soul, and I can’t forget its flavour, and what hurts me the most is that you no longer feel the same ... that you no longer remember. And it feels like once again I’m in this game playing all alone”

His eyes glanced over mine as he stepped forwards, I closed my eyes trying to stop the tears that threatened to fall, I bit my quivering lip to stop it from pleading. “It’s hard to believe I allowed myself to be open with anyone” He softly spoke up. I opened my eyes and looked at him, “Oh but you did. You give out pieces of yourself to people but never let any of them see the whole picture” I stated our eyes never breaking as I watched his breathing hitch when I closed the gaps between us.

“I’ve seen it. I know who you are” I whispered and for a split second, I saw a wave of emotion overcome him before he quickly regained his composure and moved away. “You don’t know anything” He was trying to convince himself more than me. “You’re the one with the memory loss, not me” I rolled my eyes sitting on his desk.

He glared at me as I sat crossing my leg over the other messing up his neat pile of paperwork. I smiled innocently as I watched him walk over to me standing directly in front of me. He leaned in our face’s inches apart, I found myself looking at his lips imaging his on mine one more time. I bite my bottom lip and quickly look back up at him.

He stared at me unconvinced “I know you more than you know yourself, Vincenzo King” he tilted his head his breathing harsh as he eyed my lip before he looked me in the eyes and whispered “Prove it” I rolled my eyes and pushed him away with my leg. “I have work to do” I jumped off his desk and walked out of his office. Shutting the door behind me I let out a sigh of relief. I made my way to the basement but before I

could go in someone grabbed my arm. “Isabella” I turned and saw Maria staring at me with worry in her eyes.

“Maria, what’s wrong?” She smiled shaking her head “I’m fine it’s you I’m worried about, with everything going on I barely see you ... why were you going in the basement” I smiled trying to change the subject “How about we do something tonight?” I suggested. “Like?” I pursed my lips trying to think of something.

“Let’s go to the beach and watch the waves like we use to do with Mama and Papa” Her smile widened as she quickly agreed to pulling me into a tight hug. I laughed at her behaviour watching her jumping around like a child. She rushes off somewhere and I go inside dismissing the men.

“Isabella” He greets me, I nod my head and stand in front of him. “How do I find them?” he pursed his lips tilting his head to the right. “You can’t” He answered. I squinted my eyes staring at him “what do you mean I can’t?”

He sighed “Your parents even though they have been kept hostage for so many years, are still in good shape. Thankfully they haven’t indulged in any trauma like you did when he kidnapped you. However, to control you, he keeps a tight leash on them. So wherever he is they’re not far from him”

I scratched my head before I froze death staring at him “You knew ... he was torturing me? You knew about my trauma **WHAT HE PUT ME THROUGH?**” He gulped avoiding eye contact. I knew that he was aware of my kidnapping since he and Xavier had it all planned out that I would go after him, but I would have never guessed he was aware of the torture I had to endure. “you’re telling me you knew what he did to me? What he put me through, and you did nothing? **YOU KNEW EVERYTHING AND TURNED YOUR BACK ON THE GIRL YOU WATCHED GROW UP?**”

I stood up straight walking back towards him grabbing a fist full of his hair. “Your end is near my old, old friend.” I pushed his head away and walked off. He started squirming in his chair yelling “**WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT ...**”

ISABELLA! ISABELLA!” I walked out telling the men to go back down.

“Estás bien?” I looked at Sebastián and nodded my head. He embraced me in a tight hug, I didn’t fight him wrapping my arms around his waist burying my head in his chest as I softly cried. “I promise you I have cried more this past month than my whole life” I whined, my emotions were all over the place I hated crying, and I hated feeling so hopeless. Someone cleared their throat I lifted my head and turned my arms still wrapped around Sebastián. “Can I talk to you for a minute?” Vincenzo spoke through his teeth. I cocked my eyebrow at him “Must you?” I asked. He nodded his head sarcastically. Grabbing my arm dragging me to his office.

I huffed as I watched him close his doors, “what!” I yelled frustrated. “Who is he?” He blurted out his jealousy peeking through. I smirked even with his memory loss he was still jealous. He noticed my smug facial expression shaking his head “I don’t care what he is to you ... b-but what is he doing here” He quickly saved himself. The smirk never leaves my face “He has a name. Sebastián is here as my ... how do you say right hand? His father also your new business partner thought he could learn a lot under my... well more so Dragon’s influence”

He looked mad and I honestly couldn’t guess why. “You look like a cartoon character with steam coming out from its ears” I eyed him smiling. I rolled my eyes “Vincenzo, I’m not after your title. I never wanted to be the ‘boss’ I never wanted any of this.” I reassured him he spun around looking at me. “Then what did you want?” He yelled out. I smiled sadly “I wanted you back” I admitted choosing not to lie to him right now. His eyes softened letting out a soft sigh “I don’t remember the past year. It feels like-”

“Like you’re lost like you’re going to make a mistake” I finished off his sentence as he eyed me taken back. “Vincenzo hates making mistakes, it’s one of the main things that angers you most” I explained he nodded his head slowly “and it feels like you’ve taken over, most of my contacts ask about you or

if you'll be attending meetings. Half of my new deals have your name attached to it." He finished off, "I didn't take over Vincenzo" I whispered, "I was the thing that pushed you to do all of that. You dragged me along for everything. At first, you kept me here as a bargaining tool then you started trusting me and I don't know my experience in all this just helped ... but it was always you. They wanted to join the two most powerful and feared people, I went underground Dragon wasn't heard of for years then suddenly she's back and is with the King's. People got excited, people wanted to form an alliance's" I explained his method of thinking and started understanding it better myself as I explained. "You saw a pretty good opportunity and took it. You knew just how much more powerful you would be with a strong weapon in your quarters." I shrugged.

"I held you here against your will ... so I can use you as a tool for my mafia?" he asked, I nodded my head "That's probably the first thing I've heard the past week that genuinely sounds like something I would do" I nodded my head slightly hurt. "But one thing still doesn't add up" I moved my head leaning forward. "What?" I questioned

"After all that ... why did you stay? Why are you still here?" a hint of frustration and curiosity in his voice.

I smiled "You asked me that already" He shook his head "No, why are you here." He pointed at his chest. I straightened my posture realising what he meant "after how I treated you, how did I let you in? And what made you want to stay?"

I sighed "No one else has been able to make me feel so strong and vulnerable, while just as safe" I explained, "Yes you kept me here against my will, but you also kept me and Maria safe by doing that" referencing Xavier "No one else but you could reassure me that although I may fail a thousand times, someone might still be crazy enough to love me just as I am. It's in no one else, but you who I willingly surrender myself to. So, take this as a subtle plea" In fact, I beg of you. I whispered to myself.

“Never let go of me,” I whispered. He looked taken back a wave of emotions ran across him, not expecting my explanation or my plea.

I smiled and looked up, “Before your plane crashed you asked me to promise you something.” His eyes never left mine as he slowly moved towards me, “What was it?” I felt myself slipping into that memory like it was happening now. “You made me promise to never forget you ... I told you that people who ask them to always remember them planned to leave.” I felt my throat burn up “I told you that I couldn’t make that promise because if you planned to leave, I didn’t want to remember that” He looked at me for this first time since he woke up from his coma with the safe soft expression he did long ago.

“Little did you know my heart already promised yours to never forget it ... and it looks like your heart did the same” I softly spoke, raising my hand gently placing it on his chest. I felt his heart begin to pick up speed as his previously tensed body began to slowly relax into my touch.

Before he aggressively stepped aside and walked out of the office leaving me standing alone. I felt a tear escape sliding down my cheek slowly. Looking up at the roof tucking my bottom lip in shutting my eyes as I felt my heartache. I miss you so damn much, now we’re back to strangers even though he was no stranger to me. He was back to pushing me away and trying to hold a cold exterior back to hating me to maintain his cold reputation. Little did he know he was more feared when he allowed his emotions to run wild ... he was more feared with me on his side. I silently prayed he didn’t push me to the extent where it ends in a war between me and him.

I wiped the tear away aggressively walking out of his office. “ISABELLA” I spun around and saw Lorenzo panicking. “What?” I hesitantly asked. “I forgot about the shipment tomorrow and I have another meeting I need to attend.” I shook my head “I’ll handle it go” he hugged me “Lifesaver” I laughed and pushed him off me “GO” I laughed out. He

smiled eyeing me “You, okay?” I nodded my head “Why wouldn’t I be?” He stares at me unconvinced but decides not to push me nodding his head he walks off.

“Isabella, this delivery came for you” Hacker handed me a bouquet of Spanish Bluebells. I eyed it suspiciously a sick feeling forming in my stomach, he looked at me with a weird look wondering why I was reacting the way I was. “These are my mother’s favourite flowers” I spoke aloud I grabbed the note and opened it. A gasp left my lips the vase shattering underneath me spilling the water and flowers. ‘Your parents say hello, So, do I. Don’t believe everything Diego says my love ... he was the one torturing them last week. My dear Isabella ... Never Forget Me’ I read the note again turning it around seeing a picture stuck on the back. “No” I cried out seeing them sitting on the floor tied up and looking like their lives was being dragged out from them. “NOOO,” I screamed out feeling the veins in my neck and forehead pop out, my entire body boiling up.

All I could see in front of me was red, I stormed towards the basement ignoring everyone calling out my name. I faintly heard Hacker calling for Vincenzo, but I didn’t care, the way I was feeling right now no one stood a chance. “WAKE UP” I yelled the men stood back unaware of what to do, I looked at them my face stone cold. Nothing but anger radiated off me as they quickly scattered leaving me alone with Diego. I smirked “that was a bad idea,” I thought aloud, “No one is here to hold me back.” I leaned down and whispered in his ear “Your fate has been sealed”

I grabbed Vincenzo’s knife from the table and slowly approached Diego. As I approached him it finally felt like this was the last straw the last thing that drove me off the edge. I felt numb I felt like my old self. I smirked welcoming Dragon back, my face changing as my smirk turned somewhat sinister “Isabella!” he called out nervously. I tilted my head to the side “No” I laughed out excited. It wasn’t like I was a different person, I just shut off all emotions only feeling anger, and for nostalgia only refer to myself as Dragon when I’m like this.

“D-d” I started frantically laughing, storming towards him faster than he was able to comprehend. I heard the door open, but my attention was solely focused on Diego. “No-No I thought you weren’t going to kill me.” He quickly muttered out “You still need me to find your parents!” He rushed to reason with me, trying to desperately save his life.

I laughed hysterically I rip off his bandages and stick my finger in his wound. He lets out a painful scream sending goosebumps up my body. “No, because when you told me about where they could be, you gave me a small hint. My parents are wherever Xavier is, but not in the same building.” I explained, knowing Xavier’s tactics. I pulled my finger out from his wound and decided to stab him there instead.

“Most likely he put them in a safe place. A place he knows can only be accessed by him.” I continued, “So wherever he is they’re not far from him” I mimicked Diego repeating his previous comment. “He is far from home, so he can’t put them in his basement or a place he owns. He isn’t dumb enough to put them in a house with witnesses around, to see or hear them calling for help. He’s going to put them in a small place where no human lives and where no one can hear them.” I took a second to pause “He has them in a storage unit”

Diego’s facial expressions shifted from cocky to fear, I smiled applying pressure to his neck. “So, tell me ... what do I need you for?” I uncuffed him and stood him up. Still sticking to my rules about never taking on someone like a coward.

“I thought you changed when you left Spain, that you weren’t dragon that you killed her and the demons that accompanied her.” He explained wearily as he watched me with caution.

“My demons though quiet, are never quite silenced. Calm as they may be, they wait patiently for a reason to wake, take an overdue breath, and crawl back to my ear.” I pulled him into me stabbing him in the stomach “And I’ve had a shit week” I grunt taking the knife out of his stomach losing myself. As I started stabbing him repeatedly his blood splattered all over me as I watched his soul leave his body. I let out a scream all

my built-up anger, sadness, frustration every single emotion unleashed. I snatched his throat stabbing him in the neck, chest, stomach wherever my knife landed.

I felt someone wrap their arms around my waist and pick me up. I cried out screaming and kicking not feeling any satisfaction wanting to keep going. To torture him even if he is dead, to do to him what he did to my parent's. "NOOOO," I shouted out in pain feeling everything crumble, my emotions all over the place unaware of what to focus on.

Vincenzo's memory loss? My parent's being held hostage by a maniac. The baby in my stomach that I haven't told anyone about yet. When did everything get so complicated, I was kicking and screaming before finally submitting to whoever was holding me back trying to restrain and calm me down. I cried into his chest, feeling myself calm down. I inhaled his familiar scent, the only person who could make me feel safe and calm after what I had just done.

"You're okay" He whispered in my hair holding me. I cried until my eyes dried out, I felt weak as I started losing balance. Vincenzo quickly caught me holding me bridal style as I laid in his arms struggling to stay awake.

"Vincenzo?" I whispered. "I'm here" was the last thing I heard before surrendering and shutting my eyes my head colliding with his chest as everything seemed to fade away.

X

Vincenzo's POV

Hacker urged me to follow Isabella saying she was ready for the kill. I had to admit I was intrigued to see what she was capable of, what she was able to do. I heard stories about her, but it felt like the part of me that remembers her was pushing me to go and watch. I saw my men standing outside the door looking shocked and scared, I shook my head asking them what was wrong. "Something happened to her, something's triggered her."

I quickly opened the door not trying to be discreet slamming it shut behind me making my presence known. She didn't flinch or move, she stayed put not caring about my presence in the room. I eyed her sceptically as I watched her demeanour completely change. He started begging for his life like a sacred gattino. (kitten) "You need me to find your parents" he caught my attention as I snapped my head in his direction. Her parents? I thought they-

A blood-curling scream snaps me out of my train of thought I look back over at Isabella she has her finger in his wound digging it in deep, I winced on his behalf. I stared at her and how she was interrogating him, it felt like I shouldn't be here that it was a private matter. But something in me told me not to move, that she's going to need me at some point. I watched her laugh like a madwoman, making me think about myself.

How we share many qualities, not your average ones. It wasn't like we both liked the same colour we both had very similar strategies for torture, she was intimidating no doubt. The way she completely loses herself allows her demons to take control of her like it'll be easier for her to cope and deal with everything if she numbs herself. If she can blame her monsters for who she is, as an escape from the guilt.

"No, because when you told me about where they could be, you gave me a small hint. My parents are wherever Xavier is, but not in the same building." I raised my eyebrows impressed by her ability to decipher such a simple phrase and create a map. I leaned on the wall feeling proud of her like my old self was somehow still in control of my feelings. He was giving me all these emotions and I don't know what to think or do with them like my soul is yearning for her, but I don't know her and that scared me.

How I was so stupid to allow my soul to get attached to hers to allow it to bring her into my world.

He lets out a sharp scream I lift my head to see what she did. I smirked and sniffled a laugh when I saw she took her finger out and replaced it with a knife. I squinted my eyes getting a

better look at It realising it's MY knife. I tensed up at the thought of someone using my things, but my better judgement told me to not push her or bring it up when she's holding a knife and in a state of rage.

She continued explaining her theory of where her parents are "He has them in a storage unit" she concluded and the shocked expression on the man's face was the only clarification needed. Now most likely being a hundred percent convinced of their location. I watched as she leaned into him and threatened "So tell me ... what do I need you for?"

I watch my body jolting upright as I saw her Un-cuffed him. I looked at her like she'd lost her mind but despite being free the man stood in front of her terrified not daring to make a move. "I thought you changed when you left Spain, that you weren't dragon that you killed her and the demons that accompanied her." He tried to calm her, to remind her that she isn't a killer that she isn't herself right now, but something told me she was very aware of what she's doing.

"My demons though quiet, are never quite silenced. Calm as they may be, they wait patiently for a reason to wake, take an overdue breath, and crawl back to my ear."

Goosebumps formed up and down my arms, my hairs stood up a cold chill down my spine as she spoke about her demons how no matter what they're never quite gone, It was then I realised why I kept her why I was selfish and let her stay in my world.

She pulled him towards her stabbing him in the stomach "And I've had a shit week" she grunt's taking the knife out of his stomach, I watched her loosen up her staring blankly as it felt like she was losing myself like she was fading away. She started stabbing him repeatedly his blood splattering all over her face as she watched his soul leave his body. She let out a scream all her built-up anger, sadness, and frustration like every single one of her emotions were being unleashed. She slashed his throat stabbing him in the neck, chest, stomach wherever the knife landed.

Her scream sent me over the edge it felt like her scream alone was enough to shatter the earth, that she had so many things weighing her down. She was ready to rain hell on earth. I rushed towards her wrapping my arms around her pulling her off of him. "Isabella!" I called out her name repeatedly but she kept screaming and kicking. Like she was fighting an internal battle not knowing what fight to focus on.

She finally calmed down easing into me as she cried uncontrollably in my chest. I wrapped my arms around her tighter keeping her still resting my chin on her head as I reassured her she was going to be okay. "You're okay" every single fibre in my body just wanted to hold her forever to protect her from the world to shield her from everything bad ... even if that includes me.

She whispered my name "Vincenzo?" I reassured her "I'm here" before I felt her body collapse. I quickly grabbed her picking her up and took her out of the basement, "ISABELLA!" I'm assuming her twin started yelling, "she's okay" I reassured her. "Give me her. ISABELLA" she kept screaming. I rolled my eyes growing frustrated "She's fine." my tone firm "Do you remember?" she whispered. I stood there not showing emotion my face blank. "Lorenzo get rid of the body in the basement and get Gina to clean it"

"Vincenzo." I stopped walking, still looking ahead. "You two loved each other. Even if none of you admitted it ... hold onto that" Without turning around I stood still for a moment letting her words sink in before walking off.

I went into my bedroom and put her on my bed, I sat next to her for a few minutes admiring her beauty, how calm and serene she looked. Like the world stresses all faded away when she allowed herself to calm down, to relax into me. I tucked a strand of her hair behind her ear, I look up at the sound of someone knocking on the door.

I stood up and opened it, "Is she okay?" I looked at Lorenzo and nodded my head slowly. "You two seem close" I muttered under my breath, he looked at me like I had gone mad before

looking at me with pity. “You’re so lucky you have memory loss. I’m with her sister but Isabella and I are close. She ... she’s my best friend and in the short time I’ve known her” He drifts off looking at me “I would happily take a bullet to save her ... just like she saved all of us without even noticing”

I nodded my head gesturing us to go to my office, he walks out towards my office. I turn around and look at her in my bed and found myself smiling at the sight of her. I sighed and shook my head like I was repeating a mistake, I closed the door and told Aberto to stay guard “She’s asleep no one but me goes in.” He nods his head and stands in his post.

I go inside and see Lorenzo waiting for me laying down on the couch, I close the doors behind me and walk around my desk sitting in my chair. “I-” I huff feeling conflicted with all my emotions, a part of me desires to get to know her to connect with her again. To constantly be with her like I needed her to stay alive but the other part of me feels like this memory loss was a chance for the both of us to part to give her another chance a life without me ... a life without bloodshed.

“Don’t worry” I shook my head leaning back into my chair, Lorenzo sat up straight and looked at me. He shook his head knowing what I wanted to say. “When I first met Isabella, you had just saved her from a hostage situation. She was taken so they can get information on you” he put emphasis on you. “She didn’t utter a word even though she owed you nothing, a matter of a fact If I was her, I would’ve spilled everything I knew. You threatened her in front of the club, knife to her throat. I guess she deserved it but still” he shrugged his shoulders.

“But that’s how she was loyal and fucking stubborn. She was never scared of you, she spoke when she wanted, did what she wanted, and I remember thinking Vincenzo found his match” He smiled at the memory I no longer possessed. “That day, however, you rushed home and assembled men in such a hurry to save her. You knew her for a few days if not a week, and you were ready to tear the world apart to get her back, and

that's when I knew you were fucked" he laughed, I smiled feeling like I'm being told an epic love story.

"She got forced to stay here because you wanted to use her as a bargaining tool. But I know you too well, that could've been a reason but if that was solely the reason to keep her you would've shove her in any one of our homes or hotels, but you chose our home. You wanted her close for reasons you didn't understand yourself." He continued explaining

"She saved us, we were broken. You didn't do anything but work, hungry for more power to stay feared, without realising it you were turning into him" he was referring to our dad making me cringe at the thought. I promised Lorenzo and Ariana I'd never be like him ... I made a promise to Dante that I would never turn out like our parents, and I couldn't help but feel like I let them down.

"But then this fire spitting Dragon came into our lives, and **everything** changed. You were suddenly more aware and present. You made time for us, you even started doing one on one training with me again for old times' sake. You slowly started becoming like your old self, **she brought out the best in you when you only thought you had monsters to be brought out.** And even after all that your reputation only grew stronger, you were calmer you made better decisions with her reassurance ... she was like your reason to keep going"

I watched as he spoke about her with such high regards, I felt a warm sensation in my heart hearing everything she's done for my family ... for me. It made the guilt of forgetting her worsen. Lorenzo laughed out "No one defended you as much as her, she would cut anyone who spoke poorly of you. You saved her too you know that?" He questioned I looked at him unaware of everything. "She was lost, she had so many traumas she was on the brink of just giving up. You brought out the best in her ... you were her reason to keep going"

He let out a chuckle "It was rather beautiful to watch, the way you put her insecurities to sleep. The way you dove into her

eyes and got rid of all the fears, how you pulled her out from the skeletons she had hidden in her.”

He shook his head “I think I know why she drew you in so much” he thought aloud and I found myself wanting to know more, wanting to hear the rest of the story. Needing someone to explain why I was drawn to her why I allowed her in because now every day is like I just woke up nothing made sense but that’s how I feel throughout the day. “It was her; she has a devil in her, and I swear it’ll dance some nights if you’re brave enough to take her hand.” I pictured her in the basement stabbing and losing all control on the man she had down there.

“She’s a stubborn fiery soul who takes what she wants, stealing a glance then a night then eventually she stole your heart. She had a smile like an angel but the mindset of a devil, everything she ever loved left her burning. You became a part of her, you carried her, and she left her mark on you. She took on the things that should have scared her away and learned to use them to her advantage. What I’m saying is that Isabella she’s dangerous. The best ones are, and you’re attracted to her flames, with your broken soul and cold heart. You loved her and you once said she was like ‘hell inside of heaven, and heaven inside of hell. She’s a girl who deserves someone willing to through both.’ and at the end of it all, she was a girl who thought she stole your heart, not knowing you can’t steal what you already given her” He whispered the last part.

I had a swarm of emotions running wild not knowing which to focus on, Isabella was truly one of a kind. A girl full of life yet full of stresses she could take on the devil and win. I smirked at how we would’ve been as a couple, both being the alpha type needing to control and dominate. Her stubbornness and my very thin patience.

Our head snapped up at the sound of a girl screaming, Lorenzo laughed out “Isabella” he gestured taking a bow like he explained her very accurately. I rolled my eyes and stood up Lorenzo followed close behind. “What’s wrong?” I asked her, she looked at me with a rather mad expression. “What’s wrong?” she mocked me frustrated. I looked at her clueless not

understanding why she was screaming. She let out a frustrated screech and stormed off, I grabbed her arm and pulled her towards me. Her body colliding with mine, “We need to talk” she stood frozen for a minute taking in a deep breath before nodding her head “Okay”

x

Isabella’s POV

I was pissed he left me, it felt like all I needed to feel safe, and calm was his presence. To be able to hold him while he reassured me in his calming voice that it was all going to be okay. I needed him more than ever and it killed me I couldn’t have him anymore.

I walked inside the office watching him as he slowly closes the office door’s he approached me cautiously; I eyed him sceptical. These damn hormones fired me up I mentally calmed myself down and let out a small sigh. I looked up I see him standing in front of the broken mirror. Staring at himself lost in thought. I stood behind him staring at him through the mirror, he looked to the side seeing me in the reflection before focusing back on himself. His face turned to stone, his entire body tensing like he had no idea who was staring back at him, and whoever it was he didn’t seem to like who he saw.

“You stare at that mirror so often I’m surprised you don’t know who’s looking back at you” I commented, his eyes fixated on me through the mirror ... “Do you?” he questioned I was taken back “Sometimes” I replied. I eyed him curiously “What do you see?” I whispered so low like I feared his answer, not wanting to anger him. He seemed to be pondering the question for a minute “A monster” he stated. I nodded my head slowly, “Are you a monster? Or is this what it means to be a person?” I questioned. His eye’s never leave my reflection in the broken glass. It seemed like he wanted to say something,

the words at the tip of his tongue before he shut his mouth shut and decided against it.

“How did it break?” He changed the subject, I winced at the memory of him finding out about his brother’s death, “You punched it ... then a few weeks ago so did I” my fingers tracing my cut-up knuckles. “Why?” I stayed silent not wanting to relive that part of our life hoping he would simply drop it. He sensed my hesitation and cleared his throat.

“How are you feeling?” He proceeded with caution like he was handling a bomb and I was going to blow up at any minute. I nodded my head slowly “I’m better ... and thanks for pulling me off when you did” I whispered feeling stupid at how I lost control in the basement. When I took over this mafia I took over as both dragon and Isabella I was able to control and tame my demons and still have emotions, be reasonable as it wasn’t like Spain, and I wasn’t responsible for just myself anymore. But when I found out about my parents and how both tortured them, I lost all senses ... It felt like both sides of me wanted to do that, that my demons overpowered me once again and that terrified me more than anything.

“Are you sure?” He pushed; I eyed him sceptical “Vincenzo why the sudden interest? You spent every chance you get to avoid me and now you’re all of a sudden concerned about me?” I was so irritated, and these damn hormones didn’t help my emotional state. “Isabella ... I’m worried about you” He admitted “You’re worried about me?” I questioned letting out a mocking laugh before looking at him again.

“Where you worried about me when you completely shut me out? Where you worried about me when I spent an entire month looking for you! **Only to find some half version of you!**” I screamed. “It’s not like I forgot you on purpose Isabella!” I whipped my head turning to face him, “What?” I repeated “You might not have done it on purpose. But you **CHOSE** not to try! ” I cried out forgetting that he is currently trying to reach out, but I had so much built-up frustration I never got to let out when I first found out and now it was like everything was spilling out at once.

“I don’t want to fight; I don’t want to yell I just ... I-” I cut myself off drifting away sadly as I eyed him with glossy eyes. “Sometimes I wish I was you” I admitted he looked at me sceptically “Sometimes I wish I was the one with the memory loss, to escape the pain of being in this relationship alone.” My anger faded away and now all that was there was grief like I was still mourning him. “You don’t think it sucks for me? I look at you and it’s like my body and soul are gravitating towards you. Like it’s going to erupt if I’m not near you, but my mind is screaming at me that it doesn’t know you! Like my soul and mind are at war”

I nodded my head sadly sucking in my lips, “I know” I whispered knowing the fight he is going through “Sometimes it’s just easier to forget, to ignore the battle” I explained his situation to him showing him I knew why he distanced, why he shut me out. “Vincenzo has always been a man who knew what he wanted, and these unknown feelings are telling him you know this person you have a connection with her, but his mind is shutting it down. For the first time, you are in conflict with yourself more specifically with your feeling’s and you chose to listen to the one you’re most familiar with... your mind” He looked at me shocked like I just read him like an open book.

“How did you?” I smiled “Because I know you not just Vincenzo King the man the scary Mafia boss, but I know your soul. When I found myself wishing to forget, I remember all the times we spent together all the memories, how your lips felt against mine, how your voice calmed me down. How beautiful your singing voice is. I remember your soul and I would never want to forget it. It would be such a shame.”

“We drove each other to insanity” I laughed out looking at him, he was concentrating on every single word I said like it was gold. “But that was our thing, insanity” I nodded off losing myself in my own train of thought. I slowly walked towards the window near the couch and sat looking out.

“I want to believe everything you say, but-” still unconvinced. I cut him off continuing “You know no one noticed how guilty

you felt.” I stated, he huffed “I don’t feel guilt” He spat angrily. I smirked still deciding to continue my observation “They only saw your guilt. No one saw the pain you were in; they only saw the pain you caused. No one realised you hated yourself, far more than anyone hated you.”

“No, I don’t have guilt, I wasn’t in pain, and I don’t hate myself. I do very bad things, and I do them very well.” He was getting frustrated Vincenzo came to terms with his demons but now he was reset, back to factory settings. Still denying it and avoiding all his buried emotions. “Okay” I replied not pushing him further. “I think it’s time for me to go” I whispered, he looked at me irritated. “Maybe it is, I’ll see you tonight for dinner” He replied brushing his hands through his hair.

“No,” I whispered softly physically hurting. “I mean for good” his stare turned dark and icy. He lunged towards me gripping my arms lifting me up, “what?” He warned lowly, “I think it’s time for me to go” I repeated. “No” he answered short and simple letting me go, “I-” he cuts me off screaming “NO ISABELLA, NO!” I watched his body tense his worry lines on his face and his hurt expression no matter how much he tried to hide it I saw it. “What do you need me to do? What is it you need!?” He shouted his voice boomed through the office, I looked at him my anger levels slightly rising.

“What do I need?” I repeated, “I NEED YOU!” I shouted silencing him; he dropped his arms down looking at me his mouth parted his eyebrow’s furrowed as his eyes softened. “I need you! That’s what’s wrong I miss you; you are fucking idiot! I Miss you; I miss Vincenzo. I need the old you back the one who knew me! The one who touched my soul and dragged me back to life, the one who understood me ... who understood my daemons without me even saying a word” I shouted, I lunged to him and pushed him back “YOU! I FUCKING NEED YOU!” I kept shoving him back and hitting his chest until he hit the wall.

“My dead parents are alive! They’re being held captive by Xavier, and I didn’t tell anyone. I didn’t even tell Maria because I didn’t know how too. I needed you, I needed to tell

you because YOU always knew what to say.” My voice got softer the more I confessed to him. His worried expression deepened as he looked at me with sympathetic eyes. I closed my eyes tears escape sucking my lower lip to stop it from quivering.

“I miss you ... I need you!” I shouted feeling every single emotion as it rose to the surface, I started hitting his chest again screaming, pleading, and begging. **“Please give him back to me!”**

He gripped my wrists to stop me from hitting his chest and pulled me towards him forcing me into a tight embrace, I sobbed in his chest wrapping my arms around his waist. I had no idea what I needed to do about the two of us, but one thing was sure I needed to save my parents.

“I- I don’t know what to do ... but one thing I know is I need to go to **war**. I need to kill that fucker and I need to save my parents.” I whispered softly. He lifted my chin up with his fingers and whispered **“then let’s go to war”**

THE CHAOS

I looked at him cautiously pulling away, “what?” I softly whispered. “Let’s go to war” He stated once more firmly and sure. “B-” He cut me off “If he had my brother captive, I would tear apart this world for him, with or without anyone’s help. I know you would do the same with or without help. I don’t think I’d handle it well if you went alone and something happened to you. He wronged both of us so let’s finish him together”

“You remember?” I softly spoke, “That he was the one who killed Dante? Yes, I have these mini flashbacks they feel like a dream. Some are detailed and some are a blur, I just remember someone telling me how he died” I nodded my head slowly, “Are you sure about this?” He looked back down at me and nodded his head. “Never been so sure of something in my

life.” I smiled nodding my head feeling my anxiousness calming down.

I looked over at the clock on the wall and jumped up “Oh shit” I rushed out, “what?” I turned around “I need to go to the shipments from the Garcia’s-” He cuts me off with his hand “Wasn’t Lorenzo going to that” I bit my bottom lip acting deep in thought. “Okay, let’s go” I looked at him shocked “You’re coming?” I questioned. He looked at me while putting his leather jacket on “If I’m going to remember anything I need to start getting back into the routine. Since you know all my clients, you’d be a good person to help fill out any gaps” I eyed him not believing his reasoning, He wanted me around ... maybe he was scared I was going to make a run for it?

I sighed leading the way “I just need to change first” He nodded his head. I walked towards my room and quickly changed into something more comfortable. I slipped on my black skinny jeans, a tight black fitted bodysuit and through my red leather jacket on top. I sighed and turned to the side analysing my stomach, I smiled rubbing the barely visible bump. “Maybe we should tell daddy about you tonight?” I whispered. “Isabella, you alright in there?” I jumped hearing Vincenzo’s voice. I quickly put my hair up in a ponytail and walked out. “All done” I smiled; he turned around stopping to take a minute to stare.

I started feeling self-conscious, I walked towards him even though the way he was staring at me made my heart beat a million miles per hour. I used my fingers to close his mouth “You done?” I asked. He rolled his eyes; I kept staring at him amused the smug smirk never leaving my lips. He cracked and let out a small chuckle “Come on then” I walked in front of him and out the door. “Isabella!” I turned around and saw Maria “What about our trip?” I nodded my head smiling “I promised, didn’t I? Tonight, when I get back, I promise” She smiled nodding her head okay.

“Be careful” She whispered I kissed her on the cheek and smiled “Always”

We got into the car and Vincenzo took off. We sat in comfortable silence for a minute “How do you do it?” He questioned, I looked at him confused “Silence them” he paused for a minute “Your demons” He finished. I turned to look at him my eyebrows slightly raised, and mouth parted at his question. “Well, I don’t know” I answered truthfully “I like to think that because I finally accepted them as a part of me, It allowed me to have some control over them. Like by accepting it I wasn’t focusing my strength on fighting them, I was focusing it on how to use them to my advantage”

“How did you stop fighting,” He asked like he was in the middle of an internal struggle right now “I came to terms with everything” I whispered softly, “I came to terms with the lives I took, the people I left behind. I accepted every single sin I ever committed and never looked back. I decided to stop blaming it on my ‘monsters’ and accept it. Once I did it felt like I became whole” I explained watching his features relax as he took in every word. “Why?” I asked, he looked forward “When you explained tonight about how you ‘knew’ me, you spoke about my guilt, my pain, and my hatred. I never spoke about that to anyone; I never showed those sorts of emotions.” I nodded my head understanding him.

“I guess you opened something I thought was closed. A part of me that I didn’t know existed a part of me that was human?” He questioned, “Vincenzo, you’re not a monster” I whispered softly but I lied. “Yes, when I first met you, I hated you. Then I don’t know it felt like somehow my soul was yearning for you then all of a sudden that hatred just disappeared.” I explained truthfully, shrugging at how it could just go. “That doesn’t change the fact, that I am what I am” He grunted. I squinted my eyes at his sudden mood change “Let me finish”

He kept his eyes on the road, sighing I continued “When I said you’re not a monster, I lied” I spoke out, his foot hitting the accelerator the cars speed picking up as I watch his knuckles turn white. His grip on the steering wheel looked lethal “What I really wanted to say was a monster wasn’t such a terrible thing to be” I quickly rushed out; the speed came down ever so

slightly. “From the Latin root *monstrum*, a divine messenger of catastrophe, then adapted by the old French to mean an animal of myriad origins: Centaur, griffin, sayr.”

The car was zooming past everything was a blur, I looked ahead and saw we were approaching the drop-off. I noticed the sharp turn ahead and my heart began picking up pace “VINCENZO STOP THE FUCKING CAR” I yelled placing my hand over my stomach. The car came to a screeching halt, he turned to face me. I shook my head trying to catch my breath. “To be a monster is to be a hybrid a signal, a lighthouse. Both shelter and warning at once. Vincenzo, life has been a bitch to both of us. It forced us to do and see things no human should, but we did it for the protection of the ones we loved most. So, no being a monster isn’t such a bad thing. Everyone has them the only difference is choosing to accept it or trying to suffocate it until it eventually consumes you. I’m proud of mine ... now It’s time you start accepting yours before you let it swallow you whole” I opened the car door and slammed it behind me.

I walked the rest of the way and watched as he zoomed past me. My head racing 10 miles per hour, not knowing what to focus on. I huffed frustrated walking towards the drop-off, feeling my heart racing. I looked at the smoke in the air from the car, I use to be able to know how Vincenzo would react, what he would do how he would feel but since the accident, I feel like I don’t know him at all. In a way I didn’t anymore, he was constantly contradicting himself maybe he really is at a battle with his old self and his present self.

And it looked like his new self was wining, I huffed seeing the Garcia’s alongside Vincenzo, I slowly approached them.

“Isabella, Como Estas mi querida?” he greeted happily, I sniffled a laugh smiling at him, “Bueno, que tal tu?” I asked he nodded his head saying he has been good as well. “Business picked up thanks’ to your shipments and supplies of alcohol” I laughed nodding my head, Vincenzo eyed me sideways. I explained the situation without directly looking at Vincenzo to catch him up. “Yes, the government got pretty interested in our

finances, so we decided to buy a wine farm along with a factory. We have been exporting and importing goods and money laundering them through various businesses. And who else but the Garcia's would we love to be in business with" I smiled, he nodded smiling.

"You got a good one Vincenzo" Mr Garcia smiled admiring myself and Vincenzo. "Both of you are at the top of our chains, I can imagine your kids" He laughed. I and Vincenzo tensed up as I placed my hand over my stomach feeling uneasy. "No kids" Vincenzo quickly spoke up, I was now eyeing him sideways. "You don't want kids?" I questioned, he shook his head no "and bring them into a world of crime, violence and bloodshed?" He questioned like he was the logical one.

"I never wanted kids and I never want them" He spoke out firmly as I tensed up. "What If I want?" I asked frustrated, "Then fuck someone else!" He calmly spoke but his eyes were sending daggers my way. "Maybe I will" I spat, "I don't understand why you are even being like this we aren't together I don't even know you" He whisper yelled only for me to hear. I went to yell at him, but Mr Garcia quickly cut me off. "Sorry, I didn't mean-" I quickly cut him off shaking my head sympathetically "No, don't be sorry. You did nothing. Thank you for your compliment, Vincenzo just has meterle el culo" I smiled feeling some sort of pleasure telling him Vincenzo pretty much had a stick up his ass.

Vincenzo glaring me from the side, I rolled my eyes. Continuing our chat as his men loaded the shipments from the boat into their truck. "It's always a pleasure doing business with you my dear, and you Vincenzo." We both nodded our heads and Mr Garcia approached me alone. "He'll come around don't worry. Keep your head high angel" Giving me a kiss on the head and getting into his car.

I smiled watching him leave, he reminded me so much of my father. His warm heart, his soothing voice, and soft features. I sighed remembering my parents still trapped. Their cars and trucks left the dock as I watched them drive off until I couldn't

see them anymore. “What the fuck was that!” Vincenzo roars from behind me, I rolled my eyes not turning around choosing to just ignore him. “ISABELLA” I snapped turning around “WHAT” I hissed, “what was that? The talk about children then demeaning me in front of my oldest client and closest ally?” He was pissed I’ll admit that was wrong of me, and he had a reason to be irritated but, in my defence, I was defending the child that was in my stomach ... sending a sick feeling to my stomach now that I know he doesn’t want it.

My eyes grew wide thinking if he finds out he may make me get rid of it. “Isabella!” He snapped; I snapped my head towards him. I rolled my eyes “Sorry, I guess I forgot where and who I was talking to” I admitted feeling like I was talking to the old Vincenzo. He sighed frustrated brushing his fingers through his hair, “where you always like this?” He questions, I eyed him “like what?” I hissed.

“Like this! Did we always argue like this?” I sighed “Yes, but it was sorta our thing” I shrugged, “Our personalities are so alike we would clash more times than you could count” I admitted. He looked at me with a confused expression “Then how- How?”

“If love isn’t madness, ‘it’s not love” I repeated the words he once told me, He looked at me taken back a wave of shock took over his features. Realising where that quote came from, “Dante” He spoke softly, I nodded my head as I quoted his twin brother. He went to ask a follow-up question before three cars circled us.

Vincenzo quickly grabbed me by my waist and pulled me closer to him, “Who-” Vincenzo quickly shushed me grabbing my hand and running. The men that were in the car chasing us as gunshots were heard flying in our directions. “GET HIM AND KILL HIM” a rather young voice roared, Vincenzo guiding me through the shipping containers as we hid behind one, our backs pressed up as our chest heaved up and down.

“You go back there, I’ll check here” One called out, Vincenzo peaked and quickly hid. I went to say something before he put

his hand over my mouth. I rolled my eyes and licked his palm; he snatched his hand away so fast I almost burst out laughing. He looked at me like I lost my mind his head tilted towards me; his mouth parted slightly as his eyes furrowed together. He wiped the palm of his hand on his jeans a playful smirk forming on his lips.

I saw the shadow on the floor getting closer, he stood near us and before turning to face us Vincenzo quickly hit the side of his hand in the man's neck, the man dropping his gun and holding his throat not able to breathe. Vincenzo quickly pulls him behind the container and snaps his neck. I watched my eyes widen at his effortless combat skill's, He grabbed the gun and extends his hand out while he watches ahead making sure the coast is clear. I looked down at his extended hand and felt my heart skip a beat, I looked up chewing my lip before taking his hand. He tightened his grip and took off, we bounced from container to container slowly approaching where he had his car parked. While we fought off a few of the men as quietly as we could.

We saw the car in sight, and he squeezed my hand I sighed and gave him a squeeze, indicating I was ready to run. We had no idea how many men are here, and we have no backup or our own weapons. I hated the idea of running but I wasn't going to put myself in a situation like this ... not in my condition.

"Well, well, well." A rather young voice began taunting us as his men stood behind him guns aimed towards us. He had three men behind him I turned around seeing a few more on the floor, I winced. I turned around and watched as he and his men only seemed to be paying attention to Vincenzo, no one looking at me as they aimed their guns to his head.

"Salvatore" Vincenzo greeted, "You killed my father!" the man spat. Vincenzo rolled his eyes "Your dad tried to kill me, steal from me ... and did a lot worse than that" I cringed imaging what else the man could have done, "I don't care what he did. You killed him, now you're going to pay for it with your life." He spat, I raised an eyebrow at him, he looked no older than 20 his men looked much older than he did.

Vincenzo let out a dry mocking laugh “Go on then” he threw his gun near his car as he opened his arms out inviting him to end his life.

“I don’t have much to live for nowadays” He’s voice was barely above a whisper, not wanting anyone to hear him. I watched him stand there inviting all the bullets to pierce his chest honestly no longer caring about a thing. I looked back at the men in front of him and noted they still paid no attention to me, I slowly backed away.

As they kept yelling and exchanging threats, “YOU THINK I WON’T” he yelled, Vincenzo stood his arms still open “My arms are getting sore boy” he yawned. I quickly darted towards the car when I felt like I was no longer in view. I grabbed the gun from the floor and stood up as I felt a man grip my waist pinning me against the car “Whatcha got their doll?” He slurred pressing himself to me. I gagged trying to push him off me but failing. “Get off” I shouted, “LET GO OF HER” I heard Vincenzo’s voice roar.

The man stopped his grip on me still firm, he didn’t turn around. I turned around and looked at Vincenzo, he lunged forward trying to get to me before his men stopped him while the Salvatore pressed the gun to his head. “Kill me I don’t care just let her go” He shouted; He eyed him shocked “Vincenzo King? Has a soft spot?” He laughed. I rolled my eyes feeling my anger rising and my strength building.

The man placed his hand over my stomach pushing me roughly against the car, I grabbed the gun and hit it against his head, watching as he passed out on the floor. I aimed my gun at the men who now had let go of Vincenzo with their guns aimed at me. “Hello boys” I smiled sadistically, “I don’t think we’ve met”

They rolled their eyes laughing as they lunged towards me, I moved to the side grabbing one and holding him in a chokehold as I used him as a human shield. I tightened my grip to stop him from squirming as he gripped my arm pulling to set his neck free. I aimed my gun at the remaining two, I

looked over at Vincenzo almost asking him if I should kill them. He smirked and nodded his head slightly.

Turning back around I smirked pulling the trigger both bullets penetrating their skulls as their lifeless bodies fell to the floor. The man I had in a shock hold now passed out as I let go of his body. I walked towards the boy who still had his gun aimed at Vincenzo now aiming my gun at him. He laughed “Did you think I only brought 10 men to take on the most feared people in our line of work? As if ten men could take out Vincenzo King and Dragon” I eyed him then quickly met Vincenzo’s worried stare.

As if on cue cars hurled surrounding us, another twenty men appearing as they surrounded us. Starting to grow nervous I watched them with caution, my chest now rising and down at a quick pace. I protectively placed my hand over my stomach as I watched their guns aimed at us.

Vincenzo however looked calm, too calm. His posture was straight, confident as his features remained smug. I tried to see if he saw someone or noticed something I hadn’t, but the place was surrounded by unfamiliar faces. He’s lost it “After all this is over, I want my sanity back” I whined huffing crossing my arms over my chest. Vincenzo eyed me sideways amused. I watched him in front of unfamiliar men all guns aimed at his head, he showed not one ounce of fear, worry ... nothing like he was in his element. I rolled my eyes at the irony talking with me makes him uneasy but 20 guns pointed at his head ready to kill him makes him all giddy.

“Get them” He ushered his men towards us, looking at one another we nodded getting ready. A man came swinging I ducked kneeling him in his stomach, punching his side then hooking his jaw. I grabbed him by his collar and threw him against the two men that were approaching me.

I kicked one in the back before he could attack Vincenzo from the back, Gunshots started blaring. Vincenzo grabbed my hand and pulled me with his entire strength out of the way hiding me behind his tall built frame. The Salvatore growing

frustrated lunged, quick and relentless, his gun positioned to deal a death blow. “ENOUGH!” Vincenzo’s voice boomed, through the dock sending a wave of fear through all the men. Salvatore and his men stopped cold, listening as Vincenzo’s voice seemed to echo around inside their heads. “That’s it.” His voices rattled inside their brain as he spoke like a true leader. He towered above Salvatore as he stood tall, he looked powerful, in charge as though everyone was under his command they all found themselves unable to move as they stood frozen.

“**Obbedire**” He commanded, Obey I found myself repeating his words. My eyes never left him. I found myself unable to move, unable to comprehend anything like I was waiting for him to allow me to move again. Like I was in some sort of trance, I watched in admiration feeling my heart rate speeding up watching him. The way he was able to take control in a split second amazed me and stirred up a deep attraction.

He put his hand back grabbing mine, making sure I was okay and still behind him away from the aim of the guns. I found myself losing every inch of hate, the resentment I felt towards him this past month as I started at his hand intertwined with mine as I found myself wondering. What if I never forget you as you forgot me? What if, all my life, when I meet someone new, I can never fall for them because they aren’t you?

Biting down on my jaw I looked away feeling myself slipping into a state of mind that I couldn’t afford to be in right now. I looked back up noticing Vincenzo and the Salvatore in a heated argument, “It’s over” Vincenzo laughed victoriously. On cue the sound of gunshots filled the once silent dock, Vincenzo gripped my pinning me against the container as he shielded my body with his own as the bullets were flying everywhere. I shut my eyes tight as I feared for his life more than my own gripping his shirt as he stayed pressed against me.

With the sound of gunfire coming to a stop, he slowly pulled away. Our eyes never leaving each other, I watched as his Adam’s apple bobbed up and down. His hands wrapped

around my small frame as I watched his gaze softened his mesmerising grey eye's shined as he stared into mine and at that moment we both drowned under the waves of words we weren't saying. His eyes slowly trailed down to my lips then back up, my breathing hitched as he slowly leant down to connect our lips, I edged up our lips inches apart ever so slightly touching before we pulled away at Garcia's presence.

"Are you both okay?" Vincenzo moves aside scratching his head walking towards his car. I looked at Mr Garcia and smiled gratefully "Thank you so much, I don't know how we can repay you" He laughed pulling me in a hug. "Isabella, your friendship is enough payment." His embrace was warm and comforting it made me yearn for my father's hugs even more. I sighed feeling a piece of me was still missing "Your friendship means a lot to me as well" I smiled.

He nodded his head smiling "Take care of yourself ... remember I'm always here if you need anything" I smiled at his reassurance giving him one final tight squeeze. He called all his men and ushered them away and ordered some of his men to do the clean-up. Vincenzo told him it was not necessary and that he would get his men to come but Garcia insisted. They exchanged a few words before Garcia laughed patting Vincenzo on his back giving him a hug, I smiled watching Vincenzo's calm stature as he hugged Garcia back. He had more of a bond with him than his own father, it was sweet watching the two of them.

"Isabella start calling me Manuel, I think we can skip the formalities" He laughed, I shook my head smiling. "As you wish, Manuel" He winked waving goodbye as he got into his car and drove off. "You ready to go?" Vincenzo spoke up, I nodded my head "More than you know" I rushed and got in the car. "You and Manuel seem pretty close" Vincenzo spoke up trying to get rid of the awkward sexual tension. I nodded my head smiling "After your crash he was the most concerned for you out of all your contacts. He was constantly coming to check up and make sure I was okay. We got close he reminds me a lot of my dad" My smile grew smaller as I looked out the

window wondering how they are if they're in pain. If they're okay, I leaned my head on the glass as I watched the buildings pass us in a blur.

"You seemed pretty close as well" I said turning my attention back to him, "He is like the father I never got" He answered truthfully drifting off, I waited for him to continue as I edged closer to him. "I first met him through a business deal when me and Dante were only 10. He was so energetic and full of life, never in a million years would I have assumed he was a part of any criminal activity, he was cheerful full of jokes" He laughed out, "I remember once they finished a meeting early and he saw me and Dante target shooting, he came up to us and watched us shoot at the clay targets and said no ten year old should be that good with a gun" I smiled watching his entire persona shift as his body relaxed into a happy memory of his childhood.

"He asked us what we liked, what interests us. Dante and I had a real fascination with the stars for some reason, what each represents what it means. It always amazed us, and he just happened to be an astronomer. He spent hours telling us stories around the stars, about what each represented. Where everything was, it was one of my fondest memories. Ever since then we grew really attached to Manuel. He was more of a dad to us than our real dad, I think that might be because he and his wife were never able to conceive. So they really enjoyed our company they treated us like we were their own, If Dante hadn't died ... I think I would have turned out differently" He turned his head and looked at me wearily.

I looked at him with sympathy, I wanted so badly to hug him but felt "You shouldn't be this easy to talk to" He spoke out, I eyed him slightly offended. "It's like I don't even realise what I'm saying until I said it." He seemed annoyed at himself. I sniffled a laugh. He turned around eyeing me "Stop that" He commented, I burst out into laughter. "I'm not laughing" I quickly laughed out, "Stop smirking!" I smiled "Don't be a rainy cloud." I rolled my eyes; his facial expression went from

laughter to seriousness as he lowered his head in pain letting go of the wheel.

“Vin- VINCENZO!” I yelled out. He shook his head grabbing the wheel and looking straight ahead. “Are you okay?” I touched his head checking for a fever, “I- I’m okay” he rushed out. I nodded my head unconvinced as I moved my hand away.

x

We parked the car getting out, I felt my stomach turn. Oh, hell. I ran past Vincenzo and his men rushing to my room.

Hovering over the toilet I felt everything in my stomach making its way out. I flushed the toilet wiping my mouth with a tissue and slouched down. Leaning my head against the wall, I looked down at my stomach and glared at it. “Come on! Be nice you’re living in there rent-free” I heard a knock on my door, I quickly jumped up and washed my face. “Coming!” I called out examining my state in the mirror before nodding my head and walking off towards the door.

I opened the door and saw Maria standing “are you okay?” she rushed out. I looked at her confused “W-why wouldn’t I be, okay?” I swatted her hands away jokingly. “You ran up to your room so fast, it looked like you were going to throw up”

I pursed my lips shaking my head “No, no. I’m fine I just ... needed a minute to myself” She nodded her head unconvinced but decided not to push me any further. “Can we go now?” I nodded my head feeling as though it would be the best time to tell her about our parents. Somewhere far from everyone where it was just me and her. I changed out of my leather jacket and grabbed a comfortable oversized jumper and slipped it on. I smiled inhaling its familiar scent.

FLASHBACK

I hate him, I hated him more than I could ever explain. I watched Vincenzo asleep; I cannot believe he is keeping me here against my will. I was leaving this hell hole even if I had to crawl out in a pool of blood.

I watched him sleep, laying on his stomach his arms underneath the pillow cuddling it. I watched his breathing subconsciously syncing mine with his. He looked peaceful, I shook my head focusing, I held the knife tight in my hand as I hovered above him, I quickly dropped my hand down ready to penetrate his back. When he flipped over, grabbing my arm midway and pinning me underneath him.

“Now you didn’t think it was going to be this easy, did you?” He purred towering above me. I eyed him furiously, I grunted and managed to free my hand from his grip, I swung missing him but getting the side of his arm. I watched as the blood flowed out from the fresh cut.

His eyes darkened as he pulled me up, pinning me against the wall. “You’re gonna regret that leonessa.” I smirked “No, I don’t think I will.” I spat, I took another swing which he professionally dodged, grabbing me by my waist and throwing me against the end of the room. I grunted hitting my back against the wall, He pulled the gun from underneath his pillow and aimed it at me. “I wouldn’t call this a fair fight” I spoke out. He looked at me and smirked “You giving up so soon?” he mocked.

I smirked “I meant for you” He laughed out. I lunged towards him my knife ready for the blow he gripped my arm and held me by my waist spinning me around and pinned me up against the wall. “I think you found your match” I rolled my eyes, pushing him off me but failing. “UGH” I grunted frustrated, using every ounce of strength I had left inside me and pushing him off. He fell to the floor, and I jumped on top of him, I was straddling his waist using my free hand I wrapped it around his neck and firmly planted my knife on his cheek.

“Likewise,” he looked at me with those big beautiful grey eyes, staring into my soul as he looked completely mesmerised, his eyes told me everything he couldn’t. I felt myself losing my train of thought unable to tear my eyes from his. Like hypnosis all I wanted to do was look into his eyes. I heard the doorknob begin rattling “shit” I hissed under my breath and fumbled trying to get off cutting the side of my

stomach in the process. “How ... mother fucker” I hissed dropping the knife and holding my side.

“Leave” Vincenzo ordered to whoever was at the door as he stood up slowly. He forcefully moved my hands and looked at the cut, his soft features turning to stone as he saw the small cut, I caused myself. I watched him as he forced me into his bathroom and cleaned my wound. “I don’t need your help” I bite, he ignored my outburst and finished cleaning my wound and bandaging it up. “I know you don’t, but you’re going to get it anyway”

I felt myself relax, he grabbed me one of his hoodies and told me to put it on. “I don’t want it” I pushed it away and he took in a deep breath before running his hand through his hair. “I need you to wear it” I looked at him confused before I looked down realising, I was only in shorts and a bra. I snatched it from his hand and quickly put it over my head. He smiled amused and I couldn’t help but laugh.

He joined me laughing I shook my head, and I couldn’t help but think ... was he so bad? I broke into his room to kill him and instead he cleaned my wound and gave me a hoodie to cover up.

END OF FLASHBACK

“Wait I need to do something before we head out!” She quickly shouted and ran off somewhere downstairs. I watched her run laughing at her childlike behaviour for a late trip to the beach. I looked from the corner of my eye and watched Vincenzo go into his bedroom a cup of bourbon in one hand. His grey sweatpants hung dangerously low exposing his defined V line.

I found myself standing in front of his door, as I watched his tall frame lean against the railing of his balcony, I sighed watching him. Even from behind he looked stressed, I walked inside and stood next to him leaning on the railing. “They hate each other” Vincenzo commented pointing to Ariana and Sebastián arguing in the garden.

“How lucky” I whispered, he looked at me puzzled by my comment. “To harbour such strong emotions for another and to

have them be reciprocated,” I explained ... “They are lucky” I whispered watching them exchange words in a heated argument. “You just described love.” Vincenzo states taking a sip of his bourbon. “Did I?” I smiled. “There are close ties between love and hate; snip the cord and watch which way you fall.” I whispered the last part mimicking the actions of cutting a cord with my fingers. “And where do you?” He implored. “Fall?” He made clear what he was asking. Little did he know I was hanging by a thread in the grey space between where no one could bring themselves to give a damn ... But I did I gave a damn no matter how much I denied it, if my cord snapped, it was clear where I’d fall. “It’s not important” I finally answered him.

He looked at me ready to push before I smiled cutting him off “It’s in the past, all my feelings for you are gone” I lied through my teeth, he looked at me his eyes melting mine as we held eye contact our eyes saying everything we weren’t. I quickly snapped my head looking away, “You looked at me a little too long, for your feelings to be gone” He commented.

I inhaled a deep breath choosing to ignore his comment, I looked up at the sky admiring the stars. “I like the stars” I randomly confessed. He smiles wide as he whispered, “So do I” I admired the beauty of them “They inspire me, you know?” I asked, he laughed “Yes, I know” I laughed “But get this,” I throw. “What?” He turned his gaze looking around the sky at the different stars. “They, the stars themselves, don’t inspire me”

“Hmm?” he hummed. “It’s who made me curious about those stars, the one who gave the courage to look up at the sky through the storm and wonder” I commented remembering the one time he comforted me when it was thundering outside. “Who would that be?” He genuinely asked his voice sincere and genuine. I looked over at him, “You”

Maria peaked her head through the door “Isabella, you ready to go?” I nodded my head my eyes still fixated on Vincenzo before I slowly made my way out.

We arrived at the beach and quickly found ourselves a spot on the sand. I smiled as Maria leaned her head on my shoulder. We both stared out watching the calming serenity of the waves crashing against each other. "Maria" I whispered; she looked up at me "yes?" worried as she studies my features. I inhaled and looked her in the face "I found out something a week ago, but I didn't tell you or anyone until I was a hundred percent sure" she nodded her head slowly encouraging me to finish.

"I went to follow up on a lead, Xavier's right hand so I can figure out who he was holding hostage" I took a deep breath before continuing Maria was visibly worried as she eyed me waiting for me to spill it out. "Isabella?" I nodded my head slowly, "His right hand was Diego" I whispered scared of her reaction. Her eyes grew wide hearing his name "Continue" she spoke out firmly aggression clearly evident in her tone of voice. "Isabella finish your sentence!"

I cringed hearing her aggression being pointed at me "He said Xavier has our parents" she stood up alerted "DOES HE!" She yelled, I stood up trying to calm her down "ISABELLA DOES HE!" I let out a frustrated sigh "YES! Okay yes" I felt everything fall apart.

"Our parents are alive and have been hostages with the man YOU worked for? The man YOU killed and tortured for? The man who YOU still haven't killed no matter every chance you get! The maniac who kept you hostage for months and turned you into a different person has our parents!" I winced at her harsh words. I bit my lip and yelled "MARIA! IT WASN'T LIKE I KNEW ALL THIS!"

"BUT YOU FOUND OUT AND DIDN'T THINK TO TELL ME?" She shouted, I shut my eyes hurt looking back at her again "I NEEDED TO BE SURE!" I yelled out in my defence, "ISABELLA, THEY'RE MY PARENTS JUST AS MUCH AS THEY ARE YOURS! YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO HIDE THIS FROM ME"

She looked at me still frustrated full of anger and sadness. “Why did he kidnap them, Isabella?” I went quite biting my bottom lip not wanting to tell her the reason. She nodded her head understanding, tears streaming from her face as she pointed a finger at me “To get to you right?” She asked pondering the thought. My silence spoke volumes and it was all she needed to be sure she was right.

“Because it always comes down to you, doesn’t it? They all wanted you, our parents died for their empire but, it was to get to YOU! Then they are held against their will to get to you to stay! EVERYTHING THAT GOES WRONG IN OUR LIVES SEEMS TO HAVE YOUR NAME WRITTEN ALL OVER IT ISABELLA.”

I looked at her my eyes wide as tears began forming “Isa-” I cut her off “My fault?” I laughed nodding my head “YOU DON’T THINK I KNOW THAT ALREADY? YOU DON’T THINK I HAVENT BEEN KILLING MYSELF OVER THAT EXACT THING!” I shouted feeling like everything I ever thought about myself was slowly becoming a reality.

“I didn’t mean it l-”

“But you did Maria, you did mean it. If i knew even for a second that my existence would in danger everyone, I loved I would have ended it a long, long time ago” I watched as she looked at me before whispering “I wish you never became Dragon ... then Xavier wouldn’t have put his eyes on you and our parents would still be alive.” She brushed past me walking back to the car and speed off.

I was well known in our line of work being dad’s right hand, word got out about me. My skills, my tactics even at such a young age I wasn’t one to be messed with. So, when I agreed to work with Xavier I only went by dragon that’s who he wanted and that was all I was able to be at that point.

I sat back down on the sand and looked out at the waves; tears streamed down my face as I felt my world crumble around me.

“Isabella?” I woke up to someone shaking me awake, I quickly shot up looking around trying to remember where I was. I was still at the beach, the sun slowly beginning to rise. “Isabella?” Lorenzo called my name again. I looked at him and sighed “What are you doing here?” I asked. He looked at me full of sympathy “I heard what happened, when you didn’t come back home. I got worried”

I sighed looking back ahead at the ocean “I didn’t think it would be a smart idea to go back.” I whispered, “You know she didn’t mean any of it” he whispered sitting next to me. I sighed not believing a word he just said. “She did, she meant every word. Everything she said was true ... and because it came out of her mouth it just made everything, I already thought so real” I spoke through the tears my throat burning up.

I coughed and looked up blinking trying to stop the tears from making its way out again. “Come on” He stood up extending his hand out for me to take. I looked at him silently thanking him for not pushing the topic further. I grabbed his hand, guiding me up. We walked towards the car and sat silently as he drove us back to the estate.

“We’re going to get them back” he commented disturbing the silence that filled the car. I looked at him and nodded “I know” I whispered “I just hope we won’t be too late”

“We won’t be. You have us all standing behind you, not us Vincenzo and me. The whole mafia loves you, you’re still like our leader they all admire you, and like Vincenzo they would go to war in order not to see a drop of your blood hit the floor” I smiled feeling a warm feeling settling in my stomach.

“Thank you” I whispered; he smiled nodding his head. “I’m always here when you need it Isabella” I smiled “I know” I whispered.

We arrived at the estate and a sick feeling settled in my stomach the closer I got to the doors. “Isabella, Vincenzo want’s you in his office now” Sebastián informs me. I nodded

my head making my way to his office, I froze at the door as I saw who was in his office.

“Hey Isabella, miss us?”

THE VOICES

I eyed the two of them the feeling in my stomach worsening.

“What are they doing here?” I bit walking into the office.

Vincenzo looked on edge almost like he was going to throw up. I looked at him trying to see if he was okay. “Oh, you’re going to find out baby” Roxy purred, my gaze turning to her. My eyes piercing her soul as I warned her not to push me today, she went quiet but remained confident.

“Didn’t I fire the two of you?” I looked between them, “We are not your employees to fire us, besides we know the real reason you wanted us gone” Lexi pondered, “To think Vincenzo ever trusted a snake” She hugged his arm, he tensed under her touch pulling his arm free. “Is it true?” Vincenzo asked.

I looked at him confused and frustrated “Is what true?” I yelled, he grabbed the polaroids from his desk and flung them towards me. “IS IT TRUE ISABELLA!” His voice echoed in my head sending chills through my body. Goosebumps rose on my skin because for the first time his anger was a hundred per cent aimed at me, I bent down slowly picking up the polaroid’s a gasp leaving my lips as I stare at the pictures.

“No, No, NO!” I chanted denying everything, I looked at the picture of me going to my doctor’s appointment and Xavier in front of me his hand extended making it look like we were involved in a conversation. I flicked through the other’s my eyes growing wider at every picture. “You cannot seriously believe this” I threw the polaroid’s across the room. “Why would he believe anything you say ever again? Photos don’t lie isn’t that you and Xavier?” I tensed my jaw, “Besides he doesn’t know you anymore” Lexi whispered with a victorious smug on her lips. “If you don’t wipe that smirk off your face I

WILL” I yelled lunging towards her, tackling her to the floor, punching her in the face.

My fist collided with her nose hearing a satisfying crack. Blood oozing from her nose and cheek, not being able to stop myself I felt a pair of familiar arms wrap around my frame forcefully pulling me off. “THAT’S ENOUGH!” He roared, “Both of you out!” He ordered them, Roxy helped Lexi to her feet walking her out, “Don’t forget Isabella, you won’t leave this office alive. I hope you satisfied yourself” She mocked, “Not enough” I bit back lunging towards her again before Vincenzo caught me midway. “OUT!” he yelled.

The door slammed shut, I snapped my head around looking at him in complete disbelief. “Tell me you don’t believe it” I begged hurt he could ever think I could betray him. “I want to” He spoke softly looking at me with sympathetic eyes. “Vincenzo” I whispered my voice cracking, feeling my throat burn up and swell with tears and screams ready to burst. “You know me!” I yelled; he shook his head “I knew you! I ... I don’t know you now” he frustratingly brushed his hand through his hair.

“I DIDN’T BETRAY YOU VINCENZO! I DIDN’T EVEN KNOW IT WAS HIM LOOK AT WHAT HE WAS WEARING HIS FACE IS BARELY VISIBLE” I yelled trying to reason with him, begging him to listen to the words coming out of my mouth. “Isabella you were talking to him; you’re telling me you didn’t recognise his voice!” I flinched, shaking my head “I wasn’t talking to him! He didn’t utter a word his mouth is just open; they did this on purpose” I grabbed the polaroids throwing them in the firepit. “It’s all a plan to get rid of me, so he can infiltrate” I spoke up piecing the pieces together, “Why would my girls want you out?” He asked confused, I snapped my head towards him irritated. “Did that plan crash make you stupid?” I blurted out.

“They want you to themselves again, as long as im here they know they can’t have you” I scratched my head my heart twisting into a knot, all this stress really isn’t good for the baby, “I need to hear you say it, tell me you don’t believe

them. Tell me you trust me” I whispered. He looked at me his eyes full of regret as he tensed up. Worry began stirring as I looked at him my breathing picking up as I watched his body, “Vincenzo. Tell me you believe me” I repeated almost pleading with him.

“How can I?” He finally answered, “How can you? Is that seriously all you have to fucking say” I felt everything come crumbling down from beneath me. “I don’t know you, Isabella! My team, the people I’ve known for years came to me with evidence that you’re a mole” I stormed closer to him pushing him back “why would I partner up with the man who tortured me for months and continues to torture my own parents? WHY WOULD I EVER GO TO HIM” I yelled, he looked at me his eyes growing wide “To get your parents back ... KNOW IT MAKES SENSE” He pushed me back storming off “You went to him, you surrendered to get them back.” I looked at him like he lost his mind, “No matter how much I love and want them back. I would never step over you and this mafia to get them back”

I would never do anything that could prevent me, you, your touch that makes my skin crawl with excitement, your breath that forms goosebumps all over my body, your voice that echoes in my heart and your scent that I could pinpoint from a crowd of millions. I would never do anything that can forbid me from seeing you, I thought he knew this but again I was mistaken his old self would know that I would never betray him not even if given the chance. I looked at him now and his eyes were hard as ice his face cold as stone-like he was looking at a traitor and that would be the thing that kills me.

“Please listen to me, I didn’t do it! I never spoke to him. I have no intention of it, and I would never, and I mean ever go against you” I whispered, he looked at me like he didn’t know what side to believe like he had no idea what to do. For once he looked lost, alone, and afraid. I sighed I grabbed his cheek and forced him to look at me he didn’t flinch as he locked eyes with me. The more I stared into his eyes the more I felt like crying, the eyes that once used to light up and melt into mine

now stares back at me cold and lifeless “You have no idea who I am, do you?” I whispered softly, he closed his eyes slowly and leaned his forehead on mine. “I’m sorry” he whispered.

I tensed my jaw and pushed him off me “NO! NO, YOU’RE NOT. YOU’RE NOT SORRY, AND YOU’RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THEM OVER ME” I shouted, grabbing his tray of glass and bourbon smashing it on the floor. “After everything I did, you really think I would go against you?” I looked at him my entire nervous system breaking, grabbing a book from the shelf I threw it across the room. It hit the already broken mirror as I watch it fall along with a few small pieces of glass. I turned to him tears now trailing down my face “It’s me! It’s me Isabella” I cried out slapping myself on the chest.

“It’s me. It’s me. The girl who tried to stab you, but instead you cleaned her wound and gave her your hoodie. The girl who you rushed to and covered her ears talking her through the storm because she was terrified. The girl who you sang to the girl who you danced with. The girl you took horse riding and a picnic along the river. The girl YOU light a lantern with. The girl you played laser tag with. Vincenzo looks at me please ... Please look at me” I whispered crying.

“Isabella-” He cut himself off, He grabbed my arms pulling me in. I cried in his shirt feeling like this was it. The end of the road for us “You know I want to believe you” I pushed him off me softly. “You’re going to regret this” I softly shouted, he shook his head once again looking like he was in another battle with his head and his heart. With the side of him, he no longer remembers, “I regret nothing” He finally spoke up.

I rolled my eyes swallowing back further tears before I snapped my head looking at him. I threw my hands up in the air “because you don’t remember what you’re supposed to regret” I pointed out. I took in a deep breath and sighed, wiping my tears I nodded my head softly “Fine if you truly believe there is a possibility that I could ever do something like that. Then okay, I’ll go but on one condition” I gave in, feeling like if It was the end of the road then so be it.

“Anything” He softly whispered, “You need to protect Maria, no matter what”

He nodded his head; I blew out air and nodded my head slowly. “Do it” I whispered, “If you believe I betrayed you, then that means you believe I broke Omerta. Kill me and get it over with, but don’t forget your promise”

He shook his head, “I don’t want to Isabella, I don’t-” I cut him off, “But you have to ... don’t you?” I referred to the code, his reputation for his mafia and enemies that he doesn’t spare those who betray him. “Do it” I spoke firmly as I looked at him square in the face, not believing he could. “Aren’t you scared that I’ll kill you? That I’ll hurt you” He shouted, “NO,” I replied instantly.

“Why the fuck not! I’ve done it before” he yelled, I flinched at his outburst and his statement. “I’ve had demons in my mind and you ... you are the thing that saved me from myself. Not all monsters are bad. I’ve seen you at your worst when your demons overcome you and I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

He looked at me from the side his eyes softening “I will not have you without the darkness that hides within you the darkness that you’re so ashamed of. I will not let you have me without the madness that makes me. If our demons cannot dance, neither can we.” I whispered. It was finally the end for us, our once dancing demons now stare at each other like strangers. While I stare at a man with so many emotions that I could burst but all I get back is confusion and conflict. “We won’t be dancing, will we?” He whispered.

“Not unless you believe me, not unless you remember me” I cried softly, he shook his head visibly upset. “I’m so sorry” He softly whispered. I nodded my head closing my eyes “I know you are” I whispered. “What- what if I don’t kill you?” He looked at me, I stared back at him confused “I don’t know what and who to believe, but one thing I know for sure is I don’t want to see you dead. Even if I can’t have you, I can’t live with the fact that you will be gone forever. Even if you run and your seas away, I’ll rest easier knowing you’re alive”

“Alive but dead” I whispered; he closed his eyes pained. I sighed “No one is going to believe that you of all people had a ‘traitor’ escape from right underneath your nose.” I air quoted the word traitor. “What if people just think you’re dead?” He commented.

I looked at him an eyebrow raised “I mean that could work”

He nodded his head deep in thought, he was chewing on his bottom lip. “Okay, let’s make it believable than” I nodded my head, “You ready?” He asked me. I let out a sigh and nodded my head “No one can know you’re alive.” I looked at him “Until your memory comes back when you remember I could and would never do this.” I whispered. “Right” he sighed out.

He roughly grabbed my arm and stormed out of his office.

“Vin-VINCENZO WHAT ARE YOU DOING?” Lorenzo roared out, Vincenzo kept his head down and I couldn’t seem to stop the tears from flowing down my face. “VINCENZO. ISABELLA WH-” Ariana started shouting, her voice broke. I turned around and saw Maria run out of her room. “Isabella. ISABELLA” She shouted lunging forward. “KEEP HER OUT OF MY FUCKING WAY” Vincenzo yelled out, his voice sending everyone to silence. We never stopped walking as his grip on my arm tightened the closer, we got to the basement. “VINCENZO WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU FUCKING DOING LET HER GO” Lorenzo pushed him when he noticed where he was leading me.

“It’s okay” I whispered, “NO! NO, IT ISNT WHATS FUCKING GOING ON” Vincenzo kept his head high, giving them nothing more than a cold stare. “Get. Out. Of. My. Way.” he warned. “Yea let him kill the fucking bitch” Roxy yelled out, “She turned her back on the King’s, she betrayed us all” Lexi joined. “I swear to god I’ll fucking kill them” Maria threatened lunging towards the two. I looked back my eyes wide, this was the first time I saw Maria ever threaten death to anyone. “Maria ... it’s okay” I whispered. Her face fell as her eyes started filling with tears. “Isabella?” she whispered my name almost begging me to not confirm what the girls said

was true. I shook my head “It’s okay” I reassured her one more time.

“Vincenzo, talk to me. Let her go. It’s Isabella she would never-” Vincenzo cut him off and dragged me downstairs towards the basement. He threw me in, I fell and landed flat on my side. “VINCENZO DON’T FUCKING DO THIS!” Lorenzo shouted trying to get in banging on the door “VINCENZO FUCKING DON’T DO THIS! THIS ISN’T YOU! FOR FUCKS SAKE OPEN THE FUCKING DOOR” Ariana now joined her brother trying to desperately reason with him. “ISABELLA PLEASE, VINCENZO PLEASE DON’T DO IT. ISABELLA PLEASE GET UP OPEN THE DOOR. VINCENZO PLEASE DON’T DO IT. VINCENZO!” Maria pounded the hardest against the door, her scream sent chills down my spine. Her cry made me sick to my stomach as I cried out.

They all went quiet trying to hear what was going on inside, “There is no way he’d hurt her” Ariana tried convincing herself, Lorenzo, and Maria. I looked up at Vincenzo, he quickly came to my side and helped me up. Mouthing a sorry, I shook my head not caring about anything except Maria. “Don’t forget your promise to me”

“WHAT PROMISE? ISABELLA WHAT FUCKING PROMISE?!” Maria started crying out again, I slowly breathed in and out. “I’m so sorry, I wish everything would just come back to me already. I wish I knew you.” He softly spoke so they wouldn’t hear him. I nodded my head “I know, but I haven’t lost hope just yet ... I know eventually when you come to your senses, you’ll find me” I whispered reassuring the both of us that this will be over soon.

He sighed feeling like that was a far fetch “Even if I never get my memories back, I’ll remember the new ones. Isabella, a part of me knows you’d never do this but a different part of me keeps reminding me that I really don’t know anything about you. To me I just met you a week ago” I nodded my head understanding him.

“You’re so used to listening to your head, that when your heart speaks up you don’t know what to do ... Maybe, maybe we are like the moon and sun, the moon comes out at night and the sun comes out in the day, they pass by but are never meant to be together.” I closed my eyes and felt him cup my cheeks.

I looked up to him and leaned in, our lips connected for the first time in a month. The kiss was soft and gentle, we both savoured the moment. This kiss was different from all the others this kiss felt like a goodbye. We parted slowly and I watched with teary eyes as he leaned his head on mine, tears forming in Vincenzo’s eyes. I nodded my head “You need to stab me, they need to see the blood or they won’t believe it” I whispered, he shook his head frantically “I- I can’t” He softly stammered out, I shook my head “Vincenzo you need to” I softly cried out, “Isabella I can’t- I- I can’t” He cried, my heart shattered seeing his eyes going red as his tears slowly escaped his eyes.

I grabbed his knife from the table and forced him to hold it, he looked at me knife in hand, tears flowing down from his eyes. His body shaking “I can’t-” He softly cried trying to make no noise. I took in a deep breath tear hot not being able to stop them. “You have to” I begged him, “It’s the only way I can get out of here alive and can find my parents. Alone or not, I need to get them for Maria, and I need to kill that son of a bitch for everything he did to me ... to us”

He shook his head irritated now “You will not go after him alone. It’s a suicide mission” I shook my head smiling “who’s going to stop me? I’m dead”

He looked at me knowing there was no use fighting me, I nodded my head and wiped away the tears. “Do it.” he took in a deep breath, shaking his head dropping his hand. “I could hurt anyone. I could kill anyone, but not you. If it was up to me, you’d never see a single drop of your own blood again.”

“Then why don’t you believe me?” I whispered, he shook his head “I don’t know” I grabbed his hand and placed the tip of the knife on my thigh, “Loving any of us is a death sentence,

isn't it?" I nodded my head sadly looking up at him through teary eyes. "To insanity, Vincenzo King" I whispered, he shook his head crying "To insanity, Isabella Knight"

I gave him one sharp nod; he shook his head no. "DO IT!" I shouted, "NOOOO" a muffled scream was heard behind the doors. He closed his eyes shut as the tears rolled down his cheek, my hand secured tightly around his as he pressed the knife into my thigh. I looked up at the roof and let out a silent cry. Looking back down at my leg he pulls the knife out and quickly wraps the wound "First thing you do, you go to the hospital" He whispered in my ear. I shook my head "they ask too many questions" I repeated his words to him. "Isabella ... please" He begged me, I nodded my head slowly.

He stepped back looking at me, biting his bottom lip. His body shaking the knife falls out of his hand as he backs up against the wall "I'm so sorry" he calls out. "SORRY? WHY IS HE SORRY! VINCENZO OPEN THE FUCKING DOOR" Lorenzo cursed.

"Isabella? I- ISABELLA!" Maria yelled her voice breaking as the bangs on the door became louder. "BOSS? WHAT'S GOING ON ISABELLA CAN YOU HEAR US?" Hacker called out, I looked at Vincenzo and smiled weakly "It's okay" I whispered.

"Stay put" He ordered me through teary eyes. He grabbed the knife and walked upstairs, he slowly opened the door and slammed it shut behind him. "NOOOOOO" Maria cried out. I winced crying at the pain in her voice, I'm so sorry Maria. I placed my hand above my stomach and cried harder. I know I should tell him, but there was something preventing me from uttering the words. "YOU FUCKING DIDN'T. ISABELLA GET UP AND COME HERE! ISABELLA!" Lorenzo roared, from the sound of shuffling and banging I'd say he was trying to get through.

I sighed leaning my head against the wall, tears never stopping. I'm going to get my revenge and God help anyone

who gets in my way. I heard one of his new men ask Vincenzo
“Do you want me to dispose of the body?”

“NO!” Vincenzo yelled. “No one touches her except me,
everyone leaves”

“We thought the old Vincenzo had a small chance at coming
back, but now by killing Isabella ... you just killed any chance
of that happening.” Ariana spat. “EVERYONE FUCKING
LEAVE!” he shouted frustrated “I HOPE YOU BURN IN
HELL.” Maria cried out “SHE WAS MY ONLY FAMILY
AND YOU TOOK HER AWAY FROM ME. YOU TOOK
HER, YOU FORBID ME FROM MY OWN BLOOD. MY
LIFELINE, MY SOUL, YOU TOOK THE ONE PERSON
WHO MADE THIS WORLD WORTH LIVING. YOU
KILLED MY BEST FRIEND ... you killed my sister, and I
didn't even get a chance to tell her I loved her, that everything
I said yesterday wasn't true. That without her I'd lose myself.
My last conversation with my sister was a fight! I TOLD HER
I WISH DRAGON NEVER EXISTED. I- I ...” I cried feeling
every piece of me shatter hearing her like that.

“Lorenzo get me out of here”

“You can't leave” Vincenzo whispered so softly I barely heard
him, “why the fuck not” she yelled. “Because her last wish,
what she made me promise. Was to protect you no matter
what, I owe it to her to not break that promise.”

“You also promised to protect her, to never forget her and to
keep her safe. What happened to that promise?” She spat and
everything went quiet. The door creaked open, and Vincenzo
was now in sight. I covered my mouth with the palm of my
hand and muffled a cry. “Isabella, I'm so sorry” I shook my
head and closed my eyes.

He grabbed a sheet and laid it out on the floor. He painfully
closed his eyes waiting for me to lay in it and fake dead. So,
he can carry me out and take me somewhere safe, “You will
have Sebastián with you.” He spoke softly, I looked at him “If
what you said is true, you'll need someone to keep an eye on
you. He's your right hand, it makes sense he goes with you”

I nodded my head slowly and hopped towards the sheet. “You ready?”

“Ready as I’ll ever be” I laid flat on my back as he covered me up in the sheet and carried me bridal style, he slowly walked me upstairs opening the door. “N-no” Maria breathed out sounding like she covered her mouth with the palm of her hand. “Sebastián, follow me”

“Why the fuck would I ever take orders from you!”

“Follow. Me” He warned lowly.

X

He laid me in the back of his car, “I’m trusting Isabella to you” Vincenzo spoke, full of jealousy and anger. “You’re trusting me to get rid of her corpse!” Sebastián yelled out like he had officially lost his mind. “No” Vincenzo softly spoke. “Then?” I grabbed the sheets and flung it off sitting up slowly, “Not a corpse, but who knows” I commented, Sebastián jumped and screamed like he’d just seen a ghost. “Isabella? W-How?”

“I didn’t kill her, I never do anything until, I’m sure. But if people get word, she is alive and well, three things will happen, Isabella will have an even bigger target on her back because she would be seen as my weakness for not killing her. Two, people would create more ‘proof’ to show she is a traitor, and three my enemies will grow confident and try to attack me because I’d be seen as weak. Killing me and pretty much everyone closest to me.”

I nodded my head slowly as Sebastián tried to understand everything happening, “so what now?” He asked looking at me “well, I go underground. Try not to get any attention and other stuff I’ll tell you later” I nodded. He cocked an eyebrow at me and looked ahead watching the road as Vincenzo took us to some unknown location. Maybe one of his safe houses? I wasn’t sure.

X

A week has passed since my 'death'. Vincenzo took me straight to the hospital and then to one of his secluded safehouses. It was and felt like in the middle of nowhere, there were no neighbours, and the town was two miles away. I sighed and sat down on the sofa. I looked up hearing the doorknob turn "Isabella?" Sebastián called out, "Over here" I shouted.

"Okay, I know I'm late but I got us food on the way so you wouldn't yell at me" I laughed softly grabbing a slice of pizza. "You, okay?" He questioned looking at me, I nodded my head slowly "I just can't get Maria out of my head." I whispered. "She's still a wreck, she cries every day but today she stopped crying. She was visibly sad and mourning but I think her tears dried up. Honestly, Isabella, the whole Mafia is mourning you. No one is working and the ones that are working are doing it by force. You really had a deep impact on everyone there, when they first heard the news they nearly burnt the basement. They still love and fear Vincenzo but wish he never did what they all think he did"

I nodded my head softly taking in his words. "I loved every one of them like brothers and sisters. I just hope Maria can go on like normal. I wish she could know I'm okay but that would just put her life in danger." I reminded myself of the reason why she can't know to stop myself from getting up and running towards her.

I shook my head and finished eating "Okay time to get to work, no more laziness and no more sadness. I want revenge and I'm going to prove it one way or another I'm innocent" I stood up and walked to another room. I heard Sebastián groaning and whining under his breath. I rolled my eyes "Chúpalo princesa!" I shouted.

Grabbing my coat, I look at the mirror not recognising myself anymore. I looked at my new short haircut, the bags under my eyes and the look of death pretty much. I shook my head washed my face and went out. "I don't have Hacker anymore so now It's time to do it old school."

I threw him his keys and ushered him to hurry up. “Clock’s ticking” I tapped my imaginary watch, groaning he stood up and locked up behind us. We got in the car and started driving into the city, putting on my glasses to cover the majority of my face as I looked out the window. It was beautiful in New York City at night, I admired the buildings and lights as we drove.

“Okay, go to the strip club. That’s where they’re working need to see who goes in and who comes back out.” We sat in the car for hours, my eyes on the door while Sebastián started falling asleep, I smacked his arm noticing a familiar face. That’s one of his men, “That’s one of his men” I started frantically smacking his arm. He shot up “What!” He yelled shooing my hand away. I unbuckled my seatbelt about to open the door when Sebastián shut it back closed. “What the fuck are you doing!” I whisper shouted.

“What the fuck are YOU doing, you’re dead!” He looked at me like I just said the dumbest thing on earth. I rolled my eyes “you’re not Lorenzo you can’t look at me like that” I greased him off, “You two have such a strange relationship” Sebastián commented trying to change the subject. “Nice try, I need to go down and see what’s happening” I bit, “I’ll go, it won’t be weird if I’m there you just STAY!” He warned me pointing his fingers at me “If you treat me like a dog, I will bite you like one” I threatened sitting back in my seat.

“Atta girl” I slightly lunged towards him, and he quickly shut the door running inside the strip club. I let out a huff of air sitting back in my seat waiting for him to come back out. I continued to stare at the door monitoring who goes in and who comes out. I sat up seeing a familiar tattooed hand, my heart began beating noticing the king’s crown. **Vincenzo**

I sat back in my seat trying to look elsewhere so he wouldn’t recognise me, I took a small peek through my glasses and saw him standing at the door crouched down with his hand on his heart, he started looking around frantically until his eyes landed on me. I gulped and turned away staring out of my window.

I heard the door open, and slam shut, judging from the way my heart was about to explode in my chest that wasn't Sebastián sitting next to me. "What. are. you. doing. here" He grunted through his teeth, I slowly turned around and saw him for the first time in a week. I took a deep breath and used the coat to cover my stomach which was now a little more visible. I coughed and smiled "What a coincidence bumping into you here" I smiled. He eyed me and saw my new hair cut he was visibly tense, and I couldn't help but let out a small giggle.

"Isabella, you're not allowed out of the damn house let alone near the place you can easily be spotted!" He whispers shouted, I huffed sitting back in my seat, "Vincenzo, I won't sit still when I know the son of a bitch has my parents ... even if I really should be sitting still" I whispered the last part and looked down at my stomach.

"You really should Isabella everyone thinks you're dead, don't forget why we did all this" I sighed and huffed "I know, believe me, I have more experience with going underground than you might think" I hissed. "Isabella what are you doing here" he groaned agitated. I looked at him and sighed "What did I tell you I was going to do when I left?"

"Isabella..." He drifted. "No, don't Isabella me. You kicked me out and 'killed' me when you knew the situation I was in, you pushed me away and forced me out when you know I needed you most. So no, don't you dare Isabella me because you have no right" I snapped. He shifted in his seat and sighed "Get out" I whispered.

He turned to look at me, "even after breaking my heart, you keep coming back just to make sure it can't recover. When I prove to you and kill the ones who set me up and tortured my parents, I'll be back ... so I can watch you break just as you broke me" He stayed looking at me for a second, his eyes glazed over as his eyes trailed down to my thigh. He winced shutting his eyes and looking away, his head still looking out the window "I just want to tell you I miss you with no subtext. No guilt, no anger, no expectation that you'll fix it. I don't want you to feel bad or to tell me it will get better. This is

where we are meant to be right now ... me apart from you, my hands a little empty and my heart a little sad. I just miss you ... and I wanted you to know, even without remembering you I can't get you out of my head or my heart" and just like that he slowly and once again he left me all alone.

I watched as he walked off and into the strip club, I breathed out trying to stop the tears from flowing down again. I wish you never left me, that you never forgot me maybe everything would've turned out different. It would have been me and you against the world ... us against the world. I whispered mentally and looked down at my stomach. Ashamed and sadness overcame me, I wish I could tell you but I just ... I can't tell him, not yet anyway.

Sebastián came back and quickly got inside the car, "Well?" I asked. He sighed "I couldn't hear much but they're planning something. When they started talking, they went to the private room" I huffed and leaned back into my seat.

"I need to know what they're planning" I groaned holding my head in my hands. He took off and I looked out the window the city lights and buildings all blurring together. All I wanted to concentrate on was figuring out what they're planning but my mind couldn't help but drift back to Vincenzo ... give him back to me. I begged looking up.

X

I looked into the mirror in front of me, my robe wrapped around me as I stared into the mirror. **"Besides he doesn't know you anymore"** Lexi's voice echoed in my head, my stare intensified, **"I knew you! I ... I don't know you now"** Vincenzo's voice now echoing in my head. I looked into the mirror my jaw tensing my knuckles wrapping around the sink as my knuckles turned white. **"Why did they kidnap them Isabella ... to get to you right?"** Maria's face flashed in front of me my entire body tensing **"Everything that goes wrong in our lives seems to have your name is written all over it Isabella"** I couldn't help but picture her face in front of me, full of anger, sadness and disgust. I leaned forward into the

mirror, my eyes bloodshot red as I tried to hold back the tears. **“Vincenzo, it’s me. It’s me!”** My cry for his old self to come back, his stoned face and tensed body flashing in front of me. My throat burned as I grabbed my head in my hands. **“Congratulation’s Ms Knight. You’re pregnant.”** My doctor’s voice made its way in the mix among millions of voices.

I let go of my head and looked up at the mirror. Letting out a scream, a scream for help, a cry of pain and a scream of frustration. I banged my fist into the mirror watching it shatter in front of me, I looked down at the blood on my hand.

I sunk down to the floor letting out everything I once bottled up since I found out I was pregnant when I thought Vincenzo died When I had to take over when he lost his memory and finally when he thought I betrayed him.

I looked up straight staring at the wall in front of me because once I finish this cry. It’s going to be the last one, I was done crying and it’s time. It was time to destroy, and I’m going to destroy it all.

“Isabella, are you okay?” Sebastián called out from the other end of the door. I stood up and opened the door, “Just fine” I walked past him and into the bedroom. I laid flat on my bed looking up to the roof, things were about to start heating up and I wasn’t going to stop until I needed to. I looked down sighing, well at least until I can’t see over my stomach.

X

It was time to do everything the way I did before Hacker, and all his men were there to aid me. I looked across the street and finally saw him, Antonio the man who hated me from the beginning who tried to torture me along with Xavier and the person I just know has information on my parents. I smirked and started walking behind him, far enough not to be suspected but close enough not to lose him. I grabbed my sunglasses from my head and put them on, snatching a magazine from one of the stands as I continued walking.

I stood behind the corner and watch him duck under a wired gate and go inside an abandoned house, I looked behind me making sure no one was following me and slowly went after him. Ducking under the wired gate I investigated the cracked window; I watched him walk in and greet a few other men they all grabbed a beer taking a swing.

I cocked my eyebrows and looked around the house one last time, I saw the back door cracked open. Biting my lip, I walked around and softly opened the door trying to not make a sound, I tiptoed around the hallway until his shadow came into view. I straightened my back against the wall trying not to make a sound. "Is anyone there!" He called out, I bit my bottom lip looking up. Fuck!

I looked around and noticed a long piece of wood, bending down I grabbed it and waited for him to figure out where I was. He and the rest of the men split up looking around I grabbed a piece of rubble and threw it, opposite him, he turned to his right and followed the noise while the others followed "Come out, come out wherever you are" He sang out I rolled my eyes. I crept up behind him and swung hitting him in the back of him and the rest of them in the back of the head. "If you insist" I singsong laughing at his fell face forward passed out.

"Thank god for old habits" I praised myself for being quick at what I do otherwise this would've been more of a blood bath than I intended.

Huffing I dragged his limp body to the chair grabbing some rope he had laying around. I cringed "what the fuck were you planning on using this for?" I commented out loud. I shuddered and quickly tied him along with the other men up keeping their arms to their side. I tore off fabric from each person's top and waited for them to regain conscious.

After a few minutes he opened his eyes slowly, I smiled tilting my head to the right as I slowly watched him come to the realisation. He jumped back and went to scream, when he opened his mouth, I stuffed the fabric inside silencing him. I

opened my mouth forming a wide smile and I looked at him. “If it isn’t my favourite bitches” I smirked, “did use miss me” I purred.

He and the rest who slowly started waking up noticed the rope bounding them together like a fun knot. They shook their heads to wake up from a nightmare, and then finally shifted their gaze up looking at me, looming in front of them. Antonio suddenly lunged forward trying to free himself.

I laughed a loud jarring laugh. As I watched the fear in his eyes as he looked at me, I was enjoying his fear. I enjoyed it more knowing it was me who caused it. “Oh, you lot have no idea just how happy it makes me to watch you squirm ... just like how you made me squirm” I reminded them of the days of the basement when Xavier wasn’t on the grounds.

“You’ve really gotten yourself into a bit of a knot here, haven’t you?” I grinned looking at them. “You’re never going to win baby” Joseph spat out eyeing me up and down giving me the creeps.

I want answers and if I must go back to old tactics I was going back. The others squirmed trying to free himself from the ropes as I continued to watch the lot of them amused. “I wouldn’t be too sure of that kitten ... I’m not the one tied up” I reminded him.

Antonio spat the fabric out of his mouth “You’re supposed to be dead” I shrugged my shoulders “Yeah well, it didn’t stick.” I stood back up on my feet and walked around the small living room, I smirked finding the solid brick on the floor.

“Why aren’t you dead?” Carlos now made his voice heard. “Trust me it’s not from a lack of trying” I pointed at him “starting to think the Grimm reaper is scared of me” I laughed out shrugging my shoulders again.

I turned my attention back to the brick on the floor I bent over and picked it up looking behind me, He looked over trying to see what was in my hand as he started struggling against the

rope. “You’re in danger, you’re on our turf now” He spat, the men all nodding their heads like they won.

I smiled.

Technically all of New York was **his** turf. A sinister chuckle left my lips grabbing a chair I held its side I sat down and leaned into it making the chair lean on two legs. *“I’m never in danger. I am the danger”*

“And boy did you catch me on a bad day” I laughed. “Now why don’t you tell me what I want to know” I eyed him, and he laughed “I’m not saying shit!” he spat in my face, I nodded my head grabbing his leg I lift it up to rest on my chair.

Standing next to him I whispered in a dangerously low voice “I was so hoping you’d say that.” My smile immediately dropped into a straight line as I smashed the brick down on his knee. Hearing the satisfying crack of his leg breaking and his scream for help. I smashed it over his knee once again just to be safe, “Still want to play the silent game?” I asked. Not saying anything he continued to scream and make painful groans.

“I’ve always loved a challenge Antonio” I threw the brick against the wall glass cabinet. The glass shattered walking towards it I knelt and picked up a piece, I placed the tip against his stomach, “Three” I started counting down, his body shaken as his pulse started picking up. seeing the veins starting to bulge “Two” I added more pressure, the rough tip barely penetrating his skin.

He sat his body tensed, his head high as he stayed stubborn. “One” I grunted out stabbing his stomach with the very rigid glass. Blood streaked down his stomach. He tried to fight to keep his stubborn footing as he spoke “If you kill me ...” He gasped “I swear to god it will be the last thing you ever do”. I raised my eyebrow amused, the corner of my lip twitching into a mocking smirk. “You are in no position to make threats kitten” I laughed out.

he squirmed uncomfortably, “You either tell me what I need to know or ...” I raised my eyebrows and rolled my eyes “Let’s just say I hope God has mercy on your soul because I won’t”

“Okay next victim” I sang out, I looked around for something I could use smirking I grabbed the beer bottle. “How about I shove this up a place it doesn’t belong ... for a little revenge?” I smirked looking at all of them. “You’re nothing but a women what power do you think you possess. Come close and I’ll take you my way” all of them started laughing but before I could react.

Ruffling was heard from one of the rooms. I snapped my head up, standing up straight, I looked at him. He and the rest avoided eye contact and began shifting uncontrollably in his spot. “Who was that?” I asked, they shook his head and started squirming even harder to get out of the ropes that bounded him like he feared what I would do when I found out who was inside one of the rooms.

“GET ME OUT OF HERE!” He screamed; I took off looking through each room kicking the doors open until I finally saw who was making the noise. “Alex?” I whispered, seeing his lifeless body tied up on the floor only wearing a pair of ripped boxers. I rushed towards him and quickly untied him and helped him up. He pulled me into a hug his body trembling as he squeezed me for dear life, “You’re okay, you’re okay” I whispered.

“Alex, listen to me. Go outside my car is only around the corner. Get in and don’t you dare get out until I come” He nodded his head and quickly ran out.

I stormed back inside my body on fire, angrier than I ever was before. I watched him on his feet still bound to the ropes. I grabbed a fist full of his shirt and hooked him in the jaw. “Pedo little fuckers, aren’t you?” punching him again, and again and again. Until his face limped in front of me, “what me and the rest of the people you tortured wasn’t enough?” I yelled out grabbing the brick back up and smashing it into Joseph’s face.

I gripped Carlo's hair and smashed his face into my knee "I'm close ... what are you gonna fucking do about it?" I questioned grinning. I grabbed his hair and lifted his face. "My demons finally woke up, and they feel like playing a game" I whispered.

Grabbing the knife, I tucked into my boot I stabbed him in the side and back of his abdomen between his lower ribs and hip. Causing immediate paralysis of both legs and a spread sensation repeating the same action with the rest of the men.

I watched as they fell flat on their back unable to move, unable to run. All they could do was stare at me. I laughed untying the ropes and all that bounded them and walked towards the kitchen, "Judging from Alex, the ropes and matches on the counter. You were going to light this place up when you were done?" I called out.

"I wouldn't want to spoil your plans" I smiled, finding the lighter fluid, and started pouring it all around the living room I bent down and took all their phone out of the pocket smirking then proceeded to pour the gasoline on all their clothes, bodies, and surroundings I want this place to go up in flames. Grabbing the match from the countertop I flicked it and watched closely as it sparked. "Tell the devil I said Hey, he should know what I mean" I winked "oh and I might be a woman but that's all the more reason you should've been very scared haven't you heard? We hold grudges" and without another word I dropped the match on the floor.

Walking out of the house as the fire started building up and spreading all over the living room. Their screams were all that was heard above the crackling of the fire and the falling of the ashes. I walked a far distance and watched in satisfaction as the house blew up, smoke emerging from the chimney the house now covered in nothing but flames, ashes, and their corpses.

I lowered my head and rushed back to the car. "Isabella, I know where your parents are" Alex quickly spoke out. "Isabella, I know where your parents are" Alex quickly rushed

out, I looked at him but no words were coming out. I stayed sitting there frozen as I tried to comprehend what he was telling me. I looked straight ahead and turned the car on, “But you can’t go after them today” he whispered softly. “You need to wait until tomorrow at 2 pm that’s when they’re moving them from the storage unit to another location” He informed me, I nodded my head “His men are going there?” I asked him. He shook his head “No, Xavier only has three of his closest men know about his secret weapon ... and you just killed one of them I’m guessing” He whispered looking defeated.

“Did he?” I whispered not sure if I wanted to know. “No, you got there just in time ... when I heard your voice all I thought was thank god.” I stopped at a red light and turned to him smiling, “as long as I’m alive, you’re safe” He smiled nodding his head. “How did he get you?” I asked, trying to piece together everything. He sighed “Fico heard the news about your death when he went back to inform Vincenzo and you about Xavier. I don’t know what happened he never came back, I heard about your death when I went asking for you. I came back and Antonio saw me exiting the estate. Turns out he was keeping a close eye on them for some reason.” He explained.

I parked the car in front of the house and looked at him “If he was watching them, that means Xavier is planning something.” I explained, “Whatever it is, his phone better tell me what.” We both got out of the car, and I rushed him inside, “there are some clothes in the room down the hall to the left” I pointed out.

He walked inside and closed the door behind him, I grabbed the phone out of my pocket and turned it on. The apple logo popped up and I sat waiting for it to start up. I leaned my head against the chair as I waited. The phone finally turned on I quickly unlocked the phone and started looking for something that can give me some information. I clicked the phone log as I started scrolling through his recent calls. One number looked suspiciously familiar.

I leaned over picking up my notepad and pen and started taking down the numbers along with names, only one number wasn't saved but it was contacted over thirty times. I clicked the number to see if there had been any messages exchanged.

"Antonio, call me now. He will exile me." I read the number again in my head trying to understand and figure out why it sounds all too familiar. I sigh and continue to read the messages "Give the boss what he wants, and your secret is safe with us" I squinted my eyes nothing making sense, "It's not easy to simply give you a person like the one you want"

"Isabella?" I looked up and saw Alex, I sighed and smiled "you, okay?" I whispered he nodded his head thanking me once again. I shook my head smiling "don't thank me, trust me I could use more company around here" I laughed looking around the very isolated house. He nodded hanging his head low "I tried to come to you earlier when we heard about your parents, but we couldn't be suspicious and when I found out where they were ... you know" He winced not wanting to finish his sentence.

I hissed "It's okay, I don't blame or expect anything. Thank you for telling me ... I'll go after them tonight, guards or no guards I need to grab them before they move locations." He nodded his head understanding "I'm coming with you" He spoke up confidently.

I giggled a little at how sweet he was being, "No you're not!" I pointed at him to sit back down in his chair, "You'll stay here with Sebastián, and keep this between us" I referenced the situation, he slumped back down pouting. "It's not safe for you to go alone" he fought. I shook my head "A wise man once told me something once if you're not happy with something you either **fight it, accept it, fear it, or control it.**"

I quoted a man who often spoke to me on the phone or in person "when I was a little girl, I think I made him up in my head, but he was so sweet and always so proud and encouraging me. He was dangerous as well like me, but he was nice to me and Maria." I laughed shrugging my shoulders.

I smiled hearing his voice echo in my head as I repeated his words aloud, "I plan to fight and control it. Besides it's them, that should fear me" I winked. He laughed and nodded his head agreeing with me, "whoever told you that sounds like a great guy" He whispered, "He is a great guy" I corrected him still idolizing my imaginary friend.

"Tell me about him" he smiled leaning back into his chair. "Well like any imaginary friend he was ... unique?" I laughed trying to find a word to best describe it, "He needed to be in control of everything, you would never see him just sitting around. I used to imagine him tall, and very strong but he wasn't young he was older. He was a stubborn man who needed to do things with his own hands, if you told him to stay put, he would be at the location before you." I laughed

"It kind of sounds like you're describing the male version of yourself" he laughed out. He smiled indulged in the story, "but aside all that he was furiously loyal, loving, and the kindest soul you'll ever meet. Even if he isn't real ... oh he is nice so long as you're on his good side of course. He was the one who gave me my nickname" I smiled nodding my head seeing Alex's shock. "I always wondered why you went by the name Dragon, I thought Xavier gave you that nickname" I shook my head furiously "He likes to think he created dragon, but she was already born ... just needed an excuse to pop her head and say hello" I winked. He sat on the edge of his seat and hurried me to continue the story by me telling him he was somehow escaping reality.

"Well, as we all know I didn't take after my mum at all, I'd say I took after dad, but I was more stubborn, resilient and fierce so maybe I mimicked my imaginary friend?" I laughed shaking my head, "Nearly all of his traits I have, so when I became aware of the world, we were living in I wanted a part in it. I didn't want to work at the flower shop with Maria and Mama. No, No. I wanted to be dad's mini worker. So that's what I did ... to his disliking mind you" I pointed nodding my head to the side.

“So, I joined in on his business meetings, shipments, loading the trucks and everything. Once he took me to the gun range to teach me how to shoot. Said if I was going to be stubborn and join the family legacy, I need to know how to use a gun. I caught on so fast that he and the rest of the men were beyond shocked because he was never able to properly shoot a gun. One day we go into a little incident with one of the four families trying to become the head. He attacked our compound, I hid on the roof and took out his men before they entered the house, he only had six but still. It was the first time I ever killed anyone, I was scared and shaken up my mum had allowed my imaginary friend in my room to talk to me while she took care of my dad. So, my imaginary friend tucked me into bed held me close to him while I trembled and told me a story ...”

FLASHBACK

I kept replaying the events of today, my body was shaking my heart was beating too fast I felt like it was about to burst out of my chest. I looked up at my imaginary friend, his eyes soften when they met mine. He smiled reassuringly and kissed my forehead as he held me close to his chest, I wrapped my arms around him and felt tears falling down my eyes. “Oh Isabella, I’m so sorry you had to go through that” he whispered into my hair “I didn’t want them to hurt my dad, I heard them whispering from my window” I muttered, he nodded his head and smiled sadly.

“I don’t think I can sleep” I whimpered feeling paranoid, he pulled me off him so I could look him in the face, “my Isabella is scared of no one” he softly whispered giving me a playful wink trying to lighten the mood. I giggled softly, he tucked me back in bed and sat next to me while I leaned my head on his arm. “In this life mi mariposa, everything you chose will determine your life.”

I sighed taking in what he said getting goosebumps at how strong that sounded, how much meaning and broad it really is. “Fight it or accept it. Fear it or control it,” he whispered to me feeling the power behind such a simple phrase.

My imaginary friend's soothing voice broke me out of my train of thought "You know Isabella, according to some beliefs the dragon was once regarded as an evil creature who sought destruction and killed innocent people ..." I watched in awe as I listened to his story, "but in oriental mythology, the dragons were seen to have god-like power they were a symbol of wisdom and longevity being associated with the figure of the Empire" He nodded his head proud as I giggled. "So, the dragon was not a bad creature?" I asked with an eyebrow raised. He shook his head and looked at me "No, of course not" He playfully scowled.

"The Japanese dragon had combined traces of various animals his head was similar to that of a crocodile" He used his hands like a crocodile's jaw and slapped it shut, I smiled watching him. "his body was as long as that of a serpent and protected by six scales like those of a lizard" He made a weird slither like movement with his body.

I looked at him my eyebrows raised, and my mouth formed a mocking smile. "They mostly live in the ocean or on top of the mountains most legends believed they granted wishes to the humans" he paused for dramatic effect, "Dragons were in fact believed to be kind and showed complex emotions such as loyalty, sympathy, feelings of serenity, gratitude and devotion but when they got angry, they could destroy entire villages leaving nothing but fire in their paths." I looked up at him and wondered, was I like a dragon? I felt all those emotions and today I got angry and left nothing in my path.

I shook my head and listened to the rest of the story "In China, it represents good luck and prosperity ... and Isabella you are my dragon... you saw someone trying to attack your own and you destroyed them you spat fire and left nothing in your way. You are as fierce, as brave, as dangerous, and as majestic as a dragon ... **el dragón**" He kissed my forehead.

END OF FLASHBACK

I looked up and saw Alex get teary, I giggled and shook my head. "It sounds like you never really had much of an easy

life”

I exhaled a deep sigh and looked back up at Alex nodding my head, “no, I never did ... but I wouldn’t trade my life for the world. I had the best parents and the best sister. Yes, it was hard, nothing came easy, and I had to go through a lot, but everything made me who I am today” I shrugged my shoulders leaning back in my chair. “I think I used my imaginary friend for emotional support whenever I was happy or angry or scared, he would come. Until one day he just stopped.” I shrugged my shoulders upset.

“Anyway, I guess among all the struggles and trials I went through are memories I never wish to lose even if that means an easier life” I smiled, “I never tell my story or about my past to gain pity, it’s so people understand why I am the way that I am”

Before Alex could respond the doorknob rattled, I looked out the window and sighed seeing Sebastián’s car. I nodded my head to Alex reassuring him he was safe. “Hey, Isabella I got food”

“In the living room,” I shouted back quickly hiding the notepad and phone in my pants pocket. He stopped when he saw Alex, I shook my head and explained to him the situation and who he was. After that was clear we all sat around the table and dug into the pizza. We lounged around in the living room for an hour before everyone decided they were sleepy and called it a night. I walked into my room and closed the door behind me, I smirked and took the phone back out from my pocket and continued looking through everything.

I hummed and saw five new messages; I squinted and opened it.

“We have to postpone moving them out of the storage unit.”

“Antonio! You need to stay there and make sure no one goes in or leaves”

“Hello!”

“So, help me if you don’t answer me I’ll burn you alive”

I laughed and quickly went back to a straight face realising I probably shouldn't be laughing at the irony of that last message. I chewed at my lower lip and sent a message back "send me the address, I'll make sure no one goes in or out" I waited a few minutes before the phone rung once more. "444 W 55th St, New York, NY 10019"

I sighed and replied asking if he was sure he didn't need me for another operation. Xavier denied it and said he and the rest had it under control. I quickly got up and got ready, I peeked from behind the bathroom door making sure no one was in my room. "Okay," I whispered once I was sure and opened the cabinet at the bottom of the sink. I moved all the feminine products to the side and smiled seeing my pocketknives, I grabbed the holster and tied it on my ankle putting the blades in the pocket. I grabbed my thigh holster and strapped it on my other leg putting in the blades. I grabbed a pair of fitted loose pants and a black bodysuit.

I grabbed my handgun and tucked it behind my pants, I looked in the mirror my baby bump ever so slightly becoming visible. I sighed "I promise I'll keep you safe, you're just going to have to trust mummy and her ... adventures?" I whispered.

I slowly opened my door, trying to not make a sound. I stand still waiting to hear any sound, I sighed in relief after hearing both of the boy's snore. I tiptoed to the living room grabbing my keys from the kitchen island. I smiled silently thanking Sebastián for getting me my motorbike against Vincenzo's better judgement. I silently thanked God for Sebastián nativity.

I grabbed my helmet and unlocked the door and quietly got out trying to stop the creaking from the old door. I fist bumped the air and rushed to my motorbike. "Oh, how I missed you" I whispered kissing it. I sat in awe as I watched it purr to life, I revved it hearing the satisfying roar before taking off.

"I'm coming" I whispered, my mind for once was clear. No distractions, no uncertainty I knew where I was going and what I needed to do. Nothing and No one was going to stop

me, I will burn anyone and watch their bodies turn to dust if they tried to stand in my way. It was time my parents came home, not for me but for Maria. I speed up feeling the adrenaline pumping through my veins. I laughed finally remembering what It really felt like, to be my full self.

The sparkle in my eye when I face danger, once you get that adrenaline, that high. Once you get into it, it's a mix of adrenaline, a stroke, and such a high it is so addictive that once your soul gets a taste of it it's very difficult to not want more.

I was only a block from the storage unit as I scoped the place out, there weren't many men that surrounded the area, but there were at least five men who stood in front of one specific unit. I calculated everyone's position scheming the best strategic in my head. I smirked and closed the shield on my helmet and speed off to park the motorbike.

I swung my leg off the motorbike and put my helmet on the seat, I bit my lip and walked around towards the back of the area. Only two men stood guard, I rolled my eyes you need just as much coverage from behind, attacks are more likely to come from the back to catch them off guard and ease their way taking out every person one by one until they reached their destination. I knelt behind the bushes; they looked like newbies I don't even think they have been a member for more than a few months. I looked around and grabbed a rock, throwing it opposite me hitting a bush.

They sharply turned towards the bush that suddenly rattled and approached it guns drawn leaving their post. I rolled my eyes "definitely newbies" I whispered to myself. I slowly stood up and walked towards the too, grabbing a twig I snapped it in half. They jumped once more and walked into the bushes, "Whose there?" one of them called out. I rolled my eyes one more time and stepped out from the bushes, I shook my head as they walked further into the bush. I sighed maybe I should spare them, they're too stupid to cause much trouble for me anyway. I turned around stood up against the wall peeking my head seeing if anyone was on the side.

I spotted one man approaching probably after hearing the two idiots rustling through the damn bush, I kept my back firmly planted against the wall waiting for him to come in sight. I listened hearing his footsteps slowly approach, I raised an eyebrow. The tip of my tongue on the roof of my mouth, my lips curling into a smirk.

I quickly wrap my arm around his neck and cover his mouth with my hand, he starts pushing and squirming trying to set himself free, I grunted applying more pressure “Just give in to it, go to sleep” I whispered into his ear, didn’t take much longer until his body became lifeless. I slowly pulled him and hid his body behind the dumpster, I bent over and grabbed his silencer from his waistband and walked around the building, I huffed I missed my wider range of gun choices.

I saw two men near my bike, aiming the gun I shot both in the back of their heads, I grunted falling to the floor when someone’s foot collided with my back. I lifted myself up and looked up at the gun aimed at my head, I smiled and winked. I grabbed his wrist pushing his hand out of the way and pulled him down. I swiftly turned around sitting on his torso, putting the gun in his mouth. “así es la Vida” I purred and fired. I whipped the blood with the tip of my mouth off the corner of my mouth and stood up making my way towards the unit.

“Hello boys” I purred.

All five men shot their heads in my direction quickly grabbing their guns out and aiming them at me, “let’s have some fun hm?” I hummed, I watched as I saw one of the men put his finger on the trigger I quickly ducked down, taking the knife from my ankle, and flicking it in his direction. The blade piercing his throat like butter, I kicked my leg out tripping one of them and using his body as a shield holding him up to my body by his neck. I aim the gun back up and shoot two of the men in the throat. I smiled at the only remaining man standing, “what’ll it be? Gun or you wanna fight me like a man?” I purred. I grabbed the blade from my thigh holster and stabbed the man I was using as a shield in the back, I twisted it like a key in a keyhole, my body shivered hearing the satisfying

click. My lips turn into a straight line pulling the knife out from his back and pushing his body to the floor.

He stared at me horrified, his gun still aimed at my head “I guess you chose the gun then?” I asked pointing at the gun nonchalantly. I rolled my eyes and kicked the gun from his hand and pushed kicked him into the storage swing door. His back smashed into the metal door, he quickly regained composure and went for his gun.

I bent down grabbing the blade around my ankle and flung it. I laughed when it hit his upper thigh. He grunted and fell. I walked up towards him and kicked his gun away.” Come on give me a fight, I want it so bad” I bit my bottom lip. “Or you can give me the key to unlock it. Your choice really” he swung his fist ducking I uppercut him on the side of his stomach. He bent over I grabbed a fistful of his hair and kneed him in his nose. Grabbing the back of his hair I pulled his head back “Tell me, do you ever use your balls, or would you like me to cut them off now?” I flicked the blade out as I watched his eyes turn cold.

His body trembles as he reached for his pocket, I raised my eyebrow waiting to see a key before he took out a small device pressing a red button. Those two idiots from the bush came running towards me one had a gun aimed at the back of my head while the other stood in front of me. “Drop the knife and let him go.”

I rolled my eyes and dropped the knife letting go of the man, I put my hands up and watched them. “Cuff her, the boss is going to want to see her” The man limped over to the side as he grabbed his phone calling someone, I looked at them amused at their lack of knowledge, “None of you knows who I am ... do you?” I suddenly broke the silence; they all rolled their eyes and the man threw the cuffs to the one behind me. I felt him lower his gun as he caught it. I flicked my head back, hitting him right in the nose. I spun around kneeling him in his balls and used him to cover myself.

I took the gun from behind my back pocket and shoot the two men in the head, I pointed the gun to his head and leaned closer “you should have stayed in the bush” and pulled the trigger. I walked towards the one who was on the phone and start rummaging through his clothing looking for a key to open the storage unit. I sighed finding the keys, “finally” I rushed towards the unit and quickly unlocked the lock and swung the door open.

“What the fuck” I shouted; it was empty. My heart dropped when I heard two familiar voices from a distance, I rushed out and saw them being put into a car by one of his men. “NO! NO! NO!” I shouted, they both turned their heads and saw me. “GIVE THEM BACK TO ME” I shouted out feeling every single fibre in my body ready to spitfire. The man quickly shoves them into the car and takes off.

I run for my bike pushing off the dead and take off, hot on their tail. I pull out my gun and aim for the tire, the car swerves. I pull aim for the other tire and suddenly felt everything crash. With the sound of another car swerving and crashing into me, my body hits the floor. I stare at the car that holds my parents fade into the distance as I helplessly look on.

People crowding me trying to get me to speak, to keep my eyes open. To not die, I laughed ironically in my head, because little did, they know I was already dead. I placed my hand over my stomach feeling a sharp pain. My baby, our baby. Please, please be okay. My eyes shut as the tears flowed out until my body caved into the darkness and gave out.

Everything was black.

X

Vincenzo’s POV

I stared into that broken mirror, and I see her every time I investigate it. There she is standing right beside me. Everything at the Mafia has been cold, distant and on thin ice ever since they thought I killed Isabella. Lorenzo hasn’t spoken a word to be besides the occasional update on work,

Maria hasn't been eating or leaving her sister's room. The only time she did was to kill me, I looked down at my stomach lifting my shirt seeing the freshly stitched scar. I don't blame her; I would have done much worse if I was in her shoes. I sighed pulling it down and going back to my chair.

I looked up at the small library to the left of the office, tilting my head. I winced at the headache that suddenly overcame me, and like a dream she appeared. Limping around my office as she touched the pictures on the wall then traced the books on the shelf. Her body turned to me like she was frightened, the book fell to the floor. I grunted and shook my head and looked back up. Nothing, she was gone. I smashed my fist against my head fucking remember, why can't I fucking remember. I lowered my fist and slammed it on the table.

The door opened slowly as Lorenzo entered, his body squared his face stone. "I finished checking the numbers everything is on schedule. Our gun shipments have arrived and were dispatched. Your men are all still grieving, and more than half decided to do work outside the estate" He spoke formally and walked off. "Lorenzo" I called out, he stopped in his tracks and looked at me. "Boss?" he answered. "Lorenzo don't do that" I spat, feeling helpless. "You did this to yourself" he harshly spoke up. I sighed running my hand through my hair, he approached me fuming.

"She cried over you. She cried for months!" He shouted. "She took over because she knew how much you loved this mafia; she was the only one who refused to give up on you! She went out and searched for you! SHE DID THE IMPOSSIBLE AND MADE YOU A DECENT HUMAN BEING AND WHAT DID YOU DO? YOU FUCKING KILL HER!" He shouted in my face.

"I KNOW. OKAY. I KNOW!" I shouted back, "Then why didn't you reach out to her? Why didn't you save her instead of killing her, why didn't you give her the closure she needed?" He replied waiting for an answer.

“Because I don’t know her” I whispered. “I fucking wish I did, it’s like I’m torn between two parallels of myself. The side of me that knew her and the person I am now. The only version of myself I have ever known. You asked why I couldn’t give her the closure she needed, why I didn’t reach out”

“Vincenzo just save it-” He cuts me off, “Because I’m hurting too,” I shouted. “Because I look into her eyes and see so much emotion, so many memories that I know nothing about. I was afraid, I was afraid that if I see her crying in front of me, I’ll apologize and beg for her back! I can’t do that to her” my gaze dropped. “I can’t hurt her any more than I already have” I whispered.

Lorenzo stayed silent for a minute before he spoke up

“Vincenzo ... you just referred to her in the present, not the past” he whispered his observation of my words. “Is she al-” The door swung open cutting Lorenzo off. I coughed, clearing my throat. “Boss this package came for you” Luca handed me a yellow envelope smiled and walked out.

“Vincenzo-” I cut him off with the back of my hand “this is from Xavier” I ripped open the envelope and pulled out a polaroid. A photo of his phone, with one number and date highlighted. I squinted my eyes confused and read the message on the frame. ‘Don’t believe his lies’ I whispered. Lorenzo moved closer and looked over my shoulder. I scanned the number and the date. I looked up at Lorenzo my eyes wide anger radiating off me. I pushed aside and went towards my phone I flicked through the contacts and matched the number. I eyed the date and looked at Lorenzo “Lorenzo, what date was my crash?” I asked. “December 8th” I looked back down at the photo the date highlighted as I whispered “December 8th”

“That’s dad’s number” I flung the polaroid aside and stormed out of the office, “GIOVANI” I shouted out my voice echoed through the big now unsettlingly quiet house. “Son” he greeted me, I watched as mum stood by him. “Why was your number on his phone” I spat, he looked at me as he stood frozen.

“Why. Were. You. In. Contact” my tone dangerously low as I inched closer with each word.

“I-” he was cut off by the sound of bullets. My headshot to the door as it broke open. I pulled out my gun and aimed it towards the doors, my men and Lorenzo following in my lead. I turned to the side and saw Maria and Ariana watching “GO!” I shouted at them. “Well, well, well. If it isn’t my favourite family” Xavier mocked smug. I looked at him “You do not want to test me today” I spat.

“I just wanted to make sure you got my gift” he smiled innocently. “If someone helped arrange my rival to purposely crash a plan and kill whoever was on board” he paused, “I mean I would like to know” He smiled at me mockingly before turning to Giovanni. “Especially if that person was my father”

I turned around “YOU!” I shouted, Lorenzo and Ariana, looked at him in shock. Disgusted as they shouted, “YOU DID WHAT!” he stood frozen “It was supposed to be Isabella, he said she was comin-” he quickly rushed trying to justify everything. “DO YOU THINK THAT WAS BETTER! DID YOU WANT TO KILL ISABELLA? WHY?” I shouted.

“BECAUSE SHE CHANGED YOU! SHE WAS BECOMING A WEAKNESS FOR YOU AND FOR ALL OF US I COULDN’T-” I cut him off and yelled “WHAT MADE YOU THINK YOU OR ANYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LAY A HAND ON HER” I roared.

“WHAT MADE YOU THINK YOU HAD ANY RIGHT!” Maria shouted, she looked over at me seeing the pain and hurt in her voice and face my features soften as I stayed quiet, “What made you think you were allowed?” she spoke venom laced in her words as she approached me. “You should have died during that crash, you coming back was worse than your death” she spat.

“What. Did. He. Do.” Xavier grunted, “Where is she!” he yelled out concerned, “why isn’t she here?” his voice growing more and more worried, as he just noticed her lack of

presence. “WHERE IS SHE! ISABELLA! ISABELLA!” He shouted out. “Never. Speak. Her. Name.” I warned lowly, “OH YOU DIDN’T HEAR!” Maria shouted feeling like she finally reached her climax. “YOU DIDN’T HEAR!” She shouted again. “MARIA NOT THE TIME” I shouted, “Maria get out of the way” Ariana yelled out. “Baby come here” Lorenzo extended his hand out for her. “NO, WHY SHOULD I! WHY NOT TELL THE MAN” She shouted.

Xavier’s grew more and more worried as he stared at the three of us, “What!” he pushed. “Vincenzo Killed her.” She spat. His eyes widened as he looked back at him, “You what?” He warned as he started approaching me, I pointed my gun at him “Watch your step” I reminded him, he stopped his men still aiming their guns at everyone in the house. “I don’t believe you” he spat, “No, no. We saw him carry out her body in a white cloth. He killed her because he thought she was working for you” Maria continued to speak, I looked over at her begging her to stop talking.

I should have told them she was alive, that she wasn’t dead. That this was the safest option for her, that I couldn’t touch a hair on her head. That her absence was like a knife stabbing me every second she wasn’t here. “There is no way you killed her” Xavier muttered, I watched him “She meant too much to you when she looked at you. I saw it, I saw the love in her eyes. She would die for you, and you would die for her. There was too much emotion between the two of you for you to do that. You couldn’t kill her even in your state. I don’t believe you.” He harshly spoke out, I looked at him he was in a way convincing himself rather than us. Maria eyed him then eyed me for a second, her stare softened like she realised something. From the corner of my eye, I see one of my men inching towards our panic alarm, it sends a signal to all our men. “How would you even know about love?” Lorenzo spat, trying to distract him, “because that’s how I starred at her” He admitted.

“You call everything you did, everything you put her through love?” I spat, “You tortured, weakened, manipulated and

harmed her more than anyone. You call that love?" He winced. "I will kill you" he threatened, "Such a shame, you lost the love of your life without even knowing it. Your dad betrayed you, and well everyone around you hates you."

"No one will stop me huh?" he smirked and pulled the trigger; I stood tall closing my eyes waiting for the bullet to pierce my chest. I opened my eyes not feeling the gunshot, I look down and see my mum laying on the floor clutching her chest. "No, NO" I shouted, Lorenzo, aimed the gun towards them, one of his men saw and shot. Maria dived in front of him taking the hit. Lorenzo screamed out, the alarm blared through the estate as cars and my men started filling the home once more.

"KILL. THEM. ALL" I shouted. They all rushed out of the house, my eye's scanning for Xavier. "Damn it!" I shouted, smashing my hand through the wall. Nothing but gunshots and screams were heard, I rushed back inside and bent down near my mum. She smiled weakly at me for the first time she softly grazed my cheek "I'm so sorry Vincenzo" she whispered; I shook my head frantically. "Why?" I spoke out, looking at her. She held my hand while her other cupped the side of my face I tensed under her touch not use to the affection but nonetheless I didn't move. "I was never a mother to you, you were right. I birthed you and that gave me the title Mum. However, I should have committed to that title, held your hand when you were scared. Tell you bedtime stories at night, take care of you when you weren't feeling well." She coughed, "I should have been there to watch you grow, and I'm so sorry I wasn't. I'm sorry I wasn't there when you needed me most. I'm sorry because of me and your father you were forced to grow up alone and all too fast. I killed myself, I buried myself in alcohol instead of taking care of the three kids I love more than anything."

I shook my head I didn't know how I was supposed to feel about what she was saying to feel happy because she's finally seen the fault or angry that she's only realised now because she's dying that the realisation will only be for this moment alone and never to be loved through.

“I loved you all so much, I just wasn’t good at showing it. I wanted to give you all the world instead it started feeling like I was just sucking the world out of you all.” She coughed, I shook my head ” stop, you need to save your energy” I tried to stop her, but she shook her head weakly “No, I need to say this. When Dante died, a part of me died with him. I know you all thought I didn’t care, but the truth was I cared. I cared so much more than you could imagine. I couldn’t bear the thought of no longer looking out from the window and watching him paint, or not seeing him play soccer, or listen to the two of you bicker over who is more good looking” she giggled recalling the memories.

I watched her and felt like I didn’t know who I was staring at this was the person I dreamt of the mum I yearned for and now that she’s here it feels like a sick joke! I got my mother back only for her to be taken away just as quick. “

“I was there, you never saw but I was there. I loved you so much, and I’m so sorry you lost him ... And I’m so sorry I made you go through all of that alone. I’m so proud of you monkey” I looked at her shocked. “You haven’t called me that since I was five” I whispered.

“You’ll always be my cheeky monkey, I’m so proud of the man you’ve become. Thank you for taking care of them for me, thank you for stepping up when both your parents failed you ... Thank you for not only being a big brother but a dad, a mum, a best friend, and everything to my kids to my Ariana and Lorenzo. Thank you for teaching them, guiding them, being there for them. Thank you for allowing them to have a bright and happy childhood, I’m just sorry I couldn’t do the same for you” Lorenzo looked up from Maria and towards us listening to Mums’ voice, I looked down and shook my head.

“Please forgive me” she begged. I couldn’t speak I just looked down at her tired expression the way her body was slowly draining. “Don’t say that when a person asks for forgiveness it’s always when they think they won’t have a chance to ask for it later! You want to be a mum? Then live” I spoke out.

She shook her head weakly “I lived ... it’s time I know it is ... Vincenzo I was never a mother to you back then. So please let me be one right now. Let me save you, let me protect you! Let me die knowing that I did that. Monkey ... please let me be your mum” She whispered softly, “I love you so much, mio figlio.” (my son) She spoke up then immediately after closed her eyes. NO!

I let go standing up my entire body tense and my head spinning I looked down at her body “I forgive you” I softly spoke turning away I looked at my men.

“Did you find him!” I shouted, “We got half of his men boss, but Xavier got away. Hacker is running number plates and surveillance now”

I turned around on my heel and grabbed Giovanni by his shirt. “You.” I spat, “You are the reason they entered my home, the reason for mum’s death for those people to enter my home the reason Maria is clinging to life and the reason I FORGOT ISABELLA” I shouted. “I did it for us! To be rid of them, to give them what they wanted.”

“Nothing! no reason is going to justify what you did” I shouted feeling every emotion at the surface. I let go of him, “You are not even worth a bullet, get out.” My voice was low and harsh as I grunted out the words. “And if I ever see you in New York or near any of us, I will find you and I’ll kill you myself” I nodded my head and two of my men escorted him out. I watched Lorenzo crying near Maria, I winced as I watched them. “That’s a fucking promise”

I ushered for my men to kick him out and dump him somewhere far! My head snapped towards Lorenzo hearing his scream. “Why!” he cried, “Because I love you, Lorenzo King” He shook his head furiously and picked her up. Rushing her out and to a hospital.

x

Lorenzo’s POV

I carried her in my arms her weak fragile body began growing pale. “Maria, baby. Look at me, come on. Keep your eyes on me” I encouraged her, “GO FASTER” I shouted at the driver, “Lorenzo, promise me something” she whispered. I looked down at her “anything”

She stayed quiet for a second “If I die, don’t be sad for too long. I want you to be yourself, the Lorenzo I fell in love with. The man who made me laugh, who taught me how to paint. Don’t let me drain you of the light you have inside you.” I shook my head tears on the brim of my eyes “you’re not dying Maria” I shook my head adamant. “Lorenzo-” she whispered. “No, don’t even think it! Because every time I think of not having you in my life I break into a million pieces.”

She cupped my cheek and whispered, “As long as you love me ... as long as i’m in your heart. I’ll never leave you, Lorenzo”

She sighed and whispered. “I just wish I could say goodbye to Isabella” she whispered.

I looked at her confused, “he didn’t kill her” she whispered softly, I eyed her through my blurry vision. “You could see it in his eyes, the love he has for her. He might say one thing, but the eyes say another ... the eyes never lie” I watched her and let out a small laugh. “You are seriously such a special angel” I whispered kissing her on the forehead. “He also kept referring to her in the first person” she weakly laughed out. I shook my head “stop wasting your energy, save it.” I begged her, she nodded her head and looked at me. The car came to a stop, and we immediately rushed her inside, they took her on a bed and rushed her to the emergency. “SAVE HER! PLEASE GIVE HER BACK TO ME!” I shouted when they wouldn’t let me pass through the glass doors.

Please give her back to me, don’t let her go. “Please don’t leave me here alone, please don’t leave me here. Please don’t leave me. Please don’t leave. Please don’t. Please.” I whispered against the glass.

“We need to find a contact, we have no idea who she is” I heard doctors and nurses frantically rush out, I turn and

investigated the room. My heart dropped when I saw her, “Isabella?” I whispered. Maria was right ... she’s alive.

I rushed into the room and stood next to her on the bed, she had an oxygen mask over her face as she laid limp. “Excuse me, sir, you can’t be in here”

“I know her, she’s my girlfriend’s twin” I rushed out, “What happened is she okay?” I asked. They nodded their heads “She had a motorbike accident; she is recovering well” the doctor informed me. “Thank god” I whispered, so he didn’t kill her. Why did he make us all think she did.

“It’s a miracle she’s alive” The doctor spoke up, “she wasn’t harmed too much?” I asked for reassurance, “No actually, she is in stable condition and should wake up anytime now. It’s a miracle her and the baby are alive”

My head snapped in the doctor’s direction, “The what?”

THE MARIA KNIGHT

Isabella’s POV

The sound of people talking above my head and sound of machines caused me to slowly flutter my eyes open, my hand rested on my stomach as I slowly became conscious. I looked around the brightly lit up room and saw a nurse standing above my head. “My ... My baby” I coughed out, my throat felt itchy. She handed me a cup of water which I accepted gratefully, “You and the baby are perfectly fine. It’s a miracle that no harm was done, however, you are now at high risk. We highly recommend you stay put and relax for a few months” She informed me, I nodded my head rubbing my belly with a small smile on my face.

She tells me about medication and vitamins I’ll be needing to take and slowly leaves my room. I hear a knock on the door, and I slowly look up and freeze when I see who’s at the door. I gulp and eye him as he makes his way towards the side of the bed. “Isabella” Lorenzo whispers, almost unsure of how to act. “I- I thought ... but you’re here.” I nodded my head slowly, taking in a deep sigh. “I can explain” I whisper, he nods his

head encouraging me to continue. “Vincenzo wasn’t sure who to believe in all honesty. He was at war with himself and didn’t want to have me stay at the estate while he was figuring everything out. The target that was already on my back would just grow bigger and he didn’t want people getting confident and invade or use me as leverage” I exhaled and looked back up at Lorenzo who starred at me nodding his head slowly absorbing the information he was receiving.

“He- We both decided faking my death would’ve been the better option. To keep me safe” He looked at me then down at my belly “You and the baby” he added. I moved back, my hand clutching my stomach as my eyes widen hearing him say that. “Y-you know?” He nodded his head slowly “I saw you here earlier and I was told you and the baby are okay. I mean I’m just surprised Vincenzo didn’t tell us about all this.” I hung my head low; he edged closer to the bed “He does know right?” I started chewing my bottom lip, “Isabella” he sighs.

I look up and look at him with a pity expression, “I wanted to... God, I wanted to. I couldn’t wait to be back in his arms again and tell him about the baby but ...” I stopped talking and he looked at me “What?” he questioned. “But he wasn’t Vincenzo” I whispered. “I promised myself not to tell anyone until I told him, but when he came back, he wasn’t Vincenzo. He became the old Vincenzo, the person he was before he met me. It felt wrong, and I was scared. I was terrified that this version of him, the cold distant. That he wouldn’t want the baby.” I whispered the last part a tear escaping my eye as it trailed down.

He exhaled and looked up at me “Isabella, I understand and get where you are coming from, but you have to tell him now more than ever. Maybe you’ll come back to the estate” I shook my head no. “I’m not going back, not until he believes me. Besides, to the world I’m dead” I reminded him, I looked at him with a confused stare, “wait a second. Why are you here?” I asked confused at the fact that he just so happened to be at the hospital I’m at. “This isn’t exactly a tourist landmark”

He lowered his head and looked back up at me, it wasn't until now I noticed his eyes. They were red and puffy like he had been crying for hours, he looked like he hasn't slept since yesterday and from how exhausted his voice sounds, I would have to guess he has been at the hospital for a day. "Lorenzo" I whisper begging him to tell me what's wrong even if I knew I didn't want to know. "Xavier, he ... he came to the estate. Long story short, mum is dead, and Maria was shot, she got out of surgery, but the doctor said things are not looking the best, but he is optimistic." Before he could even finish, I was already out of my bed, I started limping towards the door, not being able to balance. "Isabella, please just stay here. You're just going to make your condition worse; I promise when I find out anything I'll come here and tell you." He begged, I ignored his plea and balanced myself on the doorknob.

Lorenzo sighed and grabbed my arm helping me out of the door, "just as stubborn as the first day I met you, and you had stab wounds in your thighs" he expressed the parallel. I shook my head with a small smile before I remembered Maria.

We walked into her room, and I gasped seeing her weak body lay on the bed "Maria" I softly cried as I limped towards her, her eyes closed the only noise was the sound of her weak steady breathing. "Maria, por favour" I softly cried caressing her cheek. She fluttered her eyes open slowly before she set them on me, "Bella?" she whispered. I cried and kissed her forehead, "I'm so sorry amor. I'm so sorry this happened to you." She shook her head softly and held my hand, her weak grip made me ache as I looked at her.

"Isabella, you're alive" she whispered tears streaming down her face, I wiped them off and smiled nodding my head. "I was so mad, I thought he killed you" she coughs and looks at me once more "then yesterday I saw it in his eyes, a hint of the same look of love he had a year ago ... and I just knew there was no way he did it" I shook my head not wanting to talk about that, "please Maria, just save your energy. When you get out, I promise you we are going to do something again, a trip to the beach?" I smiled.

She smiled and nodded her head “I’m sorry for what I said ... I was just-” I shook my head and stopped her “you were right, I never should have hidden it from you. They’re our parents, not just mine.” She nodded her head and smiles “I love you so much, don’t ever forget that” she warned me. I nodded my head slowly “I know baby, I know. I love you so much more” “Isabella, promise me something. You too Lorenzo.” I shook my head immediately “No, there is no need to make promises. You are getting out of here healthy and alive, Maria when you are up and standing, I’ll make whatever promise you want ... please don’t make me promise anything now” I cried the last sentence knowing if she is asking us to make a promise, she was planning on leaving like she knew her time was up. I refused to accept that fact.

“Isabella, Lorenzo. Promise me no matter what happens you’ll be happy; you’ll go out and live your days normally. Isabella promises me that you won’t remember me like this, that you’ll remember me as the girl who admired you, the girl who loves flowers and princess movies. The girl who use to beg you to play dress up, the girl who would climb all over you when I wasn’t getting the attention I wanted. Promise me you’ll remember me as I was not as I am now” She weakly squeezed hand

“And don’t you dare let yourself go, take care of yourself. Live for me, make memories for me, do so much crazy things because when I see you again, I want to hear all the crazy stories. So, you better live and take care of my niece or nephew” I looked taken back, “Lorenzo can’t keep a secret” she giggled softly.

“Take care of him or her, and make sure you tell them stories about their aunty Maria and how much she loved them. Tell them even though they can’t see me I’m right there, watching them grow up, laugh, and make memories. I’ll also be there laughing when they drive you crazy, I’ll be cheering them on from the side lines no matter what they go through, and I’ll be there watching them grow into the person they are destined to be ... and whoever that is I’m so proud. Tell them I love them

more than the sand at the beaches and deeper than all the oceans and tell them if I could be there, I would have, but I want to know about everything, so you make sure you bring me my babies so they can tell me about their days.” I choked back tears as I watched her, as she softly spoke her voice breaking as the tears started streaming down her face.

She softly turned to Lorenzo and held his hand as well, “Promise me the same, you will not end or give up on life. I want to be able to watch over you and see you doing so many things, I want to see you painting. I want to see you getting excited when you win a game in monopoly, I want to see you laugh and smile, the smile that made me fall so madly in love with you ... I want to see you love again and know I’m so happy for you. If I don’t like her, I’ll give you a signal don’t worry” she joked trying to lighten the mood, he shook his head softly tears escaping his eyes as he squeezed her hand tighter.

“I want you both to make so many memories and do so much crazy stuff because if you come back to me with boring stories, I’m fly kicking you both out”

She let out a cough before continuing “You can both cry and shed tears because I’m gone, or you can smile because I lived. You can close your eyes and pray that I’ll come back, or you can open your eyes and see all the memories and love I left behind. Your heart can be empty because you no longer can see me, or you can be full of the love we shared. You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday, or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday. You can remember me and only that I’m gone, or you can cherish my memory and let it live on forever. You can cry and close your hearts and mind be empty and turn your back on life. Or you can do what I want from you both, smile, open your eyes, love, and go on. Don’t you dare let this be the only memory you remember of me. Don’t you dare associate me with this moment. Remember me for who I am. Not for my death”

“Alive or not, I’ll never love a soul like I loved you. Please don’t leave me” Lorenzo quietly begged her. “You’ll be in our hearts forever and always; you’ll never leave this world. I’ll

carry you around with me forever my love” He kissed her forehead and rested his head on their intertwined hands. “I love you more than you love getting drunk” she softly giggled, “dead or alive I’ll always remember you, my one and only love. If I have room in your heart, I’ll always be with you”

She went quiet and bit her bottom lip, she grabbed an envelope from the side desk. “Give this to Vincenzo for me please” she whispered softly. Lorenzo took the note and tucked it in his pocket. She weakly squeezed both of our hands.

“I love you so much Maria, and I’m so sorry I couldn’t be there to save you.” she smiled and shook her head “it’s always you saving everyone, let me have my moment” she softly giggled.

I shook my head “you saved so many lives, without needing to be violent. You are an angel, and now you’re really going to be one” I cried. She rubbed my arm and smiled looking at both me and Lorenzo, she pointed softly to the sky out from the window

“I want you both to know, that there is where I want to be. Watching over all of you like a dream” I let out a cry as Lorenzo knelt and kissed her hand. “Besides I’ll have Dante to keep me company, I heard so many stories from both of you. I can’t wait to meet him” she admitted through teary eyes.

I shook my head and looked at her with sad eyes “say hi to him for us, Maria, I love you so much” Lorenzo whispered. “Promise me you will also keep an eye on her for me” I rolled my eyes and laughed softly through the tears, “and make sure my baby isn’t starving” she laughed and looked back at me “jokes aside, you are going to be such an amazing mum. That baby is the luckiest little bean” my lips quiver as my throat starts burning up, I laid my head on her shoulder as she sighs. “You both didn’t promise me” she sated. I sighed and looked at her “I promise” we both whispered at the same time, she smiled and looked at the sky from the window.

“When you find mum and dad, which I know you eventually will. Tell them I missed them, and I love them more than

anything. Tell Mama I still check up on the flower shop and I planted the seeds she gave me. That even though I'm gone now I'll always be around. Look at the flowers or the waves at sea and know I'm there. Tell Papa that I tried to keep you out of trouble and tell him I love him so much. That he was my rock and my role model the man I wanted in a husband and the man I know is going to be the best papa" she laughed softly.

"I don't know how I'm going to do life without you. Without your sweet voice, your smile that always keeps me going. I never known life without you ..." I softly cried. She smiled softly at me **"If you ever miss me, go to the beach and look out into the waves. I'll be there playing in the water and waving right back at you. I'll send a wave, so you know it's me"** She softly giggled at her pun, while I softly cried looking at her. She looked so weak and fragile, but when she spoke of leaving, or looked at the sky from the window. She looked peaceful.

After a few minutes she softly closed her eyes to rest, I leaned over her and whispered "You can stop fighting now flower, you can let go" I softly cried as I whispered the words. Within seconds the heart monitor went flat she was gone. I looked up and softly cried, I waved goodbye in the air "you did good baby, I'm going to miss you and your smile so much."

Doctors and nurses rushed in the room and escorted us out, the second I was behind the doors I broke down. My body went limp as I fell to the floor and let out a scream, Lorenzo was on the window crying out. Both of us felt broken, I looked up at the roof and cried. The tears were hot as they fell like a waterfall, I couldn't believe what just happened, I had so many things' I still wanted to tell her. Things I wanted to do with her, I never saw her with my baby. She couldn't be reunited with our parents. She never got to do so many things, she hasn't lived and now she's gone.

My twin sister is dead and there is nothing I can do about it. **I rushed out not wanting to be there when she was pronounced dead, and Lorenzo ran after me.**

A week passed and I was sitting back at home in my room with Lorenzo laying on the bed next to me as we both grieved. Both of us haven't been out of bed and we both felt drained, "we are doing the exact opposite of what we promised" Lorenzo blurts out. I sigh and continue looking up at the roof. "If she saw us, she would kick our asses" I laughed out, imaging her yelling and stomping her feet. Lorenzo laughed and shook his head "agreed, I'll never hear that playful scowl again" he whispered.

Shaking his head, he gets up from the bed "I need to get back home, I think it's time I faced everything. Besides I need to know how the hell they got in so easily, more than half the men were gone but there was still more than enough to stop them. They had inside help" Lorenzo sates. I sit up "It's time we both stop feeling sorry and get to working" I announced drowning myself in work is exactly what I need right now. He laughed and pushed me back down on the bed by my shoulders, "I'll get back to work, you my dear are pregnant and need to sit down" he reminded me.

I rolled my eyes "I'm pregnant not on my deathbed, I can't sit this out." He looked at me for a second "Fine but work from home. No killing no dangerous activities. STAY. HERE." He yelled and walked out, I sulked back in the bed and investigated space. My heart felt empty, a part of me is missing. Half of my heart was ripped out of my chest, and I just had to continue doing life with her.

I asked him for one thing, I made him promise me one thing. ONE THING ... and he couldn't keep her safe. I hated him, I hate him so much. I left, willingly with one simple thing, one simple plea to keep my sister safe. To keep the better half of me safe and she's dead, she died.

My head fuzzed, my sadness and grief now replaced with anger and hunger for revenge. I will avenge her death even if it takes me my whole life. I will kill the person who forbid me of my sister, I looked down at my belly. My bump was more

visible, I rubbed my stomach and sighed. “I promise I’ll keep you safe”

“Did you ever think to tell us you were pregnant” Sebastián and Alex burst into my room, I looked at them warningly. They shushed me and continued “IT’S SOMETHING YOU WOULD THINK ABOUT TELLING US, HEY BOYS BY THE WAY I HAVE A HUMAN GROWING INSIDE OF ME” I laughed and got out of bed “I’m hungry” I state and walk towards the kitchen. I rummaged through the cabinet and grabbed salt and lemon from the table. “What are you-” I shrugged my shoulders “I feel like lemon and salt.” I cut up the lemon and added salt as I indulged in the sour taste it left in my mouth.

I shook my head at the two boys and shrugged “If you are waiting for some sort of miracle apology or explanation. You are wasting precious time” I winked and sat in the living room. “So, we won’t talk about what happened last week when you escaped, or Maria or the fact that you are pregnant and didn’t tell a soul, and probably wouldn’t have told anyone if Lorenzo didn’t find out and your bump wasn’t showing.” I winced hearing her name, all I want to do is sit in my bed and forget everything all my soul yearned for was for my sister to be with her again even if that meant in death. I closed my eyes softly and remembered my promise to her, and remembered my main reason to stay alive I sighed rubbing my belly

Finally, I looked back up with a fake smile answering their question. “Exactly we are not going to talk about any of it” I smiled.

x

An hour passed since Sebastián left to get me some information from the estate about the incident that happened, I grew frustrated waiting like a sitting duck and dialed Lorenzo’s number. I tapped my finger on the back of the phone waiting impatiently for him to pick up. “I can’t talk right now; can I call you back?” He answered the phone and

rushed, “No! Don’t you dare hang up this phone! What’s happening”

“Boss, Lorenzo it seems they had inside help. The surveillance caught three voices near the back gate, whoever helped them snuck Xavier in through the blind spots of the back entrance.” I cursed, repeating the words I said yesterday. You need just as much protection if not more from the back than you do in the front. A lot of people love sneak attacks, fucking cowards.

“Who were the voices” Vincenzo spoke up, my heart stopped beating the air caught in my throat hearing his voice again. I shook my head frustrated at myself.

Biting my lower lip waiting for them to continue the conversation. “Two female voices” Hacker spoke. “MOTHERFUCKER, THERE DEAD” I yelled already knowing exactly who it was, “I- Hello! HELLO!” I hung up the phone and stormed out of the living room, knowing exactly who did this. I don’t care if I die today, those two were going to suffer for what they did. Oh, they better run, because If I get my hands on them, I will skin them alive.

“Isabella, you can’t leave. Not in this state of rage and in your current state” Alex begged me, I shook my head “I never think clearly unless I’m mad. Once again, I’m pregnant not crippled” I grabbed my knives and gun. I picked up my blonde wig and strapped it on, grabbing glasses and a big coat. “Don’t wait up” I walked towards the door “I’m coming with you!” He shouted, I looked back at him “No, you’re not” I laughed. “Yes, I am. We are in this together, where you go, I go. You are not allowed to be alone, not now” he begged me with his eyes.

“Alex, you might see things. I don’t want you to see. I don’t want you to see me like this” I begged him to stay here, “stay put, where it’s safe. Please” I begged him. He shook his head adamant “I’m coming” I sighed and looked at him defeated, “fine” I caved in. We both got in the car, and I took off for the strip club, I parked in front of the club and scanned the car park for a familiar car. I smirked seeing both cars parked, I

moved the car parking it in the back, near the alley door. I got out of the car and grabbed two cloths from the back seat, pouring some fluid to knock them out I hide them in my pocket my head low as I walk inside.

I look through the crowded club and spot two dancers. I walk around to the bar and call for the manager, "I want Lexi and Roxy for a private dance. In the last room" I smiled, the manager nodded his head and informed me of the price and told me to wait in the room for my dance. I walked towards the room and pressed myself against the wall waiting for them to come in.

The door swung open and then close. "Where is-?" I pounced from behind them placing the cloth over their mouth and nose, they gripped my arm trying to get out of my grip but with the anger, I was feeling no amount of strength was going to make me budge.

I dragged them through the alley door, I inched the car and let go of them running out of breath as my lower back started to ache. Alex rushed out of the car and forced me to stop saying he'll get them in the car. He got them in the boot of the car and drove off quickly, I ushered him to drive and park behind a school that was planned on being bombed to demolish. Doing as I said we arrived and parked in the back keeping the car in a discreet area I watched as Alex carried both of their limp bodies inside, I forget how strong he is and that he isn't the same sixteen-year-old boy who I use to care for.

He handcuffed their hands above their heads, and I watched impressed, he huffs after he is done and looked at me. "They're dying here, aren't they?" he watched my face looking for a hint of remorse something he could cling too but found none of it. They're the reason my sister is dead there will be hell to pay.

I nodded my head slowly then nodded my head to the side so he can make his exit. He watched me unsure before deciding not to push his luck further and walked out waiting for me in the car.

I grab a chair and sit in front of both of them waiting for them to come back to their senses. I looked at the two and saw nothing but red. They were the reason, Vincenzo doubted me. They were the reason Maria died. They are the reason for the two biggest pains in my life. I smirked standing up and grabbing my phone I open the camera application and hit record positioning my phone on the floor behind us in the corner making sure the angle was just right.

I looked up when I heard them groaning slowly coming back to their senses taking my seat once more. I smiled as I watch them slowly realise who was in front of them, they both looked at me confused. “WHO ARE YOU?” “WHERE ARE WE?” “WHAT’S GOING ON?” “WHY ARE WE HANDCUFFED” I stayed silent as I watched them scream, struggle, and desperately try to get out of their cuffs.

“You don’t know who you’re messing with, you’ll regret this our boss will have your head.” I laughed mocking them. I leaned forward slowly parting my legs as my smile turned into a straight line. “Which boss?” I questioned they looked at me confused “Vincenzo King ... Or Xavier?”

They quickly turned to look at each other shocked and visibly frightened. “Which boss?” I called out bringing their attention back on me.

“Who are you?” Lexi spat. “Who am I?” I asked, “your worst nightmare” I smiled taking off my glasses. They stared at me with shock, fear, and immediate regret. “Impossible” Roxy screams trying to free herself. “Why? Have you never seen someone come back from the dead?” my lips slowly curled into an unsettling smile.

“You are the reason for the fire that’s burning inside me. The reason why my sister is dead, and you will be paying for this with your life” I flicked out the knife. They eyed the knife, sweat visibly falling from their foreheads. I played with the knife twirling it “You, you died.” Lexi still trying to wrap her head around the concept that I was standing in front of her I rolled my eyes. “Yeah, well it didn’t stick.” I stood up slowly

and placed the tip of the knife on Lexi's chest where her heart sits.

TW THIS CHAPTER HAS GRAPHIC SCENES OF TORTURE AND VIOLENCE PLEASE BE ADVISED IF YOU WISH TO SKIP, I WILL ADD A START AND END FOR YOUR CONVINENCE!

(START)

“You let Xavier into the estate ... why?” I asked Lexi as I dragged the knife along her barely covered body. “I- I-... I” panic rising through body, her skin turning white as her veins budge out from how hard she's tensing. I rolled my eyes and applied pressure to the knife leaving a scar from her chest down to her belly button.

She screamed out and breathed when I stopped, “Why Lexi? Why?” I asked again, “He wanted to get you” she finally whispered. “You both saw me in a cloth dead, why didn't you tell him I died,” I questioned. She shook her head no “our deal was to make you look guilty in Vincenzo's eyes. So, Xavier can take you back so that you would go back to him. He wanted us to do this when his memories of you were gone and there was no foundation, we knew it was the best time to plant doubt in his mind.”

I stabbed the knife into her stomach and pulled it out, “please,” Roxy begged, her voice nearly failing her under the weight of her frightened state. Her eyes darted to Lexi and then back to me. “Please. Don't hurt her, hurt me instead” I cocked an eyebrow, twirling the bloody knife through my fingers. I chuckled. “Is that what you think?” I asked. I moved the knife and placed the blade underneath her chin, forcing her to look me in the eyes. “Oh, you poor, naive thing. I was always planning to hurt the both of you.”

My eyes darkening, I smirked “I just planned to hurt you worse”

They both started struggling and squirming trying to get out of the handcuffs. “Oh no, trust me, sweetheart, you're going to

want to stay strapped in for this. We're about to find out just how many times a person can break." I stabbed Roxy in the leg. She cursed tears threatening to fall I smirked my face inches from hers. With the knife still in her leg I pulled it down and watched as her soul struggled to stay in her body.

I pulled the knife out and watched her as she struggled to keep her head up. "You let them in" I slashed her stomach, "You helped them get inside!" I slashed Lexi's stomach. "YOU ENABLED" another slash, "THEM TO ENTER" another slash. "GAVE THEM THE ABILITY" another slash. "TO KILL MY SISTER!" I screamed. I balled my hands and started pounding my fist into their faces. "YOU KILLED HER. YOU LET HER DIE. YOU LET THEM GO IN WITHOUT ANYONE TO STOP THEM. YOU HELPED THEM KILL HER" I screamed feeling my world crash beneath me.

I stopped and stepped back; both their heads hung low barely able to breathe. Blood poured from their face as their eyes puffed from the impact. "You took the last bit of light and killed her. Don't worry I'll kill the shooter next."

I flicked the knife, "he promised me, he would protect her. He said he would! He lied!" I carved 'to' on Lexi's stomach and moved to Roxy. "He promised, now she's dead and you both just helped her death" Carving 'insanity' on Roxy's stomach. I took a step back and looked at their stomach, taking my knife I cut out a circle in both of their legs and dipped my finger into it making sure my finger was coated with their blood I wrote all over the walls. 'Insanity' 'to insanity' 'remember yet?' 'Miss me?' 'I've only begun' 'Not the end'

(END)

I then grabbed my gun from my back pocket, aiming it at their chests. "You set fire to my world, now I'll happily watch you burn for what you did" I lowered my gun and left the building. Grabbing my phone on the way out, while it was still recording. Getting inside the car I aim my gun out the window filming as I shot every single gas tank in sight setting the

building up in flames. I closed the video and sighed into my seat.

x

We parked the car at home, and I saw Lorenzo and Sebastián arguing in front house. I got out of the car and threw the phone at Lorenzo. “Show your boss” I spat and stormed inside. I walked inside my room turned on the shower, I stripped my clothes off and hung my head low under the hot water. My jaw tensed, my hands turning white from the pressure of pushing them up against the walls. “FUUUUCK!” I screamed, unleashing every single pain. My grief, my sadness, my hurt, my demons. I leaned back against the wall and sank to the floor watching the blood from the girls wash off me. I rubbed my belly, hearing knocks on the door. I washed my hair and body and got out slowly.

“Isabella!” Lorenzo called out. I sighed grabbing my robe and covering myself. I opened the door slowly and let him in. “You, okay?” I nodded my head slowly, “we went to look for Lexi and Roxy. I knew that’s where you would have gone first. We didn’t find them but” I looked at him with no expression. He paused for a moment. “You did it didn’t you” I looked at him with a ‘you already know the answer to that’ look.

I sat on the bed, and he sighed sitting next to me, he hugged me. I rested my head on his shoulder we stayed like this for a few minutes. “Show your boss” I whispered. “Show him the video. I want him to see and hear it all” I stood up and walked out with my clothes to change into the other bathroom.

I come back out in my trackies and a baggy jumper. “You can’t do this anymore” Lorenzo begged me still sitting on my bed. “You have to stop; you are going to get bigger and you’re already at risk with your pregnancy. Please if not for me for the baby’s sake stay put. Protect it like how Maria would want you to” I sighed nodding my head. “Okay,” I whispered.

“You still need to tell Vincenzo” Lorenzo whispered, I sighed nodding my head “I know I do, but I just can’t not yet. Not until I recognise him when I look into his eyes. I will tell

Vincenzo but the Vincenzo I know is not the one he is now” I felt my heart twist saying his name, and a yearning sensation overcame me. I just wanted to be in his arms around me again, to be near him. Then my head snaps at me to get a grip, he doubted me, and he didn’t keep his promise.

I shook my head and wiped away a few tears that fell down. “I have an ultrasound appointment tomorrow ... do you want to come with me?” Lorenzo smiled and nodded his head. “Of course, I do”

“Okay leave go home rest. Tomorrow come and we will leave be here by 9am” I informed him and kicked him out of the room, I just needed to be alone now. I grabbed the clothes from today grabbed the pack of matches and some alcohol from the kitchen and walked around outside “Isabella?” Sebastian called out. I threw the clothes on the ground and poured the alcohol all over it I stood over it for a moment and lite the match on fire.

Without hesitation I threw the match on the clothes taking a step back I watched it immediately ignite I stood there for what felt like hours watching and hearing the crackling sound of the flames. Today everything around, me went up in flames. Maria is dead. Vincenzo is gone. I feel so alone, even though I have Lorenzo, Sebastian, and Alex around me, I couldn’t help the feeling of loliness. That kind of loliness is the worst when you have people with you, but you still feel the void that’s what kills.

I fell to my knees as a tear trickled down my cheek. “I’m so tired” I cried softly looking down at the floor. The boys all quickly came to my aid and carried me inside putting me to sleep.

I laid in bed and the only thought that kept repeating itself was ‘I’m going to set you on fire just like you set my life up in flames.’ Your death will be by my hands Xavier know that!

x

I slowly opened my eyes to a very excited Lorenzo at my door, “GET UP. GET UP. GET UP.” I rolled my eyes mentally cursing my stupid idea to invite him to the ultrasound. “LORENZO IT’S NOT FOR ANOTHER TWO HOURS!” I shouted. There was a pause and I smiled going back to sleep thinking he left the pregnant lady to rest.

I of course was mistaken because the door flew open, and I heard footsteps coming closer to bed until it went silent. I peeked and saw Lorenzo standing over me. “I thought we could go to the beach before” he whispers softly. I look up at him ready to yell but then my features softened realising because he wanted to go to the beach “You promised her a trip, but she never got to go... and I miss her” he whispered.

I sighed and sat up, “let’s go to the beach” I spoke softly. Lorenzo got in the car waiting for me while I got ready, I grabbed a t-shirt pink dress and slipped it on. Putting my white air forces on I tied my hair into a ponytail and walked outside to the car. I got in putting my seatbelt and Lorenzo slowly got out of the driveway and made his way towards the beach.

“Do you think it’ll ever go away?” He asked me softly; I looked over at him. “I don’t think the pain ever leaves; I think we just grow with the hurt.” I answered him, He looked ahead deep in thought before he softly spoke up. “It hurts” he whispered. “Of course, it does,” I smiled sadly at him. “The hurt is how we know it was love. The absence we feel is proof that what we had is something that can be lost.”

With pain in his voice, he whispered to me once more begging me to give him an answer. "...And when does it stop?" I sighed with my eyes turning dark like a cloud before it rains, not wanting to answer his question because the answer is not what he wants to hear.

"Isabella" he softly whispered begging me to end his misery with a timeframe.

I shook my head slowly closing my eyes, I leaned the back of my head against the headrest and finally answered him. "If it was **love**, it won't." I answered from my heart, from my own pain that I chose to bury deep inside me. To not focus on the feelings, I had or for the person my heart yearns for. The two people who I felt strongest for died, one literally and one metaphorically. He parked the car and we both got down and picked a spot on the sand and sat down staring out at the water. The water was calm, no one was at the beach. Everything felt calm and quiet, I leaned my head on Lorenzo shoulder as we both stared out watching the sun bounce off the beautiful blue water.

"She wasn't for everyone you know that?" Lorenzo speaks up softly, I hummed as he continued "She knew it too. People found her different and strange" he laughed softly. "Don't get me wrong she was, she danced in the rain, she laughed when she cried, and she loved with her whole heart through her pain. People fear the unknown and they never knew a girl like her. I never knew a girl like her, but when I did. From the first second I saw her I knew she was it. That funny, smart, and loving crackhead was the one for me" We both softly laughed.

"She loved you too you know?" I told him softly. "Maria never loved a soul like she did yours, she would talk about you constantly what she wanted to name your kids, how she wanted her wedding to be. How she planned to grow old with you... She would've made the perfect mum" I added.

He nodded his head agreeing with me, "Over the course of the year she would talk about you constantly, like you put the stars in the sky. You really meant something to her." He kissed my

forehead warningly and rubbed my arm, we both stood up slowly getting ready to go back to the car.

We stood still and turned back around looking at the water, I smiled “We missed you sis” we waved at the water, the calm water started forming waves. I let out a laugh “she waved” I giggled and smiled from ear to ear, a tear falling as we both smiled admiring the water.

I miss you sis it hasn't even been more than a week and I miss you so damn much!

x

We got into the car and made our way to the appointment “Can we find out the sex of the baby?” Lorenzo beamed, I looked at him from the side and laughed. “I'm only a month and a few weeks. I need to be at least five months” He slouched in his chair and sighed. “Then what the fuck is the point of this!” he frustratedly slouched in the chair. I raised my eyebrow at his temper tantrum

We got to the doctor's office and walked into the ultrasound room, I layed on the bed as the nurse spread gel on my stomach.

She started moving the stick around my stomach looking for my baby, we heard its strong heartbeat, and my eyes tear up with pride and happiness. My heart skipped a beat as I listened to the heart of this tiny human growing inside me, I whipped away the tears from under my eyes and saw Lorenzo get teary, “Oh my god look at it, you have a person growing inside you” he laughed out amazed. I smiled and looked at him “I can't believe it.” I spoke feeling like it was now that I fully wrapped my head around the concept, the fact that I'm pregnant, I'm going to be a mum.

Oh my god I'm going to have a baby!

After the appointment we got back in the car and Lorenzo was driving me back home, “Isabella, I mean it. No more stunts, no more fights. No more, not now at least” he warned me. I looked at him hesitant “My parents-” he cut me off “I promise

you; *Vincenzo hasn't forgotten* about them. He spends every second looking for them. I promise we will get them for you, just stay safe”

I looked at him and sighed feeling defeated “Okay, I promise”

x

Vincenzo's POV

Lorenzo walked in my office, my eyes were blood shot red and puffy from the amount of crying I did. I felt so lost, so stupid for these stupid emotions. I hated crying, the feeling of helplessness you get when you scream out in pain, knowing that what is causing your pain your tears you can't do anything about.

“How is she?” I whispered afraid to hear his answer, he looked at me his eyes bloodshot red. He collapsed into my arms and cried in my shoulder. I hugged him tight against my chest letting him cry, my heart aching the pain I was feeling was nothing compared to the pain Lorenzo or Isabella might be feeling. I don't know how I'm going to tell Isabella that her sister is dead, that I failed my promise.

“She's gone” he cried out, “What?” Ariana whispered from the door, Lorenzo looked up at her and opened his arms weakly. She rushed towards him and hugged him crying in his chest. I watched them and felt alone, lost, and hopeless. I failed them, I failed Maria, and I failed Isabella. Ariana extended her hand out and pulled me towards them by my shirt, I sighed and hugged them both as they cried into my chest.

“I'm so sorry” I whispered. “I saw her” Lorenzo whispered. “We both watched her soul leave her body, she looked so peaceful” he whispered looking lost in thought. I raise an eyebrow “we?” I asked. He looked at me shocked and coughed trying to recover.

“I meant me” he corrected himself, I eyed him knowingly. “Isabella” he admitted. I watched Ariana's face turn from sad to shock as mine. “What?” I asked. “I found her in the hospital her room was next to Maria, I know you faked her death to

protect her Vincenzo” I tensed my jaw and looked away. My mind swirling with why she was in the hospital in the first place, is she okay? How did she take the news? Is she upset? Does she need me?

“You didn’t kill her?” Ariana whispered, looking at me with guilt. I shook my head no “I couldn’t” I whispered back. “Why didn’t you tell us? Why did you let us isolate from you? Why did you let us push you away and say all those harsh words? Why didn’t you tell Maria you saw how she was decaying from the news!” She threw questions my way. I winced and nodded my head slowly “I saw but I couldn’t tell her, if she knew she would go out looking for her. Putting her life and her sisters in danger. Besides I couldn’t tell the two of you without her knowing it didn’t seem fair. I needed to keep all of you safe ...” I drifted off and stayed quiet. “You did what you had to, Maria would’ve done what she did no matter what.”

I shook my head, “I promised to protect her, and I failed. She had every right to yell and scream at me. I just wish I said sorry ... I wish I could’ve made it right.” I whispered and looked at them both. Lorenzo sighed and pulled an envelope out of his pocket jacket. “She told me to give you this, she wanted you to read it” He handed me the envelope and guided Ariana out leaving me to read it alone.

I looked down at the envelope marked Vincenzo. I hesitated before I opened it, slowly tearing it open I pulled the paper out.

Vincenzo

If you’re reading this, then it means I couldn’t tell you this in person. I didn’t want to leave this world without telling you what I need to get off my chest. I’m sorry for all the hurtful things I said when I thought you killed my sister, but not that sorry because you made it believable, she was dead. I wish I was there in person to hug you and thank you for keeping the promise you made to me. To always protect my sister, I know it’s not easy no one knows that better than me, but you

somehow always manage it. So, thank you for making sure she's safe, thank you for keeping the better half of me alive.

You weren't the easiest to get along with, but when you finally let me in. I was so happy, I connected with you like I connect with my sister. I looked up to you and admired you in so many ways, your love for your people. Your passion, your drive and most importantly your heart. The heart you don't let anyone see, I got a glimpse of it and was in awe. Don't you ever let your heart go, sometimes it's okay to tell your mind to shut up and listen to your heart, often it tells us what we really want in life. But our minds silence it and plays life safe.

Thank you for also keeping me safe, I know I'm dead now, but truth be told I never felt as safe as I did in your home. I love that you even with your memory loss still treated me the same way you treat Ariana, like a baby sister. I love how overprotective you were of me even if you hardly knew me, and what I loved most of all is the love I see in your eyes for my sister. When I heard Xavier speak yesterday, it finally clicked.

My anger was clouding my judgement and I finally realised there was no way you could kill her, the way your eyes told me a story made me a thousand percent sure my sister was alive and safe. Your actions say one thing, but your eyes tell a different story, it's always in a person's eyes. They tell a story something you would never utter out loud, the eyes they never lie.

Don't give up on that sparkle don't give up on the love you have for my sister, even if you don't remember her don't let it stop you. Make new memories, I got to say goodbye to my sister. I got to hold her hand and talk to her one last time, go take charge before it's too late for you. Knowing my sister, she won't sit until she gets revenge so be patient let her burn the world because she's going to do it one way or another. After the fire has settled look for her among the ashes and hold her, because she'll never admit it. She'll never admit all she really needs is a hug from you.

Please keep my sister safe, she's stubborn so she won't want your help or protection at the start but don't give up she needs you more than you know, and you need her so much more than you think.

Until we meet again big brother, but I better not see you and the rest for a very long time, I want to hear stories about what you been up to. I want to be able to smack you in the back of the head when you tell me a dangerous and stupid adventure ... I never thought it but I'm going to miss you.

I'll make sure to say hi to Dante for you, I can't wait to meet him.

Maria Knight Xx

THE RED ROSES

Vincenzo's POV

I folded the paper and tucked it in my drawer. I looked up at the door through blurry vision, the tears stained my cheek as I sighed and sat back down on the chair. I buried my head in my hands and fought back further tears. She was still the most forgiving and sweetest girl I've ever known. She loved her sister and everyone with her whole heart and a warm feeling took over my heart when I knew she loved me too. She was a little sister that I promised to protect, and I didn't, I'm so sorry Maria. I couldn't help the sadness that consumed me, I let her down she died because I couldn't protect her.

"Vincenzo" Lorenzo knocked on the door softly and walked in. "Are you okay?" He whispered softly I looked up tears falling down my eye. I huffed and whipped my tears and stood up, "don't worry about me, are you okay?" I whispered he looked broken and sighed. "I promised her I wouldn't cry, that I wouldn't be sad, that I would remember her for how she was not her on her death bed" I nodded, watching him try to be strong and not cry.

"I promised Isabella, I'd show you this" he whispered giving me her phone. I looked at it and then back up at Lorenzo

studying the facial expressions he looked equally as worried as I was about looking at whatever she wanted me to see. I opened the phone and saw Isabella staring into the camera, I winced seeing the pain of losing her sister on her face, she looked so tired of all this pain, but she still looked breathtaking.

“Has she said anything about me?” I whispered. “Yeah, she said show your boss” he looked at me I nodded my head why would she ask? I broke the one promise I made her. I rolled my eyes why do I care so much I’ve seen people die, people losing their loved ones all the time but why does her pain hurt me most. I looked over at Lorenzo who shared her pain, I sighed and re-focused on the phone.

My eyes went wide when I played the video. Lexi and Roxy hung from the wall half-naked, she kidnapped them during work. “How the hell did she manage to kidnap them during working hours? We have people everywhere” I snapped, Lorenzo put his hands up defensively “Hey, she did work there besides it’s Isabella she’s crafty” He shrugged like It was information I should already know. “Plus, with the rage, she is feeling this doesn’t surprise me at all” he added.

I looked back at the phone and watched everything unfold. “Which boss?” she asked them, I squinted my eyes watching them look at her fearfully. “Vincenzo King ... or Xavier,” she asked them my jaw tensed what the fuck did she just say.

“Which boss? ... Go on I’m curious” she provoked them to answer her question. They looked at her scared like everything was crashing down around them as they had just been caught finally mastering the courage to speak. “Who are you?”

“Your worst nightmare” she exposed who she was as they started squirming and yelling. I looked up at Lorenzo who was watching the footage with me, “What is this?” I asked through gritted teeth. “Dragon” was all he answered. My attention snapped back to the video hearing their voices. “Our deal was to make you look guilty in Vincenzo’s eyes. So, Xavier can take you back so that you would go back to him. He wanted us

to do this when his memories of you were gone and there was no foundation, we knew it was the best time to plant doubt in his mind.” I clenched my jaw, so she was right, my own were double agents and I kicked her out and faked her death.

I snapped back towards the phone hearing a cry, Isabella stabbed the knife in Lexi’s stomach “please,” Roxy begged, her voice nearly failing her under the weight of her frightened state. Her eyes darted to Lexi and then back to Isabella. “Please. Don’t hurt her, hurt me instead” I couldn’t see Isabella, but it was obvious she watched them amused, as she twirled the bloody knife. The familiar chuckle left her lips. “Is that what you think?” she asked. I watched the video intensely shamelessly very turned on right now.

She moved the knife and placed the blade underneath Roxy’s chin, forcing her to look her in the eyes. “Oh, you poor, naive thing. I was always going to hurt both of you.” she took a dramatic pause for a moment then continued “I just planned to hurt you worse” Chills ran threw my spine hearing her threaten Roxy. Her voice was low and cynical.

They both started struggling and squirming trying to get out of the handcuffs. “Oh no, trust me, sweetheart, you’re going to want to stay strapped in for this. We’re about to find out just how many times a person can break.” She mocked them enjoying seeing them in pain, it looked like she thrived watching them squirm. She stabbed Roxy in her thigh and dragged the knife down, Roxy let out a shrieking scream causing me to wince and look away.

She pulled the knife out and watched her as she struggled to keep her head up. “You let them in” slashed her stomach, “You helped them inside!” slashed Lexi’s stomach. “YOU ENABLED” another slash, “THEM TO ENTER” another slash. “GAVE THEM THE ABILITY” another slash. “TO KILL MY SISTER” she screamed. With every slash I tensed, I caused her to be in this much pain this is my fucking fault.

She balled her hands into a fist and started pounding my fist into their faces. With all her anger, her grief she wasn’t

satisfied with the knife anymore she needed her hands to get dirty she needed to feel the pain she was causing them. She's done more damage with her hands than the weapons.

“YOU KILLED HER. YOU LET HER DIE. YOU LET THEM GO IN WITHOUT ANYONE TO STOP THEM. YOU HELPED THEM KILL HER” She screamed her voice high as I watched her pounding her fist into their faces and stomachs watching her world crash beneath herself.

She suddenly stopped when they became lifeless, she stepped back, and both their heads hung low barely able to breathe. Blood poured from their face as their eyes puffed from the impact. “You took the last bit of light and killed her. Don't worry I'll kill the shooter next.” She flicked her knife, “He promised me, he would protect her. He said he would! He lied” I shut my eyes feeling the guilt crawl back and sit in my stomach. She carved ‘to’ on Lexi's stomach and moved towards Roxy. “He promised, and now she's dead and you both just helped her death” She bit I watched her feeling like this was my fault. It was my fault.

She Carved ‘insanity’ on Roxy's stomach. “To insanity” I whispered.

She took a step back and looked at their stomach, she cut a circle in their stomachs dipping her fingers she wrote all over the walls. ‘Insanity’ ‘to insanity’ ‘remember yet?’ ‘Promise?’ ‘traitor’ ‘miss me?’ and more I set the phone down on the desk and rubbed my temple. She grabbed her gun from her back pocket, aiming it at their chests. “Vincenzo” Lorenzo breathed out indicating for me to keep watching I looked down at the phone.

“You set fire to my world, now I'll happily watch you burn for what you did” she lowered her gun and left the building. “She left” I watched confused ... why didn't she kill them “Did she leave witnesses?” I asked Lorenzo. He watched the video horrified and shook his head not saying a word like he knew what she was about to do. “You really don't know what she's going to do?” he asked me shocked. I shook my head no,

“fuck you really have forgotten her, haven’t you?” Not being able to respond my eyes were glued to the screen seeing her.

She grabbed the phone and got inside the car aiming her gun out the window filming as she shot every single gas tank in sight setting the building up in flames. I immediately shut the phone off and threw it on the desk. “That was dark” Lorenzo breathed out, I looked at him. “That wasn’t Isabella, that was Dragon.”

“Dragon? Isabella? It doesn’t matter” I shouted running my hand through my hair. “It’s all the same person, it’s just a cover to distant herself from the horrors she committed.” I shrugged my shoulders frustrated, he looked at me confused at my reaction. “Shouldn’t you be freaking out? Shouldn’t you be freaked out? LOOK WHAT SHE DID” He yelled pointing to the phone, “SHE STABBED THEM BUT WASN’T SATISFIED SO SHE BEAT THEM UNTIL THEIR EYES WERE COVERED BY THEIR SWOLLEN EYELIDS. VINCENZO” He yelled panicking.

I looked at him calmly “who did you see? You saw Dragon si?” I asked and he nodded his head slowly. “I saw a girl who just lost her sister, I saw someone who was hurting and grieving. I saw in that video a person who needs to be told it’ll all be okay, that everything’s going to be okay. I saw a girl who was lost and full of hate. A girl who lost all hope” I shut my eyes and let out a sigh ... I caused that.

“You’d be the person to know huh?” Lorenzo asked, more like questioned. I looked up and nodded my head slowly remembering my rampage after Dante had passed away. I sighed not wanting to think about it. I grabbed the phone staring at the frozen image of her positioning the phone. “What are you going to do?” He whispered, “I need to see her. Tell her to meet me at the horse ranch” I nodded my head looking at the phone.

“You never take anyone there” I shrugged my shoulder “I need a safe place I know no one knows, besides maybe the horses will cause her to be less stabby?” Lorenzo let out a small

laugh. “Dragons scary” he commented staring at the phone, “if she could she would bring them back to life and do it all over again ... over and over again”

I looked at the phone for a minute looking at her face, her perfectly structured face. Her green eyes that I could stare at forever, her soft blush lips but her beauty was hidden under the rage and sadness.

“Maybe the Dragon needs saving” I whispered looking up at Lorenzo. My phone lit up *‘Luca’ one new attachment.* I open my phone and look at the image.

Isabella’s POV

I woke up feeling sick, I mentally whined rushing to the bathroom. Watching everything I ate last night ended up in the toilet. I flushed the toilet and washed my face; I looked in the mirror and felt sick and beaten down. I sighed feeling like I needed a day to just relax, so far Lorenzo kept his promise and is looking for my parents, I think he is doing it more so for Maria’s sake than mine, but I appreciated him even more for it.

I got in the shower slowly and let the hot water melt away all my problems. I stayed like that for a few minutes letting the hot water prickle at my skin as I sighed underneath the water. I heard Lorenzo’s voice from my door, and I sighed quickly finishing my shower and getting ready. I stepped out of the shower and got dressed walking out of my room I saw Sebastìan, Alex and Lorenzo all sitting around the table.

“What do you tell Vincenzo when you come here” I spoke up grabbing a drink from the fridge. “Work” he shrugs his shoulders. I look at him raising an eyebrow as I roll my eyes “he already knows you know I’m alive” I state.

“He knows but that doesn’t mean he wants me near you, he is pretty pissed you killed the girls and that you continue to blow your cover” he rushed the words out and started breathing heavily out of breath. I cocked an eyebrow at him and shook my head “tell your boss to fuck off” I smiled sarcastically and shut the fridge door a little too aggressively. He looked at me with pursed lips and with a high-pitched voice “hormones” he

sang. I grabbed an apple and threw it at his head. “HEY! These are made for eating not assaulting ... bloody hell you really are a mum in training” he rubbed his head.

I rolled my eyes and flipped him off, I grabbed my drink and some strawberries and took a seat next to him on the couch. As much as I hate Vincenzo for not being able to keep his promise a small part of me knew it wouldn't last that at first sight, I'd forgive him. “You might want to tell him about the baby” he whispered softly. I looked at him like he lost his mind “how the hell am I supposed to tell a man I hate and want to kill that I'm pregnant with his child THAT I KEPT A SECRET FOR OVER A MONTH!” I yelled. He pushed his head back and held his hand up “because after he watched the video” he drifted off slightly as my eyes went wide, I leaned towards him waiting for him to continue. “He wants you to meet him at the ranch” he whispered below usual audible.

“What?” I asked “yeah” he looked at me scared. “What did you say!” I yelled, “yeah...” he drifted off. “What?” I asked waiting for him to elaborate further but he just nods his head with his eyes wide open. I smacked his arm and shouted “NO! You fucking idiot what did you say!” He rubbed his arm and whispered again. “He wants you to meet him at the ranch” I looked at him sending daggers to his head. “If you don't speak up, I promise you I'm going to shove my drink so far up your ass you'll be talking in a high pitch voice forever” he gulped and stood up near Sebastìan for protection “yeah because I can't take him” I sarcastically mocked his poor choice.

He let out a breath and looked at me scared “he wants you to meet him at the ranch” he rushes out and ducked behind Sebastìan. Alex and Sebastìan wince waiting for my reaction. I took a second to process what he said and looked back up at him “how am I going to go to him pregnant!” I whisper yelled. “Bitch. You still fucking have abs, and your stomach is flat he won't know! It's your first baby you won't show that quick” he explained. “How ... you know what not even gonna ask” I shook my head.

“I DONT WANT TO SEE HIM” I yelled.

“HEY! Stop yelling at me this is more of a you problem than it is a me or we problem” he sassed. I eyed him “stop talking” Alex warned him, I nodded my head towards Alex “listen to the wise boy” I warned him.

“I’m just saying, you had a month and more to tell him and you haven’t I get why you’re hesitant but the baby in your stomach is also half his don’t you think he has a right to know?” I pondered his words and sighed I stood up and stormed outside needing a minute to myself.

I sighed sitting on the grass, I know he had a right. Okay, he had a big right to know about the baby I was carrying but I feel like somehow telling him is like betraying him. I just know his confused already about everything every day is a different battle trying to figure out what’s real and what’s fake. The news of the baby can be the final nail, it can either go well or bad.

“Isabella” Lorenzo hesitantly called my name, I looked up at him and sighed nodding my head. “You are not in danger you can come sit” I spoke up patting the grass beside me. He sat down and side-hugged me gesturing me to lean my head on his shoulder. I sighed and leaned my head on his shoulder and looked into the distance.

“I know you’re right” I whispered softly he hummed staying quiet. “I just wish nothing changed, I wish I listened to my gut feeling and never let him go on that stupid plane and I wish he didn’t forget me. Maybe this hatred would disappear maybe Maria would have been alive. Maybe everything would’ve been great” He kissed my head and sighed. “You can’t play the what-if game, Isabella. What happened has passed, we can’t alter our future on it. Take what hurt you and keep it as a lesson but don’t keep it as a burden” He whispered.

I sighed and shook my head “but-” he cut me off and stated “This is going to sound like we are aliens from another planet, but we don’t get normal endings, or a normal fairy tale. Our life is dangerous, and death is something we face every single day we are more exposed to it than most people. Normal is

something not in the cards for us” he sighs finally accepting his life. “You’re so annoying when you make sense” he laughed and shook his head. “I know there was a compliment in there somewhere and I’ll take it” he laughed.

I looked up at him “You piece of shit” I laughed “Ah, there it is!” he cheered. I rolled my eyes laughing, Lorenzo looked back up in the distance and whispered. “You know ... He always wanted kids, when we were young, he always said how excited he would be to have a girl. He was obsessed with Ariana and always wanted his own little princess to spoil” I smiled feeling a butterfly sensation erupt imagining him with our baby.

I sighed “do you think his mind is still like that? After he lost his memory. You think he would want to have a baby with a stranger?” I asked scared to tell him. “Isabella, he knows you, you can see his heart and his own head trying to remind him. That’s why you’re alive, anyone who is accused of betraying him is killed immediately if he finds solid proof or is tortured ... he did all this to keep you safe because the old him somewhere deep down he knows you” He reassured me.

“I hate him ... I hate him so much for forgetting me. I hate him for breaking his promise and most importantly I hate him because it takes so much energy to hate him.” I admitted. “I’ll go and meet him at the ranch. I’ll tell him about his baby”

“Think of the positives if you fuck him you can’t get more pregnant” he joked laughing his head off, I shook my head “idiot” I slapped his arm.

We both stood up and walked back inside. I grabbed my jacket and put it over my shoulders, sighing “I need to get some air before we go to him” I spoke up, Lorenzo nodded his head and suggested we all go for a picnic at the beach before I leave for the horse ranch. I nodded my head agreeing, “Oh yes I want something sweet!” I demand. They flinch back putting their hands up “Alright, alright. Easy, easy. We don’t want no trouble.” I rolled my eyes and went outside to the car “IF YOU DON’T GET SOMETHING GOOD, I’LL EAT YOU” I yelled

out “WAS THAT YOUR WAY OF CALLING US SWEET?” Lorenzo yelled back.

Choosing to ignore him I slammed the door shut and prayed for his soul. I looked at the garden in front of me and sighed, picturing Maria and me as kids playing in the flowers.

FLASHBACK

Maria jumped on me screaming in my ear “HERMANA!” I pushed her off me laughing “aye Maria what’s wrong?” I laughed out watching her jumping all over the couch. “I’m bored” she whined still bouncing, I watched her amused “You had sugar, didn’t you?” I questioned. Mama came inside the living room and saw her bouncing up and down. “MARIO DID YOU LET MARIA HAVE SUGAR” She yelled rushing out to go find papa. I laughed and shook my head, I stood up on the couch staring at her ready to pounce, she stopped jumping and stared at me scared.

I lunged forward and she took off running, I lifted myself off the couch “damn it” I yelled and chased after her. “What was that Isabella?” Mama shouted. “I said oh no” I laughed and chased Maria outside, she was hiding behind the flower bush. I eyed her “I see you” I sang and lunged forward she let out a shriek laughing and running. We ran across our garden, and I finally got close enough. I jumped forward tackling her to the floor, “HERMANA” I yelled out laughing.

She squirmed underneath me laughing, “Eres tan pesada” (cant breathe) I scoffed offended “are you calling me fat!” I jumped off her and laid down next to her on the grass. “Do you think if we grow up, we will become like Mama?” she asked me.

I furrowed my eyebrows confused “what do you mean like Mama?” I asked her. “Responnsibelle” I lifted myself up with my elbow “responsible?” I asked and laughed. “IT’S A HARD WORD” she yelled at me. “No Maria we will stay kids forever” she nodded her head smiling. “Good. Life is funnier like that” I shook my head and helped her sit up.

“It’s you and me forever Hermana” I smiled nodding my head
“me and you forever Hermana” I confirmed nodding my head.
We did our small handshake and high-fived laughing.

END OF FLASHBACK

I felt my chest tighten as I wiped away the tears that managed to escape. “It was supposed to be me and you forever Hermana” I whispered looking at the empty garden.

I shook my head taking in a deep breath “damn hormone” the car doors opened and the boys all jumped in “You ready” Lorenzo asked me.

X

We finally got to the beach, and we got down smiling and laughing, we found a quiet spot and sat down, “Where’s my something sweet” I extended my hand out. Lorenzo hesitantly pulled out chocolate, biscuits, and a bunch of sweets. I eyed him and looked at the number of sweets in front of me “I didn’t want you to eat us” he exclaimed defending himself. I laughed shaking my head and grabbing the biscuits. I watch Alex’s fist bump the air “I’m guessing you picked the biscuits?” he nodded his head proud of himself grabbing a biscuit and eating one for himself.

I took off my shoes and buried my feet in the sand, I smiled feeling the sand prickle and tickle my foot. “I love the beach” I whispered, “everything about it is so calming and relaxing” Sebastián spoke up. I nodded my head; I eyed Sebastian smirking. He looked at me cautiously “So Sebastián how’s life” I smiled condescending “Isabella I live with you” he replied softly. “I mean life, when you go to ‘work’ at the King’s” I, laughed wiggling my eyebrows. “Isabella!” he warned. “You can’t hit a pregnant lady” I smiled and rubbed my stomach.

“Fine let me be more specific. Have you made a move already?” I pushed he looked at me ready to throw sand in my eyes. I moved back and hide behind Alex. “You know on Ariana” I spoke up making it more specific “Because you like

her” I continued making it more awkward. Lorenzo looked at him like an older brother. I laughed watching the death stare aimed at Sebastián. “You like my sister?” He spat I oohed eating my biscuits.

“Stay away from Ariana” Lorenzo warned. “I wasn’t planning on going near her” he admitted. “Why not is my sister not good enough for your Spanish ass?” he scoffed offended. I sniffled a laugh shaking my head. “N- No. I mean yes, I mean ... what the fuck just happened.” Sebastián rubs his temple.

“This is what happened, stay away from my sister. She is never allowed to date, try again and Vincenzo and I will be waiting for you” he threatened. I looked at the two of them staring off. “I mean Ariana is 20 I think she is allowed to have a dating life. I’m surprised she hasn’t dated already” I admitted shrugging my shoulders. “She is drop-dead gorgeous and has such a golden personality. Your lucky guys don’t ask her out because she has you two idiots for brothers”

He smiled nodding his head satisfied “The king brothers are dangerous and one of them is always ready to kill. No one dares” he felt proud. “You know she is eventually going to date, and wouldn’t you want her to be with a guy who knows your mind, is loyal, comes from the same illegal background, can protect her and is literally one of your closest friends” I pointed out.

“I can protect her; Vincenzo and I have been protecting her for 20 years.” I rolled my eyes “Lorenzo, she is eventually going to get sick and tired of the restrictions. Don’t make her go behind your backs and take a loser off the street because he offers her freedom and a compliment” I pointed my finger at him.

He slumped his shoulder and looked at Sebastián and then at me. “Isabella Knights?” I looked up and saw a man who looked so familiar, but I couldn’t pinpoint who he was. “Mr King sends a car for you” my mouth formed and ‘O’ I stood up dusting the sand off my exposed thighs. “Okay,” I smiled nodding my head and getting up, before coming to a halt “how

did he know I was here?" I looked at the man who stood and uttered nothing. "He must be new" I spoke up looking him up and down.

"Otherwise, you would've answered me by now," I added, he just stood there staring at me and waiting for me to walk toward the car. I shook my head exhausted "Fine" I muttered through my teeth with the fakest smile. I waved bye to the boys and got into the car, I leaned in the back seat and waited anxiously.

x

The car came to a stop, but it wasn't the ranch ... it was Vincenzo's cooperate office. "I thought he wanted to meet me at the ranch" I spoke up, the man simply got out of his car and opened the door, "Mr. King is in his office waiting for your arrival" I nodded my head and let out an oh.

Makes sense, his just an employee of the legit business that's why he is so formal, okay makes sense. I walked up the stairs and stepped inside the building everyone was running around and were dressed so luxurious making me feel out of place just like the first time I visited him at work. I pushed passed them all and got into the elevator and hit the top floor, the bell dinged, and I made my way to his office. "Excuse me miss you're not allowed inside" A man spoke up.

I turned around and saw him eye me while he held some files in his hand, I tilt my head examining him. He was in navy blue suit pants and a fitted black t-shirt, my eyes travelled up his tall body to his face. He was handsome but not like Vi- I mentally scolded myself for the stupid comparison and smiled. "I'm sorry but-" I went to explain that Vincenzo was expecting me, but the man did something that surprised me even more. He placed the tip of his finger on my lip to silence me. My eyes went wide, and my blood boiled.

"I know you might have a thing for the CEO, but I think I can show you an even better time." He whispered; I cocked my eyebrow "oh could you?" I whispered playing along, he hummed lowly nodding his head "I'll have your legs shaking

baby” he licked his bottom lip, I let a giggle biting my lower lip. “I hope what you’re dealing is as big as your talk” I raised an eyebrow looking at him with a playful smirk.

I know he was watching because I heard the door open also, I can feel a hole being burned in the side of my head. I also know he was furious, but I want him to know that just because I’m here doesn’t mean that everything is back to what it was or that I forgave him. “Should we ask the boss to join us?” I commented looking over my shoulder at a very angry Vincenzo.

The man jumped back “boss” he greeted and went to walk away, Vincenzo walked in front of him blocking his path “If you touch my girl, I’ll break your neck” he threatened him and stepped aside for him to pass. My breathing hitched hearing his threat, while my pussy automatically began throbbing hearing his voice again and ‘my girl’

I spun on my heel and made my way to the office doors; Vincenzo grabbed my arm and spun me back around to face him. “What was that?” he spoke through gritted teeth. “What was what?” I asked clueless, “Isabella.” he warned I rolled my eyes “jealousy is a good look for you” I whispered. He rolled his eyes “I don’t get jealous because I know what I can do for you they can’t measure up to” my breathing picked up. I bit my lower lip looking at his lips, “Don’t bite your lip” he pressed on my chin making me open my mouth realising my lip.

“You got jealous” I taunted, he laughed “I don’t get jealous I kill” he explained, I laughed “so will you kill him? or will you kill me?” I asked pressed my body against his. “Can I kiss you before I kill you?” he breathes out I criss crossed my legs trying to contain myself, fucking hormones! “No” I walked in the office “and since when was I your girl” I yelled standing in front of the desk as he followed behind closing the doors.

He grabbed the office phone and told his assistant to hold all calls and meetings until he said otherwise completely ignoring my comment earlier. “What do you want Vincenzo?” He

looked put his phone down and stood in front of me “I was wrong” he spoke up looking at me “I should have believed you; I should have been there for you, and I should have protected Maria” I stepped back hearing her name.

“I asked you for one thing” i whispered “keep my sister safe” I breathed out sitting down on the leather couch “Isabella I didn’t know she would jump in front of that bullet. I didn’t think-” I stood up fuming “That’s Right! You didn’t fucking think. You didn’t think to listen to me when I told you that Lexi and Roxy are lying moles! You didn’t think that after all these years and all this time that I could never fucking do anything bad to you because I fucking lo-” I immediately stopped talking catching myself.

I let out a breath as the tear rolled down my face, I moved to the side and whipped it off trying to calm down. I turned around facing him “If you believed me. None of this would’ve happened” and with that I went to leave but Vincenzo gripped my arms and spun me around, I looked up at him and he looked down at me his body towering above mine.

“I did believe you” he whispered, “If I didn’t you would have been dead a long time ago Isabella” he added. I looked at him confused “I knew straight away you would never intentionally hurt me.” I looked confused shaking my head “Then why did you kick me out? Fake my death?”

“I needed you out of that house so I could protect you!” He exclaimed and pushed himself off me, “I knew that if you stayed whoever it was that was setting you up would eventually kill you and I couldn’t bare the thought of a strand of hair getting out of place so I did the one thing I knew would keep you safe. Even though you didn’t stay put and put yourself in dangerous situations daily!” he brushed his fingers through his hair looking stressed.

“I TOLD YOU WHO IT WAS! I TOLD YOU LEXI AND ROXY!” I yelled getting frustrated, “I KNOW YOU DID BUT I DIDN’T-” He yelled back before I swiftly cut him off

“YOU DIDNT WHAT? YOU WANTED TO PROTECT YOUR HOES?” I yelled out feeling a sting of jealousy.

“NO, I WANTED TO USE THEM TO GET TO XAVIER ISABELLA I WANTED TO GET TO HIM TO GIVE YOU YOUR PARENTS BACK” He yelled throwing his hands in the air sitting on the edge of his desk. “What?” I whispered, he wanted to get them for me. I walked toward him slowly, standing in front of him I opened his legs so I can get close.

“Kiss me” I whispered.

(SMUT WARNING)

Vincenzo’s POV

Without thinking I smash my lips to hers, her body immediately reacting to mine. I pull her in closer by her waist her hands start tugging at my hair making me groan. Fuck what is she doing to me? It’s like whenever I’m with her I have no control over anything. I stand up never breaking the kiss my tall frame towering over her, tugging at the hem of the shirt “Off” I order. “No” she teased, I break the kiss looking at her.

Gripping her singlet from her chest I rip it in half Isabella let’s out a gasp. Looking down her perfect caramel skin and her tits perfectly hidden in her red bra, “it’s like you knew” I whispered against her neck. Turning her around her ass now firmly planted on my growing cock I smirk. Walking her to the edge of the desk I lean her over. My now hard bludge just in between her ass.

“That singlet was my favourite” she whispered looking up at me from the table, pulling out my wallet I take out my golden card putting it in her mouth, she bits down. I lean over and thrust myself into her I could feel how wet she is even with pants on. “Pin is 728” Smirking I stand back upright, “are you going to do what I tell you?” I asked roughly pulling down her pants, she lets out a whimper before shaking her head no.

“No?” I asked knowing she would object, above her underwear I start slowly playing with her pussy “Oh fuck” she

moans out “are you sure?” I asked and she still objected, slowing down even more my finger now travelled to her clit teasingly stroking it knowing she would want me to go faster I kept it as slow as possible. “Vincenzo” she whimpered, “I love it when you moan my name Isabella” She bit her bottom lip, I groaned and slapped her ass “Don’t bite your lip” I warned her, she let out a squeal. “You want to flirt with other guys?” I asked rubbing the spot I slapped, she looked back at me enjoying my jealousy.

“He was cute” she smiled innocently; I spanked her again the slap echoed in my office. She perked her butt up and let out an excited squeal. Spanking her again “I won’t stop until you say you’ll do as I say” She bite her bottom lip again staying silent. Spanking her ass cheek again, both were now red. She perked her ass up with every hit. “Okay, Okay” she yelled out. Nodding her head in agreement. Smirking I kissed both her cheeks, licking, and kissing where I had hit. “Good because who’s your boss?” I smiled. “You” she groaned feeling my cock firmly planted on her throbbing wet pussy.

“So wet for me” I mummer into her hair, with my right arm i swipe everything off the desk, I hook my fingers on the red waistband, tugging at it I can see her trying to suppress a moan. Smirking I pull them down, my fingers trailing her exposed skin, starting from her ankle all the way up.

“Vincenzo” she begs, spanking her ass, she squeals “shhh” I tap my lips. Spreading her legs open I go down on my knees my tongue trails every inch of her leg, all the way up to her inner thigh. Leaving sloppy kisses, with tongue, no tongue, only tongue, wet, dry, sloppy until I finally reach the end of her inner thigh and stop again. She lets out a pleading whimper needing my tongue.

His hands grip her upper thigh pulling her towards my face the tip of my tongue trailing her throbbing pussy from bottom to top, flicking the tip of my tongue on her clit going slow on purpose. “Fuck you taste so fucking good” I moan. I turn her around helping her making sure her back was flat on the desk giving me better access to what I wanted to eat.

My tongue goes back up pressing it flat on her clit, making her scream not even caring about anyone outside these walls. I start flicking my tongue up and down from side to side. She grips the side of the desk, her back arched while she grinds herself against me, I started rubbing her clit with my thumb while I eat her out. "Fuck, oh my god" she moans out. Keeping the motion going I penetrate her with my middle finger.

As soon as I enter, she screamed out "Vincenzo Fuck" feeling her about to come I stop "Not until I say" I warn her, she nods her head licking her lips. Eating her out I suck on her clit flicking my tongue in the process, still fingering her I put in another finger.

Isabella's moans filled the office, opening my mouth, my top lip rests on her clit while my tongue travelled down and penetrated into her pussy making her gasp. "Ahh fuck. Fuck. Mmmmm just like that don't stop" she begged taking off her bra and throwing it to the side. Keeping my speed, I keep fucking her with my tongue I grip my breast and moan out "Go faster" I begged him.

Smirking my hands travel up and pinch her nipples softly rubbing them between my fingers. I could feel her about to explode, "now Isabella" I mumber against her still going, without a second she let out a moan Cumming, cum was in and around my mouth but I never stopped picking up speed I started licking her clit again flicking my tongue faster her body shaking feeling every sensation, she screams out her hand in my hair, "Oh god" she moans her pussy now very sensitive. "Fuck fuck fuck fuck" she moaned out coming into a second orgasm she lets out a scream without a care in the world.

Moving back, I smirk standing up I grip her throat and pull her upright, "I want you to see how fucking good you taste" smashing my lips to hers, My tongue swirls around her mouth she moans into the kiss giving me more access before she started sucking on my tongue Oh fuck me, I groaned eyes roll to the back of my head she's fucking hot.

“Delicious” she comments on her taste, licking her lips, “I want to taste you” she whispers already undoing my zipper, opening my mouth and sticking out my tongue she pulls my cock out slapping it on her tongue she licks the head teasingly with the tip of her tongue, kissing it, licking it from his balls all the way up to the tip of my cock. “Fuck just like that” My hands in her hair my head falls back when she takes my cock in whole “cazzo” I mumble thrusting in and out of her mouth, He grips her tits squeezing them in my hands as I fuck her mouth. she pulls away letting out a breath “fuck” she mumbles against my cock spitting on it and going back in.

Holding her head in place I fuck her pretty little mouth, holding myself in place she gags at the length, pulling out she lets out a breath smirking and licking her lips. She stands up pulling me in by my tie she pushes me on the desk table, crawling on top of me she smirked and started grinding her pussy against my cock. “Ride me”

Grabbing my cock, she positions my dick now feeling every fucking perfect inch of her wet pussy, letting out a moan on contact my eyes roll back as she bounces up and down on me. “oh, fuck me it’s so big” she moans out, she leans forward bouncing my ass up and down on my cock. I thrust my hips up picking up the speed, hearing the satisfying slap every time I fuck her, and her uncontrollable moaning was so fucking hot.

Her tits bounced up and down in front of my face licking my lip I lean up taking in her nipple in my mouth and sucking on it. She moans out her forehead resting on mine, “I- Oh fuck” she moans. “Your cock feels so good in me baby” she whimpered licking the side of my face I breathe out “cazzo” feeling my throat close.

Holding her hips down she starts spelling out her name like she was marking her territory. Moving her hips in the motion of her name. “I” up and down, “s” sake motion, “a” circular, “b” circle up and down, “e” side and half circle “l” up and down and finally “a” circular. “Isabella” I moan out “say my name again” she whispers as she nibbles on my ear.

“Isabella” I moan out, “It’s mine” she warns nodding my head “All fucking yours” I confirm, thrusting all the way inside her she gasps I hold it and pull her head to mine “Mine” I warn. licking her lip, she nods “yours” she confirms. Keeping my dick inside her I turn us over, on my knees, I pull her up by her neck, now on her knees and her ass against my crotch I leave sloppy kisses all over her neck then bury my face in my hair smells like vanilla. Slow thrusts as I took her in and with each thrust, she suppressed a moan, I move my head back she leans over her chest on the desk, I smirk grabbing her hair from behind I start fucking her hard and fast, feeling every inch of her.

“Fuck!” she kept screaming, as she cums into her third orgasm after a few more I quickly pulled out feeling myself about to cum, she quickly turns around as she pumps me, my eyes roll to the back of my head “fuck Isabella” a throaty groan and my cum now all over her tits and a little on her face.

END

She smirks licking it off herself and stands up, “I don’t even know what to say” she breathes out breathlessly. I smirk “next time you flirt with a guy remember three orgasms.” I comment winking at her, she rolls her eyes and looks for her clothes. I go into my drawer and pull out some wipes, cleaning myself off. Giving her some as well, she wiped her face and her body off.

“How about you come back?” I asked her looking up, she freezes and meets my eye “what?” she asked confused, “I believe you. I ... I miss you back at the estate” I mumble thinking she didn’t hear the last part. “What?” she whispered hopeful, I cough shaking my head “Ariana, Lorenzo and the guys uhm they miss you” I nod my head pulling my pants back up. “I can’t” she whispers “why?”

She bites her bottom lip and quickly lets it go, “I have ... Vincenzo I’m p-” she cuts herself off and lets out a desperate sigh “I’ll come back when I know you did” she explains, I nod my head slowly “Isabella I don’t know when I’ll remember

you. I made a mistake for not believing you just ... come back?" I try again, what the fuck am I doing? When did I beg anyone to come back. I can't explain it, but she's got this hold, this... fuck she's just perfect I want her.

"I know and I'll wait. Listen for now I think it's safer if I stay where I am." She whispered out as if she didn't want me to hear her, I nod my head "think about it?" I asked. She smiled and nodded her head "I will"

x

I got my office cleaned up and watched Isabella stare at me, "You tore my singlet so ... unless you want me to go out with a bra-" I put my hand up immediately silencing her "No! No that's not happening" I grab my blazer and help her put it on. Pulling her in closer I button it up, it looks massive on her, and it hides everything I want to be hidden. Also, will let the guy she spoke to know what happened in here. Smirking I nod my head approving, she looks down at the blazer then back up at me and smiles. "Thanks... I think he would've gotten the idea with a hickey but hey. Your blazer does the trick as well" she laughs out.

"I can do both" I smiled pointing to her neck, her eyes went wide rushing to the mirror on the wall to see. "Oh fuck" she hissed covering it with her hair. I stood behind her and moved her hair out of the way "be proud" I winked.

"Come on I'll give you a ride back" I offer she nodded her head, and we went out. Everyone looked towards us, I looked over at Isabella who was slightly uncomfortable with the men staring but was giving all the female workers a smug look. I smirked shaking my head I turned to my employees giving them all a stern look everyone quickly went about their business.

Isabella's POV

Not knowing If Lorenzo was at the home or not, I told Vincenzo to just drop me off and go home before he could see or notice a car parked in the back.

I was grateful he listened to me because he was sticky and needed a shower, and so did it. I walked to the door with the biggest smile, seeing hope. Within a second I see Lorenzo and the guys pull up to the house, “Hey Isabella how it g-” Sebastián cuts himself off looking at the blazer I’m wearing. “I’d say she enjoyed herself” Alex comments laughing. I roll my eyes and Lorenzo looks saying nothing “damn Chica first time you see my brother again and you fuck” he laughs, I roll my eyes about to yell before I got a peak at the window of the house noticing something red I looked at Lorenzo “Did you close the window?” I asked him.

“Yeah, I closed and locked everything before we left” I nodded my head towards the window and noticed he finally saw it as well. “Stay here” he whispered. Sebastián, Alex and Lorenzo all got out of the car their guns out as they enter the house with caution.

I watched them go inside and scoop the place out, my hand over my belly. After a few minutes, they came back out laughing, “Someone left you a gift probably a thank you for earlier” Lorenzo smirked. I eyed him walking inside he wouldn’t have had time... I rush into the living room and see hundreds of roses staring me in the face, almost every inch was covered.

FLASHBACK

I walked around the garden my gun firmly in my hand, I looked in front of me seeing him smiling at me. Admiring me as I held the gun ready to attack one of his business parents. I rolled my eyes and nudged my head to the side telling him to focus.

I did a hand signal to the men to surround him and the few men protecting him. They quickly got up and surrounded him along with his men, I stood up from the bush and ran towards the men. “Disarm them” I shouted. They quickly took the guns from them and waited for my command. “What’s this Xavier looks like your own gang follows someone else’s orders” he

mocked. I rolled my eyes and shot him in the leg “don’t try to start something Will. I promise you It will only hurt you”

I nodded my head giving them the okay to shoot and kill his men. He watched horrified when all his men fell to the floor beneath him. “I wanted to be the head, but you made it very clear that it should be you” Xavier mutters, I step back watching them. “You dishonoured me and made me seem like an incompetent coward infant of the families.” He continued.

“You mean the family that you killed? Her family! They were the head, you killed them to take her spot and now she is killing for you to take over” He yelled. I looked up at him and aimed my gun towards his head “Watch. It.” I spat “No, YOUR DAD WAS THE HEAD HE KILLED HIM AND NOW YOU ARE WORKING FOR HIM. He would be so ashamed.”

“You’re right, he would be. I’m working for the boy who killed him, and what’s sad is I never got a chance to put a rose over his grave. Why don’t I make up for that now” I clenched the gun in my hand and pulled the trigger emptying it in his head. I smiled I walked over towards his garden and pulled the roses from the ground. I slowly drop them above him. **“Like a rose, you are covered in red, and like a rose that’s been pulled from its root. You are dead”** I smiled.

END OF FLASHBACK

I rushed to look for a note among the roses, grabbing every single rose and throwing it from the table. I grabbed and threw every single rose until I saw a note, “UGH!” I yelled out frustrated. Finally, I saw a white paper hidden beneath the roses.

I gulped taking in a deep breath I grab it and read it out loud. “Like a rose, you are covered in red, and like a rose that’s been pulled from its root. You are dead but you my Dragon are not dead ... not yet. Papa and Mama say hello”

“He found me” I whispered.

THE HOUSE

Isabella's POV

“What?” Lorenzo laughed nervously, “Who found you?” Alex nervously mutters. “Xavier found me” I started hyperventilating feeling my throat closing. “What if he knows about the baby? How did he find us? How long has he known!” I started panicking.

“Okay, Isabella! ISABELLA! We need to get you underground; we are leaving and won't tell anyone. It's time for you to disappear and this time properly.” I sighed nodding my head and trying to calm down. “Fine let's go underground.”

“We need to leave New York!” Alex yells. Lorenzo shakes his head “You are not taking Isabella or her baby out of the city!” He yelled, “Where am I supposed to go then?” He bit his bottom lip and nodded his head. “I know where to go” He rushed me and the men to go and pack up our things.

We all packed up everything in the house and quickly rushed out the door, leaving the roses behind. With no second thought, Lorenzo took off driving like a madman. I clutched my stomach and prayed that everything was going to be okay.

Someone lightly shook me awake, I opened my eyes slowly and saw Lorenzo hovering over me. “You ready?” I nodded my head and looked at the most gorgeous house I have ever seen. Double story, in a friendly neighbourhood. I was in awe at the beautiful flowers planted in front of the house. “Where are we?” I asked him.

He hung his head low smiling sadly; he lifted his head up and looked at the house “it was supposed to be a getaway house Vincenzo built for you and him.” he admitted softly.

“Lorenzo?” I whispered confused and shocked. “Before he lost his memory, that day after the ball he saw how upset and sad you were and hearing your story made him wish you had a normal upbringing so... he built you this. So, whenever you wanted an escape from it all this would be your normal” he

explained. I shook my head about to burst into tears, “he loved you so fucking much Isabella. He found your sketchbook and saw this drawing of the house and made it for you.”

“I figured what safer place to hide you than a place that was intended to protect and shield you from everything” He pointed to the side demonstrating how close we were to the beach. I laughed softly and hugged him “Thank you so much” he hugged me back squeezing me tight. “I can’t believe he did this, and he has no recollection of it at all?” I asked praying he might remember doing this.

“None, I asked him about it, and he looked at me like I had gone mad. I even brought him here hoping it would trigger something, but he had no idea what this place was and how much it meant to him” He sighed shaking his head upset. “It’s okay.” I reassured him looking back at the house, “you still need to let him know about this baby especially with Xavier on your tail he needs to know” I nodded my head knowing he was right “when this Xavier madness dies out then I will. I just I can’t risk leaving and being seen right now. If he asks about me tell him, I went underground and if he asks why say you don’t know” I informed him

He nodded his head slowly “if that’s what you want. Isabella, you will eventually tell my brother he has a kid, right? Please don’t deprive him from being a dad and don’t deprive your baby from its father” I nodded my head promising him. He kissed my baby bump “cute baby” and looked at me and pushed my head away making a disgusted face “yuck” I rolled my eyes laughing.

Sebastián and Alex grabbed the bags and walked inside, I sighed and stepped on the front lawn, the grass has neatly been trimmed the smell of the flowers made me smile a sense of reassurance overcame me as I smiled looking around.

I walked in and straight towards the backyard, I smiled when I saw all the flowers. It looked so mesmerising I wasn’t a flower girl but Maria was I wanted a garden in my home so she could come, so no matter what she would be here tending to the

plants. Even if we were fighting if i told her the flowers looked wilted she would run, she loved it so much that I wanted it in my dream house.

I looked and saw some branches interned with the white arch. I walked towards it and stood underneath it, I smiled and leaned my head back slightly feeling a warm breeze through my body. I smiled and laughed “I miss your hugs” I whispered and sat down for a minute. I looked over at the flowers smiling at a distant memory.

FLASHBACK

I ran into the flower shop and saw Maria and Mama working and watering the plants. “Isabella” Mama announced, “Hermana” (sister) Maria sang as she laughed looking at me. I rolled my eyes “Hermana” Maria repeated jumping on top of me I pushed Maria off me “leave me alone.” “What’s wrong Isabella?” Mama asked I looked at her “well ... Papa won’t let me come with him to deliver the shipments to the Italians” I huffed. She rolled her eyes playfully before rubbing her temple with her fingers.

“I don’t understand your fascination with your dad’s work” I smiled “It’s so much fun. It’s dangerous, it gets your blood pumping, and it is so much more interesting than flowers” I pointed at the flowers in the shop, “TAKE THAT BACK” Maria shouted pointing a gardening tool at me. I rolled my eyes “Papa’s work is interesting it has so many things intertwined with each other; the business talks the numbers the meetings everything about it is so cool” I shrugged. “I even promised him I wouldn’t get myself in trouble, but he still won’t let me go” I whined.

“Isabella come plant this flower with me” Maria called out, I looked at mama desperately “please tell him to take me!” I begged her. “Over my dead body. Go to your sister” she nodded towards Maria smiling. I huffed and made my way next to my sister, I sat down next to Maria and looked at her. “What are you doing?” I asked. “Planting a flower.” I widened

my eyes and stood up “Nope. Can’t do this. It is mind-numbingly boring.” I cried to Mama.

“Hermana! sit your ass down” Maria yelled at me, I eyed her sceptically and sat back down slowly. “I’m planting Mama’s favourite flower. It has such a beautiful meaning but it’s also deadly.” She started as she carefully placed the bluebells in the flowerpot. I looked at her slightly intrigued. “Go on” I gestured for her to continue.

“Well, the **Spanish bluebells** are said to be hybrids. They are poisonous. They have chemicals called glycosides, which are toxic to humans, dogs, horses and cows. All parts of the plant are toxic” She explained fixing the soil around the plant with her gloves on.

“In the language of flowers, the bluebell is a symbol of **humility, constancy, gratitude and everlasting love**. It is said that if you turn a bluebell flower inside-out without tearing it, you will win the one you love, and if you wear a wreath of bluebells you will only be able to speak the truth.” she handed me a glove and one of the bluebells and held one herself.

“Ready?” she asked smiling, I nodded my head smiling. We both turned the flower inside out, I managed to turn it inside out with no tears, but Maria tore it and almost fell apart. I giggled looking at her face “hey no fair! I’m the one that loves and cares for you not her” She grabbed my bluebell and threw it outside. I laughed watching her shaking my head.

“See Isabella, who needs your dad’s work you can hang out with Mama” she winked and kissed my cheek. “Yeah, who needs it” I shrugged smiling. Papa came into view “Isabella, you want to come?” He asked me.

“YES YES YES YES YES.” I knew the guilt would get to him. I ran out as fast as I could and jumped on Papa’s back. “Bye tree huggers” I blew a kiss to Mama and Maria. “Traidora” (traitor) Mama laughed out.

END OF FLASHBACK

I shook my head whipping away the tears from my cheeks, the boys all went inside and started putting our stuff away but for some reason, I felt so calm and peaceful in the garden that it was like a gateway to my sister. Whenever I saw flowers or a beautiful garden, I knew she won't be far behind me.

If she was here, she would spend hours in the garden tending to it, planting new flowers. Caring for every inch of it like a baby. Lorenzo smiled and sat beside me "she would have loved it you know" I smiled watching him, "she should've, she came and did the garden" he laughed. Nodding my head "of course she did. Maria can't help it it's in her blood." I laughed looking around.

"Ugh, it sucks she's not here" I breathe out biting back the urge to cry. Lorenzo sighed looking at me "in a way she is, this entire garden has a special Maria touch to it. Whenever she was here tending to the flowers she would talk about our future and her dream" I nodded my head "She would've been the happiest person on earth here dreaming and planning her future. If it was up to her, you would've had a bunch of little kids running around by now" I laughed imagining the scenario playing out in front of me.

"She wanted twin girls and twin boys" he laughed reminiscing of their moments together. "I'm guessing she also had names?" I questioned he laughed nodding his head "oh yes. The girls were Aurora and Azalea and the boys were Nicholas and Anthony" I nodded my head "I love the girl names" I complimented.

He looked over at me "don't you have any names yet?" he asked I hummed shaking my head no. "I know I'm pregnant and I'm going to have to name it, but I never imagined myself having kids, so I never picked out names like Maria. I feel like when I see it I'll know"

We spoke for a bit more until the sun finally set and it was time for me to go to sleep. It feels like I'm going to close and open my eyes one day and I'm going to be ready to pop.

TIME JUMP 9 MONTHS LATER

I woke up rubbing my stomach I feel like a whale I mentally whined. I got up and walked to the living room, I plopped on the couch and stared at my stomach. “You look so pretty today” Lorenzo smiled I grabbed a pillow and threw it at his head “I look like a whale. Shut up” He shrugged his shoulders and put his hands up in a defensive manner “I didn’t wanna say anything but” I glared at him. “I complimented you and you didn’t take it just shut up” he threw his hands up exhausted.

“Lorenzo King. Get out of my face” I pointed to the door “This is my house” I eyed him and raised an eyebrow “Ok, okay fine. Stop looking at me like that” I smiled feeling satisfied with myself. I looked down at my stomach and yelled “OH COME ON GET OUT! GET OUT!” I yelled. They all looked at me for a second and nodded their head in sync and walked out of the house.

I rolled my eyes and got up slowly, I went back towards my room and grabbed a white button-up knit dress. I sighed and sat on my bed looking at my stomach “I wonder what you are” I laughed. The day we went to the doctors to find out the gender Lorenzo’s yelling made me go deaf wanted to know the sex of the baby so bad, but I decided I didn’t want to know yet it didn’t feel right finding out without Vincenzo who I have had zero contact with since I went into hiding nine months ago. I sighed and grabbed the keys to the car; I walk outside approaching my car. “Where do you think you’re going?” The boys all jump out of nowhere.

I jumped dropping the key holding my stomach, “Jesus” I breathe out “can you not scare the pregnant lady!” I scolded them. “Where are you going?” I looked at them and smiled “I’m going clubbing!” I answered them sarcastically throwing my hands in the air, “I’m fucking going to get the baby clothes” I shook my head.

“You hold her down, I’ll blow air into her mouth and well just MA pop that baby right out of her” Sebastián told the group

“You have been watching to many friends” I pointed out shaking my head. Opening the car, I jump in and close the door turning the car on, I look up and see the boys charge to the car jumping in. “Oh, so you idiots are coming?” I got out and made Alex drive instead my bump was big for the steering wheel.

Lorenzo hung from the side of the car window. “you’re not coming?” he shook his head no “I need to get back to Vincenzo” I nodded my head understandingly “I’ll catch up with you though” I nodded my head okay and leaned back in my seat.

“You are due any day now and Vincenzo still doesn’t know he is a dad. You know how hard it is to keep this a secret” he sighed. “I want to jump on him and call him old, i want to watch him go through the motions and most importantly i want to see him gag while attempting to change a dipper” he snickered. I rolled my eyes laughing “I can’t afford to tell him; I can’t even afford to leave the house, but I need to get stuff. Leaving you lot in charge of buying things for the baby is hopeless”

“How are we supposed to know what to buy it if we don’t know if it’s a boy or a girl” Alex yelled out. I rolled my eyes and shook my head “and we won’t know until I give birth” I pointed out nodding my head. “Actually, if you guys don’t mind can you drop me off at Maria’s grave for a second” I whispered softly, Sebastian nodded his head.

“You can have a minute alone; I visited her this morning” Lorenzo added stepping back letting us drive off.

X

We parked the car, and I looked out in the distance and saw an old man standing over Maria’s grave when he saw our car approach he quickly rushed off. “He looked oddly familiar ” I whispered. Alex and Sebastian nodded their head agreeing with me, “I won’t be long” I promised and got out of the car.

I wobbled towards her grave and smiled looking down. “Hermana” I sang like she used to. “I’m so sorry I haven’t been coming, but I really couldn’t the last few months have been rough. I’m sure Lorenzo already filled you in on all that” I drifted off laughing. “I cried so much when you passed away. I still cry today. Although I loved and still love you so much, I knew there was nothing I could’ve done to make you stay. A golden heart stopped beating, hard-working hands now still and resting. God broke my heart to prove to me that he only takes the ones he missed, I don’t blame him for missing you. I don’t know how he lasted so long without you . . . I don’t know how I’m going to last without you. The moment closed your eyes and left us my heart was torn in two, and the other half left with you.”

I rubbed my belly and smiled “I’m finally on my due date, I should be giving birth anytime now. I have no idea what the gender is.” I laughed “If you were alive you would have made me find out the second, I hit four months” I giggled imagining how excited she would have been “I know you’re up there watching me and maybe even yelling at me for not finding out already. I wish you were here to experience it all with me” I whispered.

“I miss you and love you so much Hermana” (sister) I kissed my hand and rested it on her tombstone. “Next time I visit I’ll have a baby with me, so you can say hi” I looked up and saw a black range rover drive past, I sucked in a breath and quickly rushed back to the car. “What’s wrong?” Alex asked me, I shook my head “I don’t know, I just got a bad feeling” He nodded his head and drove off my eyes still on the car.

Vincenzo’s POV

I sighed sitting back in my chair, it’s been 9 months since I saw Isabella. I didn’t know what to think, Lorenzo told me she simply didn’t want to see me that she went underground for real this time. I don’t think I could face her anyway whenever she would look at me, she looked at me with so many emotions that it killed me, because I couldn’t remember all that her eyes tell me.

“Luca!” I shouted calling in one of my men, I grabbed a picture of Isabella and me at what looks like my dad’s parties from my desk admiring it. I don’t remember taking it, but I look so ... happy. Staring at her with the same number of emotions in my eyes that she has except now my eyes were hallow.

“Look for Isabella again and keep an eye on her. Report back to me tonight whatever you find out” He nods his head and takes the picture. My men know Isabella is alive everyone celebrated when I announced it and started talking to me again once they found out.

However, my mafia no longer was grieving, they all roared with joy when they discovered she was breathing and alive, all of them looked at me with relief happy that her blood was not on my hands. Some said they knew I could never do what they all thought, which only made my head spin more.

I stepped outside on my terrance remembering when I first saw Isabella at the clinic when I woke up, she was looking at me with such relief and happiness that I was alive and well. Little did she know the person she thought was on that bed was long gone and who knows if he’ll return. I do remember watching at her at times, when she would barge in my office and make herself at home, or when we fought how much she cried I remember looking into her eyes and seeing so much emotion that I immediately felt lost, thinking how could any human ever harbour so many things for one person? How was she able to look at me like that? And did I ever look at her like that?

And then she turned out to be everything I needed, and I blew it. I lit a fire and now I can’t put it out. What a plot twist you were Isabella Knight. She didn’t need me or my mafia, and honestly that didn’t anger me, but it made me smile I was proud of her, she was unlike anyone i ever met maybe that’s why I’m so taken by her. No matter what I do all I can think about is her, when I stare into that damn mirror, I can see her standing right beside me. Staring back at me waiting for my next move.

I looked down, the pool in view as I towered above it. A small headache started making my head to spin, I shut my eyes and rubbed my temple before slowly letting go and opening my eyes again looking back at the pool, I edged closer surprised and shocked. I saw my men Lorenzo and Isabella all in the pool splashing, singing, and goofing around. I continue to watch as Isabella turns around and looks up from the pool staring at me. My breathing hitched as I quickly opened the window and stuck my body halfway out trying to get her before she disappeared, but like a dream she vanished.

I stepped back and swiped everything off my desk with the back of my hand everything flew across the room glass shattered and papers covered my floor. "Get out of my head!" I yelled. "GET OUT!" I shouted out desperately.

My door flung open, Lorenzo stopped midway as he looked at the mess on the floor and my expression. He paused not wanting to add to my already bad mood, "Lorenzo what is it?" I asked calmly. He sighed and spoke up "The head of the families are here, they request an urgent meeting" I huffed and nodded my head running my hand through my hair, "take them to the meeting room I'm coming" he nodded and quickly rushed out. I sighed trying to get myself together.

I walked out of my office and into the board room. The five men sat at the table waiting for me. "Men" I greeted, they all stood up and nodded their heads. I put my hands out and told them to take a seat, "What calls for this meeting? We agreed to never have the head families meet in one place." I informed them they nodded their heads. "Unfortunately, this was a rather different case" I eyed him. I licked my bottom lip and opened my hands nodding my head for them to continue.

"We are afraid that you no longer are fit to be a part of the families." My stare turned cold as they spoke, "You let a mole getaway, she killed your members. Your own father betrayed you and not to forget a pity gang managed to break in and kill your mother and another." I nodded my head clenching my fists. "You are no longer seen as threatening nor powerful in the crime family people are beginning to conspire and rise

against you, they think you lost your spark, that you longer have the leadership qualities you did years ago.”

I sat back in my chair and I looked at the men in front of me and smiled. “I have single handily done what most men double my age couldn’t achieve their whole life, I have the biggest mafia in New York City. I am the most feared and powerful mafia boss, and I will be reminding you and everyone who doubts me who Vincenzo King is. I bring in the biggest profit for our businesses and Mafia, no one in our circle has the connections and power that I do, my narcotics and weaponry are top of the line in demand, it would be foolish to underestimate me and my Mafia. My table with the families has been secured and mine since I first entered. It would be suicide to remove me now” They looked at one another exchanging looks.

“I have received word of who has been conspiring and planning an attack,” I commented. “Good. Take them out and we won’t suspect nor doubt you again and you can keep your chair” They all stood up and left the room. I stayed behind for a minute and let everything sink in. “LORENZO!” I yelled out. Hacker rushed in with Snipper “Lorenzo left a few minutes ago would you like us to call him?” I shook my head no. “No time to waste. It’ll be better if he wasn’t involved. Get the men ready we are going to the Rossi’s”

I had half of my men huddled around me as I explained the plan to invade the Rossi’s the head of the Mafia has always threatened to kill me since I took his spot at the table. He threatened me on numerous occasions, but I never took him seriously he was a washed-up middle-aged man who needed to get a life. However, now from moles, I was told he wanted to use this opportunity to invade and take me down once and for all. I didn’t need to go to him or even give him the time of day, but the families were right. I have been so caught up in Isabella I forgot I had a mafia to run and a name to protect.

My head forgot about her once it was time to do it again once and for all. After I briefed my men, we all took off, in the car’s leaving the other half to guard the estate. The drive there was

slow and quiet everyone pumped to get some action, we haven't been at war in years and the thrill, adrenaline was pumping in all our blood.

I connected the phone to the cars and spoke up "everyone hears me?" I asked. "Yes, boss" they all answered. "Rossi wanted a battle, so let's take this fight to him. Let us remind New York who the Kings are!" I firmly spoke in the phone, "Car a, you are at the front your job is to take out security at the front gate. Silencer guns I don't want attention to be drawn too quickly."

"Car B, C, D, you're to cover the back of the estate and all surroundings no one goes in or out, you have permission to take out whoever comes near you"

"Car E, AND F. Snippers, you are to find an appropriate position on the hills with a clear aim, take out anyone who comes near us, keep an eye out you will be helping us with our blind spots."

"Car G, H, AND I. You are going in with me, we take out everyone inside and make sure to leave a mark. We need to send an image to everyone who dares think they can overthrow the Kings"

"Shoot to kill!" I reminded lowly feeling a warm feeling overcome me hearing once more everyone shouting yes boss. We began approaching the street and I looked up and saw our cars all emerge and go off in various locations. I nodded my head at the driver and told him to keep going, everyone got their guns out ready to fire. I waited for the gates to open; I looked out the front window. I hit the headrest satisfied watching the guard's all fall to the floor. The gate opened after one of the men got out of the car. "Car a, stay at the front" I announced as the rest of us all went in.

Everyone swerved parking the cars on the grass, everyone jumped out and started shooting. I jumped out of the car aiming my guns at the men's heads. Extending my arms out I pulled the trigger firing two shots at the men approaching me.

I extended my arms to the side shooting the two running towards me.

“UCCIDILI TUTTI” I shouted. (Kill them all) I looked at the balcony of the house and saw Rossi hiding like a kitten. I aimed my gun up and shot the window, “COME DOWN AND PLAY ROSSI!” I shouted. He ran back inside, and I rushed inside the house, all that was heard was built shots firing all around us. Painful screams and blood splatter, I rushed inside and up the stairs, I shoot the guard at the top of the stairs and then the three standing in front of his door. I kicked the door down and walked in “Long time no see” I smiled.

He aimed his gun at me, “You wanted to dance? Let’s dance” he smirked. I laughed stepping closer letting the gun hit my chest, “Oh, I want to dance. I think it’s high time someone made you dance” I grabbed his wrists twisting it away from my chest and headbutting him. I push kicked his head causing him to fall back to the floor “I heard you wanted to run me over? Do you want my Mafia? My place at the table Rossi?” I asked him. He spat blood on the floor picking himself up, “I’M TAKING YOUR PLACE” He yelled. I shook my head laughing, clocking him with the gun he falls back to the floor.

“You just started a war!” he yelled, “You ready for another war!” “You have too many enemies Vincenzo” I laughed. “Same war it’s only the enemy that’s different” I smiled. “The Kings are always ready for a war. Time to make everyone aware of that” I smiled.

I grab him by his throat and pin him against the wall, with my left hand I extend it behind me and shoot at the door hitting one of his men who was trying a sneak attack. “The more enemies you have the more successful you are,” I answered his non-question. “You will never be able to take over” I whisper.

“This is my fucking city, and I let you run around in it for too long. Time to teach you some respect, showing you how a real man fights. Doesn’t cower behind others and doesn’t talk about a fight. I heard your threats and brought the fight to you my old friend” I applied more pressure around his neck. He

started trying to free himself from my grip by scratching and clawing at my arm. "It's time I make an example out of you. To anyone stupid enough to take on me or my mafia." I grabbed the knife he had next to his bedside and stabbed both of his arm's pinning him against the wall. "Convenient" I smiled.

I looked around his room and grabbed a corkscrew, "I'm guessing you planned some company?" I smirked looking at the bottle of wine. I walked towards him slowly and smiled, I stabbed the corkscrew in his right eye. He let out a blood curling scream I grunted and took the screw out from his eye and stabbed him in the other side. I turned the screw around in his eye and pulled it from his socket. His lifeless body hung his head fell. He was dead.

I laughed and looked out from the balcony my men all stood up victorious waiting for me to emerge, I nodded my head and walked back inside. I stabbed his eye on the wall just next to him. I grabbed my gun and started firing bullets in his head and stomach waiting for the blood to pour out. I dipped my finger in the warm liquid and wrote on the wall. Taking a lesson from a pro. 'V.K' 'I'M BACK.' 'I'M WATCHING YOU ALL.'

I stood bad and shook my head laughing, pulling the knife out of his arm I carved V.K on his face. Re stabbing his arm back up I looked at his body and smiled feeling satisfied with my work. I walked out quickly hearing sirens blaring. My men all rushed towards the cars as we took off, quickly getting out of the area "everyone out?" I asked on the intercom.

"YES BOSS" they all shouted still pumped. I laughed shaking my head "first war we didn't have casualties from our end" I announced proudly. "Isabella taught us a lot of stuff while you were missing" one of them answered. I put the intercom away and sat down. Isabella taught them she was proving to be more and more dangerous by the minute.

Flashing blue and red lights emerged from behind us, "fuck" I cursed I grabbed the intercom "SPLIT UP NOW, LOSE

THEM!” I shouted. I nodded to the driver to hit his foot on the gas and pick up speed. Everyone split up swerving off the streets, “stay on the road we need to distract them from the rest of the men” I slammed my hand on the seat and looked back.

They were gaining upon us, letting the others pass through. I grabbed my gun and opened the window covering my face I shot at the tires of the three cop cars in front. Their cars swerved off the road crashing and flipping into one another. “GO!” I yelled.

Isabella’s POV

We got to the store and Lorenzo came meeting us here like he said he stared at me waiting for me to cover up. I rolled my eyes and adjusted my wig, “I look like an idiot” I stated. “Nothing new” Lorenzo mutters and quickly runs in the store before I could slap him. I rolled my eyes Alex helped me waddle inside. “This is going to be a disaster” I whispered to myself.

We walked into one baby store and the boys got carried away grabbing girl and boy clothes. I laughed watching them running around the store excited for the baby’s arrival, we got so many things for the baby, but I always felt like I never got enough. I sighed shaking my head I look over to the side and see a man in glasses and an earpiece staring at me. I raise my eyebrow and look at him when he noticed I was staring at him he quickly lowers his head and walks away.

“That was odd” I shook my head and saw Lorenzo standing in front of me “Ok imagine a girl in this” he pulls out a pink puffy dress, I laughed looking at it. “Okay! Okay! Imagine a boy in this!” he pulled out a black suit. I laughed grabbing it “This baby is so spoilt” I stated, “we don’t need it” I put it all back and he looked at me offended, “We don’t need it! But I want it so I’m buying it” he and the rest of the men rush to the checkout and pay for their items.

I shook my head and put my hand behind my lower back and winced slightly. Feeling a sharp pain in my lower back. “Oh no,” I whispered. “Wow you okay” they all ran towards me; I

nodded my head “I’m fine I think I’ve just been standing up to long” I whispered.

We walked towards the cafeteria and sat down. I leaned against the chair and breathed in and out, “Are you okay?” “Does anything hurt?” “Do you feel any pain?” “Why do you look pale?” “Are you angry?” “You need to be careful” “We need to make sure the baby is safe” “Isabella pay attention”

I glared at the three of them as they kept blasting questions my way, “OI! Shut up” I put my hands up silencing them. “Excuse me ma’am are these men bothering you?” the security guard asked me; I nodded my head “Yes they are” I smiled. He turned to the guys “I’m going to have to ask you three to leave”

“Wha- Isabella, you know us!” Lorenzo whisper yelled. I cock an eyebrow and sigh “is this true ma’am” he asks I look at him and nod my head in shame “Unfortunately” the security guard laughed and walked away. I looked up and saw the same man staring at me, I looked at Lorenzo and pointed at the man with my eyes, “what?” I emphasised with my eyes the man I was looking at. “What?”

“Oh, for fucks sake”, I stood up and walked up to him. “No, come back!” Lorenzo shouted, “Who are you?” I asked the man, he looked at me motionless like a robot. “Listen to me very carefully I have three men behind me that will kill you if I want them to. Heck, I’ll kill you if I wanted to. I don’t want to, but I’m changeable. Are we clear?” I threatened lowly so no one could hear me.

He nodded his head staring at me, “Do you speak?” I asked. He shook his head no avoiding Lorenzo’s stare. I sighed and went to yell at him when I felt a gush of waterfall. My eyes were wide, and I froze in my spot. “WHAT! EW, WHAT’S THAT!” Sebastián yelled out. “AHHH I DONT KNOW WHAT TO DO” Lorenzo started panicking. “HOSPITAL NOW” I yelled out holding my stomach.

“BABY DON’T FALL STAY PUT THE FLOOR IS FILTHY. ISABELLA CLENCH YOUR LEGS!” Lorenzo shouted out

calling for an ambulance.

THE BABIES NAME

We got closer and closer to the hospital and my contractions were minutes apart. "OH, GOD!" I yelled out gripping Lorenzo's arm. "OH, GOD!" He yelled out bending down towards his arm. We finally approached the hospital, and they rushed me inside. Nurses and doctors surrounded me, I was out of breath feeling like I was going to faint. "DRUGS! GIVE ME DRUGS! IT HURTS SO MUCH" I yelled out in pain.

I couldn't help the guilt that sunk in my stomach, I wished Vincenzo was here, I wish he could have been here to witness everything. To hold my hand to watch the birth of the baby, to comfort me. I want to see him hold the baby in his hands. I knew I just wanted him here I wanted him close to me, I wanted him to hold me and to reassure me in his comforting voice that everything is going to be okay and that this baby is going to be so happy.

I need him to reassure me I can do this, that I can be a good mum.

I yelled feeling another contraction gripping Lorenzo's arm tighter my nails digging into his skin. "OW OW OW OW. THIS BABY IS SUPPOSED TO HURT YOU NOT ME!" Lorenzo yelled out. I death stared at him and shut my eyes. They rushed the men out of the room and tendered to me "You need to stay awake for us angel, come on your 10cm dilated you need to start pushing." she told me, "IT HURTS" I cried out. "It's too late to give you anything to help with the pain the baby's coming out"

I screamed out in pain feeling my bones separate to make room for the baby, I gripped the railings and pushed when they said push. Grunting and screaming sweat was pouring down from my forehead and it felt like a blood vessel was going to erupt. I started breathing heavily everything was becoming blurry.

“One more push come on beautiful” The nurse called out. I shut my eyes and pushed screaming out in pain. They grabbed the baby and wrapped it in a towel and placed it on my chest. I cried and held its little head to my chest. They took it away to weigh and clean it up. I looked around the room and felt everything go black. My eyes shut as I felt my body give out.

(DREAM)

I looked around my surroundings freaking out “where am I? Where’s my baby!” I yelled. “Hermana” I heard a familiar voice call out, I looked and cried seeing my sister in front of me. “Maria?” I called out, I ran towards her and hugged her. Holding her tight I embraced her close to me. “I missed you so much” she whispered in my hair. “How? What’s happening?” I asked her confused. “I told you I didn’t want to see you here for a very long time” she yelled at me. I looked at her and shook my head “No, no. My baby” I started panicking.

She laughed shaking her head “Isabella, you’re not dead ... not yet. Look” She pointed down and that’s when I saw my body lying on the hospital bed doctors around me trying to wake me up. “I’m not dead?” I asked her. she shook her head “consider this a once in a lifetime visit” she jokes. I shook my head and pulled her in for another hug. “I’ve been watching you; I’ve been watching all of you” she smiled looking at me.

“I wish you could have been there; I wish you were down there with me. I’m so sorry Maria. I should’ve protected you and it should be me here and you down there” she slapped me on my arm and shook her head “stop apologising and stop all of this!”

“I’m happy, I’m peaceful It’s like a dream up here watching all of you is like a dream. A dream I wish to never wake up to, everything here is calm and peaceful nothing goes wrong, nothing bad ever happens all I feel is peace” she smiles trying to reassure me. “Okay” I whispered. “I wish you could hold the baby” I laughed out a little “God knows you would look more natural doing it than me” I laughed

she giggled and shook her head “you are going to be such an amazing mum I can’t wait to see you do everything. I’ll be right there cheering you on and helping you along the way. it’s me and you forever Hermana” she winked. I choked back a few tears “me and you forever Hermana” I whispered back to her.

“Yes, I’m mad you didn’t find the gender straight away” she slapped my arm, I looked at her my mouth parted and my eyes watering as I smiled. “You heard me?” I asked her. She nodded her head “I heard you, Lorenzo I heard all of you ... even Vincenzo” she stated. I looked at her confused “Vincenzo?” she nodded her head slowly “he visits me a lot more than you would think, he talks about you all the time. He also apologised a million times; I wish I could come back down and tell him it’s all okay. I wish I could tell Lorenzo the same thing.” She went on.

I looked at her “I don’t want to leave you here alone” I whispered holding onto her so tight, “I don’t want to wake up. What’s going to happen if I go, I’ll never see you again. I don’t want you to be alone.” I cried softly she shook her head tears forming in her eyes as she smiled looking at me “Isabella I’m not alone look” she nodded her head, and a familiar face approached me.

“Dragon” he mocked me. I jumped in his arms and hugged him tightly “Dante” I whispered he laughed hugging me close to him. “You’re taking care of her?” I asked him he laughed nodding his head “Thankfully she isn’t a handful like you were.” He joked I rolled my eyes and smiled at the two of them. “I missed you both so much, Dante I’m so sorry for everything I-” he cut me off quickly shaking his head “Don’t you dare apologise. I insisted to stay with you, and I gave you no choice. Isabella, I don’t regret that day for anything I got to meet you if I could do that day all over again believe me I would, and I wouldn’t change a thing” He reassured me hugging me close to him.

I sighed and hugged him back crying on his shoulder “thank you for taking care of my brothers. Especially Vincenzo” he

whispered. I pushed him back and looked at him “I-” he cut me off again. “Before you say anything, I literally see everything” he laughed motioning around us. I nodded my head agreeing with him “I see the way he looked at you when he first meets you and how much he loves you. I can see his heart and its main purpose for beating is for you. He loves you Isabella he has a shit way of showing it but it’s there. He is going to do a lot of stupid things, but his intentions are pure.”

I nodded my head taking in what he was saying “You love him to Hermana” Maria joined in. “You just are too afraid to show it in case you get rejected. Even though deep down you know he loves you too” I shook my head “Stop trying to convince me something that is no longer there. It’s making me more conflicted than I already am. You know since you guys literally see everything from up here. Look the old him maybe did, but not the person he is now. He kept reminding me that I was no more than a stranger to him” I explained.

“Isabella, he could have killed you. He could have thrown you out without so much of a hello. But instead, he housed you, provided money while he lied to his mafia and the families. He went to war with Xavier for you and even after losing his memory he still wanted him dead when he found out all the terrible things, he did to you. Deep down he knows you, he just needs a reason to unlock that memory. Isabella gives him a reason” Dante whispers.

“I can’t” I whisper back. They stare at me and smile nodding their heads “you can, and you will, you’ll know when the time is right our voice will pop in your head don’t worry” Maria giggled. “Take care of our niece or nephew” they both warned me. I rolled my eyes laughing “trust me it’s safer with this dragon than a real one” I smiled.

They both wrapped their arms around me and hugged me tightly. “Take care of each other please, I love you both so much” I whispered.

They squeezed me one last time and whispered softly. “It’s time to wake up Isabella”

END

I jolted awake letting a breath of air out, “Isabella!” I nodded my head still in shock feeling my chest rising and falling at a fast pace. “What is your name?” they asked me after I calmed down slightly. “Isabella Knight” I answered them out of breath. They asked me a few more questions before they gave me my baby.

I held it in my hands and kissed its forehead. Lorenzo and the boys rushed into my room looking at it and me. They looked at the baby in awe “what is it?” they asked. I looked at them and smiled. “It’s a boy” I whispered proudly. “That’s my nephew” Lorenzo whispered proudly as the baby held his pinkie in his hand. “Look at that grip, you’re defiantly my nephew” he laughed. “I don’t think I’ve ever loved something so much in my life” Lorenzo spoke up. I shook my head “I didn’t know I could love like this” I whispered.

“What are you going to name him?” Alex whispered. I looked up and smiled “I swore if I had a boy, I would name him ...” I looked up at the men.

“Lorenzo, Sebastián and Alex meet ... ” I paused for dramatic effect.

Vincenzo’s POV

We all got to the estate and celebrated our victory, the boys popped bottles of champagne and I smiled “good job men” I announced and cheered them. Everyone took a swing from their bottle, I sighed letting them celebrate while I walked back into my office, I looked at the radio and decided to play, the song so this is love came on. I smiled feeling a strange warm feeling connected with the song.

I winced grabbing my head as everything around me changed into a ballroom.

I looked ahead and saw myself and a gorgeous girl in a white dress. I stepped closer seeing whose hand I was holding, Isabella. I watched as they both spoke not able to hear anything, they walked inside the ballroom, and I escorted her

to the dance floor. I watched myself as it looked like I was singing.

I listened to a familiar voice in my head as I watched the scene play out in front of me. I pulled her closer to my body as my hand up slowly grazed her hips. While guiding her other hand to my shoulder. I use the back of my fingers to slowly trace hers her smooth skin against my hand, her gorgeous black hair falling off her shoulders as her emerald, green eyes melted in my grew ones. I pulled her back to me closing the gap between us finally placing my free hand on her waist.

Our chests now touching having nothing in between us, not even the air, I smiled satisfied feeling her chest rise and fall at a fast pace as our skin connected. I take the lead as we begin to move our bodies in sync with the music. Stepping her out of my embrace I pull her back in and dip her. Taking advantage of the position my hand grazes her exposed thigh. I smirk and pull her back upright.

our lips inches away I dip my head and sing in her ear, “E’ questo allor” my voice low matching the rhythm of the band. The singer stops singing allowing me to take the lead, everyone silent as I continued. Her body shivered under my touch, I traced her spine and continued “Quel dolce ardor” I neared my lips closer to my ear, I dipped my head and placed a soft kiss on her neck. “L’incanto che si chiama amor” I placed another light kiss on her neck. She bit her bottom lip giving me access subconsciously.

Our bodies continued to sway to the beat. Keeping her close to me, something about her scent drove me crazy. I needed her to stay close, “Adesso so hmmm” I grab her hands and guide them up to my neck as I rest my hands on her waist, “Che ormai non può” I slide my hand’s up her thigh before finally resting them on her lower back. She looked at me with a questioning stare I laughed and gave her a cheeky devilish like smirk. “Null’altro sognare il mio cuor” I slightly raised my voice gaining more attention from the crowd as the band softly came to a stop.

The music stops and so do we, we lock eyes and for once everything felt perfect?

I shook my head and grabbed it; I looked back up and the ballroom in front of me now turned back into my office. I sighed turning around I looked in the broken mirror and watched myself. "I know you; I know you," I said out loud looking to the side of me in the mirror. Seeing her standing beside me. "I'm sick of these small memories I need everything. I need everything to just come back." I kept talking getting frustrated. "I need you back Isabella. I'm sorry, please just come back"

I rubbed my temple "please just remember" I looked down and whispered to myself "I know I want to remember her ... so just do it just remember her" I demanded myself feeling hopeless and lost. "Remember her already or stop trying to remind me!" I scolded myself. I needed her in so many ways I didn't even know how to explain it all. I didn't even know I was capable of feeling what I felt. I wish she was with me and then again, I wish she wasn't. My feelings about her were so conflicted it was a headache I never knew how to feel, and something tells me even before my memories I never knew how to feel about her.

I snapped out of my train of thought hearing the breaking news on the radio. "Well known Rossi Mafia has been under attack the suspected boss of the mafia was found dead and brutally murdered in his own home, the boss was said to have been pinned to the wall with bloody knives in his arm. His eyes were pulled out of his socket and one of them was pinned next to his head. Presumably to send a message to everyone that whoever did this is watching them."

I laughed satisfied, "The initials V.K was also smeared on the wall in the boss's blood, along with many other phrases. A clear act committed by the King's head boss. Name and description unknown to the public, this is not a man you want to double cross. If you have any information on who V.K is or about the mafia King's, please let police officers and agents

know. This is New York news. Thanks' for tuning in please everyone stay safe"

I turned off the radio and laughed, I watched my door open the families all entering. I eyed them raising my eyebrows, they nodded their heads in respect. I returned the gesture and nodded my head "Thank you for coming" I acknowledged their presence. "On behalf of the families, we are sorry we doubted you. Good to have you back Vincenzo King. Your stunt has silenced every mafia and gang in New York and around the country. We are proud to have you back" They smiled shook my hand left my office. I smiled nodding my head, they closed the door on their way out.

I sat in my chair and smiled; everything was going my way again. I secured my spot even more than it was, I killed one of my rivals and won a war. Our mafia was more feared than before, and it still wasn't enough. Something was still missing, and I knew exactly what it was. As much as I hate it, as much as I demand myself to forget everything to forget her, I couldn't.

My soul refused to forget her. I didn't want to forget her; fucking hell I wish I believed her I wish I never let her go. Luca came rushing into my office with a pale expression. "Boss" he looked at me out of breath, I looked at his pale sate and stood up from my seat worried. "What? is she okay?" He shook his head no.

"WHAT NO! SPIT IT OUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH ISABELLA!" I yelled. He caught his breath and looked at me hesitantly.

"She's pregnant and her water broke in front of me"

I stood back looking at him "She's pregnant?" I asked again. He nodded his head slowly yes. "She's pregnant ... who's the dad?" I asked him. He shrugged his shoulders "I think you are Vincenzo"

I'm the dad? She's pregnant ... and like a lightning bolt, everything hit me all at once. "Where is she?" I rushed out,

Luca said he followed Isabella to Lenox Hill Hospital, before he could even finish his sentence, I was already in my car zooming past everything and everyone trying to get to her and to my child.

I can't believe I'm a dad, more importantly I can't believe she didn't tell me. I had to find out through Luca. I sighed and shook my head trying to focus on the positive that my child was being born into this world, that I was about to become a dad any minute.

x

I rushed inside the hospital room and asked for Isabella "relation?" she asked looking up at me "I'm the father" she told me the room and I ran standing on the glass I looked into, seeing Sebastian, Alex and my own brother inside with her. I shut my eyes leaning against the glass feeling gutted. My own fucking brother, kept my child a secret, is about to witness my child's birth while I stayed home.

"Ugh!" I looked up seeing Isabella push, her body was so fatigue she looked like she was in incredibly pain. Women are the strongest species in the world look at what their bodies go through, if childbirth were up to the male species the world would be a lot smaller. "Come on baby" I whispered against the glass cheering her on.

They pulled the baby out of her; I just witnessed my child's birth, and it is the most wonderful and special moment of my life. But just as fast Isabella's heart started slowing down and she fell asleep. No! I banged against the glass scared, I quickly moved away hiding behind in the waiting room seeing the doctors rush the men out. I didn't want them to know I was here.

x

"She's waking up" I heard the doctor inform the men who rushed back inside the room. I waited for them to close the door behind them before I walked back to the glass peering in, they asked her a few questions before handing her the baby,

“what is it?” they asked. I pressed myself further into the glass. “It’s a boy” I covered my mouth shocked, “That’s my nephew” Lorenzo whispered proudly as the baby held his pinkie in his hand. “That’s my son” I whispered to myself proudly.

“Look at that grip, you’re defiantly a King mixed with a hint of Knight” he laughed. “I don’t think I’ve ever loved something so much in my life” Lorenzo spoke up. I shook my head “I use to think I could never love anything or anyone but a simple glance at my son and he proved me to be a liar” I whispered to myself thinking out loud.

“What are you going to name him?” Alex whispered. She looked up and smiled “I swore if I had a boy id name him this” she took a pause “Lorenzo, Sebastián and Alex meet ... ” pausing for dramatic effect. She smiled whispering “Dante King”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I chose to write my book under my initials S.H, I’m a 20-year-old student studying nursing. I have had this idea for a book since I was 12 years old. I grew up reading so many books that it inspired me to write my own, this book has been many years in the making I wanted it to be perfect, and finally seeing it being published now is a dream come true 12-year-old me would be

crying with joy. Thank you all for buying,
reading, and supporting the book and my
nine-year dream of publishing my first
book.

(PSA this is not the end of the mafia king,
this is just book #1 book #2 will be a
continuous of this one only with a small
time jump.)