



Deviant
KNIGHT

THE NEW AMERICAN MAFIA

N. E. HENDERSON

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PRONUNCIATIONS

Sienna - see-en-uh

Matteo - mat-te-o

Domenico - duh-men-i-koh

Krishna - krish-nuh

Nikolayev - nik-uh-lie-of

Capisce - ca-peesh

Stepan - step'an

a pheata - ah-fat-ah (means "pet")

Kovaçi - co-vah-chi

Avtoritët: av-to—ri-tet

Sidet - see-DYEHT' (means sit)

Myesto - MJE-sto (means stay)

CHAPTER 1

DOMENICO

The first time I got a hard-on, I was fourteen. A late bloomer I'm sure compared to other boys, but I'd steered clear of girls for the most part. The way I dressed and the method in which I stared at people scared any sane chick. They gave me a wide berth, and that was exactly what I wanted.

When I was twelve, Krishna and Sasha joined the mixed martial arts training center my father had taken my siblings and me to for a few years. K is a year older than me, so he was thirteen at the time. I hated that they were poaching on my turf. I had always known who he was since we attended the same private school, but that didn't mean I was okay with being in the same vicinity as him outside school grounds. Back then, I didn't give two shits about his sister, Sasha. Maybe if I had, then I would have noticed my brother's infatuation with her before it came to light that he'd married the Russian-American Bratva princess in secret two years ago.

I had just started my eighth-grade year when Krishna was a freshman at the high school in another building on the same campus. He wasn't taller than me back then, not having hit a growth spurt yet. We mirrored in stature and weight, and after avoiding each other at the gym, our coach made us pair up for a training session. I'm sure he thought it would help mature our minds and teach us a lesson in controlling our egos and our tempers.

Only that's not what grew. With my back on the mat, his body between my thighs, and my legs wrapped around his hips

with my ankles locked to keep him from getting away, my cock thickened. I hadn't expected *that* to happen. Hatred spurred from within me as I squeezed my thighs around his waist tighter than what was acceptable in class. We weren't supposed to hurt our opponent in that particular class.

We weren't wearing Gi's, only T-shirts and rash guard shorts. With my teenage cock pressed against his cotton-covered abdominal muscles, I would have sworn on my life they contracted at the contact. I was caught off guard, but Krishna, he fucking smirked before using my distracted state against me.

At some point, my ankles loosened their hold. Krishna quickly unwrapped my legs and then flipped me so that my back was to his front. He righted us into a seated position, this time with his legs knotted around my middle as he pulled me firmly against him. His arms were looped around my neck like thick chains, choking me, and that's when I felt it—his dick twitched against my lower back.

Goose bumps broke out across my skin as tingles cascaded their way through my system. I still remember the feel of his labored breath in my ear. It shook me to my core. What he whispered made me come inside my boxers, right there on the mat, in the middle of the gym, among our peers and coach: *You don't want to go down this road, pretty boy. I'll consume you, and then I'll forget you exist.* His hot breath fanned down my neck and vibrated through my ear.

That's not the hardest I've ever come, but the memory sure makes me think it was. Nothing happened after that, at least not until my first year of college, and even then, it was a one-time thing. It wasn't supposed to occur again, but it did a year ago.

For months afterward, I refused him, ignoring his translucent gaze, his hard thick cock pressed against me when we'd pair up in training. Like years ago, we now train under the same Krav Maga Master three times a week. That irked me too. I didn't particularly appreciate it when I showed up for my first session only to learn Krishna had been taking the class for six months. I wasn't surprised, though. Over the years, I

have realized we like the same things. I might even go as far as to say he's more of a computer genius than I am.

But then the son of a bitch decided to make me jealous by using my sister. At the time, he was also making a different point to Sienna and Matteo, as well as myself. But his purpose was lost. By watching Krishna touch someone else, it set me off. Had it been anyone other than my sister, the bitch would not still be breathing. I broke one of his ribs later that night. That happened five months ago, and I haven't been with anyone else since. That fact pisses me off so goddamn bad it makes me itch to break another one of his bones.

It's been far too long since I've sunk my dick inside something soft. Don't get me wrong, I love the hard just as much as I need and crave it, but the feel of a woman's body is different. It sates something else inside my soul that I can't quite put my finger on, yet I've never wanted to fuck the same woman twice. Not the way I keep coming back to Krishna anyway.

My sister has no friends other than Lorenzo and me. That was solidified the night she killed Vin, the guy who kidnapped her. Up to that point, he was the only friendship Sienna had maintained outside the family. So, it's not like I can ram my dick in someone from her wedding party. I'm not going to lie, I like it that way.

The twins have always had each other, and then they have me too. It's been my duty to protect them since the day they were born. It doesn't matter that I'm only sixteen months older than them. They are my prince and princess, and I guess that makes me their deviant knight. There isn't anything I wouldn't do for Lorenzo and Sienna. I'd kill for them. I'd die for them. Keeping their circle small means less of a headache for me when it comes to maintaining their safety. I let Vin slip by, which nearly cost my family another life. It won't happen again.

"Your wife changed out of her blood-covered dress," K comments from my right side as Matteo walks up to the outdoor bar and signals for the bartender to get him a beer. I'm on my second and last, knowing I can't drink too much and be

able to watch every angle of the room. “Couldn’t you have kept the tuxedo jacket on at least? You’re scaring your mother.”

“It’s hot as hell out here, so no,” Matteo replies, grabbing the long-neck amber bottle with the same blood-soaked white shirt that’s now bone dry. No one has come out and said what happened, but it doesn’t take a genius to guess that it was my father’s wedding present to the groom. “She’s seen it. It’s done. Doesn’t make a difference if I change or not. Besides, I’d rather display Tony’s handy work for the masses,” he says, confirming I was right.

“I’ll have one of those, Jake,” my brother requests, coming to stand between Matteo and me. Jake usually works the bar at our nightclub a few blocks away from my father’s restaurant, but Dad hired him for the event to bartend Sienna’s reception. He has a wandering eye, but he isn’t a bad guy. He’s been vetted, which means at the present moment, I trust him. That doesn’t mean that can’t change down the road, but until he proves otherwise, he stays employed—and alive.

“So, you’re back to drinking again?” Krishna grunts, annoyance in his deep tone.

“He doesn’t have a drinking problem,” I bite out, not looking at K. It’s hard not to. His six-foot-four frame is dressed in a suit tonight, and every inch of him is fucking hot, which also makes me want to throw my fist into his face.

I don’t like wanting someone the way I want him. One time should have been enough, but it wasn’t. That night, months ago, we discovered how hard we could brutalize each other and still get off. It was ... euphoric. It was mind-blowing and something I haven’t been able to cut off since. I’ve never been susceptible to addiction, but that’s what it must be between us, otherwise—

“I had a Sasha problem,” Ren chimes back, unfazed that Krishna insinuated he’s an alcoholic no matter how many times I’ve claimed he isn’t. The fucker probably said it to get a rise out of me.

“Better pray it’s a boy my sister is carrying then. You’ll be in hell if it turns out to be a mini version of her.”

“I like the full version of my wife, so I’d be fine with that. I’d be just as fine if it turns out to be a boy too. Doesn’t matter either way.”

“Fuck,” K draws out. “If I ever knock up a bitch, you may as well consider my life over.” He picks up the bottle of beer in front of him.

“I’ll second that.” I raise my beer bottle, clinking it to the glass neck of his, then simultaneously, we bring our bottles to our lips and tip them back. I swallow the rest of mine, finishing it off. Setting it back on the bar, I turn my back to Jake and survey the room.

“Domino,” Brooklyn calls out as my free hand is suddenly being snatched in a bite-size grip. My eyes flick down. “I want to dance.”

“Girl, learn how to say, Do-men-i-co,” Krishna orders, his tone a bit condescending mixed with something else that puts the beginning of a smirk on my lips.

Her eyes flick from mine over to his. “I know how to say, *Do-men-i-co*,” she bites out, and I swear a growl follows the snarl on her lip. “If I wanted to say, *Domenico*, I would’ve said, *Domenico*.” Her chest expands, and then she huffs out a forceful breath. “He’s *my* Domino. Get your own!”

Jesus Christ. I shake my head as I tip my chin up to look at the night sky, pulling in the warm air. It’s usually cooler in late October, but tonight it feels more like the end of summer rather than fall in New York City.

“I’d keep my Sasha problem over *that* problem any day, brother,” Ren adds, noting the jealousy in Brooklyn’s tone. She’s fucking five years old. Soon-to-be six, but still the same. This shit is getting worse. While I was gone for a month and she started kindergarten, I figured *this* would have faded into the wind like it never existed. Since I’ve been back, she’s stuck to me like glue when I’m home.

I like the girl far more than I like her dumbass of a father. She's tough and feisty. She reminds me so much of Sienna that it's easy to forget she isn't a Caputo by blood. I'll never regret ridding the world of her mother. Kennedy, Matteo's ex and Brooklyn's mother, deserved every bit of what I gave her the night I took her pathetic life.

"Then why don't you dance with your dad?" I finally say to her.

"Because I want to dance with you." Her eyes narrow as her back straightens. She isn't afraid of me. That alone means I should reward her with a single dance. There is a fight in her eyes. She isn't shy about going for what she wants. Her little girly crush will wane, and this will be something we laugh at in the years to come.

I'm about to push off the rim of the bar when Krishna's almost whisper-like voice stops me. "Kitten," he says, his tone as excited as it is surprised. My eyelids snap up, landing where my father, Si, and Sasha stand with another among them.

The long strands of her bright red hair cascades down her back in loose waves captures my attention first, then my eyes begin to roam, taking in the rest of her curvy form. She's dressed in a black wrap dress with silver, open-toe heels. The material crosses, making a V-shape between her breasts and the sleeves stop before her elbows.

My feet are moving in her direction before I realize I'm closing the distance between us, dragging Brooklyn along with me. Since she wouldn't release my fingers, I wrapped mine around her wrist.

"You!" I hiss, narrowing my eyes on a woman I met once, but one I haven't gone a day without thinking about since. Resentment settles in my chest at the same time blood rushes downward. I rip my grip away from my niece the moment Ciera's emerald eyes connect with mine.

"Who exactly is she, and why is she here, Dad?" Sienna questions, caution and curiosity in her voice. Krishna steps up behind me, his taller height giving him away. Ren stops next to me, followed by Matteo.

“I’m Ciera Fitzgerald,” she announces, her Irish accent coating my exposed skin like a blanket I mentally fling off before it tries to encase me. Unfulfilled lust will do that to a man. It’ll blind you to reality, which is all this is. I wanted to fuck her the second I laid my eyes on her five weeks ago. Apparently, my dick still does.

My father’s stare lands on me, but I don’t break eye contact with the woman next to him. She blinks and then swallows as I watch her chest expand and fall, getting faster with each breath, anxiety blooming from inside her the longer I stand here in silence. She inches closer to my dad, and something about that rubs me the wrong way.

“She’s Domenico’s bride,” my father answers with finality in his tone, severing my stare down with Ciera. My eyes dart to his dark orbs. The boss stares back at me, daring me to challenge him, but instead of reacting the way I should, I keep my lips sealed.

She’s a Fitzgerald. That fact didn’t slip past me when her honey-coated voice introduced herself. It’ll be a cold day in Hell before I give one of them my name.

“Like hell she is. Have you lost your fucking mind, Dad?” Sienna lashes out on my behalf.

Dad’s lips twitch, but he stops the smirk from forming as he flicks his eyes to my sister.

“Hold up. Daddy, I think it’s time we have a come-to-Jesus meeting. I didn’t say anything when I found out you arranged Ren’s marriage. I wanted to kick you in the gut if I’m being honest. I say that with love and respect, Boss, and I still want to, by the way, but I won’t keep my mouth shut on this. You do not have the right to arrange Dom’s marriage with ... What’s your name again?” My sister flicks her gaze to the stunning woman at my father’s side.

“It’s Ciera,” I answer for her, recalling how I heard her name roll off her tongue the first time I heard her say it.

“Um, excuse me, you know her?” Sienna asks, her surprised brown eyes finding mine as her brow arches.

“Not someone you forget,” Krishna says from behind me, his hot breath coating the back of my neck. My dick jumps to attention every time he does that.

“Okay, so you both know her. Noted. But not my point.” Sienna’s lips thin before she huffs out a breath. Folding her arms across her chest, she snaps her eyes back to our father. “You don’t get a say in who Dom marries or doesn’t marry. You don’t get to pick for him. What the hell is wrong with you?” Dad goes to open his mouth, but my sister continues, “He gets the same chance Matteo and I did, to find the right person and fall in love. That’s how this works. Isn’t that what you got with Mom?”

My little sister got married today. If I’d been given a say in the matter, Matteo would’ve had to work harder to earn her love, her trust, and her heart.

She’s been in love with him for as long as I can remember, since she first started showing signs of liking boys. He ignored her. Didn’t show an interest back when they attended school together. Lorenzo and I went to a different school than our sister. I never liked it. If she wasn’t with us, I couldn’t protect her. Had I been at the same school, I would have beat Matteo’s ass each day he let my sister love him and didn’t reciprocate.

“You know what your mother and I had, so I’m not entertaining that dumbass question, princess. Domenico will marry whomever I tell him to marry.”

“Like hell he will,” Si throws back, her stare igniting as anger seeps into her irises. She’s always been a fighter. Her interest in drawing blood from another is how it was awakened in Lorenzo. When we were kids, Sienna saw our dad watching a boxing match on TV and decided to prove she was tough by punching her twin brother. I wish I’d seen it, but I was asleep, just as they were *supposed* to be. “What gives you the right to decide your sons’ partners?”

I’d interject, but my sister is doing the job for me, so I continue observing Ciera, watching her squirm under my gaze.

“What gives you the impression it’s only my sons? I have a daughter too,” Dad volleys back with her, his tone more

amused than I'd expect given the tone my sister has taken. She may be his princess, but he doesn't take attitude from us.

"Hello. Wedding." She drops one arm and throws the other in the air in a dramatic gesture around the reception. It's then that I take notice that all eyes are on us. "Matteo and I—"

"Were arranged the day you and Ren were born," he says, cutting her off. Sienna's jaw drops, her eyes rounding in shock. "And the first too. You and Matteo wouldn't be together without my help. You got the dumbass of the group, for which, I'm sorry, princess. Your relationship with Matteo was harder to achieve than Ren and Sasha's. He worked hard to sabotage my goal."

"The fuck?" Matteo sputters. He usually doesn't drop curse words when his daughter is present, but I can't blame him. Even I didn't expect that, which enrages me. It's another thing the boss has kept from me. His secrets are starting to pile up higher than Lorenzo's.

"Giovanni and I found common ground again. We wanted to merge families," Dad goes on.

"I can't fucking believe you," Sienna blurts out, her eyes a burning inferno. When she gets like that, there is only one solution. The only way for her to release her tiny inner demon is to fight. That's problematic in her condition.

I'll give Matteo this, he did tell me about her pregnancy weeks ago. He wanted to ensure she was well protected when she was in New Orleans without him. I knew Sienna was pregnant long before I found out about Sasha.

"Believe it, and believe this: while I'm the boss and head of this family, I will make whatever decisions I deem best for each of you. I gave you the same chance I gave Ren and Sasha. I placed you in Matteo's vicinity. It's not my fault he was too stupid to not notice you the first time around. Be glad I gave him a second chance. That is the only reason today happened, Sienna. But Dom doesn't get what you and Ren did. Cormac hid her away in Ireland. I wasn't sending my son to another country when I had to teach him how to be the boss."

“Come on, Dad,” Ren finally speaks. “You have to see how messed up this is.”

My father ignores his youngest son, his gaze finding mine. “The twins had the luxury of falling in love, Domenico. You do not. I’m sorry for that too, but this marriage is happening. In six days, she’ll become your wife.”

“I’m not marrying anyone.” My voice is eerily calm despite my insides twisting in knots as a flame licks the back of my neck.

Flicking my eyes to Ciera and hoping they’re showing her just how ruthless I can be, I open my mouth again, spitting out words to hurt her, remembering the first time I angered her with crude terms. “I’m certainly not marrying a Fitzgerald whore.”

CHAPTER 2

Over the years, there have been plenty of times when I've wanted to lash back at another person for the way they've treated me, spoken to me, or touched me. But rarely do the words that land on the tip of my tongue break past my lips.

I've been verbally and physically abused for as long as the nineteen years I've been breathing. When Domenico opens the snarl across his lips and speaks, something inside me rises to the surface, making me want to spew nasty words back at him.

I'm not a mean person. I look for the positive in every situation. I show kindness to people who deserve it and to those who don't. I make sure to give ten percent of my monthly allowance to the church. Karma is real, and I don't want to give her a reason to come for me or be on her wrong side.

The night I met Antonio's son and the equally attractive giant currently standing behind him has stuck with me. I'd never admit this to another living soul, but I dream about them nightly. The dreams are always different. Some take place in my former bedroom in New Orleans, while others are back home in Ireland, but they all end with me waking up wet from my own sweat when the dreams turn deviant and downright sinful.

The only reason I know either of their names is because Antonio told me about them, along with his twins. I got a little lost when he mentioned the boxer that's now his son-in-law.

He and Antonio's daughter, Sienna, married today. There are many people in his family, and I'm not used to being around so many at one time. It makes my skin crawl and my anxiety rise to levels that have my insides shaking.

I still don't know what to make of the Caputo boss. Antonio is different from my father and the man that raised me back home. He's kind and caring, protective even. It's strange. I come from a family that wouldn't throw you a raft if you were drowning, let alone jump in the water to save you. They're the type that would stand back watching you struggle with a smile on their faces, and if I'm honest, they'd have a hand down their pants at the same time.

Fitzgeralds are sick and twisted beings. They're selfish and don't have an ounce of loyalty in their bones. I hate that I'm one of them. My last name and the blood running through my veins are equivalent to an elephant sitting on my chest, refusing to get off. I am forever tarnished because I was born into the wrong family.

"I think you're mistaking me for the last one you shagged." Being called a whore, or worse, a cunt, is a trigger for me. I've been subjected to vulgar name-calling since before my first menstrual cycle arrived. My chest developed when I was still an innocent, clueless little girl to all the ways the opposite sex viewed us. Other girls were mean. Boys were nasty. Men were cruel.

Words affect me more than any amount of physical pain ever has. I hate that about myself. It's a weakness that I allow what someone else thinks of me to have lasting effects.

Feeling another set of eyes on me, I glance away from Domenico. Turning my head, I meet Tony's disapproving stare. I swallow the nonexistent saliva in my mouth. It's in that moment that it dawns on me that I spoke the words aloud, when usually it's easy to keep them locked behind my lips.

"I raised you better than that, Dom. Show your fiancé more respect," Tony says, his dominant presence finally releasing me from its grip. My shoulders drop in relief, and it takes effort to pull in a breath of air slowly rather than sucking

it in at once. I don't want to be here, but I don't know how to get out of this pickle.

“Like hell she is.” The little girl Domenico dragged across the outdoor restaurant stomps her strapped-on platform heels against the concrete and steps in front of him like she's his protective barrier. She crosses her arms and lifts her head as if challenging me.

“Brooklyn Martina!” her dad scolds before scooping her slender frame into his arms. “Time for you to find your Nana. This is an adult conversation.” Matteo is his name, the groom.

“Si said the same thing,” she reminds him. She'd be cute if her fury wasn't aimed at me. Her jealousy is thicker than Domenico's cold-hearted gaze.

Sienna's husband turns, about to walk away when Tony says, “Don't worry, Brooklyn. When the time comes, I'll find you the person you're meant to be with too.”

“You'll find her nothing, Tony.” Before those words were uttered from the boxing champion's lips, I thought he was the cool-headed one of them all. He seemed mellow compared to the others, but then, I'm only going off ten minutes of interaction for all of the rest of them except the boss.

Matteo turns to face his bride. That's when I notice the dried blood that stains most of the white sleeve. “Sienna, handle your father.” Then he carts his daughter away from our group while I'm left wondering what in the bloody hell happened to him.

“This is a joke, right, Dad?” Sienna implores. Her head tilts down as she lifts her fingers to rub between her brows. “Just say this was a joke. We'll all laugh, and then I won't have murderous thoughts towards anyone.”

“He's not joking, Si,” Domenico informs his sister, his voice seething. “But he's lost his fucking mind if he thinks for one second that I'm going to lie down like a dog and do as I'm told. Call this shit-fest off before someone gets hurt, Dad.”

His eyes flip to mine, and the malice within them is palpable, while the man standing behind him looks like he's

undressing me from the way his lips curve and his winter-blue
stare is hooded.

CHAPTER 3

Fuck, I'll marry her.

Of course, I'm not going to voice that thought. I'm in no mood to brawl with Dom tonight. I have too much shit on my plate, dealing with the fallout from my father murdering one of the Bratva leaders. Since he took out seventy percent of the Canadian brotherhood that also included their Pakhan—not to mention my sister shoving a nine-inch blade into the neck of the man who was a contender for their next Pakhan—their organization is in turmoil.

I'm not angry with Sasha for killing the bastard. If I'd gotten to him first, I would have done the job myself. But I would have tortured the motherfucker. I'm proud that she took matters into her own hands for once. She needed to step up and accept her place in our family. Now that I'm the Pakhan of the American Bratva, I'll need her more than ever after our father decided to drop retirement in my lap without so much as a heads-up.

But now other Pakhans think they can breathe down my neck, trying to unnerve me while testing me. Motherfuckers ... I don't break. They'll never find out my father blew up the Canadian Pakhan's compound in Vancouver, or that my sister killed Dimitri Sokolov. I'd forfeit my life before I gave them up.

It's a good thing Dom is standing in front of me right now. The way *shagged* rolled off this girl's tongue has the blood in my body rushing to my dick, making my problems take a

backseat. She's fuckin' hot with her plump lips and those long ringlets of red draped over her shoulders and fall to her waist. She's shorter than Sasha and Sienna by several inches.

Ah, fuck it.

What's one more fight among us? It's how we always end up, exorcising our demons. "If he doesn't want you, kitten, I'll take you." A smile spreads across my lips as her doe eyes round, snapping over Dom's shoulder to mine, surprise on her beautiful face.

"This isn't up for debate, and we aren't having any more of this conversation here tonight, Domenico. We can talk tomorrow." Antonio flicks his cold stare to Ciera, and like I've seen when my father looks at Sasha, his demeanor softens. "Ciera, allow me to escort you to get something to eat. Unless you're ready to go home." His thick, bushy brow arches, and it's easy to see he's testing her.

But why?

Narrowing my eyes, I look back at her without lust in the front seat. I scrutinize her the way I would anyone else, the way a Pakhan is supposed to break down every layer of a person's being. Her body is rigid, her shoulders remain straight, not hunched, as if an invisible wire pulls on them. Her emerald stare hides secrets, and while her lips aren't tipped up or down, but rather in an even line, her cheeks and chest have a slight flush, her fair skin giving her away.

She's a kitten who wants to be a lioness. She's afraid but she doesn't want to show it. I can respect that. However, she better have nine lives and then some if she's going to survive Domenico.

Tony is a fucking idiot to bring her here, to force her on Dom, to put her between us, because that's exactly what he's done. I'm not jealous, that's Domenico's forte and boy do I love wielding that blade. No, ownership of another being was never been an itch I shared—until five minutes ago—but now, I want my half.

“Don’t leave, kitten,” I say as I close the few inches between Dom and me, doing something I’ve never done in public before. Reaching around his front, I plant my palm flat against his chest and yank his back to my chest, slamming his ass into my hard cock. “I’ll share him with you.”

CHAPTER 4

T *he fucking balls on this motherfucker.*

Ignoring the hard ridges of his dick pressed against me, I reach into my tuxedo jacket and fist the Glock tucked inside. Pulling it out, my finger straight and off the trigger, I whip my body around to face Krishna, shoving the barrel center mast. “If you don’t want to be the next dead Pakhan, then I’d back the fuck off if I were you.”

“Don’t like that I’m willing to share you, or you don’t want to share *her*?”

That was last night, and the memory continues playing on a loop in my head. I saw everyone’s expression when I pulled my weapon from the holster hidden within my jacket. My sister and Sasha both wore matching shocked gazes. Ren laughed. My father was irritated, to say the least, though I was hoping to piss him off, and when that didn’t work, it pissed me off. Ciera, on the other hand, was as cool as a cucumber, like it was nothing for me to brandish a loaded weapon in a public place.

I’d question what hole my father dug her up from, but I already know the answer. She’s Cormac Fitzgerald’s daughter: the Irish scum that runs a gang of thugs in the city, thinking he’s somebody when really he’s a nobody.

The first nine years of my life were spent living in the city, but then my mother was killed and my father couldn’t stand being in the house where she took her last breath. I don’t blame him. After that night, I changed too. We all did. But by

abandoning our former home, Cormac decided all the corners of Manhattan were his for the taking. Where the cops have tried for longer than I've been alive to find dirt on my father, the police commissioner has Fitzgerald on retainer.

Digging into Owen Donovan's finances a few months ago, I learned quite a bit of useful knowledge. He changed his name thirty-five years ago, after graduating college, but before passing the bar exam and becoming a criminal justice lawyer.

He was born Eoghan O'Donovan, the Irish version of the Americanized name he goes by today, and he's a distant uncle to Cormac. Owen is the youngest brother to Liam O'Donovan, the most feared boss in all of Ireland. Consequently, Cormac was sent to live with and be raised by Liam when he was a young child, only returning to the States after his father was killed and someone had to take his place. He was eighteen at the time.

After doing some minor digging into Liam's background, he makes Cormac look like a saint. Liam is a twisted, sick fuck that puts all the other sick fucks at least five rungs below him on the ladder. He's into extortion, gambling rings, gun running, drug dealing, all the shit you'd expect.

It's rumored that he auctions off underage girls to the highest bidder; most likely rich men that get off from abusing someone who can't fight back, that take control and power away from those they consider less than them.

What the hell is my father even thinking? He really has lost his fucking mind if he thinks getting mixed up in that kind of shit is a good idea.

I take a sip from my third cup of coffee in the last hour. After a grueling workout session where I tried to break every rib along K's torso and failed, I showered and then came home. I stayed at his apartment in Brooklyn last night for the first time, not ready to come home and confront my father. But here I am now, waiting for my dad to make an appearance.

When the click of a sound signaling someone is opening the back door, I snap my eyes up from where I'm seated on a stool at the island in the kitchen to find a disheveled Giovanni

walking over the threshold. He's wearing black slacks and dress shoes, but his white undershirt is only half-tucked into his pants and covered in wrinkles, giving away that he slept in it and just woke up.

He doesn't bother eyeing me, like I'm not here or he can't be troubled with pleasantries this early. His presence alone still ticks me off. I'd been told for years he was rotting in a prison cell even though he wasn't guilty of the crime he was sentenced for. Part of that was a lie. He wasn't still in jail, yet the fucking boss didn't care to share that part of the story. Still hasn't, actually.

Giovanni goes straight to where the coffee maker is shoved into the corner along the kitchen counter. Opening the cabinet above it, he pulls out a mug and places it under the machine at the same time he's reaching for a coffee pod to his left. Within a few breaths, his coffee begins to brew.

"Are you hung over?" My father's question is said from behind me before he stops toward the other end of the island closest to the door Giovanni walked in.

"The real question, Tony, is why aren't you? She drank us both under the table last night," Giovanni says with his back to us as his cup of Joe finishes percolating.

She?

"Yes, but I'm a grown man who knows when he's reached his limit," my father says in a condescending tone like he's scolding one of his children. "I didn't realize you were still reaching for your adolescence."

Turning around, Giovanni presses his back against the edge of the granite while taking a long sip of his piping hot coffee, the scalding temperature of the liquid seemingly not fazing him. "I don't have one fuck to give either version of you that I see right now." He sighs, half yawning in the process. "When did I get so goddamn old that I wake up *still* drunk in the morning?"

"Apparently, when you play drinking games with someone that's over thirty years your junior," Dad replies.

“She has to go somewhere else, Tony. That teenager is going to put me in an early grave if we continue sharing the same close quarters.”

Excuse me? What the fuck did he just say? Since when do we have guests that I know nothing about?

I twist my head to the side, eyeing the side of my father’s suit-covered frame. “Exactly who is here that you haven’t told me about?”

That leads to another question. Where is he stashing Ciera? I can find that out after he explains why he and Giovanni are playing with a kid. My father doesn’t even date, and now this?

“Your Irish rainbow. The girl can—”

“Ciera is a goddamn teenager?” I growl, suddenly appalled at the way I touched her weeks ago, not to mention the thoughts swirling through my head when I had my hand on her soft, warm body.

“She’s nineteen, Dom. Unwad your fucking panties,” my father has the audacity to say to me before moving toward the coffee maker. Giovanni slides out of his way from blocking the corner.

“Do I have child molester tattooed on my forehead?” My father’s back is facing me, but the shake of his head is clear as the morning sky outside. “Well?”

“She’s legal, so ...” After Dad removes the used coffee pod from the machine, he puts a new one in and closes the top. Then he shoves a mug under the coffee drip and presses the brew button. Turning around to face me as the machine makes his coffee, he arches a thick, dark brow.

“Is she even out of high school?” I demand, even though the question sounds dumb to my own ears. Unless she was held back a grade or started school late, she wouldn’t still be in high school at nineteen. Still, I need confirmation.

“Actually, she graduated two years ago. A year early, in fact.” Dad crosses his arms. “She’s smart.”

“She’s a Fitzgerald. I doubt that.”

“No,” Giovanni chimes in. “Your rainbow is more than book smart. The kid is street smart too.”

“Why do you keep calling her *my* rainbow?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know, boy.” He snickers from behind his mug.

“Actually, I’d like to know how *you* know that about her, G. Just how personable did you get with my soon-to-be daughter-in-law?”

“Tony, a better question is, how do you?” One side of Giovanni’s mouth tips up, making me want to demand they tell me what they’re going on about, but that’s the least of my problems. Dad thinking he has a say in my life decisions are too pressing to attempt to figure out their cryptic bullshit.

“Why are you so insistent on this, Dad? Did you think because Ren and Si were a success, you’d hit the ball out of the park with me?” His eyes leave Giovanni’s to find mine. But instead of answering, he turns his back to me to pull his coffee mug from the machine.

“Unlike either of you, there is nothing I *don’t* know about Ciera.” Turning back around, he breathes forcefully. “I didn’t choose your bride willy-nilly, Domenico. If you give her a chance, you’ll figure out she’s quite perfect for you.”

“She’s still a child!” I yell.

“She doesn’t drink like a kid, that’s for sure,” Giovanni adds, muttering under his breath.

Before I can open my mouth to tell him to butt the fuck out, the back door opens, pulling my gaze to Ciera, her green eyes widening with surprise. She blinks, then turns her head, her stare leaving mine as she closes the door.

“I’m sorry to interrupt, Mr. Caputo—”

“Ciera,” Dad chastises as he cuts her off. “If you call me by my last name one more time, I’m liable to wash your mouth out with soap. You didn’t have a problem calling me Tony last night, so what’s different about today?”

She glances at me and then back to my father. Her cheeks flush as if she's embarrassed, and because she's a redhead with a fair complexion, it cascades down her chest. "I'm sorry. I drank more than I should have and—"

"Put us both to shame. Don't apologize, rainbow. You finally relaxed for the first time since you arrived. It was a welcomed change in the pool house," Giovanni praises her, making my blood heat and irritation seep beneath my tanned skin.

"Do you need something, Ciera?" Dad asks.

"I was wondering if I could go to a few stores in the city for some things."

"No," he says without giving her question thought as if he was waiting for it, and knowing him, he probably predicted she'd ask. Her shoulders drop at his response and an ache threads through my chest. "You know you cannot leave the house without Giovanni or myself accompanying you. Make a list. I'll have LeAnna get anything you need."

"No. It's fine. I don't want to be a bother."

"I'm sorry, but did we kidnap her too? Is that why she's under house arrest?" For the life of me, I don't know why it bugs me that he told her she isn't allowed to leave the property without an escort. She may be underage in the sense that I don't fuck women under the legal drinking age, but she isn't exactly a child like I said she was.

"Domenico, don't be stupid," Dad chastises. "Had you not released her in New Orleans I wouldn't have had to collect her yesterday before your sister's wedding."

"So, we are in the business of caged varmints then?"

"You're a right bollix, you know that?" she pops off, and I haven't the first idea what that means, but I'm guessing it's supposed to be an insult from the tone in which it fell from her plump lips. My eyes remain on them longer than they should, then my lids finally flick up to her emerald stare.

A laugh bursts from Giovanni, followed by a groan. "Don't make me laugh today, rainbow, but you hit the nail on

the head. He's certainly a bollix." It doesn't sound remotely as sexy as when the word rolled off Ciera's tongue. "I have time. I'll take you to get whatever you need. It'll give these two time to discuss the wedding plans."

"Did one or both of you sample the goods before you decided she'd be the one you saddled me with?" The words barely roll off my tongue before I feel the sting across my face.

I react without thought, treating her no differently than if it had been my sister striking me. Jutting my hand out, I wrap my fingers around her throat as I twist her, forcing her body to flip so that her back is to me as I pull her across the counter.

"I don't know what they told you about me, little girl, but when you come at me, you better be prepared to go all the way. I'll drown you and not think twice about it. If you want to live, you better fight with everything you have." I pause and look into scared eyes, my heart pounding and my brain screaming at me to stop, but I ignore my irrelevant conscience. "I'd think long and hard before you say *I do* to me," I tell her in the most acerbic tone I can force out of my mouth.

CHAPTER 5

After Domenico ordered me to leave Santo's place in New Orleans, I didn't know where to go. I've never been on my own before, never allowed to apply for a job even though I'd graduated high school two years ago. I was supposed to return to America to attend college, but my father didn't hold up the arrangement he'd made with my great-uncle, Liam O'Donovan.

Instead, he sold me to a sleazeball who bought me as a wedding present for his son. I was supposed to become his wife—his virgin wife, my father boasted. Only I'm not a virgin, and Cormac Fitzgerald knew that. I hadn't figured out how to get away from either Salvatore or his son Marco. They kept me locked in a second-floor bedroom the four months I'd been there. The only fresh air I was granted was a window, and although it didn't have a screen, there were bars on the other side. Climbing out wasn't an option, though. I'm far too thick to have squeezed between them, and even if I could've, it was at least a twenty-five-foot drop to the pavement. So, I kept the window open unless it was storming outside.

When I finally stepped onto the paved sidewalk again, I didn't know which way to turn at first. Louisiana was as much a foreign place as New York still is. I didn't even know my father's phone number to call him. What I did know was Killian's number, but only because I'd overheard him say it once, and having a photographic memory, it was etched in my head.

I didn't want to come back here, but what choice did I have? I had no money, at least not in New Orleans. What funds I did have, I left hidden at my father's home. No one there is smart enough to find it or even consider I'd had anything stashed away. I knew from the second I met Salvatore that anything I brought with me would be plundered through and taken should it be deemed valuable.

I used a hotel telephone to make a call once I was finally free. My half-brother, Killian, who's nearly two years younger than me, arranged for me to be picked up and taken to the airport half an hour later. By noon, I was back in the city.

I was born in New York City, but all I knew up to my eighteenth birthday, fourteen months ago, had been my great-uncle's home outside of Dublin. I wasn't a captive there like I was at my father's home, then the Santo boss, and now the Caputo one. Granted, I wouldn't want to return home to Ireland if my life depended on it.

They say choose the devil you know, but I highly doubt *they* knew the same as me. There are many things I miss from back home, though. It's a beautiful place with so many friendly people.

I wasn't allowed to have friends. I was homeschooled by a private tutor, but I was allowed to explore when my great-uncle wasn't home. As long as I didn't break his rules, disobey him, or let my grades drop, then I had more freedom. Still, I'd rather endure any slur spewed from Domenico's mouth or his fingers digging into my flesh over returning to *any* of the people I share DNA with.

"We're here, kiddo." Giovanni's smooth voice sounds from my left, drawing my eyes to peek out the glass in front of me, seeing the Irish food market I'd requested he take me to. We left Tony's half an hour ago, going through a toll to get here. I'm no stranger to them. We have toll roads in the Republic of Ireland too. "What do you need from here anyway?"

He turns off the ignition with the push of a button and then slips from the driver's side door without waiting for my

answer, so I unbuckle and do the same. By the time I'm closing the passenger's side door, Giovanni is waiting for me by the front bumper.

Crossing to the other side of the street, I say, "It's supposed to be chilly tonight. I thought I'd make a beer and cheese soup and bake some sourdough bread."

Last year when it turned cold, I didn't want to cook anything for my family. After being in America for a month with no mention of it, I realized my great-uncle hadn't told my father I'm somewhat of an amateur chef. If he had, the man would've made me cook every day instead of paying a housekeeper to do that and clean. Had he not sold me to pay off a gambling debt, he likely would have made me work as the maid.

Pulling open the glass door, Giovanni waits for me to enter the store before him. Between him and Tony, I don't know if they are naturally gentlemen or if they're putting on a facade to keep me from running.

"The boss wants to have a family dinner tonight minus the newlyweds and Brooklyn since she's staying with her grandmother until Matteo and Sienna return on Friday," Giovanni informs me as I pull a cart out from the buggy return section of the grocery store. "Can you make enough for everyone?"

I start walking toward the produce section, pushing the cart as I go in search of ingredients. "I don't know if it's best for me to be in the same room as Domenico. I doubt he'd even want to eat something I've cooked."

"You're marrying him in five days, rainbow. If you can't sit down at a table with the little dick, then you're already in trouble."

More like we're marrying against our own free will, so I think we're far past the "in trouble" stage of our nonexistent relationship. I keep that thought locked behind my lips, along with the fact that Domenico's mickey is the opposite of little. The memory of his hardness pressed against my backside weeks ago is still as vivid as if it happened last night.

Instead of responding, I stop the cart and walk around it, giving my back to Giovanni as I grab carrots, celery, and an onion. After placing them in the buggy, I peek my eyes up to see Giovanni with his palms wrapped around the handle of the shopping cart. “Grab what you need. I’ll follow,” he says nonchalantly, so without objecting, I pivot on my heels, giving him my back once again. I make my way around the little store in no time, grabbing items I know I’ll need for the meal and a few other things I want to cook this week.

Once I place the block of Irish cheddar in the cart, I have everything I need. Being inside this small specialty shop for twenty minutes has dwindled my anxiety to almost nothing. I can breathe with ease, and my throat doesn’t feel like there’s a cotton ball lodged in my esophagus. For a second, I consider drawing my trek to the checkout counter out, but when I see Giovanni glance at the big watch on his wrist for the third time, I think better of it.

By the time the clerk rings up all the items, I’m pulling out the cash I brought with me, but before I hand the bills to the young man across from me, I see the credit card in Giovanni’s hand moving toward the card reader. “No!” I say in an almost shout, the clerk’s eyes going from me to Giovanni and then back to me again, alarm in his gaze. “I mean, I got it. I have enough money to pay.”

The clerk’s eyes once again slide to Giovanni’s and linger in a scrutinizing manner. Swallowing, I force myself to focus on Giovanni, waiting for him to say something. His jaw hardens, but after a heartbeat, his hand retreats and a forced nod grants me permission to pay for the groceries. As I hand the bills over, my anxiety creeps back in, and I know I’ve messed up without having to be told.

Giovanni doesn’t say anything as he grabs all the bags, not leaving any for me to carry as he walks out of the store, me following behind him. He doesn’t speak during the drive back to Tony’s either. The only noise is the turning of the tires as they speed against the wind and asphalt below the vehicle. By the time he parks in the driveway, my chest is heavy and my body stiff from the thirty-five-minute drive.

He presses the button on the dash, turning the SUV off. “Ciera,” he finally says, breaking his silence, his voice low, but there’s a lethal edge that doesn’t go amiss. “In the future, drawing unwanted attention will not be tolerated. I’m going to let your outburst slide this time, but it will not happen again. Are we clear?”

“I wasn’t trying to offend—”

“This has nothing to do with your reasoning. Don’t ever draw attention to me in public, Ciera. My job is to protect this family. If you put one of us at risk again, you will not survive long enough to apologize.” He pauses, but his deep blue eyes remain locked with mine as a cold chill runs down the length of my spine. “Do you understand what I’m saying?”

I nod because words are shackled behind the fear of his unspoken threat. Here I thought he was the nice one, but I haven’t been struck with cold hard fear since I was on Ireland soil. I’ve never been able to drop my guard around anyone. I was a fool to think I might be able to now.

“Take the groceries to the main house. I need to have a word with the boss.”

CHAPTER 6

“**T**he least you can do is level with me,” I say as I sit in the chair opposite my father as he sits behind his desk in his office. I lean back and place my forearms against the armrests on each side. “Why are you hellbent on having me marry a Fitzgerald? What is it you’re after, and why can’t we get it without a piece of paper that means nothing?”

“Did you know Killian, Cormac’s son, is only seventeen?” His eyebrows lift before he continues. “Ciera’s nineteen. She’s his firstborn.” He pauses, letting that information sink in, and I already know where he’s taking our conversation. “She’s the rightful heir. She’s the oldest.”

I bark out a laugh. “That sick fuck doesn’t care about right versus wrong. Fitzgerald will never name her his second in command,” I tell him. Besides that, she’s too skittish and mouse-like for the job. A girl like her doesn’t belong anywhere near our world. *My five-year-old niece has more of a backbone than she does*, I think to myself.

“I’m not implying that he would. There is no doubt in my mind that that’s the last thing Cormac wants. When Killian was born, he shipped her to Dublin and then killed their mother. He thought he’d get rid of his daughter since he’d finally got the boy he wanted in the first place,” Dad informs me, and it makes sense, but there’s more my father *isn’t* saying, so I keep prodding.

“Yet, here she is, back in New York, and you’re making a play for her to be what, exactly?”

He sighs, but it comes off more like he's irritated that I'm not catching on to the obvious. "Sooner rather than later, Cormac will be dead. With him out of the picture, we can take over and dismantle their shit-show. You would move back to the city so that we could have a presence there. If Killian has to go too, then so be it, but I'd rather give the boy a second chance for us to show him what a real family is supposed to be like. Let him see how we have each other's back no matter what so he can do the same for Ciera."

"Now you want to welcome a second member of their botched lineage into our folder. Have you lost your fucking mind?" One Fitzgerald is bad enough. Two is unacceptable.

"No, Domenico," he bites out in an acerbic tone. "You have already forgotten. This has been the plan for years."

"But you haven't told me why." I'm calmer now than when I followed him into his office. His frustration seems to be a balm to my anger. It won't last long. The need to damage something or someone lies just beneath my skin, aching to be released.

"Multiple reasons. Pick whichever one you like the most. Cormac isn't a leader. He's a thug. He thinks he holds power when in actuality, he's just as much Liam O'Donovan's puppet as the corrupt police commissioner, Owen Donovan, is. Cormac encourages his hoodlums to rape and kill women, to rob business owners. All that alone is reason enough to end his miserable life, but none of those are my primary reason."

I'm not in disagreement. Fitzgerald's demise should be slow and painful until his organs fail and nothing remains but a rotting corpse.

"Don't keep me in suspense, Dad. Spit it out. What's your real beef with him?"

"I discovered a recorded conversation in Raffaele's safe. One voice was Cormac; the other Rico Romano."

"Not exactly surprising that Rico, the rat, would be consorting with trash," I comment when his chest expands as he takes a breath, his eyes darkening with so much hatred it's

palpable. The real question is, why would any type of recording be in my grandfather's possession and not the boss's?

I don't verbalize that question, though. There's no need when it's clear he's going to tell me. "Cormac ordered Romano to come forward with a false confession of a murder he hadn't actually witnessed."

"Giovanni?" It's a known fact that the rat bastard testified against Matteo's uncle over fifteen years ago, earning him a life sentence behind bars for a murder he hadn't committed. I've always wondered why Dad allowed him to continue breathing, but I chalked it up to knowing his friendship with Giovanni had ended on sour terms. I figured he *wanted* him to rot in a cell, but knowing now what I learned a while back, Dad kept a lot from me that he shouldn't have. Unresolved anger resurfaces at that thought.

"Cormac had dirt on Romano. Rico liked underaged girls. Fitzgerald had him on video."

"And he's still breathing?" I sit up, my back straightening into a steel rod, ready to go find this sick fuck to end his miserable life once and for all. Despite knowing or thinking I knew the details of Giovanni and my father's friendship ending abruptly, I've always thought Romano should have been dealt with years ago. I would have put him through unimaginable agony before killing him, and that's before learning about his kiddy fetish.

"Not for long," Dad enlightens me. "He will be handled in due time."

"Yes, by me, and I say there's no time like the present." I'm sick of this bullshit. This is yet again something the boss kept from me. I should have heard the recording at the time he listened to it. Romano should already be rotting in a gutter.

"No. You'll do no such thing," he reprimands in a tone that provokes a challenge.

"Excuse me," I bite out and then clamp down on my teeth and lock my jaw as something inside me claws at my chest. He

took out his old man and didn't include me even though the motherfucker killed *my* mother. Now he wants to take this one away too?

I don't fucking think so.

"Rico didn't ruin *your* life, now did he?" My father's voice is razor-sharp and full of authority, but even that doesn't make me relax back against the chair or the rage that I'm sure is pouring out from my dark gaze. "His statement sealed Giovanni's fate. It is his pound of flesh, not yours, son. It's not even mine. He took more from Giovanni than you can imagine."

"Enlighten me," I demand through clenched teeth.

"That's not my secret to share, especially when it could hurt people I care about or damage our family," he says in my calmer tone.

"That's horseshit. We don't have secrets in this family. *Secrets* cause harm and rifts that don't need to exist." What the hell is he thinking? Seems to me, his longtime *friend* is far too important in his life than I like. Giovanni is not one of his children. He's not blood. Being Matteo's uncle doesn't count as being married into the family in my book. Fuck this!

"When you become the boss, you can run this family the way you see fit, but since I'm still the head, what I say goes for everyone, Ciera included."

"Fine," I bite out, knowing he isn't going to budge whether he agrees with me or not. Since when did Giovanni become so goddamn important to him? That's what I'd like to know, but that isn't what I ask. "What does Ciera have to do with any of this? Why do I need to marry her so fucking bad?" My question comes out like a snarl, but frankly, I don't give a damn.

"The day I found out Cormac had a girl, I knew I had to take her from him. The plan was for her to be at least twenty-one, but that's not how the cards fell. For a long time, I thought I'd have to go to Dublin and kidnap her myself, but then her relative sent her back to Fitzgerald last year after she

graduated high school. I'm still not sure why. I know Cormac doesn't want her. It wasn't until you were on the plane headed to New Orleans that I found out she was there."

"You aren't getting to the fucking point, Dad. Why do I need to marry her? You marry her if you want her so goddamn badly." That statement sours my stomach, and it has zero to do with my mother's memory, but I won't dwell on the reason why. I won't allow myself to even go there. There's no point, really.

"That asinine statement makes you sound like a petulant child, Domenico. Lose the animosity you have toward her. You're marrying Ciera because, I'm telling you, you're going to marry her. Doing it now instead of later has everything to do with Cormac's role in Giovanni going to prison."

"If you have a recording that proves his innocence, why don't you get the verdict overturned?" There is literally no reason for me to marry her. He knows he hasn't given me a good enough reason, yet he continues going in circles.

"Owen Donovan won't allow it. The tape has already been turned over anonymously. He made sure it was lost," Dad says through gritted teeth as his nostrils flare.

"Then go around him. He's just the police commissioner. I'm sure you made a copy."

"Of course I did, but the motherfucker has every dirty politician and corrupt judge in his pocket. I knew when I handed it over, it wouldn't do any good. We're doing this my way. You're marrying Ciera, and then we're ridding the city of its trash once and for all."

"Jesus, Dad. Just kill them all, then move back to the city and make our presence known. You want them out, then take them out. It's that fucking easy. Why am I the only one that sees that?"

"Cormac doesn't die until after you marry his daughter. Mass murder just doesn't hit the same way, son. Besides, taking out Fitzgerald and his crew only slices the arm off, not the head. I have a plan, Dom. Give me a year. If you want out

of the marriage on your first wedding anniversary, I'll have it annulled. I give you my word."

"Answer me this," I say, leaning forward. "Is this your way of trying to get me to stop fucking Krishna?"

"No," he says without hesitation. "Who you bring to your bed is your business, not mine."

"You do realize by the end of the first year, if not before, she'll be broken or dead, right?"

"Maybe you'll surprise yourself, Dom. Maybe she's what you need to soften the ways of your heart."

"Don't lie to yourself, old man. I'll never love her, not the way you loved Mom. Or even half as much as I love the twins. My heart is at max capacity. There's no room for her or anyone else. There never will be. But since you're hellbent on forcing a monster on her, the consequences are on you." I stand but don't walk away quite yet. Instead, I stare back at him for a beat. "I don't want what you gave Sienna. The wedding will be here and kept small. Everything, including her wedding dress, is to be black. Make it a funeral. It's her death sentence, after all."

CHAPTER 7

DOMENICO

When I left my father's office, I heard *her* talking to LeAnna, our housekeeper, in the kitchen, so I snuck out the front door to leave. I texted Ren to meet me on the mats at the gym. I have quite a bit of aggression to get out, and I still owe my little brother an ass-kicking.

That was fifty minutes ago. I've been stretching for the last fifteen, and if he doesn't drag his ass in here within the next minute or two, I'm going to resort to pounding on the floor bag. Every second that ticks by, the pressure inside my head compounds.

Ren wasn't the only one I sent a message to. I came out of the text with him and sent one to my father, telling him to have Ciera tested. I'm not sticking my dick in her—married or not—until I know she's clean. Dad replied her appointment had already been scheduled for tomorrow morning.

My sister was going to be next, but before I could type out a text, one from her came through telling me she and Matteo had just landed in Cabo for their honeymoon. She asked me if Dad was still acting like a dick.

Sienna knows she doesn't have to check in with me or tell me her whereabouts. I have the ability to see her and Ren's location at any given time, the same as they do each other and me, but I like that she does it without me having to stalk her location.

After the reception last night, Brooklyn left to spend the week with Matteo's parents while they boarded Mischa's

private jet that took them straight to Mexico. They'll return on Friday just in time for the sham my father has decided to throw together. What the rush is, I still don't know. I haven't asked either, but I'm curious. Knowing my dad the way I do, there's a reason behind it, and if I can find that out, it may give me enough leverage to stop the wedding altogether or at least push it back.

I'm not against fucking Ciera. In fact, I've wanted to do just that since the first time I laid eyes on her beautiful body and drop-dead gorgeous face. Her age doesn't even dampen my desire for her like I made it seem when I blew up on my father this morning. I'll turn twenty-six in a few days. Her being nineteen puts less than six years between us. We're not *that* far off. Though I haven't fucked a teenager since I was one, so there's that.

Movement has my eyes snapping up from where my ass sits on the mat with my legs stretched in front of me. Ren walks in, dropping his black duffle bag by the case opening to the private training room he knew he'd find me in.

"Bout damn time," I say, drawing my legs into me. Blowing out a breath, I jump to my feet as he kicks off his sneakers and socks. He's already dressed in rash guard shorts with a plain black T-shirt covering his torso, the same as me.

"Yeah, well, I wasn't stopping a killer blow job to get here faster," he muses, a smirk forming on his lips as he closes our distance.

Extending my left arm, I grab my brother by the collar of his shirt when he gets within reaching distance, yanking him forward. I step with my right foot as I throw an elbow into the side of his head, but he ducks at the last second, causing my arm to swing over the top of his head, missing its target while he slams his right fist into my side. The punch burns, but it only manages to tip my lips upward.

I needed this.

Releasing the material of his T-shirt, I plant my palm on his chest and push him backward and away from me. I don't step away from him. Instead, I advance forward, capitalizing

on his stumble by swinging again, this time my fist connecting with his jaw.

“Nice,” Ren says, cracking his neck, the ghost of a smile gracing his face. Five weeks ago, he was a mess. He’s done a one-eighty since our time in New Orleans. You’d never know he faced death only one week ago when Dimitri Sokolov took him from the strip club he owns in the city in an attempt to get Sasha to bend to his will.

“Let’s see if you’ll be saying that when I’m finished with you, little brother.”

Smirking, he says, “Or, I you.”

I beckon him with my fingers. “By all means, give me your best. No holding back. Let’s settle the score.”

“You mean for you breaking my wife’s finger?” He arches a brow. “Gladly, motherfucker.” A snarl forms on his lips, the smile suddenly gone as if it were never there to begin with.

Stepping toward me, his feet swap places in the blink of an eye as he pulls a switch kick, attempting to land it on the ribs he hammered his fist into a moment ago. I block with my forearm and pivot around as I swing my fist into his side before snatching him by his shirt and ramming my knee into his gut.

I love my brother. There is nothing I wouldn’t do for him. I’d kill any motherfucker that wished him or my sister harm. That extends to Sasha and Matteo, even the fucking giant in my life if I’m being honest, but I also thoroughly enjoy kicking each one of their asses. Matteo’s time is coming. I might even go as far as saying he deserves a beating more so than Ren for the way he treated my sister growing up.

No one gets a free pass, family included. I can have your back without respecting you. That doesn’t mean you have my loyalty. Both are earned, and so far, Matteo has shown he’s grown up in the last six years. He doesn’t back down from my father; that alone proves his character and worth as a man.

Shoving Ren away from me again, I hook my ankle around his and cause him to trip, falling backward. I tackle him to the

cushioned mat, taking up residence on top of him. I lock my feet under his legs at the same time he grabs and traps my right arm to his chest, also capturing my foot on the same side. He arches and flips me onto my back. Releasing me, he pushes off and stands, a smirk in place when I glance up.

Lifting my legs, I roll back until my palms are flush with the mat, and then I explode up into a stand.

“Are you going through with it?” Ren asks. Arching my brow, I silently wait for him to clarify, even though he can only be talking about one thing. “The wedding,” he says after a beat.

“Even I have to follow the boss’s orders,” I say with a lack of emotion, like we’re talking about mundane shit instead of my future.

He beckons me to come at him, but I wait him out. Ren’s impatient; he’ll come to me.

“This isn’t business. Why is he playing with your life?” Like I knew he would, my brother makes the next move. He grabs my shirt, the same as I did to him previously, yanking me inches from his chest. Twisting, he puts me into a headlock, and I allow it, forcing myself not to smile as he messes up. Tightening his grip, he goes to punch me on the other side of my ribcage, and from there, he’s planning to take me to the ground to pummel me.

Predictable.

Before he locks his ankle behind mine, I throw a hard punch to his side and then another direct to the gut. I repeat both hits two more times, forcing him to lose his hold, which I easily come out of.

“Oh, it’s business alright, but apparently it’s personal too.” He arches an eyebrow. “Dad found out that Fitzgerald was involved in getting Giovanni convicted. Guess he thought stealing his daughter and marrying her off to me is more of a knife to the throat than actually killing the fucker.”

“Then he should make Giovanni marry her, not you.” The thought of her warming that fuck’s bed has me seeing red and

itching to pull the trigger of a gun aimed at his head. *No one is going to fuck her beside me.* “Unless, of course, you do want to marry her. Although, I don’t see how that’s going to go over well with Krishna. Three’s a crowd and all that.”

“I don’t want to marry anyone—Ciera or Krishna. I also don’t want to talk about this bullshit anymore. Besides, I thought you wanted to kick my ass for causing minor injury to your precious wife’s pinky?” I remind him to get off the subject of me and back on his own feelings.

His dark eyes flash, giving me exactly what I need—his anger. He tackles me, taking me to the ground in the blink of an eye. We tussle, both landing hits using our fists, elbows, and knees. We continue until he tires, and the fight dies out quicker than I’d hoped, but that just means I’ll have to pick a fight with someone else.

Not a problem. I know just the person. After we get off on trying to kill the other, we can fuck until this strange feeling in my chest goes away. Fucking is all I’ll give either one of them. When I tire of one or both, I’ll find a new toy to replace the ones I’m bound to break.

CHAPTER 8

Yesterday morning, before sunrise, I discovered Alexey Kozlov had been playing both sides of the fence—literally. It was actually Domenico that figured out he'd doctored his revenue reports that he submitted to my father every quarter. Now that the business is in my hands, I needed to dive deeper into everything my father had been handling.

I've only made it through the past two years of information, and the question remains, how did Dad miss this? His not-so-spontaneous trips to Florida had been getting more frequent. It's plausible he was wrapped up in the fact that his wife was living thousands of miles from him. But then again, he chose that life for her, so he only has himself to blame.

I'm not of the same mindset my old man was. I plan to keep those I actually give two shits about within arm's reach. Anything can happen when someone you care about is out of sight. Sasha proved that to me last week, and had things happened differently, I could have lost her. Had that happened, I would have torn Canada, or anywhere and anyone else, apart to find her. Now that my sister is pregnant, I have even more to lose, which is why she isn't here today.

I've never left her in the dark. Sure, Dad didn't involve her as he did me. He didn't keep her informed, which I've always disagreed with him on, even if I didn't voice that opinion. He knew me well enough to know what I was thinking, and I respected him enough to keep my trap shut.

Now, I'm torn on pulling her in or leaving her out of the heavy shit—like killing one of my own men. Kozlov forfeited his life the moment he considered a business deal with another Pakhan, or his son. Perhaps Dimitri's father, Ivan Sokolov, didn't know of his son's backroom deals, but that doesn't matter. Alexey did not have the authority to launder money outside the United States. From what I can tell, over fifty million dollars is missing from the last twenty-four months of his casino revenue.

The question now remains, where did that money go? If he was paying Dimitri Sokolov, why? There's no doubt in my mind that Sokolov was involved somehow. It's too much of a coincidence he showed up at Alexey's house in New Orleans all those weeks ago while Sasha and I were there.

I'm also pissed at my sister for not telling me she believed our father had arranged her marriage. Dad did, but she allowed Dimitri to fool her into believing she'd been promised to him.

Had I known, I would have ended that motherfucker's life without asking my father. Hell, had I known his plans for Sasha and Lorenzo, I might have done the same to Ren too. Back then, there wasn't anything between Dom and me except hate and several hard dicks. Back then, I would have taken pleasure in killing Ren, unknowingly hurting my sister in a way that would have destroyed us.

Which brings me to another reason I'm ticked off at my sister. Had the bitch told me about their relationship, I would have backed off and let her have whatever she wanted. But like everyone else, she kept him a secret from me too. She deserved getting her ass kicked by Domenico, only for different reasons than the one he was making, and it should have been me that broke her insignificant pinkie finger. The little shit deserved a punch in the face with all the brotherly love I'd have given her.

But now I can't do anything. She's pregnant, and the next motherfucker that looks at her wrong is going to die. She'd punch me in the face if she knew I now saw her as fragile. Can't say that she'd be wrong in doing so either, but that also

doesn't thwart me from needing to keep her and the baby safe. They're my family, and they're mine to protect.

"I can keep this up all day," I warn Alexey, forcing my thoughts back to the here and now. I had him picked up yesterday morning and escorted to New York City. My men arrived with him an hour ago.

I have a residential detached home for dealing with things that have the potential to get messy. Few people around these parts will notify the cops of noises since hearing gunshots are common. It's also not too far from my apartment in Brighton Beach should I need to haul ass out of here. I own this house through a shell corporation that can't be traced back to me. The apartment I bought for when I needed space away from my father's mansion, which has been more often since he's in Florida with my mom. "Tell me where the fifty mil went."

Kozlov is done. He knows it too, or he should. He won't leave this place still breathing. The thing is, if a Bratva brother dies, all their possessions and money automatically go to their Pakhan. I can keep or sell anything I choose. I can also gift some or all of it to their wives or mothers if they have them. Alexey has neither. I can also award it to the next person I put in charge of his territory and businesses.

With the exception of Las Vegas and Atlantic City, the New Orleans casinos are our third most profitable location. Fifty million dollars over the course of two years is pocket change to us, which is how he got away with it for so long, but that doesn't mean it's a forgivable crime. His penance is death. No amount of begging will change that resolution.

"Krishna," he pleads, his Russian accent coming out urgent and pathetic. "I would never steal from you. It wasn't me. You have to believe that, but I will find out who did this among management. We'll both make him pay."

"I'm tired of you saying the same shit, Kozlov. Keep going down this road, and your life will end more painful than it has to." My patience is growing thin. I'm ready to shove the barrel of my gun down his throat and be done, but I've held out this long. I can keep going if it'll get more information out of the

bastard. “Tell me what Sokolov had to do with any of this. Tell me what the money was used for and where it went?”

“Please, Krishna. Let me find the real vor,” he urges, using the Russian term for thief.

Tipping my head down, I lift my hand to my face and press my middle finger between my eyes, rubbing the heated skin where so much tension is pushing against my skull. With my other hand, I snap my fingers and point in Alexey’s direction. Damien steps up behind Kozlov so quietly his steps can’t be heard, but by the way Alexey’s breathing accelerates, he knows one of my men was ordered to take action.

Swallowing the heat in my lungs before it pours out and I start firing rounds into Kozlov, I lift my head and pierce his brown eyes with the bone-chilling coldness found in mine. At the same time, Damien removes something from the pocket of his slacks, and within the blink of an eye, he whips it over Kozlov’s head and around his neck before fisting and snatching his hands back. Alexey starts to gag, but with his hands zip-tied behind his back, there’s nothing he can do except take the choking assault.

When I let my eyes dip, I see the fabric Damien is using is the black necktie he removed from around the collar of his dress shirt half an hour ago. He anticipated this moment. That’s good, impressive even. It tells me I promoted the right person to Sasha’s position when she took mine.

“How many times do you think I can bring you to the brink of death, Kozlov? This can end as quickly as you decide,” I tell him, lying through my teeth. He won’t be given a quick death. I’m going to draw it out for as long as possible. He betrayed the brotherhood—stole and lied—but more than that, he aided Dimitri Sokolov in whatever he’d planned for my sister. Maybe not directly, but he harbored him when I had no knowledge of that motherfucker being in my territory.

Damien relaxes his fingers, giving Alexey the opportunity to swallow a gulp of air, his chest expanding at the urgent rush to fill his lungs. He barely exhales the breath when Damien’s knuckles tighten again, pulling the tie back in the opposite

direction, choking Alexey once more. He gags, his face turning a deep shade of red as his eyes open as wide as they'll go.

My head cocks to the side, watching the scene, watching Alexey's life drain, feeling not one ounce of remorse for the situation I placed him in. This wasn't my doing. He did this to himself. He betrayed my family, the organization, our brotherhood—the Bratva. Why should I feel bad that he'll die at my hands? Damien may be the one torturing him, but it'll be me that ends his life. Damien's fingers loosen, the taut material dropping lower on Kozlov's neck, down to the collar of his disheveled and dirty dress shirt.

“Don't make me resort to chopping shit off your body, Alexey. Be a man. Take your death respectfully. Tell me what I want to know,” I order, my tone steady but as lethal as a viper's bite.

I don't want to hack away at him to get him to talk. It's messy, and it'll piss me off. If I go down that road, he'll wish Dimitri had killed him. I'll draw every slice out longer, in slow, agonizing strokes.

“Sokolov found out some of my wait staff were offering services on the side to high rollers.” He breathes, taking a full breath before continuing. “He somehow knew that Mischa didn't know I wasn't reporting that income.”

His eyes flick away from me momentarily to compose himself but not before I catch the bleakness taking form.

Good, I think to myself. He finally realizes he won't be walking out of this house. He'll only make his death quicker and easier on himself if he comes clean.

“I hope there's more,” I urge after he's silent for too long. “If you tell me Sokolov was blackmailing you for being a pimp, I'm going to let Damien do what he wishes to do to your dumb ass while I walk away.”

One side of Damien's mouth twitches. He'd love nothing more than for me to issue the order. I have no problem ending the life of someone that justifies it. I don't get off on the kill,

but I don't lose sleep over it. It just doesn't excite me like it does Damien. The sadistic fucker enjoys torturing people, but I'll give him this, it's only those that deserve his brand of crazy. After all, he did blow up the Canadian Pakhan's compound with Ivan and most of his men inside.

I flick my wrist and eye the time, exhaling as I drop my hand back to my side. "Can we speed this up? I have shit to do," I tell him. I don't, actually, at least not until this evening when I have dinner plans, but my sister is at a doctor's appointment for the baby.

I need this finished before she gets done and figures out where I am. Like the asshole I'm fucking, I too track my little sister's whereabouts on my cell phone, and I also allow her to know where I am at all times.

"Were you paying Dimitri off for only two years, or was it going on longer?" I push.

"I wasn't paying Sokolov," he admits.

My brow arches. "Then where did the fifty mil go?" A frustrated breath expels from my body, my nostrils flaring.

"Others knew too. I had to keep them quiet so Mischa wouldn't find out."

"If you paid them with hush money instead of killing them for even considering blackmailing you, you're even more of a dumbfuck than I originally thought. What the fuck did you pay Sokolov with?"

Because it was something, even if it wasn't cash.

Alexey has never been the brightest motherfucker when it comes to street smarts, but he was always a whiz with numbers. He graduated from MIT, for Christ's sake. How is he this goddamn stupid?

I knew he had a prostitution ring with at least five of his waitresses. He has for five years. When my father first learned of it, he wasn't angry, but he wanted to ensure the women weren't being forced or abused. I investigated it personally, learning it wasn't even Kozlov's idea. One of the women was in debt from student loans. There are only so many hours in

the day a person can work, but she wasn't making enough money to get her head above water. She was drowning and desperate. She wanted to do it. It was her idea; others found out and wanted the same opportunity.

I concluded the women were adults and could make their own choices. In a shitty way, Alexey was helping them, but he was profiting from them too. My father decided to let it continue without Kozlov knowing we knew. I agreed with his decision as long as we kept an eye on Alexey to ensure it did not become forced. After two years, I reassigned that job to *someone* else.

I force my stare to remain on Kozlov instead of flicking over in Stepan's direction. I had my reasons for sending him along with Damien to apprehend Alexey. I'm likely going to kill two birds with one stone today. Stepan's job was to check in on Alexey's businesses, both on the books and off. As the bookkeeper, he spent a week in New Orleans once a month, as well as in Miami, Vegas, and Chicago, making sure the Avtoritets in charge of smaller territories' loyalties stayed intact while also collecting money from them.

When he doesn't answer, I ask, "Who were the others you paid to keep your little secret?"

Kozlov's subtle glance away from me tells me everything I need to know. It was my job to ensure loyalty. I should never have placed that duty on Stepan, but I had a purpose behind doing so—he failed. His loyalty wasn't to me or the brotherhood, not even to my father, who was his Pakhan at the time. Whatever his reasons are, I'm not in the mood to hear them.

I lift my arm in a smooth but quick motion, pulling the trigger when I'm sure my aim is accurate. The gun fires, but with the suppressor attached to the barrel, the pop isn't quite as loud as it would've been without it. Stepan drops, the shot nailing him between the eyes and killing him instantly.

"Now that that's out of the way, let's circle back to Sokolov. You're going to tell me why he was here and what you were supplying him with if it wasn't money. If you don't,

your death will be drawn out, unlike his.” I flick my eyes to the dead heap in the corner and then back to Kozlov.

I’m about to get Damien to apply more incentive to get Alexey’s mouth to open when the sound of a car door slamming snaps my attention in that direction. It’s too close to be someone at a neighboring house, which alerts me to someone being in my driveway.

I nod to where Damien stands behind Kozlov, silently ordering him to check it out. No one knew we would be here, leaving me to think it’s likely my sister snooping, but that doesn’t mean I’m going to assume it’s Sasha without making sure.

“Krishna, please,” Alexey starts, his voice grinding on my nerves. “I’m a good asset. You know this. I’ve made the Bratva a lot of money over the years. Give me another shot. I’ll increase revenue, double it if I have—”

A semi-automatic weapon fires, the round nailing Kozlov in the chest, dead center of his heart.

Whirling around, I lift the weapon in my hand, prepared to fire it into the motherfucker that stole not only my kill but prematurely did so before Alexey answered all my questions. I blink, my finger itching to pull the trigger as I stare at Domenico. He has Damien shoved against the case opening from the kitchen with a firearm pointed at his head in one hand and the one he used to kill Kozlov in the other. After a beat, he lowers the one he fired as we stare at each other, only I don’t do the same or remove my finger from within the trigger well.

My nostrils flare as the onset of a smirk threatens to form on his lips. No one but me and maybe his siblings would recognize the twitch he’s trying too hard to hold back. I ought to shoot him on principle.

His finger pops out from the trigger well. Dom tips the weapon away from Damien toward the ceiling as he steps past him, walking in my direction. His arm drops, and within seconds he holsters both handguns under his suit jacket. He’s dressed the part of the underboss today: a black designer suit with a black dress shirt underneath. Usually, he opts not to

seem like a mirror image of his father, but that's exactly what he looks like today in his all-black attire.

He glances around the room, not caring that I have a weapon aimed at his chest. "Where's Sasha?" he demands.

"Not here." I drop my arm and then remove the suppressor attached to the barrel. Once I unscrew it, I pocket the suppressor and holster the weapon beneath my suit jacket.

"Why the fuck not?" he snaps.

"My sister is pregnant, or did you forget?" He wouldn't pull Sienna into this type of shit, but I don't point that out even though I know where his annoyance is headed.

"And that's an excuse for her not to have your back?"

If I wasn't pissed at the audacity this fucker has to walk in here and finish a job I wasn't finished with, I'd laugh at the seething look he's giving me. "I didn't bother telling her."

"I expect Ren to coddle the bitch, but not you. You're losing your edge, and frankly, it's a fucking turn-off."

"You'd still suck it, so ..." I trail off, shrugging my shoulders and giving him my back while I turn back to look at the mess he made. Motherfucking shit. Kozlov was withholding, and now I may never find out what that was. Dom stops inches behind me as I look at the blood staining Alexey's lifeless body to what's pooling on the floor as drops continue to add to it. "I wasn't done with him."

"Sokolov was using him to funnel young homeless girls out of the country for God knows what. At least, that's what I gathered from two audio recordings I recovered from his cloud. Now that this is done, order your boy to leave," Dom demands, further ticking me off.

"No," I deadpan, then turn to where Damien still stands in the case opening. "Clean this mess up. Text me when it's done." Flicking my eyes to Domenico, I say, "Follow me." Then I step past him, heading to the door in a foul mood.

I can't spill his blood here, but I can inside my apartment. Dom took my kill, and for that, he'll pay with his flesh, in

more ways than one when I rip his ass apart with my already hardening dick.

When I reach the kitchen door that leads to the side driveway, I fling the door open but don't step out. Instead, I wait for Domenico to stride past me. When he nears his SUV, I shove him against the side of the vehicle, making his palms jut forward before his chest crashes into the B-pillar. Pressing the crotch of my pants against his ass, my dick swells as my front meets the hard ridges of his back. I prefer it when he's dressed down, but this is nice too. He's hot whether he's wearing clothes or not. That thought seems to piss me off more today for some reason, fueling the fire burning inside me.

Reaching between him and his Land Rover, my fingers find the clasp on his slacks and pull it loose. I go for the zipper next, dragging it down in a fast motion, needing what he's about to give me.

"You're going to get us killed out here," he says but doesn't try to stop me when my hand dips into the waistband of his boxer briefs, my fingers finding the warm, hard flesh I knew would be there. All five of my digits wrap around him as my head lowers to the olive skin poking out above the collar of his shirt. My mouth opens, and my teeth bite down. Despite the wind whining around us, I hear the intake of air he sucks in through his mouth.

Squeezing the base of his dick, I drag my hand upward until I'm at the tip. I unclamp my teeth and begin to suckle his neck. A bead of cum meets the pad of my thumb as I press it against the hole the liquid seeps from. Running my tongue over the flesh I'm marking, I inch up to his ear. "I couldn't think of a better way to leave this shit hole of a world than being buried inside you."

"Fuck," he whispers, his voice hoarse.

"This is only partial payment for the shit you pulled in there, asshole." I seethe against his ear as I let him go and shove his jeans down his thick thighs. "Now, jerk the fuck off so that I have something to lube my dick with."

CHAPTER 9

My anxiety ran high all day. At the market this morning, Giovanni went from carefree and relaxed to a lethal viper within the blink of an eye.

I'm the outsider among them, and I cannot allow myself to forget that. These people protect themselves and their own flesh and blood, which I'm not. It doesn't matter that I'm marrying one of them. At the end of the day, I'm just a means for Antonio to get back at my father for a rivalry I know nothing about nor want to be a part of.

On the ride from my father's home yesterday, Tony was honest with me about my situation. He told me it was past time for him to bring Cormac to his knees, and then he apologized for using me as a pawn. He seemed genuinely sorry for that fact, but there was resolve in his tone. A minute later, he told me I would marry his son. The finality in his voice said I didn't have a choice.

When I didn't speak, he glanced at me from the driver's seat as if waiting for me to refuse. But what was I going to say? At that point, I didn't even know he was the Italian-American equivalent of my father: the boss. Antonio did have an air about him, though, that immediately made you know he was in charge, whereas Cormac Fitzgerald comes off like the typical head bully in school.

I tried to keep my guard up last night but failed after we returned from his daughter's wedding reception to find Giovanni halfway through a bottle of bourbon. It was clear

that something was bothering him when I saw Giovanni and my future father-in-law pass a look between them that was evident of a silent conversation. The boss, as Giovanni refers to Tony more often than not, left my side to grab two glasses, filling them and offering one to me.

I'd only planned to drink one, maybe two, before going to my room to give them space and myself solitude. I'd already stashed a bottle in my room while they were at the wedding to help me sleep easier in a foreign place.

The liquor cabinet in the pool house was stocked fuller than back home at my great-uncle's home, offering a variety to choose from. I've never gotten caught stealing what wasn't mine before, so I didn't think anyone would notice one bottle missing when there were multiples of the same bourbon as you'd find on the shelf at a store.

Unlike back home, some part of me felt guilty for taking it without asking. In Ireland, I'd always justified my reasoning. Other than Tony not giving me a choice in being here and demanding I marry his son in less than a week, he hasn't been cruel or made me do things ...

A shudder runs down my spine as memories flash through my head at the thought.

"You know they have a maid for that," a voice calls out from behind me, causing me to jerk my head over my shoulder, relieved by the interruption.

My eyes land on Sasha with her shoulder propped against the frame of the wide case opening, her arms folded over her chest. Her blonde hair is pulled back into a ponytail, and her makeup is more perfect than most models you see on TV or in a magazine. She's still as intimidating today as she was last night when Tony introduced me to her and Sienna.

In fact, they're both more intimidating than the men in this household, and that's saying something. But how could they not be? Both have bodies most women would kill for. Sasha is lean and sculpted, whereas Sienna has perfect curves in all the right places. Even if Tony hadn't told me about their mixed martial arts background, I would have known they're both

physically strong. Even the air in which they carry themselves, mental strength pours out of them in waves.

As for me, you might as well stamp weak, fat girl across my forehead. I'm nothing like them. I'm the complete opposite. Even if I had an interest in Domenico, which I don't, there is no way he'd ever look at me like I saw Matteo and Lorenzo gaze at their wives last night.

Of course, after witnessing how Krishna snatched Domenico against his chest, he may not be into women. Not that I can blame him. Sasha's brother is as hot as Domenico is, just in a different way. Individually, they're every woman's fantasy. Together, I don't have a word for what they are.

I place the last soup spoon down on the table, and then turn around to give Sasha my full attention. "LeAnna left early today. Besides, she's the housekeeper, not a maid. And I haven't met the other lady LeAnna says comes on the days she's off."

LeAnna informed me she was on vacation and offered to work today, but when she showed up this morning, Tony told her it wasn't necessary and to enjoy her day off. At least, that's what she told me this morning.

Sasha purses her lips as if to say semantics about my distinction between a housekeeper and a maid service.

"It's not like I can't set the table myself. I wouldn't need or want her help for that," I say.

Sasha's lips quirk in amusement instead of the superior expression I was expecting. She blinks, and the humor in her crystal eyes vanishes. "Tony better not be making you serve us. If that's the case, just say the word, and I'll set the boss straight."

"No, of course not," I quickly reply but sigh, unsure why I felt the urge to defend him when I've only known him for such a short period of time. "But if he were, do you really think you could do something about it?"

"Hell yes!" She pushes her shoulder off the opening but remains standing where she is. "I could, and I would. I don't

take orders from *that* boss.”

A laugh bubbles out of me before I can stop it. “Then, who *do* you take orders from?”

“From me, kitten.” Krishna’s tall, muscular frame fills the space behind his sister. He’s dressed in a navy dress shirt, no tie, with the first two buttons undone, paired with freshly pressed black slacks that look like this is the first time they’ve ever been worn. His blond hair is styled in a way that looks like it’s meant to look as if he ran his fingers through it. The golden strands of hair on top of his head are lighter than the dirty blond beard that’s as equally groomed.

As she rolls her eyes, Sasha purses her lips again, but she doesn’t refute her brother’s claim that he’s her boss. Tony briefly mentioned his family was allied with the Russians and that the original Pakhan had stepped down, his son, Krishna, replacing him.

I learned that bit of information before last night, but I hadn’t told Tony that I’d met him and Domenico last month in New Orleans. As far as I know, Tony thinks last night at his daughter’s wedding reception was the first time I had laid eyes on the man he told me I was marrying.

As unreal as all of this seems, it shouldn’t be. I’ve always known I would be forced into something that wasn’t of my own choosing. That’s been my entire life, the only life I’ve ever known. My stomach sours over the nineteen years of memories I’d love to forget, but for all I know, my future could be worse.

At that thought, my eyes snap to the dark presence stepping past Krishna and Sasha. Domenico halts, his stare pinning me from where I’m standing behind one of the dinner table chairs. There’s nothing light or soft about him. No ounce of humor lurks behind his almost black irises like there is with his friend, or lover, if that’s what Krishna is. But I’m also not naive enough to believe Krishna is the good to Domenico’s bad.

Krishna may have the lightest, crystal-clear eyes I’ve ever seen on a person, but he too has a darkness that isn’t masked

no matter how hard he tries to play off his obvious feelings for my soon-to-be husband. Possessiveness and need shine bright when he looks at Domenico like he's doing now, as he stares at the back of his head while Domenico hasn't budged or taken his eyes off mine.

Half a minute passes before those demon-like eyes flick down, stopping on the column of my neck. When I pulled my long strands of curly red hair into a ponytail earlier today before I started prepping dinner, I noticed the bruises marking my fair skin from where Domenico wrapped his long fingers around me this morning. It doesn't hurt, so I hadn't realized he'd held me down so forcefully until I saw it in the mirror. Then again, I've always bruised easily.

As his eyes linger, I watch him. His jaw hardens as if he's clamping down on his teeth with brute force, but it's only a fleeting moment before his gaze snaps back to mine. I can't tell if he likes the sight of the mark he made or if he doesn't. No sinister grin climbs up his face like I'm used to seeing with other men that have enjoyed the way handling me leaves remnants of them on my skin.

The thing is, while he had his hand clamped around my throat, I didn't harbor one bit of fear, and that confuses me. He clearly doesn't want me, at least not in the "until death, do us part" way, given that he outright refused his father last night, telling the boss he wasn't going to marry me.

Yet, I'm still here. And as far as I know, the arranged wedding is still set for this coming Friday. The real question is, what type of pawn am I to him, to his father? How is shackling me to their empire any kind of revenge against Cormac Fitzgerald?

Not even my father wants me.

If anything, Tony did him a favor.

"Excuse me," I tell them, though my words are spoken to Domenico since I can't bring myself to look away from him. "I'm going to freshen up before dinner."

FIFTEEN MINUTES AGO, I scurried off to pull my hair down from the rat's nest it took on from being pulled up most of the afternoon. I changed into a clean, black blouse with a V-neck and a pair of denim jeans tucked into boots. Sasha was wearing similar attire, so I figured I didn't have to dress up if I didn't want to.

Only now that I'm seated at the dinner across from Giovanni and to Tony's left, while Domenico is at the other end with his brother on his left and Krishna to his right, I wish I'd at least painted on some mascara. Sasha, who is seated next to her husband, makes casual attire look like she's dining in an upscale restaurant among royalty. Her face is flawless and made up so perfectly.

I wasn't at all surprised to come back and find Tony in the same black suit I've seen molded to his fit form. Giovanni is dressed almost identically, except his dress shirt is white. Domenico and Krishna might not be sporting a jacket and tie, but nothing about them says casual. Both look camera-ready for a photo shoot to be graced on a magazine cover or a billboard in Times Square.

Lorenzo is dressed in a plain navy T-shirt, so at least I'm not the only one that didn't make an effort. Even Sasha looks polished with the array of colorful art that decorates her forearms. I can't help but be envious of her and Sienna. They belong among the men seated around us, whereas I ...

"Have either of you spoken or checked to ensure Sienna and Matteo safely made it to their destination in Cabo?" Tony's voice halts the speeding path my negative thoughts were headed down. His dark brown eyes are set on Domenico with an arched eyebrow. After a beat of silence, they flick to Lorenzo, his other son and Sienna's twin brother.

I hadn't seen the boss since this morning when I walked into his kitchen after a night of drinking with him and Giovanni. That interaction had been unexpected, fun even. I'd

relaxed for the first time ever. I slept better last night than I had in years. But then I had to go and insult Domenico, and we all know how that ended.

“They arrived at the villa a couple of hours ago,” Lorenzo informs his father. “I’d say they’re probably making babies as we speak, but then again, they did that before the nuptials, didn’t they?” He barks out a laugh, but my eyes widen in shock. I didn’t know Sienna was pregnant. I knew Sasha was because Tony told me. It’s why I bought non-alcoholic and regular beer to go with tonight’s meal. He didn’t mention anything about his daughter.

Gliding my eyes to my right, I peek at the head of this family. Slight irritation mars his handsome face, but there’s not one ounce of surprise to bear witness to as he brings his spoon to his lips.

“Is that why you made Matteo bleed?” Giovanni asks, his head tipping to the side as he awaits Tony’s reply.

Tony pulls the spoon from between his lips and swallows the beer and cheese soup. Then he returns the utensil to the bowl in front of him.

“No,” he simply says before picking up his glass of whiskey and taking a sip. Everyone except the boss has a bottle of beer with their meal. I didn’t even consider sitting one out when I set the table. During conversation last night, he revealed he’s a glass of fine wine or whiskey over ice kind of man. “He took two fists to the gut before I did that.”

“The blood was so everyone knows he’s one of us now,” Domenico chimes in before picking up his beer bottle and bringing it to his lips. I can’t stop looking at them every time I glance at his end of the dinner table. His pink lips tip up as the rim of the glass touches his flesh, then his eyes slide to mine for the length of a breath as if he knew he’d catch me staring before sliding those dark orbs back to his father.

“Everyone bleeds for this family,” Tony says casually. There’s a beat of silence before he adds, “In one way or another.”

Picking up my amber bottle, I lift it to my lips and drain the remaining liquid, wondering if it would be rude to leave the table to get another one from the refrigerator. My soup is only half eaten, as is everyone else's, though I don't think Sasha has even touched her meal, nor the non-alcoholic beverage. I didn't tell her it was free of alcohol, but the bottle has it clearly labeled.

“And just how are you planning on making this one bleed for us?” Domenico says with a challenge laced in his tone as his gaze flicks to his brother's wife.

“You broke my finger, asshole,” Sasha spits out before her hand lifts from the edge of the table, and she wiggles her pinky finger.

I'm about to push my chair back when Giovanni stands, picking up his bottle in the process as his chair scoots across the hardwood floor. “Do you need something to drink, rainbow?”

“Yes,” I look up and then hand him my empty bottle as he walks behind Tony's chair.

Giovanni started calling me by that nickname last night or early this morning after Tony had gone to bed. I changed into a pair of silk shorts and a matching black tank top and tried to sleep, but after two hours of tossing and turning because I hadn't drunk enough for sleep to come easily, I went to the kitchen in the pool house to get a glass of water.

I was leaning over the sink with my arm stretched out, filling a glass, when he said, “Nice rainbow,” causing me to jump and splash water all over my hand and wrist. He hadn't gone to bed as I figured. Instead, he was in the corner, still sipping a glass of whiskey.

When I learned my great-uncle was planning to ship me back to America, I got a tattoo of a small rainbow on the right side of my ribcage, just behind the side of my breast. I was taking a risk, knowing I could get caught, and if Liam O'Donovan found out, he'd do his worst to not only my flesh but my mind too.

How Giovanni even saw it, I'm not sure. I would have thought he'd need perfect eyesight since the only light on was the ambient one over the sink. Surely a man of his age, who'd been sitting at least fifteen feet from where I stood, couldn't see a small tattoo the size of a quarter in a dimly lit space. But I guess he could.

"Sasha is carrying one of us," Tony answers Domenico as I dip my spoon into the bowl.

The feeling of being watched pricks at the back of my neck, but I force my eyes to remain down as I scoop out the creamy goodness of what has to be the best meal in the world. Their boss continues as I lift the silverware to my lips. "As will Ciera, soon enough."

The spoon slips between my fingers, splashing into the bowl as my bottom lip falls open. My gaze snaps to Tony as his words sink in, and my eyes widen with surprise. He told me *marrying* his son was revenge enough against my father. He never said I had to sleep with Domenico or have his babies.

"Are you still so sure of your choice?" Domenico asks. "She looks positively horrified at the thought of having my kid."

Shocked? Yes.

Horrified? No.

Though I should be, that right there tells me something is wrong with how I view Domenico Caputo. My mind is banjaxed. I should be repulsed by everything about him: the way he's spoken to me or about me, the way he's manhandled me on more than one occasion.

"Don't worry, a pheata," Domenico says, using the Irish term for "my pet." As much as I should eat the head off him, the way "ah-fat-ah" rolls off his tongue has my thighs clenching together instead. "I don't plan on knocking anyone up, especially you."

"Good," I bite out in the harshest tone I can muster. "I wouldn't want to chance him or her turning out to be an eejit like you."

Sasha smirks while Krishna barks out a laugh. “Oh, kitten, you’re quickly becoming my favorite Caputo.”

I can see the broad smile inching up Krishna’s face through my peripheral vision without taking my eyes or the snarl on my lips away from Domenico. Giovanni places something to my right, but my stare remains locked on the brooding man at the other end of the table.

“I see this morning didn’t fully sink in,” he says, then his eyes drop to my neck before flicking back to my stare with one brow arched as if to remind me what he’s capable of. “I don’t keep pets. They’re nothing more than varmints you feed. I don’t have a use for one. If you’re smart, you’ll run back to where it up for someone that actually thinks a Fitzgerald holds any power.”

“You’re a dick, Dom,” Sasha chimes in, her lips pursed.

“How’s the finger, *new* little sister?” He cuts his eyes to her, but there’s amusement behind his words, unlike the hostility he showed me.

“Careful, Dom,” Lorenzo hisses.

Snatching the bottle off the table, I put it to my lips before I say something that will only make my time here worse. Swallowing the liquid, my nose and forehead wrinkle. When I pull the bottle away and look down, I see why.

“You grabbed the wrong beer,” I tell Giovanni, eyeing him as he sits back down across from me.

“No, I didn’t.” He scoots himself forward, then takes a swig from the long-neck bottle, those hard eyes I’ve only noticed today staring at me as if beckoning me to challenge him. I glance at the non-alcoholic beer in my right hand and swallow the nonexistent saliva in my mouth. “You’re nineteen—still a minor. Besides, you’ve already had three. I think that’s enough *real* beer for the night, don’t you?”

I glance at Tony, his brows raised as his dark eyes work out whatever he’s thinking. The scraping of a chair is the only sound I hear other than the air coming and going from my nasal cavity as my eyes flick from Tony and then back to

Giovanni. After a beat, his cold stare leaves mine to look over my head.

I don't know what I've done. Domenico was rude to me first. The question is on the tip of my tongue, but I know the cost of questioning men like him, and I will not put myself through that with these people if I can help it. There is no telling what they'll do to me.

Good men don't take possession of another being like they're a commodity. The warmth I was beginning to feel here was an illusion I crafted in my own head. I'm no safer in this house than I was at my father's or even the long years I lived in Hell at my great-uncle's.

They're all the same.

Criminals.

Heartless.

Cruel.

Scum.

My chair is suddenly yanked backward. A gasp escapes my lips before I can stop it.

"Get up, Ciera," Domenico orders in that harsh tone I'm starting to think is his usual. My body doesn't move to obey. It's taking everything in me to remain still even though I can feel the internal tremors wreaking havoc inside me.

When I continue sitting where I am, waiting for Tony or Giovanni's permission to move, Domenico's warm hand wraps around the bend in my arm and then pulls me up from the dining chair. His other hand meets the small of my back and gently pushes, making me take a step, then another, and another, until I'm stopped at the seat Krishna was in moments ago. His right palm skims up my back until he reaches my shoulder, where he lightly presses on me to take a seat. The heat from his hands warms me more than the thick material of the woolen blouse I put on half an hour ago.

My eyes go to Lorenzo, who is eyeing his brother with curiosity, so I glance to where his wife is seated between him

and Giovanni. Sasha's fists are clenched tight at the edge of the table, and there's a snarl on her lips so sharp it could cut an object. Her left elbow twitches, and if I didn't know any better, I'd say she was thinking about smashing it into the face of the man that sits to her left, looking impassive. I know first-hand how stupid of an idea that is. She may be tough and strong, but these men are as ruthless as they are wicked.

I can see Krishna moving from my peripheral vision, and after I blink at the bizarre turn of events, my bowl of soup is placed in front of me. Domenico's chest meets the back of my head as he leans over me, snatching his beer bottle from where it was on the table next to his meal. He holds it in front of me like he wants me to take it, which confuses me even more, so I tip my head back and look up at him from where he's towering over me.

"You wanted it. Drink it," he commands. My eyes widen. Giovanni just said no, and now I'm unsure what to do. Slowly, I reach for the bottle, wrapping my hand around the glass. The coldness does nothing to cool down the heat coating my face and neck over being the center of attention as I continue to feel everyone's eyes on me.

Domenico moves from behind me and takes his seat opposite Tony as my chin descends, my eyes landing on the bottle my hand squeezes. I can't look at anyone right now, afraid of what I'll see. Domenico is giving me whiplash, and I don't know why Giovanni suddenly has an issue with me drinking alcohol.

After a long beat of silence, my gaze snaps to Domenico when he speaks, his eyes on his father. "If she can get married," he says with venom reverberating through him, "she can drink an alcoholic beverage."

His dark eyes flick to mine, and I swear they soften just a hair as he stares at me, waiting to see if I will follow the command he issued.

You wanted it. Drink it.

So, that's what I do. I lift the bottle to my lips, tipping it back and letting the ice-cold liquid flow into my mouth, and as

I swallow, I don't lose eye contact with the man that may very well be my downfall.

CHAPTER 10

With my laptop perched on my thighs, I rest my shoulder blades against the fabric-covered headrest behind me with pillows bunched at my lower back. I have three standard-sized pillows on my king-sized bed at all times. It's always been that way, even when I had a full size as a kid. Still to this day, it's not uncommon for Ren or Si, or even both, to end up sleeping in here from time to time.

It's always my room we gather in, never theirs. We all have the same size beds, but they prefer to pester me, so the pillows are a permanent fixture. The setup works for whatever strange reason I haven't an answer for. It feels right, like I'm supposed to have three bodies in my bed, though that isn't the case tonight.

Glancing to my left, Krishna's sleeping form takes up the far side, leaving a gap between us. He's never crashed here before, and I've only allowed myself to stay at his apartment once, knowing I need to be home in case something happens and my family is protected. I don't take unnecessary risks with their lives. My responsibility, first and foremost, is to the three lives I'd give my own for to ensure theirs remained safe. Failing them isn't an option.

He's lying on his stomach with his arms tucked underneath the pillow his head is buried in. His forearm tattoos are hidden beneath the pillowcase's gray, buttery soft fabric as his naked, muscular back rises and falls with each breath. Whereas my minimal ink is scattered around my body, his only takes up space on his flesh from his wrists to his elbows on both arms.

It makes admiring the bruises I left on both sides of this torso along his ribcage all the better to see without anything covering the black and blue hues that are tarnishing his milky-white skin.

Forcing my gaze to move back to my laptop screen, I continue the task I set out to do once Krishna dozed off. We didn't fuck. That was sated once outside his torture and kill house and then a few hours later after we'd thoroughly beat the shit out of each other. To everyone else, it's called training. To him, it's fun. To me, it's letting my demons out on the one person that's strong enough to handle them. I hold back on Ren and Sienna, even the time Sasha and I went toe to toe.

Had I known Sasha was carrying my niece or nephew, I would have punished her and made her submit another way. I'm glad I hadn't known, though a droplet of guilt still resides inside my chest for hurting a pregnant woman. I keep it buried deep within my soul, where I shove anything and everything I'm not proud of, so it's not at the forefront of my conscience. Otherwise, it's a distraction, and I can't allow those to reside within me, like now, while I'm supposed to be combing through Liam O'Donovan's hidden financial records.

He has many, even one in Ciera's name. *Not that she'd know that.* It's not uncommon for criminals to set up bogus accounts in the names of common people. It's easier than creating a fake alias. I am surprised it's the largest monetary account I've found so far. I know there are more, and I'll find them all. It's only a matter of time. And then I'm going to take them all. From Liam, from his brother, Owen, and from Cormac. They and their men will all be living in a gutter soon enough. I just have to cut off the head of the snake first. That serpent being Liam O'Donovan—the sickest of them all.

Once I figure out just how far down into the pits of Hell his organization reaches and what sins he's committed, I will destroy him and take pleasure in drawing it out.

Ever since I dug into the police commissioner's misdeeds and discovered his connection to Liam, there's been something about Owen's brother that rubs me the wrong way. The mere thought of him boils my blood. The evidence I've come across

so far leads me to believe the rumor circulating that he's not only a pedophile but also the puppet master himself. He uses children to gain blackmail material on other powerful men, and that makes me see red.

I found a ten-second video clip that was airdropped from a stolen smartphone to the personal cellular device of Carter McKenzie, our U.S. congressman that's rumored to be running in an upcoming election for a bigger house in the next few years as President of the United States.

The clip showed the congressman's face clearly, as well as his naked torso, which was covering a young girl's body from behind. Thankfully, not much of the girl could be seen because I could barely stomach watching the few seconds I saw. She wasn't his wife, who has naturally blonde hair, cut and styled into a pixie. From research, I've learned his wife has sported that same style since her college days more than twenty years ago.

What gave it away that the female was likely underage was her small stature compared to his height of five-feet-ten-inches tall. The girl was much shorter with chipped painted nails that were cut back to the nail bed. Women don't typically have messy nails. You see that more often on children, and that thought sickened me.

I figured out the video was at least five years old, maybe more, judging by the older branding of a viewable soda can. I may not have even seen it had it not fallen off the desk from the force McKenzie was putting into his sexual actions.

The knowledge he hurt her in that way makes me want to have done to him what he put her through. Her body was shaking in a way that you know she was crying uncontrollably.

Although the video was taken a while ago, the clip was transmitted a few months ago. I was able to link the congressmen's location when it came through, and since it was airdropped, that meant the person who sent it was in close proximity to McKenzie.

Luckily for me, McKenzie had been sitting in the back of a car that was parked in front of a coffee shop. One of his

lackeys was inside getting him a latte, and through surrounding cameras, I figured out who transmitted the video to the congressman's phone. He was seated at an outdoor table, sipping his own coffee from the same barista.

The stupid fuck hadn't been as slick as I'm sure he thought he was being. He kept glancing over at the town car despite it having tinted windows. I linked him back to Liam O'Donovan. He was the son of Liam's second in command back in Dublin.

My little bride-to-be doesn't know it yet, but she's going to help me bring her entire family to their knees, and then I'm going to make her set the fire. She can ignite the inferno, or she can burn with them. After all, to be a Caputo, you must earn your place, prove your loyalty, and sacrifice yourself for the family.

Unfortunately for her, she doesn't have what it takes. There may be a spitfire that lives within her when I'm challenging her, maybe even the slightest backbone, but she wasn't raised like Krishna and me or like our siblings.

Sasha—my brother's wife and Krishna's sister—didn't want the life we were born into, but even she would go down with the ship to save those she loves. She sacrificed herself to save my brother. She went toe to toe with her enemy and won. She fought for who and what she wanted.

For that, she gained my respect and my loyalty. It won't stop me from taunting her and keeping her in check, but I would give my life to save her, the same as Ren, my sister, and my dad.

Ciera, on the other hand, is a Fitzgerald. She was raised by the worst of them. She wasn't taught family values. They only know how to save themselves, even if it means at the cost of the *family*. They're greedy and value power and money above all else.

To keep my family safe and to have my mother back, I would give up every monetary resource I have at my fingertips. Material possessions are meaningless things. Life is everything and something I will go to great lengths to protect when it comes to the ones I deem as mine.

My little Irish pet isn't one of them.

She's a pussycat I have no qualms sacrificing for the greater good. The Irish are going down, and Ciera is my tool to ensure that happens without a hitch.

I'm about to click enter on my keyboard when a blood-curdling scream sends a ripple of fear down my spine. My eyes snap to the open window in my bedroom that faces the backyard. The terrifying sound didn't come from inside. It was outside or in the pool house.

Shoving the laptop off my lap, I leap out of bed and snatch the semi-automatic weapon from my bedside table before I'm out the door in the next breath.

WHEN I RACED through the kitchen, exiting the back door, the clock on the double oven read 2:04. I should have been asleep, but I haven't been a sound sleeper since I was nine. When my mother was murdered, it was no longer my job to ensure the twins were protected. I had to have my dad's back too.

For that reason, I've always kept a crack in my bedroom window to be able to hear any noise that's out of the ordinary. We have a tight security system, but even I know with the right knowledge and skillset, it can be bypassed. Tonight, and even last night, I had it wide open with the sheer black curtains pulled away and secured with a decorative rope to the sides of the window.

I didn't knock before I entered the only door in and out of the pool house. I don't observe my surroundings or check for danger as I leap inside either when another scream comes. This one more bone-chilling than the first and louder now that I'm in close proximity to *her*.

Racking the slide on my handgun, I chamber a round, something that would have already been in place had I not stopped keeping a loaded gun now that Brooklyn is living in the house.

I've told my sister's stepdaughter that she is not to touch any weapon for any reason. I can't take chances anymore now that we have her in the house and more on the way, so I changed *my* ways, at least as much as I'm willing.

Stepping barefoot onto the soft carpet inside the first of two bedrooms, I see Giovanni looming over Ciera. More anger than I've ever felt sweeps through me, almost knocking the breath from my lungs.

"Wake up, girl," he says, his voice frustrated but lacking any amount of malice. Perhaps there's even an air of concern in his tone, but at this moment, I don't give a fuck. He shouldn't be in here with her.

The covers are shoved away from Ciera and mostly falling off the end of the bed. The lights are off, but with the curtains pulled back and the window partially open, there is a chill in the room. The moonlight shines through the glass panes, creating a nightly glow. Ciera's feet are running across the fitted sheet like she's trying to get away from something or someone.

"Dammit, rainbow, wake the fuck up. Don't make me do this," he forces out as he reaches for her with one hand, and with the other, he rears it back as I raise my weapon, pointing it at the back of his head.

"Hit her, and I pull the trigger." My voice is cold and detached but full of promise. It has to be when I know I'm about to kill another person. If he touches her, the round in the chamber will be fired. There's no way for him to mistake my words.

He freezes, his arm midair. After a heartbeat or two, he says, "She's having a night terror," as if that makes it okay for him to slap her. It doesn't.

"Get. The. Fuck. Off her. Now," I bite out, my voice seething and my finger itching to pull the trigger my forefinger is poised against. I was taught never to insert my finger into the trigger well if I didn't intend to fire a round, but the second he raised his hand, palm open, the reflex was automatic.

“What the hell is going on?” my father’s gruff and angered voice pierces my eardrums from behind me.

“My suspicion was right, Tony,” Giovanni says, not moving an inch as I’ve ordered.

Stepping forward, I shove the barrel of the gun hard against the back of his head, and this time my voice is louder, more lethal, and as deadly as I can make it. “Don’t make me repeat myself.”

I don’t give one fuck that he’s Dad’s best friend or even a member of *the family* since the boss appointed him as the consigliere. He can die right here, and I won’t feel an ounce of guilt. Sienna may not be ready to take his place yet, but no one ever is until they’re tossed into the deep end and forced to sink or swim.

“Step away from her, G,” Dad says, lacking the authority he should be showing by backing up his second, his son.

“Tony, I can’t leave her like this. I know what—”

“I have no problem painting your brain matter all over the walls, motherfucker,” I seethe, interrupting whatever bullshit excuse he was trying to spew.

His spine straightens as he breathes, then, after a beat, he forcefully blows out a breath. Turning one hundred and eighty degrees, he looks me dead in the eyes, his equally as cold as mine. “I wasn’t going to hurt her.”

“Next time you consider touching here or entering her room uninvited, you’ll find a round lodged in your skull,” I snarl.

He’s smart. He doesn’t say another word before stepping around me and leaving with my father.

Lowering my gun to my right side, I step to the foot of Ciera’s bed. Kicking the comforter and top sheet that have pooled onto the floor out of my way, I stop when my knees meet the footboard. I plan to watch her, but then her brows pinch together as her fists clench at her sides. Her ivory-colored face screws up in terror. A breath later, her body starts to tremble, and that’s when I can’t stop myself.

Reaching for her ankle, I wrap my fingers around the warm skin and pull her toward me, being gentle and unlike my usual aggressive self. Her left leg slides against my dress pants, scorching my skin through the material and only inches from the gun dangling in my hand. Letting go of her right ankle, I lean forward, bringing my free hand to her delicate throat.

The faint marking of the bruise I saw earlier tonight isn't visible in her moonlit bedroom, but that doesn't stop me from squeezing her flesh. As I tighten my hold, I lower my bare chest until it meets the thin material of the black tank top covering her breasts. During her thrashing, the camisole has risen above her navel, showing off soft creamy skin that makes my dick harden as my mouth waters and tingles run down the length of my spine.

Dad was right about one thing. I shouldn't have let her go all those weeks ago when I found her at Santos's place in New Orleans. Not one day has passed that I haven't thought of her and how the memory of her hot little body fucks with my mind more than it should. I don't think there is a single thing I've ever wanted more than to eat Ciera Fitzgerald. I want to suck every drop of essence from her pussy. I want to shove myself so far inside her that there isn't one second of every day that she doesn't remember I was there. I want to take up residence in every opening and never leave.

Not touching her is a battle I've lost damn near every time I've seen her. The only reason I didn't reach out and snatch her away from my father's side two nights ago during Sienna's wedding reception was because Krishna grabbed me like I was his to own. It fucking pissed me off and aroused me at the same time.

I'm not his.

I'm not hers either.

And neither of them are mine.

I dip my head, my bottom lip touching her earlobe as I place the weapon on the bed, letting it go. The pull to touch

more of her is too much, so I put my now free hand onto her outer thigh and squeeze it against my hip.

“Wake up, beautiful,” I coax her in a gentle tone that surprises me.

Her thrashing settles to a squirm at the sound of my voice, but the soft movement rubs against my hard-on, making me squeeze her neck more; not enough to cut off her air supply, but enough pressure to restrict the blood flow more than I had been doing. My dick throbs, demanding for her and knowing she’s the only one at this moment that could sate my desires.

Running my palm underneath her shorts, I grab her ample ass cheek. There’s so much goddamn saliva pooled in my mouth that I have to swallow before I speak. “Stop dreaming of whatever bad shit is happening inside that pretty little head of yours, Ciera.”

Saying her name out loud makes my cock jerk. It’s why I called her a pheata, the Irish term for “my pet” during dinner. I didn’t need my dick trying to push through the soft fabric of my trousers during a family meal.

Her chest expands, pressing into mine as her lungs steal air despite my hold on her. Then, a shudder escapes her lips, the hot air coating the side of my face and tickling the inside of my ear in the best way imaginable.

Taking the opportunity while I can, I inhale, pulling her scent into me and taking the only thing I can, when really, I want so much more. I want it all. I want her, but I know the demon deep inside can’t keep her. That doesn’t mean I can’t enjoy her while I have her, while she’s tied to my last name.

“Don’t wake up, my little pet,” I tell her, my voice sounding more like an order and definitely more like me than before. “Dream of something better. You’re coming with me.”

Releasing her throat, I slide my palm between her back and the bed and grip her butt more firmly. Then I scoop her into my arms and pad my feet back out of the room and through the pool house. I don’t let go of her until I deposit her in the middle of my bed, beside Krishna. Neither of them stirs, but

Ciera's right arm moves out, feeling around on my side of the bed, and that's when I see it—a tiny tattoo of a rainbow on her ribcage.

Knowing that Giovanni has also seen it, which is why he calls her Rainbow, sends saliva as hot as lava down my throat, burning my chest. How dare he know such an intimate detail about the woman I'm giving my last name to.

I've always been possessive. It started when the twins were born. It's a fault I can recognize, and I war with it daily. The urge to gouge out dark blue eyes sits heavy on my conscience, taunting me to do it, to make it painful, and to make her watch. Then she'll know not to repeat whatever fucking happened that allowed Giovanni to see any part of something that's mine.

Reaching over her, I pull my laptop from between her and K and place it on my nightstand, no longer interested in the information I was seeking when all I can think about are the two beings in my bed.

Grasping the clasp of my pants, I undo them and slide the zipper down, and then shove them to the floor. After stepping out of the fabric, I crawl under the sheet and pull the fabric over all of us, leaving the comforter on the floor where it always ends up anyway. I should have dumped Ciera in Sienna's bed or even Brooklyn's. Neither are home, and either bed would have been a better option than mine.

When I heard her scream, I threw everything I've been taught out the window. I didn't secure the main house or my family members that were inside. I grabbed my gun and raced toward her without so much as a glance in any other direction.

I cannot allow that to happen again. She is a distraction that will get someone I love hurt or killed if I'm careless like that again.

Glancing to my left, I take in all her smooth, creamy, vanilla skin, starting at her bare feet and continuing until her silk sleep shorts stop at the top of her thighs, only inches from her heat. Her silk-covered center has the inside of my mouth

watering at the thought of what she tastes like. My dick jumps as if to confirm it wants in there too.

Why does the most beautiful woman I've ever laid eyes on have to be a goddamn Fitzgerald?

This can't happen.

We can't happen.

I'll marry her as the boss ordered, but at the end of the day, she's still a tool, a sacrifice to destroy the enemy. She's a pawn to be used. She'll go down with them.

It's the only way.

She'll get me between her thighs. I want her too much to deny myself that slice of dessert, but that's all I'll give her. She doesn't get all of me. She doesn't get my mind, my heart, or my soul.

No one will.

Not Ciera.

Not Krishna.

No one.

CHAPTER 11

“No one told me we had a kitty to play with.” At the sound of *that* voice, glacier eyes spring to my mind before Krishna’s name is whispered through my slumbering thoughts.

“Stop eyeing my shit like you’re on death row and she’s your last meal.” Domenico’s soul-penetrating, almost black eyes flicker behind my closed eyelids. My body tingles as if he’d touched me with his rough hands even though I know he didn’t. That’s the effect his voice has on me every single time I hear it.

“For one taste of this,” Krishna says, his tone pulling at the cords of my resting state that wants to remain sated in peace and protection. “I may consider letting you send me to an early grave.”

Something tickles the top of my thigh, but it’s so feather-light that I must have imagined it in whatever dream I’ve conjured up this time.

“Fuuuck. She even purrs in her sleep.”

“You want a pet? Go find your own.” My eyes snap open at the harshness in Domenico’s tone. My gaze finds him standing several feet from the side of the bed. He’s dressed in black slacks and a matching belt, but he’s shirtless, showing off olive skin that has my mouth watering. He has a tattoo above his left pectoral muscle and another on the inside of his right bicep. I can’t make out either as my eyes descend, roaming lower and taking in every perfectly sculpted

abdominal muscle. A trail of black hair starts below his navel and disappears behind the waistband of his pants. He has those prominent indentions making a V, the tip of it also vanishing from my line of sight, leaving my imagination to run wild while my heart rate accelerates.

“I recall saying I’d share you *with* her.” A quick burst of humorless laughter echoes off the walls from beside me. My neck turns, my gaze meeting a cold, blue stare. He holds my eyes while speaking to Domenico. “She may take your last name, Caputo, but make no mistake, I’ll be inside both of you before *that* wedding night is over.” Krishna’s hot breath fans my face before he blinks, and then they’re on Domenico while his hand tightens around my thigh, squeezing his fingers in the same possessive manner Domenico seems to enjoy doing to my neck. “Deny me, and your dick will never fill the inside of this sweet, innocent little cunt you so desperately want more than you want your next breath. Unless, of course, you’re into necrophilia.”

The threat of my death has me sucking in a lungful of air and expanding my chest. Why that excites me rather than scares me, I can’t comprehend at the moment.

“How did I get in here?” I ask, my voice sounding more like a squeak than I’d intended.

WAKING up in Domenico’s bed this morning and finding two sets of dominant eyes on me has replayed more times than I can count on all my fingers and toes combined. I never did get an answer to my question. Domenico’s lips curled into a sneer, and then he barked an order for me to get out of his room.

There is a knock on the door a second before it opens, revealing Dr. Weston with a fake smile plastered on her pretty but plastic-looking features. She’s at least twice my age, maybe more, yet I have more creases on my forehead than she does. Her makeup is camera ready, and she has perfect white teeth to go along with an overly-used smile.

“Miss Fitzgerald, thank you for being patient after your exam.” She enters, closes the door behind her, then takes a seat on the stool positioned in front of the computer screen across from the exam table. Her fingers click on the keyboard as she signs into the clinic’s electronic medical record system. After she’s finished, she twists to face me, placing her hands on her lap. “Most of the results from the lab work we did before your pelvic exam this morning are in.”

“Okay,” I say for lack of not knowing how else to reply.

“The culture from your urine sample will likely take four to five days, but otherwise, you are in good health.” Her features transition from friendly to serious, making my spine straighten from where I’m seated on the exam table. The thin paper underneath me crinkles as my body squirms. “I would like you to shed a few pounds by the time you return to see me again in a year. Perhaps incorporate some cardiovascular exercise in your daily routine.”

“I thought you said I’m healthy,” I can’t help but comment. It’s not like I don’t know I’m slightly overweight, but seriously, her tact could use work. I like to eat, but I hate exercising. There is nothing fun about sweating.

“Your blood work was normal, Miss Fitzgerald, but you want to ensure it stays that way. Eating a low-fat diet and exercising is something we all should be doing to ensure we live a long and healthy life.” Her brow arches as if she expects me to challenge her authority on the matter. She’s the doctor, not me, and maybe she is right, but that doesn’t mean I won’t live a long and healthy life if I’m not skinny like her.

I blink, waiting for her to continue so I can leave. It was already awkward, and she’s only making this more uncomfortable the longer she speaks. This is the first time I’ve ever been to a gynecologist, and I can’t say I want to do it again in a year. The only other time I’ve seen a doctor was one my great-uncle had do a house call, and I didn’t like that experience either.

I really hope Tony takes me back to his home when we leave here. All I want to do is take a shower and change into

another set of clothes. I feel dirty, and my anxiety is starting to kick back up now that I'm thinking about where her fingers were and the two sets of eyes staring at my vagina—the doctor and her nurse who was chaperoning the ordeal.

“There was something else, Miss Fitzgerald.” She pauses, and the skin between her eyebrows creases, showing the first line on her face that I've seen. “Normally, I wouldn't speculate on something that I could be way off base with.” She takes a breath, then releases it through her mouth, causing me to squirm more and the paper beneath me to make noises. “But knowing who scheduled your appointment and who is waiting out in the parking lot for you to be finished, I'm concerned for your wellbeing.”

“I'm fine,” I say, and it sounds monotonous to my own ears.

“Are you sure? You have evidence of scarring.” She rolls her stool closer to the exam table, her eyes showing concern. “I'm friends with a lady that knows Antonio Caputo well. I've heard many stories about him, and I know what he's capable of, of the things he's probably done often. You don't have to be afraid of him. If you need out of a situ—”

“I said, I'm fine,” I say with more vigor, interrupting where her conversation is going and not sure why I feel the need to defend a man that I'm sure has done bad things. But he hasn't done bad things to me, and I don't like her thinking he has.

I slide my butt to the edge of the exam table, about to tell her I'd like to leave, when the door opens, revealing Domenico with his hand squeezing the metal door handle and those dark eyes landing on mine, making me swallow my words. “Are you done? I'm not in a waiting mood.”

“Excuse me,” Dr. Weston says, her shocked expression taking in all six-feet-two-inches of my soon-to-be husband. “You cannot come in here.”

“Yet, here I stand.” His gaze flicks to the doctor's as I step down to the tiled floor. “Now, are you finished with my pet or not?”

“I’m sorry, what?” Her bottom lip hangs open as her eyes grow round. It makes me want to laugh, which is better than the awkwardness she created with her probing questions, even if Domenico called me that degrading nickname he thinks is getting under my skin with.

He’ll have to step up his game if he plans to do that. Name-calling doesn’t hurt me.

“Ciera.” He says my name slowly. “Have you finished all the doctor bullshit?”

“We’re done,” I answer for Dr. Weston.

“We were not finished, Miss Fitzgerald,” she argues.

“I’m finished. It was nice to meet you, and thank you,” I say, being polite so that she’ll hopefully take a hint and not make a big deal about this. I don’t think Tony would do anything to her if she caused trouble, but I’m not so sure the same can be said about Domenico. He seems more protective over the Caputos than his father and boss.

I turn away from Dr. Weston, intent on leaving with Domenico, and frankly, glad he rescued me even if that wasn’t his purpose.

“Wait,” she calls out. “I still have to give you a prescription for birth control since I removed the IUD and you didn’t want it replaced.”

Domenico’s left brow arches, his dark eyes on mine, asking a question I’m unsure how to decipher. He’s a guy, so more than likely, he doesn’t know what an intrauterine device is. Not even I knew what it was when it was placed inside me at the age of fourteen. My great uncle nor the doctor that implanted it explained what it was for. It wasn’t until I was using a computer and researching schoolwork that I looked it up and discovered it was a form of birth control. I was both relieved and sickened at the thought.

I look over my shoulder to see her scribbling something on a pad with a pen. When she finishes, she tears a piece of paper off and then holds it out between us for me to take.

Domenico reaches for it before I do, shoving it into the pocket of his dress pants. “I’ll take care of it. Let’s go, my little pet.”

A gasp sounds from behind me, but instead of acknowledging the doctor’s outburst, I slip past Domenico and out the door.

APPARENTLY, you have to check out before leaving clinics. I didn’t know this since the one time I saw a practitioner was when the birth control device was implanted.

I’ve only been sick a few times in my life, and during those events, I was confined to my bedroom at my great-uncle’s house with his head housekeeper left to check on me. She wasn’t the motherly type, so I was often left caring for myself. I’m used to that.

Others taking care of me—I don’t know what to make of it. Though, I wouldn’t necessarily say that was Tony’s goal with today’s checkup. I think that had everything to do with ensuring I won’t give his son a disease. I can’t blame him for that. There was a part of me that wanted to know those results too, but also a small part that was scared to hear them. The doctor informing me that everything came back normal was a relief.

Domenico ushered me out of the building and into his SUV ten minutes ago. I didn’t expect him to follow me to the passenger side of the vehicle, nor was I expecting him to open the door for me. Nothing about the way he carries himself, how he speaks to me, or the way he eyes me and others would make me think he’s a gentleman, yet that was the way it came across. He even made sure I buckled my seatbelt when he slid into the driver’s seat moments later.

He isn’t a crazy driver either, at least not that I’ve seen so far. He comes to complete stops, lets pedestrians cross the road, and doesn’t gun it when the light turns green. Giovanni

and even Tony are more aggressive behind the wheel than Domenico.

“How did I end up in your bed last night?” I finally work up the courage to ask again since he never answered my initial question this morning. “Because I don’t sleepwalk, and I know I didn’t stumble into the wrong room,” I add.

“Why do you have night terrors?” he counters.

“I don’t,” I say far too quickly to sound believable. Is that what happened? It’s plausible. Likely even, if I give it thought, which isn’t something I want to do. “If I were dreaming, how would you even be able to hear me?” I was in the pool house, though I know his bedroom faces the backyard. I noticed his window open.

“Your screaming woke up the whole fucking house.” His eyes leave the road as his head turns to face me. “People don’t typically have night terrors unless they experienced trauma. So, I’ll ask again. Why do you have them?”

“I don’t,” I repeat, this time slower and with a bite to my tone, hoping he’ll drop it.

“You’re a liar too.” His eyes leave mine to flick back to the road as he accelerates before he cuts to the left lane and passes a slower driving vehicle. After a few seconds, he moves back into the right lane, and then his speed decreases to match the speed limit.

“Why did you move me to share a bed with you and your boyfriend?” I ask, not arguing with him. I’m not a liar, not really, but I know that there are things you have to keep to yourself. Otherwise, they can be used against you in the cruelest ways. “Did you do anything to me?”

“Krishna isn’t my boyfriend, pet.”

“Sure, he isn’t.” When he doesn’t open his mouth to answer my other question, I prompt again. “So, did anything happen last night that I should know about?”

He smirks but doesn’t look at me. “Baby girl, if I’d fucked you last night, your thighs would still be aching.” After a beat of silence, his head rolls towards me, his gaze locking on

mine. “Had K and I both fucked you, you wouldn’t be able to stand, much less walk straight.”

“Is that what you plan to do? Sharing me when each other isn’t enough to satisfy either of you?”

He steps on the brake pedal, the tires squealing as the car comes to an abrupt stop in the middle of the road. In less than a heartbeat, he slams the gear shift of his SUV into park, then his dark, devilish eyes lock with mine. “You talk too fucking much.” His gaze dips, briefly eyeing my mouth before his long lashes flick up. “I liked you more when I thought you were a mouse without a tongue.”

Car horns sound in all directions, but Domenico doesn’t seem to care. He continues to watch me instead of the street, the traffic at a standstill.

“I told you once,” he says, relaxing his back against the driver’s door as the upper half of his body faces me. “I’m not into captured prey. If you want to leave, I’m not stopping you. Run your fucking heart out, sweetheart.” He leans forward, his face stopping so close to mine that I could jut my tongue out and touch his lips. Pretty sure they’re the only soft part on Domenico’s body.

“In fact, as I’ve already told you, you should run. Now’s your chance, Ciera. Otherwise, you have an appointment for a dress fitting for our fake as fuck wedding. Sasha is inside waiting for you.” His chin juts up as he glances out the passenger side window to my right. “I have other places to be, and babysitting isn’t part of my job description. Ride’s over, little girl. Get out.”

CHAPTER 12

KRISHNA

I've known since I was Sienna's stepdaughter's age that I would one day assume my father's duty as Pakhan of the U.S. Bratva brotherhood. Every day since my childhood, I have observed my dad with the knowledge that I would someday fill his shoes. I trained with that in mind. I put everything I had into mastering every skill possible, from hand-to-hand combat to weaponry and even hunting.

Multiple times a year, my father would send me to the coldest and hottest terrains in the U.S. and outside its borders. I spent a week in Siberia once when I was a teenager while he attended a meeting in Moscow, and every second of that trip, I was convinced it would be my last day on Earth.

When we boarded a plane to come home, I told my father if he ever sent me back there, I'd shoot him myself. And I meant it. That place was Hell on Earth, yet I find myself contemplating a trade out spending the rest of my life there if it would get rid of the constant ache in my chest.

The discomfort has been present for the last year, but ever since Tony announced Ciera Fitzgerald as Domenico's soon-to-be-wife a few days ago, it's as if there is a semi-truck parked on top of me, and I don't have the strength to push it off.

The reality of what I've yet to acknowledge pisses me off. I shouldn't want Domenico the way I do. I don't want to want or need him. Those feelings and that kind of bullshit will cause me more problems than I care to deal with. I've already had to

funnel Sasha's marriage crisis. My dad may have planned her happily-ever-after out with Tony Caputo, but he sure as shit didn't address it with the other Bratvas.

Granted, Mischa Nikolayev thought he was above answering to anyone. Hell, even I think that about myself, but the truth is, shit in my culture is done a certain way. Anyone that puts a ripple in calm waters is subject to backlash—or death.

I haven't squashed the rumors that it was my father that took out the Canadian Pakhan, and I'm not going to. I want it known. I want every brother to know what we're capable of doing. What *I* will do should someone fuck with a Nikolayev or anyone else that's part of my brotherhood or my inner circle, because God knows the goddamn Caputo's managed to nestle their way to the fucking center of that motherfucker.

Some of the Bratva leaders don't like that my sister is married to a Boss's son. Hell, if they knew I was fucking the next in line to be that Boss, one of them might be inclined to cause problems.

Problems may be what I'll have to face in time. I'm not ready to give up this fucked up thing Dom and I started. I'm not even sure I'd end things with him if I found the right woman; one I'd consider marrying. Unleashing my darkest side is too addictive, and that's exactly what being with him does.

To throw a little kitten into that mix is a disaster waiting to happen. Though, even I'll admit, kitten isn't really a term that fits her very well. There's a lioness hiding behind her green eyes that I'm not so sure Dom has noticed yet.

Waking up to her curves this morning, my dick was harder than I think it's ever been. Not to mention it was the best fucking sleep I've ever had. The question is, was it falling asleep in Dom's bed, Ciera being between us, or a combination of both that caused it?

I do know I can't get the thought of us both fucking her out of my head to save my life—and I've tried. It's how I ended up at a strip club in the middle of the day on a Monday. I enjoy

watching beautiful women dance and take off their clothes like every other patron, but this show isn't doing it for me. My dick acts like it's broken. The beauty on the stage behind the glass has been performing for half an hour, and I haven't even managed a semi-hard erection.

She's hot. She's even a redhead. Apparently, I'm into those now. But her curves are wrong, her tits aren't big enough, and she doesn't have enough meat on her ass. I can't fuck her either. I'd break this one in two seconds, so it's probably a good thing my Johnson doesn't want her.

The upbeat dance music that's playing inside the stripper booth also streams inside the private showroom from two speakers installed in two corners of the private viewing room I'm standing in. There is a chair behind me, but the last thing I want to do is occupy something that's seen countless asses pleasuring themselves to naked girls. There's a volume control panel on the wall next to the door, but I don't have the music playing very loud, so when the door opens and then closes a breath later, I know someone has joined me.

Usually, I'd have my loaded handgun pulled and aimed at the individual who dared to catch me preoccupied. Though it's rare and frowned upon, it's not unheard of, nor a stretch for the girls looking for a little extra cash to sneak into the private viewing room, hoping to add to their pleasure in more personable ways.

One tried that once with me. She learned quickly to never to do it again. Before I removed the blade from her throat, I made sure she knew to tell the rest of the staff that if it happened again, the next bitch wouldn't walk away without a mark.

No, the person that entered wasn't a stripper or any other dumb fuck looking to meet his maker today. I can sense Dom's presence. I've always been able to feel when he enters a room or walks up behind me. I guess you could call it a sixth sense or some shit like that.

In the next slow blink, I'm shoved face first into the one-way mirrored glass window, my forehead slamming into it.

My palms connect too late to prevent the pain from ping-ponging inside my head.

There went my soft dick. Guess it's not broken, after all.

Grabbing me underneath my arm, he flips me around to face him as he shoves me backward, my back now against the window. Domenico isn't short, but being several inches shorter than me, I tower over him the same way I do everyone else. That doesn't stop him from placing his hand around my throat and squeezing, cutting off my airway. It doesn't stop the smile that ghosts my lips either from his attempt to dominate me.

The only way either one dominates the other is if we relinquish the power or we push the other so far that one of us runs out of strength and energy first. His lips smash against mine, and his tongue forces its way inside to meet mine.

He kisses like he fucks: hard and demanding everything from you. Any other way and this attraction between us wouldn't have lasted as long as it has or continued to strengthen between us like it's doing now.

Balling my fingers into a fist, I nail him in the ribs, once and then twice more, keen on giving him back everything he gave me the other night. My flesh is still bruised where he pummeled my ribcage on the left side of my torso. They still ache with every move I make, reminding me of Dom, which was his goal. That's my goal now.

He grunts, his tongue slipping from inside my mouth as his long fingers tighten around my throat. Grabbing him from under his suit jacket, I slide my hand upward on both sides, then I flip us so that his back is slammed against the hard, unforgiving thick glass window, taking his power away. I crash my lips back into his, kissing him harder and proving that I can outdo him every time if I so choose.

Dom doesn't take this shit. His fist slams into my gut, breaking my hold on his lips but not before I sink my teeth into his bottom lip. When I glance down, crimson leaks from the corner of his mouth, pulling a smile from me. His fist lands another punch.

Going back and forth with him is more of a high than any drug could ever give me, and I'd happily overdose on him any day or night I'm granted the pleasure. My dick swells. When I press my body against him, I feel his hard erection, which sends tingles down my spine. I press against him more, chasing something that I have no business wanting or needing.

A smart man would let him marry the Irish kitten and go on about my own life, my own family, and my own goddamn business. Playing with fire isn't going to end well for either one of us or those around us if we keep this shit up.

Sooner or later, one of us has to have the balls to end this. Today just isn't that day.

I push his jacket off, leaving him in his dark dress shirt. Mine was discarded when I walked in here, thinking I'd get myself off from watching the girl on the stage, but that didn't turn out how I thought it would.

Not caring if he has an extra shirt in his SUV or not, I grip the opening between the buttons and yank, ripping the threads and exposing his dark-haired chest. Next, I unbutton my shirt as he grips my hips with both hands, grinding my dick against his. It's doing too many things to my head, and all I can think about is his cock sliding down my throat. The power that gives me, knowing I control his pleasure and his pain, is everything I never knew I wanted. And while I have it, I will bathe in that shit for as long as possible.

In haste, I jerk my shirt off my body and toss it behind me without looking. With my hands not in control of him, Dom uses it to his advantage and swings us to the side. Then he maneuvers his leg between mine, hooking his heel behind my right one while his arm grabs behind my left knee, jerking my feet off the ground.

I go down hard, my ass landing on the concrete floor that's hopefully been cleaned since the last guy unloaded his wad in here. Coming down on top of me, he wraps his fingers around my throat again and squeezes, cutting off my airflow as he forces my head backward.

When I look up, his dick is inches from my lips, making my mouth water and my tongue dart out to lick the tip. How he got his slacks and boxers down that fast, I'm not even questioning. I dart my tongue out, licking the tip of his cock where pre-cum has beaded at the head.

"Suck my dick," he orders, his voice rough and his need showing.

"Who are you hard for?" I ask. "Me or Kitten?"

I saw the way he looked at her this morning. He wants her, which I knew from New Orleans, where we first met her. Only now, he wants her even more, but then again, so do I.

So, can I really blame him?

"Both of you."

He releases my neck, and I take the opportunity to suck in air. He, of course, uses that as his opening and jerks himself forward, forcing his dick between my lips. It takes more strength than it should to keep my elbows braced on the floor.

"Now fucking suck," he says through a strained expression like if I don't suck him off, he will lose every ounce of wits about him.

Closing my lips around his thick shaft, he pushes forward, going down my throat as far as he can and then pulls back. Racing forward again, he finds a fast pace as he leans on me, pumping in and out of my mouth.

"Shit. Fuck. Jesus, that's," he trails off, panting. My hands reach the back of his knees and yank him forward, quickly pulling more of his dick into my mouth. One of his hands finds the back of my neck and squeezes. It helps stabilize my head in the awkward position he forced me into.

I suck while he pistons in and out of my mouth, his dick tasting every bit the way I like it; like it's mine, and he belongs to me, even if he doesn't. Though he's not hers yet either, and for some strange reason, my jealousy doesn't spark when thinking about them together. I've pictured it a lot. Every time I do, my dick hardens, like now—it's a solid fucking rock.

Domenico isn't the only one affected by two beings. They both get me hard too.

He grunts a second before his pace slows, followed by spurts of hot liquid going down my throat as Dom unloads himself. While the last drop drips out, I apply a slight bit of pressure with my teeth as he pulls his dick from my mouth.

As he sits back, resting his ass on my stomach, I lick my lips and glance up, seeing dark, soul-penetrating eyes, silently scything things I can't or don't want to decipher, at least not in this lifetime. Maybe in the next, but even I'm not sure I believe in that shit.

All I do know for sure is that we're going to come crashing down at some point sooner or later. Dom has to realize that too. Maybe that's what those goddamn eyes are trying to say back to me.

This is coming to an end, motherfucker. It has to.

CHAPTER 13

DOMENICO

I hadn't realized how on edge I was until I walked inside the private showroom at Headliner's, my brother's strip club, and saw Krishna standing in front of the one-way viewing window. His arms were crossed, and his posture gave away the boredom coursing through him as he watched the stripper with her thin thighs wrapped around the pole.

It started when I walked into that exam room at the Women's Clinic to find Ciera with a look plastered on her face that told me she didn't like whatever it was she and the doctor were talking about.

I knew she had a physical exam and lab work, so of course, my thoughts went to those results not coming back clean. As I was checking her out, I texted my father, demanding he sends me the results the minute he got them.

After I dropped her off at the bridal shop, he still hadn't responded, so I hacked into her account for the clinic's electronic medical record system to view them myself.

Ciera had a complete STD workup as well as regular wellness labs. She was clean, and that was a relief.

I may not want her for a real wife, nor do I plan to stick a baby in her womb, but I sure as fuck want to stick something else inside her hot body. It would have been a disappointment to find out the only silver lining to the sham of a wedding I'm being forced to partake in wouldn't happen.

I've wanted to fuck her since I first laid eyes on her in New Orleans, and now that I know she's clean, I'm not so sure

I can wait until the “I do’s” are said.

Krishna took the edge off when I forced my dick down his throat, making him suck me off just the way I like it: fast and rough.

Now that my head is clear and I’m back in the right state of mind, I remember the doctor’s note in Ciera’s chart. The physician listed scarring around her anus similar to assault victims.

That doesn’t sit well with me. If she likes rough sex and being fucked in the ass, that’s one thing, but if the doctor’s theory is correct, then it’s something that has to be dealt with. Fake marriage or not, if someone raped her, then their death is already sealed.

After I left the strip club, I went to New Jersey to meet one of our captains to check on him and his crew and ensure things are running as they should be.

Thomas Barone is a little older than my father. His son, Bennett, and my sister have known each other for years. They attended the same school even after Thomas asked my father if he could move out of the city and over to Jersey. Dad approved the move. We had enough eyes in the city and thought having someone across the bridge wasn’t a bad idea.

I got home forty-five minutes ago, showered, and was going to turn on a movie to fall asleep when I glanced out my open window and saw the lights on inside the pool house. It’s after midnight, and after not getting any answers out of Ciera earlier about her night terrors, I dropped the remote on the nightstand and padded barefoot out the back door.

I don’t bother knocking. Perhaps it’s rude and even an invasion of Giovanni’s privacy, but do I give one fuck? No. I don’t trust him. Not yet anyway. He doesn’t get to show up out of the blue and be appointed the third highest ranking position in this family without earning that spot. A spot that should be my sister’s, not his.

I do, however, trust my father, so for that reason alone, I haven’t put a bullet in his head. They should both be thanking

me.

When I walk in, I find them both laughing with drinks in their hands. Dad is in the leather reclining chair while Giovanni is leaning his back against the plush couch on the side closest to my father. Their eyes snap to mine and their conversation stops.

“Why does Ciera have night terrors?” I direct my question to Giovanni. He’s the one that stated what was happening to her when I found him about to slap her last night. Never in my life have I wanted to end another person’s life more than I did when I stepped into her bedroom nearly twenty-four hours ago, and I’ve spent well over half my life wanting to end the life of the person that stole my mother’s life.

“I don’t know the answer to that, Domenico,” he says.

“Then how do you know that’s what she was having? Maybe it was just a regular nightmare. Dad kidnapped her after all.” I glance at my old man, but he doesn’t take the bait. I didn’t expect him to.

“I know she has night terrors because I recognize her episodes and the mannerisms she tries to control.”

“What does that mean?” I ask.

Giovanni sighs and then sits forward, placing his glass tumbler on the coffee table in front of his knees. “She sneaks bottles of whiskey to her room to drink until she passes out. That way, she’s safe from them happening,” he enlightens me.

“And you’re sure of this?” I cross my arms, eyeing him for any indication that he isn’t being honest. I don’t know how long he’s been out of prison. He mentioned he hadn’t been in there in a long time, but that doesn’t tell me anything. For all I know, he hasn’t had pussy in years either. Ciera could be easy prey for him. She’s basically a captive living under this roof.

“I haven’t confronted her, but I did find empty bottles in her bedroom. That made me suspect she may have night terrors from some type of trauma. I decided to remove all the alcohol from the pool house, so I tried to stop her from drinking another beer last night. I wanted to test my theory.”

Since his theory may have been correct, I flip my eyes to my father's. Whatever he's thinking is hidden behind the mask he's mastered in his almost fifty years.

"Since you're forcing this marriage, don't you think you should share whatever trauma she has with me?" I arch an eyebrow, waiting for him to respond.

"Of course, I think you should know, and if I knew the answer, I would have told you, Domenico." Dad leans forward and rests his elbows on his knees, his near-empty glass gripped between his fingers. "I know you've done your homework. You know what's rumored in regard to Liam O'Donovan. She lived with him most of her life. There's always a chance he used her as a pawn."

"You think the underground auction of girls in Ireland exists?" I ask, not beating around the bush.

"Probably, but since she's always been in Ireland, he didn't auction her off. Perhaps she doesn't have physical trauma, but she could have been mentally abused for all we know."

Either way, someone will pay if one or both are proven as fact. I don't say that, though. Dad doesn't like it when he knows I have ill intent toward others, even those that deserve punishment. He prefers to be the judge, the jury, and the executioner himself.

When I have nothing left to say, I turn, but it's not to walk out the door I came through, at least not until I have my pet first.

Rounding the chair behind my father, I step toward the hallway.

"Leave her be, Dom," Dad issues an order. "She went to bed an hour ago."

"Wasn't planning on waking her," I say without looking behind me, not obeying my boss or my father. In less than four days, she'll be a Caputo. I might as well get her used to waking up next to one.

MY DAD, nor Giovanni, was pleased when I walked back through the seating room in the pool house with Ciera in my arms. I didn't wake her like I said I wouldn't do, though when I walked into her room, she was on the brink of a nightmare or night terror.

Before picking her up, I decided to try a theory of my own. I wrapped my fingers around her delicate neck and applied a small amount of pressure. Not enough to cut off her breathing, but enough to give her a sense that I was in control—and it worked. Like the snap of fingers, she relaxed and exhaled a breath of air.

I found myself getting hard, so I gathered her in my arms, ignoring how perfect she felt nestled against me, and now here we are, stepping over the threshold into my bedroom. I kick the door closed behind me with my shoe.

After I showered earlier, I pulled on a pair of sweat pants and slipped into my shoes without socks, knowing I'd be taking them back off in no time. There was no point in socks when my palms were itching for the feel of soft flesh.

As I bend down, leaning over my bed to place Ciera in the middle, a noise coming from my bathroom makes my back go rigid. Ren has his own bathroom, and if he had to use another, he'd go to Si's before he'd ever come down to mine. Brooklyn is with her grandmother, and since Dad is with Giovanni, that only leaves Ren and Sasha in the house with us.

I reach behind my pillow to the backside of my headboard where I have a handgun hidden and secured and pull it from the holster. I whip my body around and aim as the bathroom door opens, revealing Krishna, wearing a pair of black boxer briefs as he dries his blond hair with one of my towels. He arches an eyebrow but never once flinches.

“Either pull the fucking trigger or stop aiming it at me.” His eyes go from the gun's barrel to mine, but I do neither.

“One Nikolayev living here is too many. Don’t you have your own bed in a different city to sleep in?”

My finger was never in the trigger well, so I drop the weapon to my side as I turn my back to him to put the gun back in its hiding place. When moments pass and he hasn’t replied to my question, I walk to my closet but see his head cocked to the side from my peripheral vision. He’s eyeing Ciera like she is his favorite dessert.

Once my shoes and sweats are off, I’m left in a pair of boxers that match the ones K has on. When I exit the closet, I find him sliding under the sheets next to her. He’s being gentle, trying not to wake her, but I’ve already figured out she’s a hard sleeper.

“Does she know you brought her in here again?” he asks, not looking at me as I pull the sheet and comforter back. She’s on top of the covers, so I have to maneuver her under them, only I’m not nearly as cautious as Krishna was. She makes a soft sound that’s a half sigh, half purr. It makes my dick jump, but as I suspected, she doesn’t wake up despite her body being jarred around aggressively.

“No,” I tell him. “At this point, she doesn’t have a choice but to get used to it.”

I slip under the sheet, but I don’t pull the covers back over us. If her window being open or the fact I’ve found her uncovered both nights is any indication, then she gets hot like I do. Leaning back, I flip over onto my left side. K is facing us with his head resting in the palm of his right hand.

“It didn’t take you long to stop fighting the married life, I see.” He’s not looking at me. He’s slowly eyeing every inch of her sleeping form.

“I told the old man I’d give him a year. That’s all,” I bite out, wanting more than just Krishna to believe the conviction in my tone.

“Maybe,” he says, flopping back on the pillow behind his head, his cool blue eyes landing on the ceiling. “Maybe not. Either way, we should put this thing between us to bed.”

“We are in bed.” I drop my stare from him to where Ciera lies between us. “So maybe you just need to shut the fuck up and go to sleep.”

I have no plans to give up anything or anyone that I want when I want them. Currently, I want them both, and he’s already put the image of us both fucking her in my head. So, until that happens, they’re both staying their fine asses in my bed whether they want to or not.

Sliding my left hand under the back of Ciera’s neck, I move past her until I find the back of Krishna’s neck and wrap my fingers around him as Ciera rests against my bicep. Squeezing, he turns slightly so that our eyes meet.

“Why are you here?” I probe, still curious. As I wait for his answer, if he’ll even give me one, I wrap my other hand around her throat, but I don’t apply any pressure, only resting it there, and the thought that this feels right is shoved to the back of my mind.

“I had the best sleep of my life last night. I wanted to see if it was a fluke,” he says with a tinge of irritation in his rough voice. It’s understandable because I get where he’s coming from. I, too, had a damn good night’s sleep.

“And if it wasn’t?” I find myself asking another question I should leave alone.

The mattress moves when his giant form turns slightly to face me. My hand is still around the back of his neck, but like I’m doing with Ciera, my hand relaxes its hold.

“Then someone is liable to be killed.” He holds my gaze, and I watch his serious stare as he forces it to transform. “When do we get to taste her? I want to find out which one of you tastes better.”

“When she asks us to.” And with those last words, I turn my head to face the ceiling and close my eyes. I’m asleep before I take a second breath.

CHAPTER 14

The feel of Domenico's soft, silky black hair sliding through my fingers feels amazing but his tongue moving across my flesh is otherworldly. Tightening my digits around his thick strands, I use all the strength I can muster to hold him in place as a moan slips from my lips. What he's doing to my body feels so good that I don't stop the next one from leaving my mouth either.

As I'm enjoying the pleasure, my left hand snakes up Krishna's bare arm. My pursuit stops when I feel the hardness of his tricep muscle flex as he puts all his weight on that arm. Biting my bottom lip, I trace that glorious muscle with my thumb, memorizing its shape, its feel, and the exact spot where it is located under his skin.

Flattening my palm against his warm skin, I roam up and over his shoulder, only stopping when my hand locates the back of his neck. The hair at the nape of his neck is soft, and where Domenico's is as dark as night, Krishna's reminds me of the sun.

Tugging his face down, his lips part to pull my nipple into his mouth. My back arches as a purr rumbles through my chest, exiting my mouth despite the clamp my teeth has on my bottom lip.

"I'm so fucking hard right now." Krishna's voice is rough, and there's an edge to it, but that can't be right. He's sucking my left breast. He can't be speaking too.

“You’re not the only one,” Domenico chimes in. “Tug her shorts down her leg.”

Wait, that can’t be right either. Domenico’s mouth and tongue are working me over too well for him to be talking.

“You don’t have to tell me twice,” Krishna replies as I feel the material coasting down my legs.

My eyes snap open.

Domenico and Krishna’s stare flicks from my center to my eyes simultaneously.

A beat of silence passes, then I glance down. My eyes widen as mortification smothers me. My knees are bent, and my shorts are, in fact, pulled down to my ankles, but that isn’t what’s causing me shame. My right hand is inside my panties with my middle finger on my clit.

And I’m wet.

I was dreaming about them both and pleasuring myself at the same time. By the looks on their faces, they know that too, and there’s no telling how long I’ve been giving them a show.

My cheeks are on fire as my embarrassment grows.

How did this happen? Why am I even in Domenico’s bed—again?

I start to retract my hand, my finger moving away from where I’m throbbing between my legs when Domenico’s right hand grips my wrist. “You’re not stopping until we watch you come, my pretty little pet.”

I shake my head, not wanting to do as he says as I pull against his hold. His fingers tighten, but not to the point of hurting me. In the blink of an eye, he pushes my hand farther beneath my panties. My fingers slip through my folds, liquid coating them. Releasing my wrist, he moves his hand to cover the top of mine, the material of my panties between us.

Pressing on my middle finger, he makes me enter myself. I gasp, sucking air into my parched mouth. I’ve never been this wet, not even from a dream.

“Make yourself come, kitten,” Krishna urges while Domenico moves my hand back and forth slowly. Adding pressure, he pushes my finger back inside me. Not just my middle finger is slick with juices, so is my palm as it glides over my clitoris. I couldn’t stop the moan from leaving my lips if I wanted to.

“That’s it, baby girl,” Domenico says. “Show us how good your finger feels.”

When I try to turn my head, my nerves getting the better of me, Domenico’s left hand finds my neck and grips it. He forces my head to face them again, but he also lifts my shoulders off the bed, forcing me to look between my legs.

“I can’t,” I say finally, but it’s breathy and laced with another moan. I may be wet and turned on, but I’m also embarrassed. The way they’re looking at me is doing weird things to not only my head, but it’s also affecting me everywhere, and I don’t know what to do. I just want to crawl under a rock and forget this ever happened.

“Kitten,” Krishna calls out while his eyes are locked between my legs as Domenico pushes my finger back inside me, pressing harder this time, making my digit go deeper. “Your panties are coming off. I need to see your finger inside you so that I can imagine it being my dick.”

Reaching over to Domenico’s side, he slips his hand between my hip and where Domenico’s hardness is pressed against me. Domenico’s hips buck, smashing Krishna’s hand to my flesh as he sucks in a breath through his mouth.

His hand leaves the top of mine so fast I don’t see he’s wrapped it around the back of Krishna’s neck until Domenico pulls his face close to his own. “Touch me again and you’re going to suck it.” Then their lips smash together so violently that I’m unsure if they’re lovers or if my assumption was wrong and they’re actually enemies.

Domenico pulls his lips free just as blood coats his bottom one. His eyes snap down to mine. “I didn’t tell you to stop finger fucking yourself, pet. Now add another finger and get back to it.”

“I think she likes watching us like we enjoy watching the show she’s giving us, Dom,” Krishna remarks. He too, has blood on his bottom lip, but it’s only a drop, like maybe he’s the one that bit Domenico, so it’s not his blood coating his flesh.

He begins pulling my panties down my legs, and as he does, my thighs begin to quake. The next thing I know, both Domenico and Krishna place one of their hands on each of my knees, pulling them apart. Then, as if knowing what the other is thinking, they descend, moving toward my center.

My thighs are caressed in such a gentle way that it’s hard to process they’re the ones doing it. They’re both hard with violent tendencies, though I did think Krishna was the nicer one of the two. Now, I’m not so sure that deduction was accurate by the looks they had on their faces when they kissed.

And why did I find that so hot? Liquid gushed over my finger and out of my opening when their lips locked. I hate violence of any means, so it confuses me when one or both of them does something and it doesn’t turn my stomach sour. Domenico boils my blood but not in the way it should.

“Faster, Ciera. Fuck yourself like you’re trying to get yourself off,” Domenico orders.

“I can’t,” I tell him again, but this time it’s a whine instead of a moan. At this point, I want to come. There’s nothing I want more than the release I can feel as I stand on the edge of a cliff I’ve never been successful at jumping off of.

“Make yourself come for us, Ciera,” Domenico bites out, his tone darkening.

“I can’t, you gobshite,” I fire back, my voice louder than I intended. “I’ve never been able to make myself come.”

“I have no idea what the fuck that means,” Krishna says with a laugh in his tone. “But it sounds so vulgar from your sweet lips, kitten.”

The flare in Domenico’s eyes tells me he heard the meaning loud and clear just before his hand stops softly caressing me. Within a heartbeat, his palm lands down on my

sensitive skin in a hard smack, eliciting a flash of pain against the inside of my thigh.

My back arches off the bed, but I manage to suppress a yelp by biting down on my bottom lip. Domenico's palm resumes rubbing the inside of my leg. The expert touch he has works like magic, the pain ebbs away as pressure returns, but it's still just enough to keep me rooted in place, the free fall just out of reach.

"Take your dick out," Domenico says to Krishna while his dark eyes stay locked with mine, his face a mask of indifference.

"Take your own fucking dick out," Krishna spits out, clearly not appreciating the order that was issued.

Domenico's head whips up to face him. "When we're in your house, in your bed, you give the orders. When we're in mine, do as I fucking say. Now get on your knees and take your dick out of your goddamn boxers."

Without another word, Krishna climbs to his knees, and I can't take my eyes off him. Staring at Domenico, he slides his boxer briefs down, freeing himself, and he's long. I don't know the average male size, but I don't think Krishna's length could possibly go all the way inside a woman's body without pain.

Krishna wraps his right hand around himself while his other remains on the inside of my thigh, rubbing me as softly as Domenico is doing. They're both seemingly in the same rhythmic pattern.

Dipping his head, Domenico's lips touch the shell of my ear. His right hand slips lower until it's covering the top of mine again. He takes control, moving my fingers between my folds, guiding them inside me and then back out, then he repeats the process. "Take your left hand and wrap those pretty little fingers around K's cock," he whispers into my ear, his voice so low and soft it tickles.

I go to say no, but a moan slips from my lips instead, his tone sending tingles down my spine.

“Do as you’re told and you’ll be rewarded,” Domenico informs me. “Don’t, and you’ll be punished.”

“As much as I want you stroking my dick, kitten, I would much prefer you to be defiant.” He strokes himself slowly, his eyes on mine. “I want to watch him punish you. *I* want to punish you for refusing to jerk me off.”

“Hand on Krishna’s dick, now,” Domenico barks out too close to my ear, his tone lacking patience. This time, shudders skate down the length of my spine.

I comply, moving my left hand down the side of my body. When I lift it, I’m hesitant, but then Krishna snatches my wrist, forcing me to latch my fingers around himself. Squeezing, I tug on the skin, moving toward the tip. His eyes flutter as a breath exits his lips.

“That’s it, baby girl,” Domenico praises me while he continues to work my other hand, helping me pleasure myself as I pleasure Krishna. “As I increase your speed as you rub your clit, I want you to stroke him faster. You understand?”

“Yes,” I say as two of my fingers slip back inside me, coating them yet again.

“Good girl,” they both say in unison.

Pulling my wet fingers out, he positions two of my digits at my clitoris and then makes me rub circles around the sensitive area. At first, it’s a steady pace, and since I don’t have to concentrate with him in charge, I can keep the same back and forth pace as I run my fisted hand up and down Krishna’s length.

His arctic eyes are on mine, and I can’t look away from them. He towers over Domenico and me. “That feels good, kitten,” he praises, and I’m left with a weird feeling in my chest. I’m not used to accolades. It’s so foreign to my ears that I almost want to ask him if he meant what he said.

When Domenico’s control of my fingers increases, I do the same, obeying his request and not understanding why I haven’t run out of the room yet. But that’s a lie. I do know why. It’s part fear, part need.

On one hand, I'm not sure I want to find out if they wouldn't release me if I told them I wanted to leave. No one has ever given me what I want, or even asked me. On the other hand, it's not as though I'm not enjoying whatever this is. I'm tired of having dreams that involve Domenico and sometimes he and Krishna, only to wake up to a pending orgasm that vanishes. It's always just out of reach, and I'm sick of it.

The truth is, I want this. Their motives or reasons don't matter to me. I know my soon-to-be marriage to Domenico isn't real, but why shouldn't I get something good out of the deal?

"I want you to come on her pussy," Domenico says to Krishna, but his voice is so close to my ear that it's as though he's speaking to me and me alone.

Domenico amps up his speed, so I stroke faster and then faster again, but I'm starting to lose control, and that's when Krishna wraps his fingers around mine, keeping the pace for me the way Domenico is doing with my other hand.

I suck in a breath as my center tightens.

"Oh, fuuuck, that's ..." Krishna trails off, his eyelids fluttering as his breath whooshes out his mouth.

"You're really making me work for this," Domenico whispers, his bottom lip touching my ear lobe. His hand supporting my neck moves up, his fingers gliding through the strands of my hair. Fisting his fingers, he pulls my hair, but it's not in a painful way I'm not enjoying. "It's time to come, baby girl."

Warm spurts of liquid land on my center, my thighs, and that's when the muscles inside me tighten as I reach that peak. It's intense as the muscles inside contract, making me cry out, unable to hold in everything I'm feeling. The pleasure is overwhelming.

"See, you can make yourself come," Domenico says before the bed shifts. As I try to catch my breath, I glance at him as he pushes himself to his knees. "And now you're going to do it again."

Krishna pulls my hand away from his softening cock, then he bends and brushes a kiss to my knee as Domenico pulls his boxer briefs down his muscular thighs.

“Suck me off,” Domenico says.

“You’re getting a little too used to my mouth on your dick, don’t you think?” Krishna replies.

“The pet needs to learn,” he tells Krishna as his hand forces my fingers to move lower, running my digits through Krishna’s cum until my fingers return to my entrance. He eases two inside me and then pulls them back out. “What better way than with a visual demonstration from a pro.”

Krishna’s hand finds the inside of my calf from where my legs are still bent and starts to rub the skin softly. He and Domenico stare at each other in a long beat of silence as they kneel on each of my sides.

“Keep finger fucking my cum into her pretty little pussy and I’ll make you come in under a minute.”

Krishna’s body bends over me. The hand he used to guide mine up and down his shaft juts out, caressing Domenico’s balls. Within a heartbeat, his lips are wrapped around Domenico, his cock disappearing into his mouth. I watch, unable to look away as his throat expands, taking Domenico as deep as his thick length will go.

“Ciera,” Domenico calls out, his breath labored. His hand leaves mine, and I almost halt as my fingers slide through my folds and then back inside me with ease. His fingers grip my knee. “Don’t stop finger fucking your pussy. I want every drop of K’s cum inside you before I come. Understand?” he asks, finally looking back at me as his fingers from his left hand plunge into Krishna’s blond hair.

“Yes,” I answer, my own words falling out of my mouth in a breathless tone.

Domenico grunts as Krishna works him. I’m watching like I really am trying to learn because I can’t take my eyes off how Domenico’s cock slides in and out of Krishna’s mouth so smoothly. This shouldn’t be turning me on more, but it is.

With each plunge of my fingers inside me, I'm wetter every time I pull them back out.

"Don't swallow," Domenico says, his voice breathless, telling me he's close to his release. "I want you to spit it on her pussy."

The muscles inside my body clench at his demand even though his words were not for me.

"Goddamn," Domenico says, his fingers fisting tighter around the strands of Krishna's hair while the vise grip he has on my knees intensifies in a bruising manner. Watching him come is fascinating for some reason I don't understand.

When Krishna pulls his lips off Domenico, my soon-to-be husband falls back in the position he was originally in when I woke up, then he turns, facing me. His lips brush the shell of my ear as a flood of liquid coats my center. Domenico's right hand finds my throat, his warm fingers wrapping back around it in a resting state more so than a choking one.

As if knowing what he wants me to do, I run my fingers through his cum and then push them back inside me. I repeat the process, pulling my fingers out and running them through the liquid Krishna released from his mouth and onto me, then I push two fingers back inside, pulling Domenico's cum in with them the same as I did Krishna's.

"I'd sell my soul to the devil to put my tongue on your pussy," Domenico whispers against my ear.

I don't know if it was the sound of his voice, the image his words conjured up in my head, or the fact that I now have a part of them both inside me, but it sends me over the edge again as another orgasm rips through every limb attached to my body, only harder this time around.

Releasing his hold on my throat, Domenico watches me as Krishna falls back down beside me on my other side. His hand glides up and down my inner thigh in the most soothing and sensual way, while Domenico's hand skims down my body until he finds my wrist and wraps his heated fingers around it.

Tugging, he pulls my fingers out of me and brings them to his mouth, then he inserts two of them, sucking them clean.

It's mesmerizing, but it would be ignorant on my part to imagine what happened this morning ever being a reality in the future. It's not. At the end of the day, I'm a means to the end of a feud between our fathers, our families. My blood will shed the same as Cormac Fitzgerald's, whether I'm guilty of anything or not. That I have no doubt about.

My time is numbered, the same as my father's.

The question is, when will that time come?

CHAPTER 15

DOMENICO

I have no idea what possessed me to ensure Ciera received a proper orgasm two days ago. When I woke to find Krishna watching her while she was rubbing herself between her legs, I got so fucking hard I couldn't think straight. When she admitted to being unable to get herself off, I couldn't get out of my bed until I made sure that happened.

She gave herself two orgasms, and for whatever reason, I was proud of her. I should be proud of myself too because it took every ounce of strength I had not to beg her to let me slide *my* fingers inside her pussy instead of her own. When I tasted her, it was the most divine thing I've ever experienced on my tongue.

If I'm not careful, my need for her will match the need I have for Krishna, and that cannot happen. I've already let him and me get out of control, and now I have to find a way to pull the reins back on him while I park the brakes on Ciera. They're both fucking up my head.

She's slept in my bed the previous two nights like the two nights before them, as has Krishna, but nothing deviant has taken place between the three of us. I'd like to say that was my intent, but Wednesday morning, she crawled out of bed and was out of my bedroom before I realized she wasn't going to the bathroom.

Then this morning I received a notification at four a.m. that someone was breaking into our warehouse, so it was me

that ditched her. I woke Krishna and then dragged Ren out of bed, making them both accompany me to check it out.

Just because someone can break in doesn't mean they can break out, and that's exactly what Fitzgerald's junkie thug found out. He wasn't the only man we discovered when we arrived either. I knew there were two of them from viewing the camera footage while Ren drove.

After I put a bullet between the meth head's eyes, K carted him off in the SUV they arrived in. Krishna will park it somewhere close to Fitzgerald's pub in the city. I want them to find the remains. I want them to know who did it. I want them to see what happens when you fuck with a Caputo.

The other shit-for-brains was a surprise. When I saw it was Rico the Rat, I made a call I hadn't planned to make this morning. It's no secret that Fredrico Romano was the one responsible for Giovanni being sent to prison. I may not like Matteo's uncle, but he's still one of us, and that means something to me.

When I killed Levi King a few months ago, he told me Rico was working for Killian Fitzgerald, Cormac's son. Ciera's brother may only be seventeen, but he's no kid to the ways of a Fitzgerald. I want to know what all he's involved in, the same as I do their father.

Dad wants to end Cormac's reign over the city we once called home, and mark my words, we will call it home again if I have anything to do about it. But where Dad wants to take Fitzgerald out, I want to see him suffer first. Maybe Dad thinks that is what he's doing with Ciera, but I don't believe Cormac gives two shits about his daughter. He shipped her off to live in Ireland, after all. He might as well have thrown her away.

I want to take everything from him first, and as soon as I figure out how to access his finances, I'll do just that. Cormac is harder to hack than the police commissioner's bank records, and I'm a bit curious as to why that is when Owen Donovan is connected to a man feared more than even my father is.

Liam O'Donovan, the man Ciera lived with most of her life, is also someone I need to learn more about, but that will have to wait until Cormac and the rest of his merry little gang are exterminated. When that happens, there is no doubt in my mind that I'll capture not only Owen's attention but his brother's as well.

Perhaps I can use Ciera to find out more about Liam because if my instincts serve me right, and they always do, he's going to become a problem faster than I think my father realizes. There has to be a reason Ciera was sent back to The States, and I doubt it had anything to do with Cormac wanting his daughter home. He's sold her off twice since she returned.

The sound of expensive shoes tapping on the concrete floor behind me pulls my focus away from my thoughts. I heard Giovanni's SUV pull up less than a minute ago, and judging by his fast-paced walk, he's in too much of a hurry to confront Rico.

"Why is there a knife protruding from his leg?" Giovanni asks as he stops next to me, his tone laced with irritation much like my father's when one of his kids does something that displeases him.

"It was an accident," Ren lies, the laugh on his tongue palpable. "Slipped out of my sleeve and landed in his leg."

"Looks deep," Giovanni deadpans, knowing fully that my brother did this on purpose.

Ren wasn't happy about untangling himself from around his pregnant wife before dawn. Stabbing Rico was his way of flushing out his anger. Giovanni's lucky he didn't pull the knife out and stab him again.

Rico's eyes grow wide just before he pulls against the rope binding his arms and legs to the metal chair he's seated in before us. The way I looped the rope, he only tightens it more with every jerk he makes.

After Lorenzo stabbed him, he started screaming like the pussy he is. The noise was grating on my nerves, so I duct-

taped his lips together. That mostly shut him up, but now he's back to screaming even though it's muffled.

If I had to guess, he didn't know Giovanni was out of the slammer until now.

"Take the knife out and remove the tape," Giovanni says, his head turning and eyeing Ren on my other side.

"Do I look like I take orders from you?" Ren quips.

"Just do it," I tell him, wanting this over and done with so I can get back, but not because I want to put eyes on the woman that better still be in my bed, or that I'm missing the feel of her body next to mine and the way my hand fits perfectly around the column of her neck as if she was molded just for me.

"Fine, but can we make this quick? My dick wants to be somewhere else," Ren replies as he steps forward. Bending, he grabs the handle of the knife and yanks it free. Blood gushes from the wound as my brother snatches the tape from Rico's mouth.

"You're supposed to be in prison," Rico spits, his muddy-brown eyes scared as they stare at Giovanni with the knowledge he isn't leaving here alive finally sinking in.

"Am I now?" He breathes, a laugh falling from his lips. "I haven't been inside a cell in over three years," Giovanni announces, which is news to my ears. I did wonder exactly how long he'd been out of the pen.

"Been looking for you for the last two years." A wicked smile ghosts my father's friend's face. "Was starting to think I'd never find you, Rat. Guess today was my lucky day. Now, tell us what you have going on with the Fitzgeralds."

"I'm not telling you shit," he hisses, a snarl curling his top lip.

Lifting his hand, Giovanni pulls out a nine-inch blade that was concealed inside his black suit jacket.

"Boys, why don't you leave me to handle this mess. I'm sure you have better things to do today," Giovanni says, his eyes not leaving from where Rico sits in front of us.

If the man wants to take his retribution from Romano's flesh, I don't have any qualms with that. I'd want to take my pleasure alone with someone if they cost me years of my life, rotting in a prison cell. Only I wouldn't have waited that long to start looking for the person that did it. I would have started my search the same day I got out of prison.

You betray me, you die—it's that simple.

"Let's go, Ren," I tell my brother as I turn, leaving Giovanni to call the shots.

CHAPTER 16

I didn't wake up when Domenico's phone made a noise from a notification, but as soon as his hand left my throat, I began to stir. Then he shoved Krishna and ordered him to get up, which in turn fully woke me up too.

He didn't say where they were going and I didn't expect him to, but I couldn't get back to sleep either after they left. I hadn't realized until a few hours ago that I've slept better this week than I ever have before.

In order to not dwell on that fact, I crawled out of bed and changed into the clothes I brought with me last night, then I cleaned his spotless bathroom, made his bed, and after I located his dirty clothes, I took them to the laundry room. After that, I cleaned Tony's refrigerator and then swept and mopped a kitchen that didn't need cleaning.

Domenico and his brother walked in to find me drying said floor and that's when Domenico asked me what I was doing, only he used a crude word he doesn't seem to have any qualms with dropping on a daily basis.

The only excuse I had was I was bored, which was the truth. He then told me I wasn't the housekeeper, but before I could snap back at him, he turned and walked out. He returned ten minutes ago, freshly showered with his laptop in hand. Without speaking to me, he made himself a cup of coffee and has been sitting on a stool at the island ever since.

I was hungry, so when he came back down, I was already cooking breakfast for myself. Tony made it clear days ago that

if I want food or anything else, to help myself, so that's what I'm doing. I hadn't planned on cooking for anyone but myself, but I can't eat while he doesn't. Then his brother walked in two minutes ago, followed by Sasha. Ren made them both mugs of coffee while I was plating food.

Picking one of the plates up, I slide it across the island until it reaches Domenico. His dark eyes flick to the plate, then he glances at me over the screen of his laptop, his expression masked. Turning away from him, I gaze at where Sasha is seated in the booth-style nook in the corner next to the window.

"Would either of you like something to eat? I cooked plenty," I tell her even though that isn't exactly true.

"Girl, I'll eat anything you place in front of me," she says, an excited smile gracing her lips.

"Same," Lorenzo adds as he puts Sasha's mug in front of her.

Turning away from all of them, I grab another plate and divide the meats between them and then fry two more eggs. When I plate the hot eggs, I pick both plates up and take them over to where they're seated across from each other.

Once I have two more eggs cooked for myself, I plate them and tote my food and juice to the island, but instead of sitting on the stool, I stand next to Domenico. Why I chose to get this close, I don't know, but I did and I'm not second-guessing myself like I usually do.

I'm about to cut into my fried eggs when Domenico picks up my plate before my fork reaches the porcelain. A breath later, his plate is set in its place and then he rakes my untouched eggs next to the ones he's half eaten.

Without saying a word, he sets my empty plate behind his laptop and pushes it away from us. Then he stabs a patty sausage and brings it to his lips. I'm still standing here when he swallows, fork midair and staring at the side of his head. "Eat," he says, and then goes back to typing and clicking the down arrow on his keyboard.

Scooping a forkful of eggs into my mouth, I get curious, so I flick my eyes to his darkened screen to see what he's doing. As I continue eating our shared meal, I keep watching him.

It takes approximately three minutes for me to figure out who he's spying on, whose finances he's hacked to be precise. Within another two minutes, I realize he's about to mess up. Without thinking, I drop my fork and snatch his right wrist away from the keys.

"Don't touch another key," I say with more bravado than I actually possess around him.

"Excuse me?" He's shocked by my actions, but I see it in his eyes when that turns to cautiousness.

"You're about to screw up and reveal yourself," I try to explain. Glancing down in front of me, I push our plate to the side and then I reach over him to pull his laptop closer in front of me. "It doesn't matter how much you think you're going in undetected. You aren't. Two more clicks and *his* security will be alerted with your location."

"That's impossible," he spits out. "How do you even know what I'm doing?"

"Until last summer, I had hobbies too," is all the information I choose to divulge as I back him out of the mess he's created.

I knew he was into breaking the law. It comes with the lifestyle he was raised in, but I hadn't realized he was this level of smart. In all honesty, he only would have gotten caught because I'm the one that built the bank's interface with specific security measurements and traps to ensure it. It's the only thing my uncle forced me to learn that I actually enjoyed. Everything else school-related was boring. Computers gave me an escape like nothing else. Exploring Dublin and the surrounding areas wasn't even as exciting as figuring out coding. It was like knowing another language that only a small number of others knew too.

"Liam's finances won't tell you anything. He keeps his accounts clean."

“All right, smarty, where’s the dirt then?”

“He only accepts cash. He keeps it in two locations: his house in Ireland and somewhere in the States. If I had to guess, his brother would likely be the source of that location. He wouldn’t trust anyone else,” I admit, having overheard several of their conversations over the years. When a man believes he owns another person and has forced the fear of God into them, he’s less worried about them spilling his secrets. Plus, there’s his ego. My uncle got off on my facial reaction to the things he’s done to other people over the years.

“So ...” Ren’s voice being in close proximity breaks my eye contact with Domenico. Glancing to the other side of the island, close to the sink, I see Ren watching his brother. “She can cook, and she’s better at computers than you. Damn, bro, I think you may have met your match.”

Chuckling, Domenico’s brother turns away from us and places his and Sasha’s plates in the sink.

Sliding Domenico’s laptop back in front of him, I grip the edge of our plate and pull it over to me, then I lift my fork and stab the other sausage patty, bringing it to my lips.

“Explain why you *think* I—”

“How I *know*, you mean?” I interrupt Domenico, my tone snarky. I step backward with the intention of getting something to drink when he snatches my elbow and pulls me close. “I’m thirsty.”

Loosening his grip, he grabs his coffee mug with his other hand and holds it out for me to take.

Reluctantly, I take it from him, lift the mug to my lips and then take a small sip. It’s cooled down. I wasn’t expecting the black liquid to taste sweet. It’s actually good, so I swallow more.

“Explain, Ciera,” he demands, but his tone isn’t hard like it usually is. It’s more curious than anything else.

“At my uncle’s request, I programmed a trap that would notify him if anyone tried snooping around his business,” I say.

“How do you even have the knowledge to do something that ...” He trails off like he isn’t sure he wants to finish his sentence.

“Sophisticated?” I offer. “Ingenious, perhaps?”

“Tell me what I want to know, smartass.”

“My uncle blackmailed a man into teaching me everything he knew,” I divulge. “It started when I was nine. By the time I was fifteen, I’d surpassed his abilities.”

“So now you’re O’Donovan’s little spy?” His nostrils flare, but he doesn’t give me time to answer him, or maybe his question was rhetorical. “Why would he send you home then, allow you to be sold to Santo first and then be given to my father? What’s his agenda?”

Something dark in his eyes changes, almost like someone else is coming to the surface. I can feel the energy in his posture morph, the muscles in his limbs being pulled taut. Before he can tighten his hold on my elbow, I step back, snatching my arm from his grasp.

“I don’t—” I start to tell him that I don’t have any idea what my uncle has planned, if anything, that involves the Caputos. I’m not privy to that type of information. But I also doubt Liam O’Donovan even knows I’m here or knows anything about my stay in New Orleans. He sent me to New York for college. There is no doubt in my mind that he has plans for me. He sent my father back to New York to run a criminal organization. He sent his younger brother to the States to infiltrate law enforcement in the city so that whatever he has my father doing could be covered up.

“Miss me, bitches?” Sienna’s interruption is welcomed.

Domenico’s wrath falls away as relief washes over me. Wherever his thoughts were headed wasn’t good, at least not for me.

I shouldn’t have interjected myself into his work. I messed up by revealing the things I’m capable of doing. Now Domenico is alarmed and suspicious of me, but I have nothing to hide. I’m not the one that brought me here, that told me I

had no choice in marrying his son. I'm not the one with an agenda. The Caputos themselves are.

Whipping his head to where his sister is standing in the entryway, Domenico scoots his stool backward and then stands. "What are you doing home? You aren't supposed to be back until tomorrow."

"Yeah, well, I have a dress to be fitted for later today, but I also figured if this is actually going down tomorrow night"—she points between her oldest brother and me—"then I should get to know my soon-to-be sister."

"You sure as hell didn't try to get to know me," Sasha pipes up, annoyance in her tone as well as a sneer on her face.

Sienna purses her lips, then glancing at Sasha says, "Because I already know you, and I don't like you, but you're coming too, so let's go."

"We live in the same house. I think I see you enough," Sasha replies as she slides out of the booth.

"Whatever, let's go, both of you." Sienna motions to Sasha and then to me.

"Ciera isn't going anywhere," Domenico states.

"Sorry, big bro, but it's not your call. I've already cleared it with the bossman."

She smiles at Domenico, but it's one of those *smile for the camera* smiles that is obviously false and akin to triumph.

Perhaps it's a sibling thing.

I have a brother, but Killian and I have never had the type of relationship the Caputos do, and I know we never will. He wasn't thrilled in the least when I called him, stranded in New Orleans all those weeks ago. At first, I wasn't sure he would bring me back home. He told me if I'd been smarter, I would have disappeared and never looked back.

Maybe, but the unknown scared me more than the nineteen years of treachery I've known from every member of my family. Killian puts on a good front, shows our family's true

colors the same as the rest, but I haven't figured out if he's really as evil as the rest of them.

I was raised by the worst man of them all, but I'm nothing like them. The only thing we have in common is our DNA.

"We're having a *girls'* day," Sienna emphasizes. "Go do men shit, or hell, go fuck Krishna out of your system since you'll be a married man in about thirty-six hours, brother." She crosses her arms.

"Who I fuck today or tomorrow or even next week is my business, so stay the fuck out of it." Domenico clucks his tongue. "Besides, I thought you were mad at Dad?"

"Oh, I am, but since you haven't done anything to get out of it, why should I fight your battles with Daddy?" Glancing at me and then at Sasha, she sighs in frustration. "Can you two move your asses already? We have places to be."

Not wanting to remain in Domenico's angry presence, I practically jump forward, walking toward her as quickly as my feet will carry me.

"Our conversation isn't over, pet," Domenico states from behind me, but I don't turn around or acknowledge that I heard him. One would have to be deaf not to have heard the boom in his voice.

CHAPTER 17

W *hat is she hiding?*

Maybe nothing, maybe everything.

Perhaps she's just the pawn, but whose? Liam or Cormac?

Knowing that O'Donovan sent his own brother to the U.S. to go to college and then climb the ranks until he reached the police commissioner of New York City says a lot. He likely has other levels to achieve, and not to mention Liam also raised Ciera's father until he sent Cormac back to New York to take over the Irish Crime ring.

He has to be the reason Ciera is here and for a specific purpose.

I just have to figure out what that reason is and if Ciera knows she's part of his plan. And if she does, well, it shouldn't be a stretch for her to know what I'll do to all of them, including her.

I shouldn't have jumped to a conclusion in front of her this morning. Not because I'm not suspicious of her motives and those of her family, but because I shouldn't have shown my hand. Now she knows I'm leery of her, and I don't need my pretty little pet to tip anyone off.

Of course, she showed her hand too. She revealed something far bigger than I did with my anger and emotions. I've never once thought Ciera to be lacking intelligence. You can look into her eyes and see the way she watches everyone and everything around her to know she isn't dumb.

Part of my attraction to Krishna is because he not only matches me in strength but in intelligence also. I don't need anything else about Ciera to make me want her any more than I already do. Her last name alone should be a turnoff, but it isn't.

I went back and studied the coding she embedded into the Ireland-based banking system. If she's telling the truth, and I don't have any reason to not believe her after watching her while she backed me out of the system, then she's on a whole different level than Krishna and me.

The one thing I do know for sure is that I cannot allow her near a computer or even a smartphone. There's no telling the damage she could cause should she get her hands on any electronic device.

Picking up the glass of amber liquid in front of me, I take a sip of the chilled whiskey, the ice clinking together in the glass as someone perches themselves next to me.

"If you really don't want to go through with the wedding tomorrow, I'll stand behind you," Ren says.

"We already hashed this out," I tell him, setting the glass down on the counter of the bar.

None of us had to get fitted for suits being as my sister just got married last weekend. The only thing I requested was that their shirts be black, though there's a nagging thought way back in my head that I shouldn't be making it more like a funeral than holy matrimony. Then again, it's not that either since the wedding will occur at Dad's house instead of a church like my sister's.

Although, there will be the commencement of marriage afterward. I'm at least doing that part right.

It's the rest that I cannot allow.

I vowed never to fall in love, and I aim to keep that promise to myself.

What transpired this morning needed to happen. It cleared some of the fog Ciera had created when I watched her come between Krishna and me three days ago. It's all I've thought

about since. What I've wanted to make happen again, and I will, but now I'll part her thighs and enter her heat knowing she's the enemy. Changing her last name doesn't dissolve that fact.

"Right," he says. "Dad wanted revenge, but Giovanni handled that. He took his retribution hours ago. The score should be settled."

"Dad wants to take the city back." I turn my head so that our eyes lock. "We're taking Fitzgerald's daughter, then we're taking his money, his property, and finally, their lives. The score isn't settled until we wipe out their existence, brother."

"Does that include your bride? Because I don't see the point in marrying her if you plan to kill her. Besides, she doesn't act like the rest of them. She fits in with us," he remarks.

"She cooked you two meals, Ren, now you simply accept her? Really? You don't even know her. *I* don't know her. She could easily be planning our demise the same as we're doing to her family. Don't fall for her shit, Lorenzo."

"I'm not falling for anything. I've been watching her while she's been with Sasha and Sienna all day. I've seen nothing to lead me to believe she's a bad person or has ill intentions toward us or anyone else."

"How? Where did Sienna take them?"

Pulling his cell phone from his pocket, he opens the device. In less than a minute, he hands it over to me. I take it, seeing he has video surveillance pulled up from the indoor shooting range Dad owns.

"They're teaching her to shoot?"

"Earlier, they were showing her how to wield a blade. Before that, it was basic self-defense. I've watched a lot of the footage. Her facial expressions never changed, not even when Si and Sasha's eyes weren't on her. She genuinely looks like she's having fun, and that's the first time all week she hasn't looked like someone Dad kidnapped. Her guard's been down while she's been with the girls."

“Or she’s pretending to have fun. Ever think of that?” I ask.

“I was taught to read people just like you were, Dom. She *is* having fun, and so are Si and Sasha. Maybe they needed her to break up the tension between them. She could be good for us, for you, maybe even Krishna too.”

I bark out a laugh, the first one today. “Are you actually suggesting a poly relationship between the three of us? Mom would roll over in her grave, Ren.”

“Mom would want you to be happy, the same as Sienna and me.”

“I killed Sienna’s stepdaughter’s mother, or have you forgotten? That’s going to be a problem one day. You’re having a baby with a woman who was pretending she wasn’t married to you six weeks ago.” I cock an eyebrow. “Happiness is an illusion, Ren. The sooner you stop living in make-believe and join reality the better off all of us will be.”

“I’m not the one in denial. You seem to think you’re impervious to love, yet for whatever reason, you and Krishna can’t stay away from each other. I’ve also seen the way you look at Ciera. You want her the same as you do him. K even wants her like he wants you. You’re falling the same as we did. You just refuse to admit it.”

Without waiting for a reply, he pushes off the bar and walks away from me, leaving me to shove everything his tongue vomited to the far corners of my mind.

He’s wrong.

I’m not falling for either of them. I *like* to fuck one of them and *want* to fuck the other. Neither are equal to love, nor anything even close to that ugly four-letter word.

It’ll be a cold day in Hell before I say *I love you* to Krishna or Ciera.

I’ll kill them both before I let myself fall down that pit of sorrow.

CHAPTER 18

Sienna didn't say where she was taking Sasha and me when we left Tony's house this morning. They both started bickering as soon as they closed the doors to Sienna's car with Sasha in the front next to her sister-in-law and me in the back.

I don't know either of them well. I've had less time around Sienna than Sasha, but they both seem so much alike that I don't understand why they don't like each other.

After a short, fifteen-minute drive, Sienna parked in front of a metal building with the words INDOOR RANGE in all caps. There wasn't a business name or anything else that indicated what type of range we were at, but I had a feeling it was a gun range. I'd been right, except it's also where Domenico and Krishna train for Krav Maga I was informed.

When we ate lunch, Sienna explained that her dad owned the building, but the range and training facility are owned and operated by the same man. He's some type of master-level trainer in what her brother and Krishna do.

Sienna and Sasha tried to give me a rundown when they introduced me to Ethan, the owner, but everything went over my head. Ethan finally explained that it's a military form of self-defense that combines techniques from several areas of martial arts.

At first, I was worried that Sienna's outing was going to have me working out. I had to pull her to the side and tell her I draw the line at exercise. I'm not like her or her twin's wife.

I've been told they love kickboxing, but I, on the other hand, hate to sweat and would rather suffer Tony's wrath than be forced to workout with them. Military-style workouts sounded even worse than normal exercises.

Sienna laughed and then told me she couldn't care less if exercise wasn't my jam and that wasn't why we were there. Then her tone and expression turned serious when she informed me that every woman should know basic self-defense, how to handle and operate a gun, and the proper way to throw a knife. None of those things sounded fun, but they also didn't sound as bad as the thought of running on a treadmill or using a stair climber. I'm a computer nerd, not a gym rat.

She had Ethan work with each of us separately, though I haven't the first clue why she and Sasha needed lessons on self-defense when Giovanni has told me both of them can and have gone toe-to-toe against their brothers and held their own.

Giovanni has invited me to workout with him each morning this week, but I've politely declined all three times except this morning. It's clear I don't fit in with any of them, nor do I see how I ever will.

Of course, I highly doubt they plan to keep me around a second longer once Tony has his revenge. The thought of having to go back to my father's house, or worse, Ireland, skyrockets my anxiety, so I've tried to force that notion as far back as it'll go.

After we spent a few hours with Ethan, Sasha and Sienna started arguing about who was the better knife thrower and who could teach me the best. They did a competition among themselves, but I couldn't tell you if one of them beat the other. They were both annoyed toward the end, but then they took turns showing me how they handle blades. All their techniques, unless I didn't learn anything, seem the same, but then, I'm not an expert either.

Toward late afternoon, I followed them into the gun range section of the building. There they had access to three different types of handguns. Sienna pointed out which weapon was

which, but now that it's over, I couldn't tell one caliber from the others. All I knew was that they were all different, and I shot all three of them.

At first, I wasn't thrilled with the activity. I don't like guns, but clearly, Sienna does. Sasha prefers knives over guns. She made that clear numerous times, but I actually liked shooting more so than I did throwing their blades and even favored it over the self-defense lessons.

I didn't realize Ethan was going to make all of us work up a sweat. Sienna and Sasha weren't fazed, but for me, that ended up sucking. Although I agree with Sienna, women do need to learn the basics, me included.

Half an hour ago, Ethan brought the three of us takeout from one of Sienna's favorite restaurants. I guess he knows her well enough to know what she likes. It was the biggest chicken salad I've ever seen. Sienna and Sasha scarfed their container down while I just picked through mine and just ate the chicken.

I hate to come off rude, but salads don't cut it for me. But it's more than that, I was forced to eat them a lot as a kid; now I hate all salads. Sienna and Sasha have been texting on their phones for the past hour, so I don't think either has noticed, but it's also been a long day. Plus, I'm tired and nervous about tomorrow. I've never been to a wedding, yet I'm expected to be one of the main participants.

I could really use a strong drink right about now.

Since Sunday, there hasn't been any alcohol in the pool house, which is weird since it was fully stocked Saturday night. The only thing I can figure out is I got too bollocksed and Tony ordered Giovanni to remove it.

I know I often suffer from night terrors from things I'd rather forget. Marcel Santos, the first man my father sold me to, got so sick of hearing me scream that he supplied me with whiskey. The only thing that saved me from getting raped by him was that he was under the impression I was a virgin and liked to tell those around him how he was going to take me on our wedding night.

I didn't feel it was necessary to correct him.

I'm about to get up to throw away the nearly full Styrofoam container when Ethan walks into the small break room, his brows pinched together. Unease rolls off him, setting off an alarm in my head that has my chest tightening.

"Si," he calls out, stopping by our table. "You three need to get out of here."

"Why?" she and Sasha ask at the same time and then glance in each other's direction, a look being shared between them.

"I don't have time to explain. Here," he says, pulling a set of car keys from his pocket. "I know your car is out front. Mine is parked just out that door."

He lifts his other hand, his finger pointing to the metal door to my right, which is behind Sasha and to Sienna's left as he shoves the keys in Sienna's direction.

"I overheard a man say he was the police commissioner and mentioned looking for a girl he described with an Irish accent. Get out of here to be safe."

I'm scrambling from my seat before the others, but they are quick to move. We leave our food, and I'm out the door as fast as I can go.

"Give me the key," Sasha says, snatching them from Sienna. "I'll drive. You call one of the boys."

Ethan has a black SUV, but I'm still unfamiliar with American cars despite being here for a few months. My uncle has several that someone chauffeurs him around in wherever he needs to go, but they are Audis, Mercedes, and then he owns a Land Rover Defender, but that one is rarely used.

"Get in the backseat with Ciera," Sasha calls out as she goes to the driver's side door. "Someone may recognize you when I pull around to exit the parking lot."

Getting in on the side behind Sasha, I pull on the seatbelt. Sienna does the same on my other side. Her phone is in her hand and her eyes are cast down on the device. "Why is the

police commissioner looking for you?” Sienna asks without glancing in my direction. “Dad mentioned you’re related to him, but that’s all I know since I just got back this morning.”

“I don’t know him. We’ve never met,” I tell her while thinking in the back of my mind that this probably isn’t good. If my uncle’s brother is looking for me, then that means either Liam has either discovered that I’m not attending college as he sent me here to do or my father gave me away.

“You’re related to him,” she deadpans and then tilts her head in my direction, one eyebrow arched as if silently telling me she isn’t buying my story.

“I’m not lying. Do you know everyone you’re related to?” I throw back, getting somewhat upset. I haven’t done anything to the Caputos. They took me, not the other way around.

“No, she doesn’t,” Sasha says, joining our conversation as she pulls out of the parking lot, turning left and driving away from the range and self-defense place. “She doesn’t know anyone on her mother’s side of her family.”

“Butt the fuck out, ho-bag. You wanted to drive, so do it and keep your trap shut while I figure out what’s going on.” Sienna glares at the back of Sasha’s head, then she swivels her body to face me. “I’m not accusing you of lying, Ciera. I promise, I didn’t mean it like that, but I do need to know what to tell Dom so that he doesn’t come unglued and lose his shit on you. I also need to be able to give my Dad as much information as I can. Do you know why he would be looking for you?”

“How would he know you were there?” Sasha adds. “Strikes me as odd.”

“Okay,” Sienna starts before I can reply to either of them. “We need to have a straight talk. Dad has his reasons for you marrying Domenico. I’ve decided to trust him. However, if you are marrying into our family tomorrow, then you’re doing it for real. You have to be with us one hundred percent. If you have an ulterior motive, then tell me now. We’ll cancel the wedding, take you back to your father’s house, and I’ll deal with the boss’s wrath. There are too many people that I care

about and am not willing to risk, including the bitch in the front seat. If you're hiding something or someone is using you to get to my family, then you need to tell us."

"I thought you hated Sasha," I say.

"She's carrying my brother's baby. She might have weaseled her way into my family, but I'd still protect her over you at the moment. She's family. You aren't yet, so convince us that we should let you become one of us."

"Bitch, I don't need you to protect anything of mine, including *my* husband. I've got him too." Sasha sneers through the rearview mirror.

"Funny, two weeks ago, I helped save you and Ren. So shut it, Sasha. Stay in your lane and just drive like a good little chauffeur, capiche?"

"Bitch, you did not just capiche me," Sasha fires back, her fair complexion reddening with spiked anger.

"Give me something, Ciera," Sienna directs toward me, ignoring her sister-in-law. "Prove to us that you're willing to fight for us and we'll fight for you too. That's what today was about. Sasha and I can hold our own with our brothers and back them up. We will always stand by their side as a united front without any question. We'd kill, and both have, to protect ourselves and our family."

Sienna reaches to the front, shoving Sasha on her right shoulder.

"What she said," Sasha bites out as if agreeing with Sienna is torture.

"You have to be willing to do the same," Sienna finishes.

"I really don't know why he's looking for me," I say to Sienna, looking her in the eyes and then glance at Sasha through the rearview mirror. "Owen is close to my great-uncle, but to my knowledge, he hasn't been home since he left Ireland before I was born. I've never spoken to him."

"Okay." Sienna's head bobbles.

“I also don’t know how he’d know where I was, but I’m not shocked either. Men like him and my great-uncle, my father, and maybe even your dad, have ways of finding out whatever it is they want to know. Maybe we were followed. Maybe my uncle found out your father acquired me and isn’t happy about it. I don’t know,” I tell her, speaking the truth. “But I also don’t know any of you. You can’t expect me to give you or your family blind faith. There isn’t one person I’ve ever met that I trust.”

“Why is that?” Sasha asks just as Sienna had started to open her mouth. By the pursed lips Sienna is showing, she was likely going to ask me the same question.

“Trusting people will only set yourself up to be hurt in the long run. I’ve learned that lesson, and I don’t care to repeat it, so to answer you, I can’t fight for people I do not trust. That includes every member of my family. The ones I’m related to by blood and the ones I’m not. It also includes your family. You’re both here of your own free will. I’m not, but I don’t want to go back to my father’s either. I’d rather die in a gutter than be subjected to that, so if that means I must be on the Caputos’ side, then I’d choose the lesser of two evils.”

“We aren’t evil,” Sienna says, taking offense to my chosen words.

“You aren’t innocent either,” I deadpan.

“No one is,” Sasha adds.

“Would you stab my brother in the back if your family ordered you to?” Sienna asks, her question striking me like an interrogation.

“No,” I reply without hesitation because it’s the truth. “I wouldn’t hurt any of you unless you hurt me first. I’m not like my family, and frankly, the less of them there are, the better the world would be.”

I wish I didn’t feel that way, but I do with every fiber of my being. That will never change.

Sienna turns, leaning against the back of the seat and part of the door since she is still facing me and eyeing me with

those dark, probing brown eyes of hers.

“I can work with that,” she finally says and then sighs as she twists her body to face forward. “I believe that mutual trust is earned over time, so we’ll work on that after you’re married to my brother. All of us will.”

“Where am I heading?” Sasha’s head turns quickly to look at Sienna and then she returns her eyes to the road.

“The boys are at Raymond’s. Let’s go there. I’m texting Dad to give him a rundown.”

“Why are they at that shit hole?”

“Who the fuck knows,” Sienna answers with her head downcast and her fingers moving quickly across the screen of her cell phone.

They’re both quiet the rest of the ride, and I don’t feel the need to make conversation. Personally, I would rather them take me back to Tony’s house. From my short time spent around him, he would be levelheaded when he questions me the same way Sienna did. Domenico won’t. It’s like he looks for reasons to get in my face and put his hand around my neck.

Like you don’t like when he acts possessive, my subconscious accuses.

I’ve done everything within my power to not acknowledge that fact and it’s getting harder with every morning that I wake up in his bed. He’s not even the only one. Krishna traps me with his thick heavy leg and wraps one of his hands around my waist. I’m not even sure how I managed to get out from under them yesterday morning when I realized my period had started. I dashed out of bed like it was on fire.

I don’t know how the wedding night is supposed to go now that my menstrual cycle has decided to show up.

When we reach Raymond’s, Sasha parks in an open space in front of the door. It’s a small building with a red neon sign in cursive that just says *Raymond’s* above the door.

Walking inside, I figure out it’s a pub and my body relaxes. Even though I’m not of age to drink in America, I would have

been had I stayed in Ireland after my eighteenth birthday. Something about this place reminds me of the good parts from back home that I miss.

I see Matteo and Lorenzo first. They are in the back playing a game of pool with another guy standing around their table. Looking left, I spot Domenico and Krishna sitting on stools at the bar.

Domenico is facing the bar with his back to me. While Krishna's butt is technically on his stool, his body is facing Domenico's. They're as close to one another as they could be. Though Domenico denied being in an official relationship with Sasha's brother, the term boyfriend still seems fitting for whatever he and Krishna have going on. They are both possessive over the other too.

Sienna and Sasha head to the back of the bar while I'm rooted to the ground near the entrance. Krishna sees me first, our eyes locking. His winter eyes make me think of a snowstorm as they cascade down my body and then lift slowly until he captures my stare again. His tongue darts between his lips, and it does something to me, making my stomach flutter.

As if he knows the effect he's having on me, his lips curve into a knowing smile while his right hand sneaks across the front of Domenico's chest, and then he wraps his hand and fingers around the side of Domenico's neck. Krishna yanks his head in front of him, breaking our eye contact to stare into Domenico's eyes.

In the length of two heartbeats, his light blue eyes are back on me with a smirk gracing his lips as his head descends on Domenico. Krishna takes his lips, then he presses forward as if chasing him while his eyes are locked with mine.

My core tightens as tingles shimmer down my back as I openly stare, unable to look away.

CHAPTER 19

I saw the girls when they walked in. Sasha and Si headed to the back where Ren, Matteo, and Rick are playing pool. Ciera stopped a few feet away from the entrance when her eyes landed on where Dom and I were at the bar.

The other morning after Domenico tasted her, I made him shove her fingers into her pussy again and then had him place them in my mouth the same as he'd sampled himself. I wasn't going to be left out of that succulent pleasure.

Dom and I are as alike and equally different. Pussy is one of the things we're alike in. I want to eat it like it's nourishment, and tasting Ciera mixed with our own cum was like nothing I'd ever tasted. The thought of eating her out after we've both come inside her has plagued my mind too many times this week.

I'm not going to lie to myself. I'm not happy that Dom is getting married tomorrow, and the fact that it bothers me pisses me off more. I wasn't supposed to care about him the way I do. I meant to scratch an itch. I thought if I fucked him enough times and he fucked me that I'd get my fill and move on.

I haven't even quenched my thirst for him, and now I feel like I'm starving—for her.

“Who are you making a point to?” His tone is laced with irritation, but it doesn't stop my pursuit or what he knows is coming. I tighten my grip on his neck, my thumb pressing against the center of his throat.

“Showing kitten you belong to me too.”

“Yeah. Who says I even want either of you?”

“Your dick.” I slam my lips to his, my tongue forcing its way inside like he loves for me to do. I kiss Domenico while keeping my eyes locked with Ciera’s intense yet mesmerizing emerald irises that are far too much like precious gems than I care to acknowledge.

She isn’t mine, but for whatever reason, I want her on damn near the same level that I want the man who is currently sinking his teeth into the flesh of my bottom lip. It stings and sends tingles down my spine at the same time. Pulling back, I cut my eyes to his. “Don’t fret. Your cold mask still shows you loathe both of us.”

“I don’t fret,” he barks out in a low tone for only me to hear, then he pulls from my hold and leans forward, snatching his glass of draft beer from the bar.

As Dom takes a gulp, I motion for the little kitty to come here with my left hand. With my right, I place my palm on Dom’s leg, purposely and in a possessive manner. He is mine; at least today he is. And tomorrow night, I plan to take them both. Even if neither are mine to keep, I’ll enjoy it while they’re on the menu.

“Walk over and stand on Dom’s other side, kitten,” I tell her when she’s close enough to hear me. She follows the order like a good pet, but make no mistake, I still see the lioness lurking behind those green eyes.

Does Domenico, or does he see her like the mouse she is not?

He doesn’t acknowledge her presence, placing his elbows on the bar with his glass in front of him. Dom stares forward, but even I know he isn’t paying attention to the liquor bottles that line the shelves his eyes are on.

“Take his dick out of his pants,” I tell her, a smirk already forming on my face at the sight of horror on her beautiful face.

She shakes her head, taking a step back, but Dom surprises me by glancing her way and saying, “Pets that don’t obey their

masters get punished. Do you want that, Ciera?”

I can imagine what his brown eyes, which look more black, are showing her right now. I know Dom too well. He'd never force her to touch him, and he'd never touch her without consent, but that doesn't mean he wouldn't dish out some form of sexual punishment if she didn't comply.

She looks from him to me and then glances behind us, looking at who's in the establishment. There is no one sitting at the end of the bar behind her, and Bennett, the bartender, is busy talking to a customer at the other end behind me. Besides the group in the back that's with us, there is only one other table with two guys, but they're shooting the shit and watching a replay of a football game on the television.

Domenico's head is back to looking in front of him with a bored expression, but I know it's a facade. He's anything but bored at this turn of events. Sienna texted him twenty minutes ago, saying they were headed this way. I witnessed Dom's eyes light up, and I doubt it had anything to do with our sisters joining us.

Hanging out at the Caputos' place wasn't what I wanted to do tonight. It's nothing against Tony, but now that I'm the Pakhan and still fucking his son, it was too much for my headspace tonight. I've already slept the last four nights there, and by this time tomorrow night, Dom will be married.

“Come on, kitten. You've jerked me off. It's only fair you make Dom come too,” I say, encouraging her to take the bait.

A mouse would be too scared of getting caught to do what I'm telling her to do. And she is no mouse. I just hope I'm here long enough to see her defeat whatever anxiety she harbors deep inside her.

And to find out who placed it there in the first place so I can slit his or her throat.

Finally, she steps closer. I watch as her palm slides onto the top of his black slack-covered thigh. Being as my hand is still on his opposite leg, I inch mine higher and then squeeze

him. Of course, the motherfucker doesn't move or breathe any differently with both of us touching him, as if he's immune.

He's not, but Domenico has perfected his mask a little too well. Showing it to me is starting to piss me off, and if our sisters and his brother weren't here, I'd be tempted to fuck him right here in the bar, letting everyone else watch, including Ciera.

Moving her hand, she reaches for his zipper and pulls it down, but then she also unclasps the fastener securing his pants together.

Biting her bottom lip, her brows pinch together like she isn't sure she's doing this right. Her innocence and inexperience are just layers that add to her appeal. Every facet of her turns me on. She's beautiful, but that's a given looking at the package she's encased in. At times, she's cute too, and there's a sweetness about her that's foreign to me. But it's the strength I see hidden within the depths of her eyes that intrigues me the most.

"K, do you want another?" Bennett stops in front of Dom, but he's looking at the side of my head. I can feel his stare without turning mine.

"Yeah, pour me what Dom's drinking," I instruct, my eyes staying on Ciera the whole time. I've only had two, and since I'm driving, I'm spacing them out. I don't trust cabs or public transportation. I don't have a personal driver on my payroll either. "Bring the kitten one too."

I have to hand it to Bennett, if he's hesitant at all since she isn't twenty-one, he doesn't show it. Perhaps, he doesn't know she's only nineteen. Either way, I don't give a fuck as long as he does what I tell him to do.

I dip my head, silently issuing another order to Ciera. If she doesn't hurry up, one of the girls is liable to walk over here, and that would be awkward for her.

Reaching into his pants and finding the opening in his boxer briefs, she pulls his already hard cock out, her left hand wrapped around his thickness.

Domenico picks up the glass of half-drunk beer, taking a sip as he pretends he's not affected by her touch. Any man or woman with eyesight would be affected by Ciera's presence. I'd challenge anyone that said differently. She's that breathtaking, and for some reason I've yet to understand, knowing she's Irish hasn't diminished my attraction to her. I guess it's the same with Dom. I used to think he and I were enemies too, after all.

Sliding my hand up, I slip it inside his pants, below where Ciera runs her hand down his length, palming his balls. Other than his legs widening to grant me access, his face continues to stay passive. My own dick begins to swell inside my dress pants, mesmerized by the way she runs her hand up and down and then repeats her back and forward gliding motion.

Bennett returns, first sliding a beer in front of me and then stepping down the bar to place one in front of Ciera. Twisting my torso while I massage Domenico's heavy balls, I clasp my free hand around the pint glass and bring it to my lips. Ciera doesn't pick hers up. She's studying Dom's cock far too hard to even realize it's there.

"Faster," I whisper, then I take another sip.

Dom picks his beer back up and does the same, only he swallows a lot harder than I did. Motherfucker is lying to himself if he thinks he'll be able to keep a straight face when we take him over the edge.

Ciera's speed picks up as she strokes him. Her thumb runs over his tip every time her hand slides back to the base of his cock.

Lifting my ass off the stool, I stand, placing my elbow on the back of Dom's chair as my chest touches the outside of his bicep that's covered by a navy dress shirt with his sleeves rolled to his elbows.

"Faster, Ciera. We don't have all fucking night," I bark in a low tone, instantly regretting my words when her hurt eyes snap to mine.

I will crush her self-doubt if it's the last fucking thing I do before I die, I vow to myself.

She increases her pace as I lean against Dom. Moving my left hand, I place my cold glass against the back of his neck, and then I flex my fingers on my other hand, making my nails drag against his sensitive flesh hidden within his underwear.

“Come for kitten,” I whisper close to his ear, unsure if she can hear me. “Her soft hand feels good, doesn't it?”

He doesn't respond other than his jaw hardening.

“Don't answer. I know it does. She's had those silky hands on my dick already.” I lean forward more, the front of my pants pressing against his hip bone, forcing him to feel how hard I am. “Stop fighting it, Dom. You know you need to come.”

Flattening his palms on the bar, his hands slide back until he can grip the edge, then his chin dips, followed by his head lowering to watch her hand pump his thick dick.

Tilting my head so that I can see Ciera but also remaining close enough for Domenico to feel my words on the side of his face, I say, “My dick is a bit longer than his, but he's thicker. Wouldn't you agree, kitten?” I don't wait for a response, as it was a rhetorical question. Leaning back over so that my lips touch the shell of Dom's ear, I add, “If you don't fucking come, I will grab her by the hair and force your dick down her pretty little throat. Come, motherfucker.”

I twist and place my beer on the counter as Domenico's body constricts. Pulling my hand out from inside his pants, I fist his shaft below where Ciera's fingers are wrapped tightly around his dick. Keeping pace with her, I work my fist up and down with hers. This time, we both jerk him off.

His breathing becomes labored, and his trimmed fingernails look like they're digging into the wooden bar top. When his body shows signs of the slightest shudder, I know he's coming, but I also know he's trying to control his reaction.

“You’ll bleed before the night’s out for this bullshit,” I promise, not bothering to whisper.

Lifting his head, he pulls air in through his mouth and then forces it back out in a violent breath.

“Now, taste Ciera’s lips,” I order, slapping him on the back. His back straightens, his orgasm having come and gone.

“No,” he spits, his tone seething, then he turns his head and looks at Ciera for the first time since she and our sisters arrived. “I’ll take her mouth after I slide a ring on her finger and she says, I do, giving me ownership of not just her body, but her mind too.” There’s a pause the length of a heartbeat before he continues. “Remember, I gave you the opportunity to run. You should have taken it, pet.”

He only calls her that when he’s working overtime to get under her skin, and she falls for the trap every single time. Her green eyes flash, then they harden as her nostrils flare with anger. She’s about to say something snarky, but when she snatches her hand from Dom’s dick, he grabs her wrist, wrapping his fingers around her skin.

Lifting her hand, he says, “You’ve made a mess. Clean it up.”

It’s then I notice the droplets of cum coating the area between her thumb and index finger.

She only hesitates the length of a breath before her ginger-covered head descends, her lips wrapping around her flesh as she sucks her hand clean of his cum. Of course, there’s a bigger mess running down the bar wall where the rest of his release landed.

I can practically hear his heartbeat skip from where I’m standing, a thrill shooting up my spine at how we do affect him, even if Ciera doesn’t see it.

Once he stuffs himself back into his dress pants and zips himself up, Dom snatches his pint glass and tips it to his lips, swallowing half the glass of amber liquid in record time.

“Hey, big bro,” Sienna says, announcing her presence.

Turning to look at his sister over his shoulder at the same time my sister, Ren, and Matteo walk up, he cocks an eyebrow, waiting for her to continue. Rick is nowhere in sight, but that doesn't bother me in the least. I don't care for the douchebag. He trains at the same dojo Dom and I do, but we aren't friends like he and Dom are.

“I told Dad, but I thought you should know too. The police commish showed up while we were at Ethan's place. He was looking for her.” Sienna nods her head in Ciera's direction as alarm bells sound off in the back of my head.

Turning one hundred and eighty degrees, he faces Ciera. “Why the fuck didn't you tell me that when you first got here?” Sliding off his stool on Ciera's side, he straightens his spine and then stares down at her, making her crane her neck to look him in the eyes. “What are you hiding, little girl?”

CHAPTER 20

When she doesn't answer me in an acceptable timeframe, I step forward, forcing her to back up, but she jerks and her back collides with the back of the stool behind her. Ciera's brows pinch together, but her jaw locks from clamping her teeth together, showing me that she's forcing herself to lock the pain inside.

Reaching for her by the waist, I pull her forward, then run my hand behind her back and against her spine, attempting to soothe the ache where I know I caused her to hurt herself. It's the only reprieve I'm giving her because my eyes are telling her that if she doesn't answer me in the next three seconds, I will snatch her by the throat and cut off her air supply until she learns to use her voice again.

"I don't have time for games with fucking children. Answer me, Ciera."

"Dom," Si calls out, but I ignore my sister. She needs to butt out.

"I'm not hiding anything. I don't know why he was looking for me." Her body trembles and that makes me rub up and down her spine again. I should want her to cower and bow down to me, but I don't, and the reason is lost on me. "I swear."

Her voice would put every sex phone operator out of employment. Every word out of her goddamn mouth is always seductive, whether she's trying to sound that way or not, and

she's never attempted seduction. Not with me at least, nor do I see her ever trying.

Right now, she's scared of me, and I hate the feeling it's causing in the center of my chest, but I can't stop what I'm doing either. I have to know if her marrying me was a set-up by her family instead of Dad's pursuit of revenge.

I gave her the option to run, yet she's still here. Why? No sane woman would marry me if she had a working brain. If she thinks she can handle what I have to offer, she's wrong. So very fucking wrong.

"Domenico," my sister says louder, using a berating tone that pisses me off. She doesn't get to scold me. That's Dad's job, and I get it enough from him already. "I've already asked her. She doesn't know. I believe her, Dom."

"I don't give a shit what you believe, Sienna. It only matters what I believe."

Keeping my eyes on my soon-to-be wife or a soon-to-be-dead ex-fiancé, I watch her stunning green irises for any clues to tell me if she's lying or being truthful. At the same time, I'm steadily pulling her closer to me until I'm embracing her against my torso.

For the first time in my nearly twenty-six years on this earth, the thought of taking a life sours my stomach. I don't want to hurt her. I want to protect her.

That proves that if I don't get my shit together where both K and Ciera are concerned, one or both of them will be my downfall. When they both have their hands on me simultaneously, it's euphoric. It's joy, freedom, and a sense of my chest being filled to the brim.

I'm unsure how I managed to fight for my control while they were working my dick over. God, how I wanted to just let go. I wanted everyone in the whole goddamn bar to know what they were doing to me.

Giving in would have been a dire mistake. My family wouldn't use my feelings for either of them against me the way my enemies would, and I cannot allow that to happen. I

can't show my emotions. I won't let history repeat itself, which is why I can't fall for either of them, let alone both.

If I marry Ciera tomorrow, it won't be real. It's an arranged marriage. It won't mean anything. It's a business deal. That's all.

"Hey, dickhead," Sienna spits out from behind me. "Dad believes her too, and since his opinion trumps yours, go fuck yourself." She shoves me in the arm, but I don't budge or release my hold on Ciera. "Come on, Ciera. You're coming with me."

Swinging my head to pin my sister with my dark stare, I firm my hold on Ciera, digging my fingers into her skin. At some point, my right hand slipped under her loose shirt and skimmed over her leggings, stopping along her ribcage. "Sorry, sister, but I don't share my toys well. She'll be leaving with me."

"Funny." K laughs, a poor attempt at breaking up the tension between our group. "You share them with me."

"Shut the fuck up. We have a pet to interrogate." Looking back down to Ciera and seeing eyes I know aren't lying, I say, "We still have a conversation from this morning to finish."

"Let us then," Krishna says as he steps between Sienna and me, forcing her to back away.

I release her when I feel Ciera's body tugging away from me. My eyes flick downward, seeing Krishna has joined his hand with hers and is pulling her along with him. In all honesty, I don't think he's realized what he's doing yet. It's out of character for him. Hell, she's out of character for me too.

"We're going to your place," I tell him as I move to follow him toward the door.

"Dad isn't going to be happy with you if you don't bring her home," Sienna says to the back of my head.

"Good thing I don't give one fuck, little sister. Tell him I'll see him at the shit show of a wedding he's putting on."

Dad doesn't possess the same ruthless skills I do regarding the opposite sex. He'd put a bullet in a man's head without hesitation if he thought he deserved it. He wouldn't do the same to a woman even if her crimes were worse.

I may not *want* to hurt Ciera, but if I find out she's working against us, I'll do what has to be done, even if that means condemning my soul to Hell.

No one will hurt my family and get away with it.

Not on my goddamn watch.

CHAPTER 21

ANTONIO

Squatting down, I place red roses on my wife's grave. There's morning dew sparkling where the sun shines against the gravestone.

"Morning, baby," I greet her as my nose stings and a sharp, agonizing pain shoots through my chest.

My grief from losing Ariana hasn't waned a day since I buried her. She was and to this day remains the love of my life, and I know my heart will not be whole again until the day I join my beloved wife in the afterlife. That is, if I'm gifted with the opportunity to be reunited with her despite all the shit I've done in my fifty years.

My birthday was last month, and like every year since Ariana's death, I refuse to celebrate another year I'm alive when she isn't. I don't allow my children to acknowledge the day either.

"Your oldest is getting married today, Ari. Like every meaningful event, you should be here with us. I'm sorry you are not, my love."

Not a day has gone by that I haven't apologized to her for being partially responsible for her death. She'd knee me in the balls for feeling this way, and she is probably berating me from Heaven whenever she hears my apology.

"You would have loved Ciera. She isn't a brute like Si and Lorenzo's wife, Sasha. She isn't jaded despite being raised in a world far worse than ours. Her soft and kind side is what

Domenico needs in his life to balance the ugliness our world brings him.”

My son runs from love because he saw what it could do to a person. I loved his mother with every ounce of me, and when she was killed, I couldn't shield my children from how it affected me. So, to Dom, love is a curse, the nail in a coffin, and I'm partly responsible for his twisted view of that too.

There was no moving on after Ari died. Nothing and no one in this world can replace my wife. It wasn't easy, but I managed to raise three amazing kids, though not without the consequences our way of life brings. I'd be a fool to think pieces of them aren't tarnished by our past, by what I could never get over losing.

“I know you're not happy with how I chose each of their spouses, but the one thing I'm certain of, Ari, is that I chose right. Matteo may be an idiot at times, but he loves our daughter. He will do everything within his power to keep her safe. Sasha has a rebellious side that mirrors Sienna's in every aspect, and our boy went through emotional hell to get to where he is today with the woman he's in love with and who loves him just as much. You'd love Brooklyn, Matteo's daughter, but you'd be fit to be tied that she is the spitting image of Sienna and will be hell to raise. She's no ballerina either. I'm happy to give you the good news. Both Sienna and Sasha are pregnant, but you probably know that. We're going to be grandparents, baby.”

I sigh as I stand back to my feet. My head remains bowed while I stare at the gravestone of my wife's final resting place.

“Dom has the biggest battle of them all to face soon. I know our son well enough to be certain that he will fall for Ciera, but he's also fallen for another, and I have no idea how it will all play out. It makes me second guess my decision, but not enough to stop what I've spent years setting in motion. Pray for him. He's going to need it. All three of them will.”

Taking a deep breath, I force the heavy emotions from my lungs and walk away even though I want nothing more than to

dig the ground up next to my wife and crawl in the hole beside her.

I am tired of this world, and it is getting harder and harder to stay in it without her.

“Until next time, my love,” I whisper into the wind, hoping it’ll carry my words to the one person that owns me despite her not even being alive.

WHEN SIENNA CAME HOME last night without Ciera with her, I was livid—at the situation and at my daughter. And my daughter being my daughter, staying true to her nature, threw it back in my face that I didn’t have the right to play matchmaker with my kids.

Sienna spewed those exact words yesterday morning when I picked her up at the airport so that we could have a heart-to-heart. She and Matteo took separate flights home because he had to make a quick stop in Las Vegas to meet with his promoter, making it home late last night.

Needless to say, I have to lay it all out for Sienna. If I hadn’t stepped in, she would have never met the love of her life. If I hadn’t pushed her toward him by forbidding her to see Matteo, they wouldn’t be married and expecting a baby. She is destined to become Domenico’s consigliere.

If left to his own vices, Matteo would fuck up a wet dream. It’s a miracle I pulled off getting them together at all. The dumbass could have waited to get her pregnant until after the wedding, but I wasn’t surprised with his proven track record.

Lorenzo and Sasha were effortless in comparison to Sienna and Matteo. All Mischa and I did was ensure they went to the same school and were in the same grade. They did the rest. They fell in love, then they fucked it up. But now that Sasha has a better understanding of her family and her enemies have been eliminated, they’re mending their hearts while growing our family.

“Fine. You win, Dad.” Sienna purses her lips, hating that I forced her to come to terms with the fact that I was right. “But Dom is a different story, and although I believe Ciera doesn’t know why her uncle, or whoever the police commissioner is to her, was looking for her yesterday, we don’t need her baggage. Domenico is already in a relationship, or did you forget that?”

“If Dom and Krishna are meant to be together, then they will be, Sienna. I know them better than you think,” I bluntly tell her, and from how she catches herself before rolling her eyes at me, I decide to clue her in on more. “There is one last thing. I know you’re the one that took the kill shot on Vin.”

“What?” She leans forward in the chair she’s occupying directly in front of me on the other side of my desk in my office. “How? Did Dom rat me out?”

“No,” I reassure her. “The phone Vin used to call Matteo the night he kidnapped you was recovered by the clean-up crew. There was an audio file on it.”

“How long have you known?” She crosses her arms.

“That isn’t important, but to answer your question, I knew the next day.” Sitting forward, I place my elbows on my desk and eye my daughter, pinning her with a stare that I’m sure is part father, part boss of this family. “A consigliere’s job is to tell their boss everything. It’s more than just advising them. It’s making sure he knows even the smallest details.”

“I’m not your consigliere,” she deadpans.

“No, but when I’m gone and your brother steps into my shoes, you’ll step into the ones I’ve been grooming you for all these years. If Giovanni drops dead before I do, you will be placed in that role regardless of whether you are ready. It isn’t your job or duty to decide what information you pass on. You should have told me, Sienna.”

“I didn’t want that on your conscience,” she tells me.

“Don’t lie to me, daughter. I heard the conversation between you and Domenico. He thinks I don’t know half the shit he’s done, but I do. Call it a father’s intuition, but for the most part, I can tell when one of you has done something that

weighs heavy on your chest or feeling hurt because a boy you liked didn't like you back."

"Can you not remind me of every moment of my earlier school years, please?"

"The only reason you are not in deep shit with me over choosing to keep me in the dark is that at the end of the day, I need to know your loyalty to Domenico will never waver. It's on you to have his back, even if you disagree with him. You will be the one that keeps this family together when I'm gone."

"Can you not speak like you won't be here tomorrow? I don't like it."

"Princess, we aren't promised tomorrow. My job is to prepare you for anything, which is why I asked you to meet with me alone. There is something I'm going to show you, but I need your oath that you will not tell Domenico or anyone else, including your husband."

"Dad, that isn't fair to them or me. You just scolded me for keeping a secret from you. Do you remember how upset Dom and Ren were when they found out I knew who killed Mom and didn't tell them, or has that slipped your mind? Now you're asking me to keep something else from them?"

"Daughter," I say, releasing a long breath. "If there is one lesson you take away today, it's that the consigliere is more than a sounding board, more than the person that gives their opinions and advice. The consigliere keeps the boss's most sacred secrets close to their chest until he tells her she can share them."

"Again, I'm not the consigliere of this family yet." She clucks her tongue in irritation.

"As far as I'm concerned, this family has two consiglieres at the moment. At some point in your life, Dom will ask the same thing of you, and it'll probably happen more than you're going to like, but it's part of the job. You only answer to the boss. And if he decides to fill you in with information only he

knows and then tells you to keep your trap shut, you do it, no questions asked.”

“Maybe you’re grooming the wrong person for the job then,” she argues.

“I’m not. I will show you the video clip anyway and do so without your oath in hopes you’ll watch it and agree that Dom doesn’t need to know *yet*.”

“What video, Dad?”

“It was a video that was made to blackmail the Albania boss here in New York, only it backfired on the man who recorded it. The recording is from five years ago, when the girl was fourteen. The problem is that it fell into my hands a few months ago. When you see it, you’ll understand why she doesn’t trust anyone, and why it’s up to us to show her how a real family loves, as well as fights and forgives.”

I stand and button my suit jacket.

“Where is the video?” she asks, her tone wary.

“On the desktop of my computer screen,” I inform her.

“Then why are you getting up like you’re leaving your office?” she queries, her face confused as I step around my desk, stopping next to her chair and peering down as she tilts her head back to peer up at me.

“Because I will not watch that video with you in the same room as me. I draw the line at that shit. Besides, I could go the rest of my life without seeing that horror again. As much as it pains me, Sienna, it’s something you need to get used to for the future that is already in motion for you. I am truly sorry that I am putting this and more to come on yours and your brothers’ shoulders.”

“Dad, don’t be sorry for the way you raised us. I wish Mom were here with us, but you did not fuck anything up. You made us strong, and if the world comes crashing down on top of us tomorrow, we will survive because of you.”

“Thank you, princess.” I didn’t know I needed to hear those exact words from my daughter, but I did, and it’s taking

everything in me not to break down and weep in front of her.

“I love you, Daddy.”

“I love you too, Sienna. And one day, hopefully not too soon, you’ll make me proud when you and Ren step up at your brother’s side. Even if I’m not here to see it, know that I am so very fucking proud of all three of you.”

When she stands, I step to the side to allow her to walk behind my desk, and I make my way to the closed door as there’s a knock.

Turning the knob and opening the door, I find Giovanni with his hands stuffed inside the pockets of his black dress pants. Glancing past me, he eyes Sienna sitting at my desk, her eyes on the computer screen. His brow arches, but he doesn’t ask the question locked behind his lips.

“Move.”

I cock my head, daring him to ask. I could tell him that she’s doing research, which would be the truth, but since I’m not going to spill everything until the time is right, I’m keeping him in the dark too.

I don’t like keeping secrets from my family, especially Domenico. He was upset, and rightfully so, that I told Giovanni that Raffaele was responsible for his mother’s murder before I told him. But like that situation, this one is too similar.

He takes a step back, which allows me to step into the hallway and close the door. Leaving him to follow, I head toward the kitchen with the intent to make sure everything is ready for the ceremony in an hour.

“Is everything handled?” I ask, feeling Giovanni a few paces behind me.

“Everything’s in order. Ciera is with Sasha getting ready. Domenico arrived ten minutes ago, his Russian companion on his heels. Last I saw, they were in the living room with Lorenzo. I assume Matteo went to get Brooklyn.”

“Were all of them dressed?” I inquire, making sure Domenico isn’t dragging his feet. Of course, if he weren’t going through with the wedding, he would have refused me when we discussed it five days ago.

“They are, and before you ask your next question, everything is in order out in the back. We have servers on standby, waiting for the ceremony to end so they can set up the reception to follow. Even the priest is here.”

“Good,” I commend him. He coordinated most of tonight’s events with Ciera’s help. All I did was set the wedding in motion and send invites to whom I wanted to be present at this evening’s event. Some for specific reasons, others because it doesn’t hurt to have more heat here than needed for backup.

Opting to change routes, I turn right to check on the boys first. I offered to hire a makeup artist for Ciera, but my soon-to-be daughter-in-law’s face flushed, and her eyes rounded at the suggestion. I had to clarify that it was her decision. I’d have Sienna and Sasha help if she didn’t want the professional.

She could have told me she didn’t want any help or didn’t want to make an effort with cosmetics, and I would have allowed it. Her decision was the one I was hoping she’d make. I want her to spend as much bonding time with the girls as I do with Domenico and even Krishna.

I want my kids to accept her. I want my son to give his marriage a real shot, but deep down, I also know he needs more than what a traditional marriage between two people has to offer. They’re the future heads of three cultures, and together, they could be a powerful force that no one can break.

Rounding the corner of the hallway, I pass the front door and both sets of stairs. As we get close to the living room, Matteo steps around the entrance, followed by my two sons and Mischa’s boy.

“You’re back.” There is joy in Giovanni’s tone that only someone that has known him for over forty years would detect. He’s always been better at masking his emotions and feelings than I have when around the people I cherish the most. “Have you already picked up Brooklyn?”

“No,” Matteo says as a low chime sounds, telling me the front door opened behind G and me. “But she is home now.”

Hearing Matteo call my residence home relieves a tired man’s soul. He’s so much like my old friend it’s mind-boggling that no one sees what’s right in front of their eyes. I honestly thought that would be a fight between us when he and my daughter made their relationship official.

If Matteo and Brooklyn weren’t living here, Giovanni wouldn’t be staying in the pool house. He had an apartment close to where Matteo’s townhouse is located. Between working for me on the down-low, he searched for Romano’s connection to him going to prison and the police commissioner, as well as watching my son-in-law and his daughter from afar. He kept an eye on Matteo’s mother too.

“Daddy!” Brooklyn shouts, her voice excited. Matteo didn’t pick her up from his parents’ last night, opting to have his mom drop her off this evening, which worked in my favor. I couldn’t have planned this any better had I tried. Other than the fact that I did invite Marty to my son’s wedding. “Let me down, Nana.”

I can feel Giovanni’s body stiffen without looking at him. I didn’t tell him I invited her either. He would have made himself scarce, and I didn’t want to take that chance.

This moment needs to happen.

There are too many secrets within these walls, and I aim to pull every single one of them out before I leave this world and this family in my children’s hands.

It’ll be good to get one of those secrets out in the open before the ceremony commences.

This has been a long time coming, and my friend is going to be furious with me, but I’m okay with that. He’ll get over it and thank me later.

“Miss me, Uncle G?” Brooklyn looks over her shoulder after she squeezes between us to get to her dad.

“Of course I did, curls.”

Looking to my left, I watch his head slightly recline as a breath leaves his mouth before he rights it again, then he straightens his shoulders. Rolling his head, he eyes me without saying a word.

“No,” Marty declares with venom. Perhaps even a bit of sorrow is laced within her tone. “It’s not possible. You are not supposed to be here.”

“It’s not a big deal, Ma,” Matteo says as he scoops his daughter into his arms.

I snap my gaze to Domenico. “Take Brooklyn upstairs so that she can get changed.” Flicking my eyes to Lorenzo, I follow by saying, “Your twin is in my office. Go let her know Brooklyn is home so she can help her into her dress and do her hair.”

“Not a big deal?” Marty seethes.

Dom reaches for Brooklyn, doing what I said without hesitation, planting her on his hip and likely wrinkling his tuxedo jacket. “Let’s go, toots.”

“I don’t want to get dressed. I don’t want you to get married. You’re marrying me,” Brooklyn spits out as she crosses her little arms over her pink T-shirt.

“Hate to break it to you, but you’re my niece now. It’s not happening, kid. The best thing for you to do is to go make nice with your soon-to-be aunt.” There is a lightness in Dom’s tone that’s rare. If there ever was a light to my son-in-law knocking up Brooklyn’s mother back in high school, it’s his daughter. For reasons I don’t even know, she softens Domenico, and he needs a lot of softening to counter the blackness he pulls into his soul.

“Let me down then. I can find Si all by myself, but I’m not going to this stupid wedding.”

“Brooklyn Martina, stop being a brat,” Matteo says in a tone only a father knows how to utilize. “Do as you’re told, or you’ll find yourself grounded from your iPad and TV.”

As Domenico steps past me, Brooklyn huffs out a dramatic breath, but the little spitfire doesn’t say another word. Her

expression is doing all the talking, making me school my lips so that I don't smile.

Ren and Krishna follow behind, leaving Matteo, Giovanni, and me with Marty in the foyer, where she stands close to the door like she wants to bolt, but the fire in her eyes that I haven't seen in far too long makes me think she's fighting a battle: leave or go toe-to-toe with the man she refuses to admit she once loved—maybe still does.

Sighing, Giovanni pivots around as Matteo passes me to embrace his mother. I finally turn to face her as well. Only that warm smile he has for his mother is about to be blown to pieces, and for that, I am sorry for the heartache and animosity he's no doubt going to feel. But I'm not sorry that the truth is coming to light twenty-four years too late.

"You completely understated just how much my mother dislikes you, old man." Matteo laughs as he eyes Giovanni, not grasping the situation yet.

"Whatever you're doing, Tony, stop right this minute," Marty says, realizing why I invited her.

She knows me well. She was my late wife's best friend. The four of us spent so much time with each other in our younger years for her not to realize my motive.

"Ari tried to reason with you. She told you repeatedly that you were making a mistake, Marty," I tell her.

"What's going on?" Matteo asks, his shoulders squaring.

"Leave it, Tony," Giovanni urges, even though I know deep down he wants Matteo to know.

"I've left this secret in the dark for far too long, G. The truth needs to be spoken, and you were never going to do it," I affirm with my stare locked with Martina's angry one. "Ask your mother, Matteo."

"How dare you, Antonio," she utters with so much fury coursing through her that I can see the veins in her neck stretched with tension. "You have no right when it comes to this. He is my son."

“And he is Giovanni’s son too,” I implore, my anger slipping through at the secret she demanded we all keep, knowing full well I wanted Matteo and Sienna to grow up together, become friends, to grow a bond that no man or woman could break.

“Excuse me?” Matteo jerks away from his mother, staring at her for the first time with utter shock and disbelief before his blue eyes flick to me and then his biological father’s.

“I’ll leave the three of you alone to sort this out.” Before I step away from them, I give Martina a look that shows my disappointment, but also my resolve. “Matteo deserves an explanation. Give him the truth, Marty. The whole truth.”

And with those final words, I step past them to check on Ciera.

One secret is out. Now I can focus on hers.

CHAPTER 22

When you're a little girl, you dream of the day you're to get married. You plan every detail out in your head over the years. I always imagined a knight would come to my rescue, saving me from whatever fate I feared my great-uncle had planned for me.

As I got older, it became clear that no one was coming to save me. I either had to resign myself to the circumstances I was born into or figure out a way to bring all the monsters around me to their knees and then cut off their heads.

Liam gifted me with a glimmer of hope when he allowed me the opportunity to learn from one of the best computer hackers in the world. I'm not naive. I'm fully aware he had his own agenda that's yet to be revealed to me.

He did everything within his power to mold me into a good little submissive, but I'm a far better actress than I am controllable and malleable. That's not to say I wasn't affected by the years spent under his tutelage. I have mental and physical scars, but I'm not broken. I can hide my emotions for the most part, but even my brim fills from time to time.

When it comes to my interactions with Domenico, it's like no reservoir or dam exists at all. His words either turn me on or light a fire under my butt that makes me want to jump back in his face the same way he gets in mine.

Last night at the bar was the first time he struck fear into me. I didn't like it, and for some odd reason, for a split second, at least, I don't think he enjoyed my reaction either. But there

were so many people standing around us, and having just ... with ...

I'm not going there. That memory is locked up behind a steel door inside my head. If I think about it, I'll get hot all over again. Krishna and I made him come in a public place. That doesn't even bother me in the light of day like it should—shouldn't it?

They both questioned me on the drive from that hole-in-the-wall bar to Krishna's apartment in Brooklyn. I told them the same thing I said to Sienna and Sasha but left out my suspicions. I wanted to tell them, but I've already dropped my guard around their family enough.

We rode with Krishna after leaving the bar, but before we made it to his place, Domenico shocked me by telling him to swing by the pharmacy. At first, I figured he was filling the birth control prescription the doctor had written earlier in the week, but that wasn't the reason for the detour.

Krishna parked, then Domenico handed me several twenty-dollar bills and told me to get whatever I needed for my period and anything else I needed. I did need items since we weren't going back to Tony's house, but I wasn't sure how he knew I was on my cycle. They even let me go into the store alone like I wasn't a captive; then, maybe I'm not *his* captive.

He did tell me he wasn't into caged pets. He also wasn't the one that took me from my father's house either. Can someone be a captive if they were freely given over in the first place? My father gave me to Salvatore Santo to pay off a gambling debt. Tony was only taking back one of the items Sal owned, and since everything he formerly owned now belonged to Tony, so did I.

At least, that's how I took it when it was explained to me six days ago, which has led me to the here and now—my wedding day.

Lifting the champagne glass to my lips with my right hand, my eyes dart to the ring on my left hand. It's a diamond band, but it's not without flair. There is a large pear-shaped diamond in the center surrounded by smaller diamonds. If the festivities

didn't resemble an Irish wake, I'd think the ring was as beautiful as my black lace wedding gown. I'm unsure which one itches more, the dress or the wedding band.

Domenico slid it in place forty minutes ago as if he was signing his name to a contract, sealing a deal, and well, isn't that precisely what he was doing?

When Tony announced me as Domenico's bride the night of his daughter's wedding reception, he balked at the idea, declaring he wasn't marrying a Fitzgerald. I can't blame him for the disgust shown in his dark eyes at the thought of being married to me. I'd change my DNA if it were possible not to be related to the family I was born into.

With the Caputos, I could easily slip into a fantasy, to the point that even I believe this is real, pretending they want me for me and not because my family wronged theirs.

Even from a young age, I knew my great-uncle was more than a man who demanded obedience. Something sinister lives inside him. He gets off on the tears and pain of others—especially mine. My sorrow is his joy.

I was never blinded by his actions, his words, or even his stares. With Domenico, my heart feels like it constantly wants to jump out of my chest. His voice is like a balm coating chapped skin. His touch calms the fears inside my head. His eyes penetrate soul deep, confusing me, warping my thoughts, making me want things that will never be possible for someone like me. For someone that was born into the wrong family.

The feel of Domenico's lips still lingers on mine. The taste of his tongue still coats mine despite the three glasses of sticky, sweet champagne I've poured down my throat since saying *I do* in front of a handful of Domenico's family, friends, and whoever else is here mingling about out on Tony's back patio.

As a waiter dressed in all black to match the gothic theme crosses my path, I snatch another flute from his tray with the hand my deceiving wedding band decorates. The young man

pauses for me to hand him my empty glass before he continues his trek around the party.

Feeling a towering presence, I flick the gaze that had been following the waiter to the man now standing in front of me.

“Dance with me?” Lorenzo has a carefree smile on his handsome face. He and his brother favor each other in many ways, but where Domenico has the weight of ... who knows what sitting on his shoulders, Lorenzo looks happy.

Not believing he could be speaking to me, I look to my left and then to my right, searching for his wife or even his sister—anyone but me.

“You’re my sister now,” he informs me. “I think it’s only right to get to know you better,” Lorenzo adds as he presents his right hand to me, palm faced up.

Swapping the champagne flute to my other hand, I place my left hand in his and then put my other hand over his shoulder, my glass dangling behind his back. “Are you sure you’re not just trying to keep the bride from looking awkward, Lorenzo?”

“Call me Ren. Hearing Lorenzo makes me feel like I’m being scolded. I get that enough from everyone else.” He wraps his free hand around my waist and gently pulls me closer. “And no, that’s not what I’m doing, nor do you look awkward, Ciera.”

“Now, I really don’t believe you,” I say half-jokingly, though I’m one-hundred-percent serious. And if I didn’t look awkward before, I do now.

As Ren swings us around, I observe that we’re still the only two people dancing. Not a person has joined us on the outdoor patio set up to be a dance floor. The DJ doesn’t go unnoticed either. He keeps looking at me and then down at his cell phone like he’s reading and typing a text message. Before Ren showed up, I was starting to feel uneasy.

Sasha is seated at the temporary bar on the other side of the pool with her back to the bartender and her eyes on us.

There is no malice in her stare. It just looks like she's observing us.

The two men dressed in suits standing several barstools down from her are a different story. One of them has hatred in his stare, while the other looks wary, unsure if he trusts me not to pull out a loaded weapon and start massacring everyone.

Sienna and her husband are nowhere in sight. I saw Matteo following an older woman inside the house like he was on a mission to get information from her. Sienna followed him, which left their daughter, or Matteo's daughter and Sienna's stepdaughter, in Giovanni's care. They're sitting alone at a table. She's eating cake and looks to be talking his head off. He doesn't seem like he minds, though. He looks happy to be keeping her company.

Tony exits the house while Krishna walks away from Domenico to head in his sister's direction. My husband hasn't taken his eyes off me since he perched himself against the white column close to the back of the main house until now, when his dad stops next to him.

A few others are sitting together three tables down from Giovanni. Two of them are wives of the two men at the bar, but the other three ladies I don't know, nor was I introduced to. The only reason I think two of them are wives of Tony's men is that I remember them sitting together during the ceremony.

"I'm not lying to you, and you should consider yourself lucky," he says, pulling my eyes up to look into his brown ones. "So far, you're the only person in our family I haven't lied to or kept something from."

"Then why are people watching me like they're two seconds from attacking me?"

"Like who?" he inquires.

"Giovanni keeps glancing at me. Two men near your wife are watching for any signs I'm the enemy, and the DJ is giving me the creeps."

"Even I'm still trying to figure Giovanni out, so you aren't alone there. I think he's trying to rediscover his place in the

family. The two men at the bar work for Dad. They wouldn't touch a hair on your head without the boss's approval; that I promise you, Ciera. The DJ probably thinks you're hot."

He smiles, and it's genuine; at least, that's what I think I'm seeing from him. "You didn't marry into the safest family, little one, but rest assured, Tony Caputo does make sure we're all safe here. That you can count on."

I'll be glad when this night is over and the people that don't live here leave, but I keep that thought to myself as I give Ren a closed-lip smile. His effort was nice and something I won't forget. But I wish for once in my life I could let my guard down and not question what type of evil lives inside every person I meet.

CHAPTER 23

My spine between my shoulder blades rests against the white column next to the brick stairs that lead from the patio at the back of my father's house down to the stone-paved patio extension. To the right, there's a temporary bar for the wedding. Directly in front of me is the pool with an elaborate fire pit behind it. The pool house is between the stone seating that makes a crescent moon around the roaring fire and where Bennett set up the bar early this afternoon.

To my left and up four wide stone steps is another patio with round outdoor tables and chairs covered in black linen to match the funeral-like theme I requested. I shouldn't have doubted that my father would follow through on my request, but gothic is more fitting for what it is, and not at all what I had in mind. A funeral it is not.

I'd laugh, but the joke's on me.

"Do you think she's ready for us?" K asks from my left, where he stands holding an empty glass of whiskey.

"No sane person would be ready for either of us individually, let alone at the same time," I say, knowing it's the truth. I don't believe in soul mates or even that there is even a woman in existence that was made for either of us. We're ... too much of something that even I can't put a label on.

"Guess we'll find out what the little kitten is made of."

"Who said you're invited?" I bring my tumbler of bourbon to my lips, tipping it back and letting the burning liquid coat my parched throat. The second my tongue nudged her lips

apart and connected with hers it was like a substance I didn't know I was missing breathed life into my lungs. When I pulled away, she took it with her, leaving everything inside me drier than the Arizona desert.

"I did," he says, his tone low and dripping with a challenge that beckons me to refute him. Leaning in close to me, his scent permeates the air around us as he whispers fire into my ear. "Letting her have what I've already taken was never on the table."

With those words, he descends the steps, going left to join his sister as she watches my brother dance with my wife.

I'm not going to lie to myself; a strong rippling current is rushing around in my head, trying to push me to take her from him. It's not jealousy I feel. I know Ren only has eyes for his once forbidden fruit. It's possessiveness I'm warring with.

Ever since I pulled her fingers out of her dripping cunt and sucked them clean, obsession took root somewhere inside me. The feeling was easily recognizable. The same thing happened the first time I swallowed Krishna's cum. I knew at that moment I'd fucked up.

Ciera was no different. They're the same coin, just on the opposite side of each other. And I haven't had my fill of either. If she thinks blood flowing from her pussy will deter me from taking her tonight, then my little pet is clueless about who she married. The sight of blood covering my skin turns me on. The thought of her blood coating my dick has me wanting to pluck her from this lackluster celebration so that the real fun can begin.

One thing is for sure: we'll either break her tonight or she'll surprise the hell out of me.

My father may be slightly shorter than me, but his presence has always made me feel at least a foot shorter than him. The sleeve of his black shirt brushes against mine when he steps beside me.

"You gave me a wedding for my birthday," I say when he doesn't speak and the silence between us starts to add pressure

to my chest. Even to my ears, I sound like an ungrateful child, and maybe that's what I am, at this moment, at least.

“No, I gifted you something to cherish, to love, something you'd give your own life to protect, son.”

“Then maybe you should have picked someone that doesn't have the same blood running through her veins as the people we want to annihilate,” I say. A sour taste rolls slowly from the back of my throat to the tip of my tongue. I lift my glass and take another sip to wash it back down, making it disappear as if it wasn't brought on by the words that slipped from my own tongue.

“The first time I saw your mother, I was so taken by her. Every part of her was a distraction and it pissed me off,” he shares. “I was angry at her for being so goddamn beautiful that it captured my attention and held my eyes in place. She owned me in that moment, and I knew it. She was only sixteen at the time, but I didn't care.”

“Is there a point to this, Dad?” I can guess where he's going with this, but I want to hear him say it.

“I see how you look at her. You're watching her right now. You've been watching Ciera the whole time you've been standing here. She may not own your heart yet, Dom, but she captures your eyes and holds your stare as though she owns you the same way your mother did me.”

I remain silent, not confirming or denying it. He and I both know it's the truth. I'll never forget the moment I first laid eyes on Ciera. I still plan to fuck her out of my system the same way I do the man that looks more like a Viking god as he stands at the bar, his forearm perched against the counter as his arctic eyes stare at me, while I do the same to the beautiful Irish girl in my brother's arms.

“Has she eaten?” he asks.

“I'm not her daddy. She's a big girl. If she wants to eat, then I'm sure she can see all the food available on display,” I tell him, but now that the bastard put the thought in my head, I haven't seen her eat anything, nor did I think to feed her last

night. All she bought at the pharmacy was a box of tampons and a small pack of panty liners.

“She feels out of place among us. She’s never been in control of one thing in her life. She’s terrified of making the wrong move, saying the wrong thing. It wouldn’t hurt for you to consider her needs before your own.”

Instead of admitting he has a point, I polish off the contents in the glass I’m holding.

“Happy birthday, son. I’m going to dance with my newest daughter. You should think about doing the same. Maybe even feed the girl for Heaven’s sake. Tomorrow we take back what was ours, but tonight, we celebrate what we have in front of us. Try to enjoy this, Domenico.”

With those parting words, he leaves me as he walks to where Ren and Ciera have just finished dancing together. Dad lifts his hand, offering it to my new wife. Lorenzo steps around them and then his eyes land on me before he heads toward me.

Dad doesn’t dance with Ciera like he said he was going to do. Instead, he drops her hand to put his on the small of her lace-covered back. Then he urges her to walk in the direction of where the food is set up in abundance. More food is available than what is needed for the number of people in attendance, but knowing my father the way I do, he’s already told the staff to make themselves feel welcome and join us.

“Where are you going, little brother? You have a determined look on your face. Should I be concerned?” I ask Lorenzo when he takes the stairs at a quick pace as if he’s on a mission.

Ren stops next to me on the stairs, facing toward the house. “I’m going to check something out. I’ll be right back,” he informs me, caution in his tone giving him away.

“Spill it, Ren.” When he just stares at me, irritation grates on my nerves. “Tell me what you’re up to, or I’m going to follow and see for myself.”

“Ciera mentioned the DJ was giving her the creeps, so as we danced, I saw him observing her a little too closely for my liking. He kept looking from her to his phone. It was clear he was texting with someone about her.”

A chill runs down my spine that has nothing to do with the breeze in the air on this fall night.

“Do it then,” I order. “I’ll keep an eye on him, but be quick. If I get the feeling he’s up to something, I’m going to shoot and ask questions later.”

Ren leaves and I pull out my cell phone. Texting Krishna, I tell him not to take his eyes off Ciera for a second. She could be up to something with any member of her diabolical family, but if that were even remotely true, she wouldn’t have tipped off Ren to the DJ.

Unless that was part of her plan: make us focus on one person while we’re oblivious to the real threat.

When K slightly nods his head, I know he received my message, so I find the DJ while also keeping an eye on the rest of the property. From where I’m standing, I can see all corners except for behind the pool house and the upper patio with French doors that lead out from my dad’s bedroom.

With Giovanni on the upper patio with Brooklyn, I know that section of the property is secure. Although with the bomb my father dropped on Matteo, I’m surprised he’s leaving his daughter alone with the man he just learned is his birth father, not Pete De Salvo.

Even I was surprised when Sienna told me just before the ceremony started. Last I saw, my sister and Matteo were inside Dad’s office having a private conversation. I’m sure his mom was thrilled he asked Sienna to join them.

Ciera polishes off whatever she was eating and then hands her plate to one of the waitstaff before Dad guides her toward the bar, where two of his captains are standing ten feet from Krishna and Sasha.

When they stop in front of Dad’s men, blocking them from my view, Dad motions with his free hand, introducing Ciera,

I'd imagine. Bennett hands Dad a glass of whiskey and then holds out a flute of champagne to Ciera. She eyes Dad's drink then her own with a look of disappointment before taking a sip as she slips away from Dad's side, walking to the fire pit where no one else is around.

She stands there, eyeing the fire for several long minutes before turning around, the front of her body facing me. Her pretty eyes are cast down, staring at the still water in the pool. She wears a mask much like my sister did years ago, making it impossible to read her thoughts. I wanted to believe her when she told us she didn't know why Owen Donovan was looking for her yesterday. There was something she was holding back, but I didn't press her on it.

Maybe I should have. Maybe I should have been forceful, like how I typically pull information out of people. She hasn't seen that side of me, but I get the feeling she's going to meet that monster sooner rather than later.

My neck prickles with awareness, making me realize how long I've focused on Ciera instead of watching the DJ and the rest of the party. Flicking my eyes from her to where the DJ is set up, I find him bent over as if rummaging through something next to his chair, his eyes snapping up and looking around every other second.

As my eyes squint, observing his nervous behavior, movement from behind him yanks my gaze over his shoulder as a man slips from under a dark cloth draped over a table with two speakers on top.

Is that ...

I reach inside my jacket slowly as bone-chilling ice slides down my spine.

He stands to his full height, his copper hair confirming my thoughts. Lifting the weapon in his hand, my eyes follow its line of fire, seeing he isn't aiming it at my father. Instead, the gun is pointed in his daughter's path where she's still standing alone.

Do I let him take her out?

Would that solve my conflicting feelings for her?

An ache morphs in my chest, blooming outward at the same time a thought manifests inside my head—*anyone but her*.

In those precious seconds while standing here like a fool, too caught up in my head to act on my instincts, my father saw him too. Dad sprints toward Ciera as he pulls a weapon from beneath his jacket.

A shot fires, my attention snapping to the DJ who's pointing a firearm in my father's direction. Dad's shot hits him in the chest before he was able to fire. That shakes me out of whatever trance I was in.

Aiming, I fire as a second shot rings out from another gun. One bullet pierces the center of Cormac's chest while another nails him between the eyes. But before he crumbles to the ground, his weapon fires.

Dropping the loaded weapon to my side, I jump down from the top of the stairs, landing on my feet, and then I sprint to where Dad and Ciera lay in front of the fire pit. Dad's body is draped over hers, and before I skid down next to him, I see the tear in his jacket and the liquid spilling from the center of his back.

"No," I gasp. Snatching him off her, I pull him into my arms as others crowd behind me.

An agonizing moan comes from Ciera's lips, but I can't focus on her.

"Dad?" Sienna screams from somewhere behind me in the distance.

Locking eyes with my father, he grabs onto the lapels of my jacket, pulling me down close to his face. "I wasn't supposed to leave a fucking mess for you to clean up," he tells me, his chest rising, and then it plummets as if he took his last breath. Blood coats the insides of his lips.

"Don't you dare leave me, Dad. Don't you fucking die."

“Love her, Dom. Love Ciera like I loved Arianna.” He gasps for air as I yank him closer, holding him tighter. “Love Krishna if he’s the one you really want. Just allow yourself to love, Dom. That’s what I want.”

“Stay with me, Dad. Don’t do this. Fight, goddammit.” Looking up, I meet my sister’s eyes and then Ren’s. “Call an ambulance. Now,” I order them.

“Do not become hateful, son.” My clouded eyes lower to meet his again. “Promise me, Domenico. Swear to me on your mother’s soul that you will not become hateful or allow hate to fuel your purpose. This was not Ciera’s fault.”

Like hell it wasn’t her fault. And if my father dies ...

“Swear to me,” he forces out through a cough, blood splattering on him and me.

“I swear. I promise, Dad,” I lie to him, knowing I’m going to break it the second he’s gone.

Don’t fucking die, Dad. Please, God, don’t let him die on me too.

“Daddy,” Sienna says from where she’s kneeling beside me.

“You can’t leave us, Dad,” Ren follows from my other side.

“I love you, my children. I loov—”

A shallow gasp comes from his throat, then his chest deflates as air leaves his mouth for the final time. When his eyes glass over it takes everything inside of me not to lose it, not to allow the tears sitting on the bottom of my eyelids to spill down my cheeks.

“No!” my sister cries out before doubling over and clutching parts of our father that I’m not fisting.

My father is dead. Gone forever.

If I’d taken the shot sooner, he would still be alive, living the life he’s supposed to be living. Something inside of me hardens into solid rock at that moment. My head snaps up,

seeing Ciera lying on the ground with her elbows propping herself up, her eyes wide with blood dripping down one side of her neck. Her head shakes in slow-motion, her eyes never blinking as she stares at my father's lifeless body.

Releasing the lapels of Dad's jacket, anger washes through me starting at my head and coursing through every cell in my body. My spine straightens as my shoulders square, then I lunge with no regard for anything or anybody else around me except to get my hands on her throat.

She caused this.

My father is dead because of *her*.

Ren and Sienna grab my arms at the same time Sasha snatches Ciera backward, pulling her out of my reach. Someone else wraps their thick arm around my chest. It's not K. I can see him from my left side, standing next to where Ren is kneeling at my side. That leaves Matteo.

"Get off me," I demand, pushing through them.

"Get her out of here," Sasha shouts, still holding Ciera locked against her front. "Now."

A red haze forms on the outer corners of my eyes.

She did this.

She has to pay for his life ending. A flash of pain shoots through my forehead at that thought, but I shove it away just as fast as it came.

"Take her, Krishna. Get her the fuck out of here before he does something stupid," Sasha demands, her tone erratic, and I know she's likely imagining all the ways I'm planning to get retribution for my father's murder at the hands of Ciera's father. *Her* blood. They're all going to die—every last one of them.

Krishna steps forward, snatching Ciera from his sister's grasp. Ciera yelps, making it sound like she's in pain, but she isn't the one that lost her life. My father did.

"You hurt her, you'll answer to me, brother," Sasha spits.

“And me,” my sister adds as her grip tightens. Leaning in close, her breath fans my ear as she says, “If you kill her, and then Dad died for no fucking reason. Don’t do that, Dom. Don’t you dare make his death meaningless.”

“Get off me, Sienna.”

Krishna yanks Ciera by her bare bicep, pulling her away and taking my revenge with him.

“Krishna,” I say in warning.

“You know where to find us,” he says, his voice low as he strides away.

“Get the fuck off me,” I yell, the lethal tone in my voice making Lorenzo loosen his hold as Sienna and Matteo tighten theirs.

“Release him,” Giovanni says, his voice coming from behind us.

Matteo is the first to let go as he whips around to face Giovanni. “Where’s my daughter?”

“I gave her to Marty. Told her to get Brooklyn away from here. They’re safe. I called Pete,” Giovanni informs him, his voice laced with sorrow.

Pushing off the ground now that only my sister’s arms are wrapped around me, I stand, pulling her up with me. “Sienna,” I say in a low tone, forcing myself not to move. “Let go. I’m not going to hurt you, but if I have to, I will pull you off me. You know I can, so step the fuck away now.”

She’s pregnant, and in my state of mind, I can’t lose so much control that my little sister gets hurt. I could have gotten out of their hold on me, but even with my hate-fueled rage, I could not harm Si or Sasha. That could have easily happened had I pushed through them to get to Ciera.

“Please, Domenico,” she begs. “Don’t dishonor his memory by hurting her. She doesn’t deserve that. She isn’t one of them the way you see her as. She isn’t our enemy.”

Looking down to my right side, I say, “You’re wrong. The same blood that runs through the scum that killed our father

courses through her. He's dead, Sienna. Fucking dead. She's one of them."

"You're wrong on this. So very wrong. Just trust me, Dom. Don't be another person that hurts her," she says, more urgent than her previous pleas. If I were in the right state of mind, I'd weigh her words and find out exactly why she's trying so hard to save a girl who's living on borrowed time.

The best man I've known and will ever know is gone. Why should she get to breathe when he no longer does?

A vise-like grip grabs hold of my heart, squeezing me, but I ignore that too as I shrug Sienna off and pivot.

"Domenico," Carmine, one of my father's captains, calls my name in a tone that should have me putting him in his place, but I ignore him instead. I've never liked him, never respected him. I'm certainly not about to start today. He and Rocco came to the wedding together with their wives.

Stepping past my sister and brother, I shove Matteo out of my way and go to do the same to Giovanni when he plants his hand flat against the center of my chest, halting the only mission I'm set on completing tonight. "You aren't leaving."

"It would be wise to get out of my way," I warn.

"You're the boss now, Domenico. You have a mess to clean up here before you deal with anything or anyone else. You've just stepped into Tony's shoes. Don't fuck it up."

With those words, he sidesteps me, heading to where my dad lies on the ground behind me. I can't turn around. I can't look at what I'll never get back if I'm going to keep myself from breaking down. My anger is all that's keeping me on my feet, fueling me in a way nothing else can.

Sirens sound in the distance, the noise getting louder the closer they get. If I stay here, I'm liable to be arrested, though it was justified to save another life. An arrest is likely, even for processing while the police investigate. Krishna and I both shot Cormac. Both shots were fatal wounds.

But if I leave now, I know I'll head straight to K's condo.

Fuck it.

“Ren, Sienna,” I call out. They’re both at my sides within seconds. I eye my sister, then my brother. “You’re in charge,” I tell him. “But don’t do anything without Si agreeing.”

“Dom,” Sienna says, her voice heartbroken and exhausted. “Please don’t kill her. Enough blood has been spilled tonight. Dad saved her for a reason. Deep down, you know that too.”

“Dad isn’t fucking here, is he? It’s my turn to call the shots, so whatever happens, happens, and every one of us will live with it.”

“Goddamn you,” she seethes before shaking her head and turning away from me, storming off.

“Sienna is right,” Ren says. “Just know that before you do whatever you’re leaving to do, brother.”

They’re wrong.

Enough blood will not have been spilled until every last one of them are in the ground and even that won’t be enough.

They’re all going to pay for taking his life. Every fucking one of them.

It’ll be me that snuffs the light out of their eyes, but none of them will have a quick death. No, they don’t deserve one second of mercy.

My inner monster is ready to come out. He wants to paint every surface of the city red. And he may very well do it.

CHAPTER 24

Antonio Caputo is dead.
A boss was murdered.

Dom lost his father tonight.

Tony and I didn't have much of a relationship, not even Pakhan to Don. At least not in the same sense he did with my father, the former Russian-American Pakhan.

I respected Domenico's father. He was a good man—an even better man and father than my own. Tony didn't keep many secrets from his children like mine did when he decided to make my sister and I believe he'd divorced our mother years ago. My dad could have stood to learn from the Italian-American Mafia boss with how Tony raised Sienna. Then maybe my father and sister wouldn't have had such a rocky relationship for far too many years.

When Tony introduced Ciera as Dom's bride during Sienna's wedding reception last weekend, my gut reaction was anger. I covered my dislike over the thought of Domenico marrying someone else with humor, telling the pretty little Irish girl I'd share him with her.

I wasn't supposed to like that idea as much as I did. But as soon as the words were out of my mouth, my dick got hard as I pressed it against Dom's ass. I'll never forget the look on Ciera's face. She was shocked, but there was also arousal in her eyes.

I'm sure the flush staining her cheeks resembled embarrassment to everyone else, but I saw the truth within her emerald stare. She was hungry for the image I had put in her head. I had a feeling she had a naughty side, and that's exactly what she proved when she didn't stop Dom and me from helping her get herself off the other morning.

Until Domenico, I had never cared if my partner for the night got off or not. My release was all that mattered. Watching him come undone is a sight I could go the rest of my life and never tire of, but watching Ciera fall apart at our hands was mind-blowing. The sounds she makes and how her curvy body moves will make you forget your goddamn name. She's mesmerizing in a way I never dreamed existed, which is why I'm so far past the point of anger right now.

Conflicting emotions and rage are a bad combination where I'm concerned. I want to paint every inch of her body with my cum, inside and out. I want to feel her walls milk my dick so tightly that she inflicts pain and pleasure. I want to eat from her pussy and lick her dry, but that isn't going to happen now. She'll be lucky if she's still breathing by tomorrow morning.

There is no doubt in my mind that Domenico has one mission to accomplish tonight. Tony's murder may not technically be Ciera's fault, but Dom isn't going to see it that way. Hell, I'm not entirely positive that I'm not blaming her too. I'm angry, pissed off, fucking furious. But is it with her or the fact that we let an enemy get through us? That we allowed him to kill one of us. I'm not even sure when I started to see our families as one.

I don't want Domenico to kill her. If I'm honest, I don't want him to harm one hair on her beautiful head. But I won't stand in his way if that's the option he chooses. If he needs to end Ciera's life to regain his sanity so that he doesn't burn the whole world down, then so be it. As much as it's going to hurt whatever part she has unlocked inside me, I'll live with the damage.

If the tables were turned and my father was lying in a pool of blood, lifeless, I would have sent her to her maker right then

and there. The only reason Domenico didn't is that our pregnant sisters were in the middle of it. He wasn't going to risk either of them getting hurt.

The dinging sound from the elevator stopping on my floor pulls me out of my thoughts. When the doors slide open and Ciera doesn't move, I push at the small of her back too aggressively, making her stumble. Reaching out, I grab her by the elbow to keep her from falling face-first into the marble floor.

"I'm not the one you should be worried about," I lie as I hold her in place long enough for her to regain her balance. I'm equally as bad as Dom, if not worse. She'd be a fool to think I'm the nice one between us both. He has more morals than I do. He was raised by a kinder man than me. "Your father didn't murder mine."

A slight tremble rakes down her body. I wouldn't have noticed if I hadn't been touching her. She hides her fear, schooling her features as if she's had practice. I store that realization in the back of my mind for another time.

Guiding her with more caution than she deserves, we stop in front of my locked apartment. It's a smart lock, but it takes more than a key code to unlock it, which is why I don't care if she sees the six-digit number that I have to punch into the keypad before placing the pad of my middle finger on the fingerprint reader. The door unlocks almost instantly.

Once we're inside and the door closes, the security system arms again. It takes more than simply turning a knob to leave my residence, which is why I brought her here.

"Go shower. You have Tony's blood all over you. Wash it off before Dom gets here," I order, my tone coming out harsher than I'd intended, but the sight of all the crimson running down the right side of her neck and matted in her hair has me wanting to get trigger-happy on someone else tonight, and I really don't want it to be *her*. It's best for her to get out of my sight right now. Plus, I have a mission of my own to accomplish before Domenico gets here.

“You can use the master bathroom, but do not put that dress back on your body. Find something from my closet.”

As if needing space from me too, she scurries down the hall. When the door to my bedroom closes, I pivot and walk to the raised countertop between the main sitting room and the open kitchen. It’s modern, with a black granite countertop and white cabinetry below. Three stools with cream-colored fabric that lines the seats are pushed underneath the raised countertop, only the backrest showing.

My muscles are coiled too tight to sit on one of the stools, so I reach for my laptop, dragging it to the side of the counter. Cormac Fitzgerald may be dead, but there is always someone in line to step into a boss’s shoes after he meets his demise. I haven’t met the seventeen-year-old son of the former Irish-American gang leader, Ciera’s brother, but he’ll need more than his name and more than the men on his father’s payroll to fill Daddy’s worn-out shoes.

He needs money, and there’s no doubt in my mind that Cormac has it stashed away with him being the only one with access. He was always too paranoid for his own good. Of course, it’s understandable when you’re a crooked person who breeds thieves. It’s a wonder someone hadn’t stabbed him in the back before now.

My sister may be a brat sometimes, but we’ve always had a bond no one could ever break. The bitch kept a massive secret from me, yet I still trust her implicitly. She could wipe me clean, but I know she couldn’t care less about our family fortune.

To power on the screen, I use my right forefinger to access the laptop. I double-check that my IP address is set to ping a different location worldwide every five seconds. I can’t chance leaving a digital fingerprint anytime I scour the internet, even for mundane searches.

I already know which bank Cormac uses, but there’s also a chance he uses multiple financial sources. Those will take a little time to figure out, so starting with the one I know of from

when Domenico was digging into the New York City Police Commissioner's finances, I start there.

It takes me ten minutes too long to start the transfer of funds, but now that it's going, I can't close my laptop when Ciera stops in the entryway between the hallway and the living room. Her father had more money than I would have imagined he'd have in a U.S. bank. It makes me think he has a higher connection than I'd initially considered.

Ciera's bare legs distract me from my next task, pulling my eyes away from the screen to scan up her body. She's wearing one of my basic black T-shirts, the hem nearly reaching her knee because of our height difference. The shirt covers too much for me to be able to tell if she put her panties back on or borrowed a pair of my boxer briefs instead. She could have opted for none at all.

A beige towel is draped over her shoulders with her hair hanging over the top. How she makes something so plain that swamps her petite size look sexy as fuck, I don't know. What I do know is that I can't stay in the same room as her and not try to fuck her. She's two sides of the same coin and it messes with my head. I'm attracted to the innocence you see on the surface, but that naughty little lion you can only see when staring into her green eyes taunts me. I want to strip all her layers off, and I'm not talking about the clothes hanging on her sexy body.

So, despite not having discovered the second step in my plan to finish my pursuit of destroying the Fitzgerald legacy, I push my laptop away. Then I step away, walking in her direction to find the nearest cold shower as my eyes remain glued to her frame. my cock stiffening behind my pants.

"Don't bother trying to escape," I inform her, stopping in front of her and looking down. "It's a complicated security system that is way over your pretty little head. You'll only piss me off by trying and fucking my shit up. You don't want to piss me off, kitten."

Her eyes flash with defiance, not liking my remark, and a part of me hopes she tries to run. I like hunting prey, only she

isn't my meal to capture, and that knowledge is like a cheese grater running down my spine, leaving jagged cuts in its wake.

CHAPTER 25

DOMENICO

When my mother was killed, I saw the aftermath of her body. In my father's panic to locate Sienna, I saw her lying in a pool of her own blood, a bloody hole in her chest. Her face was bruised and cut open from the trauma she sustained before being shot.

By the time we'd gotten home, she'd been dead for two hours. I'll never forget what I saw that day. It hardened a nine-year-old boy that shouldn't have witnessed his first death at such a young age.

But what I watched happen tonight was far worse. My mom was already gone when I saw her back then. Tonight, I experienced my father dying in my arms. The scene wasn't as gruesome, but seeing his life drain before me and not being able to do a damn thing to save him hurt. It hurt so goddamn bad that there isn't a word fitting for the level of pain that sliced through me like a jagged, rusty blade.

Fire swept through my body, burning any ounce of good I had inside of me. It forever changed me, and I'd be lying if I said it was for the better. There is so much darkness and hatred festering within me that I cannot and will not be able to contain it as I have in the past.

My conflicting feelings about Ciera being my wife made me hesitate when I saw Cormac's weapon aimed at his daughter. I wasted seconds, or maybe minutes, I don't know, and now my dad, my hero, the best fucking human I know is gone. He's dead.

Because of *her*.

Antonio Caputo's life ended tonight because Ciera Fitzgerald was there. If I'd pushed harder, refused to go along with his flawed plan for someone else's revenge, he'd still be here. I swore to myself years ago as I watched my mother's coffin being lowered into the ground that I'd never marry and look at me now with a ring on my left hand.

In what world does she get to live when he no longer breathes? Not one in which I control. She won't for one second longer than it takes me to reach Krishna's apartment near Brighton Beach.

I wasn't ready to become the boss, but that's the role I was forced to assume the second my father ceased living. I became the judge, the jury, and the executioner. I judged and sentenced Ciera in the same breath. All that's left is to watch her life drain from her eyes the same as I did my dad's. Hers is a choice; his wasn't.

I took off within ten minutes of K leaving the house with Ciera. I left Ren and Si to deal with the cops and the mess I should be cleaning up. We have cameras mounted all over the property. Video footage will show the authorities that Fitzgerald came there with the intent to kill. We were in our rights to fire back. I don't think the police commissioner wants his relationship with the Fitzgeralds exposed, but I'll use that if I need to. For now, it's a card I keep in my back pocket.

I sat in my SUV for over fifteen minutes after I arrived. I'm stalling, and I don't know why. It should be like a Band-Aid. Just rip the fucker off. Be done in one quick movement. Is it that I want to know why Cormac sought to execute his own daughter knowing he would be doing it among people that would give any reason to take his life? It doesn't make sense unless he was betting on my father saving her life. And that would have been a huge gamble.

If I could think clearly for a minute without seeing a flashback of my father dying, his dark, lifeless eyes staring up into the night sky, then maybe I could see what I'm missing. But I can't. It doesn't matter if my eyes are open or closed.

The images still pounding against my skull are more gruesome, more distorted than the original memory.

My head and my chest are warring with each other. One wants me to go into K's home and strangle every ounce of life housed within her beautiful being. The other wants me to feel her lips on mine again, have her arms wrapped around me so tightly that the bad shit vanishes. That part also wants to get her as far away from us as possible.

My heart has never been the strongest of my emotions. It's a losing battle when it's against my mind. That fucker wants retribution in any form it can get it, which is why I forced myself into the elevator that took me to his floor less than a minute ago, and the reason I'm walking out of it now.

When I near, I see the door open wide. That's impossible. Krishna is more meticulous than I am. He would never leave his door open longer than the length of time it takes to enter and close it. For Christ's sake, he has a keypad with a fingerprint scanner. To my knowledge, there are only three people that can gain access.

Removing my handgun from where I stuck it between the waistband of my pants and my dress shirt after exiting my vehicle, I lift the weapon in front of me, holding it with both hands. After I screwed the suppressor into the barrel, I couldn't holster the gun under my jacket.

As I slowly approach the opening, I don't hear any noise. That could be good or bad, but it doesn't give me any warning as to what I'm about to walk into.

When I'm a couple of steps from the front door, I have a direct line of sight into one-half of K's open kitchen. That's when I see a body sitting on the stool at the end of the counter, but not just any body. It's Ciera, and she's slumped over the counter, unmoving.

Forgetting everything before right now, I run to her without regard for anyone else or checking my surroundings first. Stopping next to her, I place the gun on the counter, seeing a bloody towel on the ground next to her chair. Liquid

drips from the ends of her wet curls, splashing her bare right thigh.

Grabbing her into my arms, I pull her off the stool where she was seconds from falling to the floor, and then I gently lay her on the hardwood to assess her. “Ciera,” I call out. “Are you with me?”

Her face is pale and her cheeks are cold to the touch. That’s when I notice the river of blood running from behind her neck on the right side and down the column of her porcelain skin, disappearing beneath the black material of the T-shirt donning her curvy figure.

“Ciera,” I call out again with more vigor than when I spoke her name the first time.

“Jesus.” I look up, seeing Krishna freshly showered and standing in the opening between his hallway and living room, dressed in dark denim blue jeans and a navy T-shirt paired with combat boots.

“What the fuck did you do to my wife?” I accuse as disbelief rolls off my tongue.

“What did I do?” he echoes. “That’s all on you. I had nothing to do with this except bring her here to await her execution.”

“I didn’t do this,” I spit out, disgusted he thinks I’d hurt her even if that’s exactly what I was set on before I walked into his apartment before I saw her as lifeless as my father was an hour ago. “I found her fucking slumped over your laptop with the goddamn door wide fucking open.”

“That’s impossible.” His head snaps to the side, looking around the corner.

Moving her matted hair out of the way, I lift her head, seeing a deep gash at the base of her skull on her right side almost immediately. “Shit.”

“What?” K demands as he rushes to us.

“When Dad was shot, he fell into her, both of them crashing to the ground. She must have hit her head on the

stone fire pit.”

His glacier eyes darken. “That doesn’t explain why my door was open.”

“We don’t have time to figure that out.” Snatching the bloody towel from the floor, I fold the cloth, press it against the gash, and apply pressure to the wound. Jumping to the other side of her body, I firm my grip under her neck, slide my other hand and forearm under her knees, and then stand with her. A moan slips from her lips, the sound penetrating my chest wall so easily and quickly I don’t have time to throw up a shield. “We have to get her to the hospital. Now.”

“Let’s go then.” He steps past me, grabs the laptop from the counter, and heads for the open door.

I follow up, quickening my pace because I know she needs medical attention immediately.

And for someone to get her away from me as soon as possible.

There’s just one problem with that—if anyone tries to take her, I will throw their very much alive body over the edge of the tallest building I can find and then take pleasure in knowing I was the last person their terror-filled eyes saw as they took their last breath.

“Ciera,” I call again, hoping she can hear my voice. “Open your eyes. Stay with me, sweetheart.”

CHAPTER 26

He called her *sweetheart*.

I doubt Domenico has uttered one endearment in all his twenty-six years until tonight. Neither have I, for that matter, but I thought we were built the same in that regard. Both of us are hard; maybe not emotionless, but at least hard enough that the rest of the world believes we're uncaring bastards who wouldn't blink at the sight of someone we care for being hurt, or worse, dying.

Earlier tonight, when he knew his father had seconds to live, it took his anger being directed at Ciera for the unshed tears not to fall. When I walked down the hall after hearing his voice and watched him lay her still body on the hardwood floor, I saw panic in his dark eyes. He may not be in love with her yet, but she's somehow burrowed her way inside his chest cavity.

If I'm honest, my chest deflated when I stopped at the living room opening, thinking he'd killed her like I knew he planned to do. I've been around Dom enough to recognize murder in his eyes. He *did* want to harm her, or at least he thought he wanted to end her life until he saw she was hurt. And maybe I did too until I saw her lying on the floor in a pool of blood.

"Can one of you tell me what happened?" the triage nurse asks, her eyes on a computer screen instead of the patient she should be assessing.

“Someone fell into her, knocking her backward. She fell to the ground and hit her head on concrete. She has a nasty cut behind her head. She may have lost a lot of blood too. It happened two hours ago,” Dom relays, but every word that comes out of his mouth is a guess.

Ciera hasn't woken up to tell us, though the assumption is the only logical explanation. Why she didn't say anything about it earlier is not. She could have told me when I dragged her from the Caputos backyard and through the house. She could have mentioned it on the car ride to my apartment, or when I ordered her to take a shower. At any time since shots were fired, she should have told me it was her blood she was covered in and not Tony's.

Luckily, upon arriving at the ER, we were taken immediately to a room. I chalked that up to the lady at the check-in desk recognizing one or both of us because there wasn't a vacant seat in the waiting room. Now I'm starting to think she didn't give this chick a heads-up. Then again, it could've been Ciera's head trauma that got her bumped up the waiting list.

“What's her name?” she requests. She's a tall, slender, white woman in her mid-to-late twenties, dressed in teal blue scrubs and white tennis shoes. Her brunette hair is pulled back and twisted with a scrunchy ponytail holder securing the strands to her head in a makeshift bun.

“Ciera Caputo,” Domenico answers, his tone lower than his recount of what possibly happened to her tonight, telling me that he too is losing his patience over the fact that not one physician has come into the exam room, nor has the nurse checked any of Ciera's vitals or taken a look at the gash that Dom is still applying pressure too with a towel.

“And how are you related to the patient?”

“I'm her husband, and her name is Ciera, not the patient,” he snarls.

“And I'm her boyfriend,” I bite out, getting irritated that she's wasting our time when Ciera should be getting medical

attention. “Let’s hurry this up. She needs to see a doctor, now, before I go looking for one.”

Her fingers stop typing, then the nurse’s head whips around, first looking at Dom, then at Ciera, and finally to me. Her lips are parted, and I think she’s breathing through her mouth, but it’s the way her eyes widen that I see it finally clicks for her as to who we are.

“He’s his boyfriend too,” Ciera adds, her left hand finding Dom’s face, pawing his cheek. It’s the first words she’s spoken that hasn’t been a groan, and even if her claim is false, it’s music to my ears.

The nurse stands, her stool flying back into the dirty beige wall behind her. “I’ll go get the doctor right away, gentlemen.” Then she power walks from the room, not even shutting the door behind her as she exits.

“Coherent looks good on you, little pet,” Dom comments, the first signs of life coloring his face since I witnessed his father die right in front of me, in front of us.

There has never been a label to what Domenico and I were, what we are, and until recently, I thought that was the way I wanted it. Now I’m not so sure. Now I’m not sure what the fuck I want anymore. Or maybe I do, but I’m too afraid to admit who it is I want.

Maybe I want more than just one person. Maybe I need to be hit in the fucking face to knock some sense into my dense brain. Dom has never looked at me like he can’t live without me, which is precisely how he’s been looking at *her* since last night, even before his father was shot.

I saw his face when he kissed her. He might have appeared indifferent to everyone else, but I know every one of his masks. Whether he realizes it yet or not, he will keep her.

And everyone knows three’s a crowd.

THE BLEEDING STOPPED ONCE the emergency room physician finally appeared to examine Ciera the night before last. He x-rayed the area and then sutured the wound with five stitches. Domenico wasn't satisfied and demanded an MRI and a full body CT scan be ordered to ensure there wasn't any internal damage somewhere else.

The attending physician didn't like being told how to do his job, but he was a smart man. He kept his thoughts to himself while placing the order. But Ciera regained consciousness again during the MRI and freaked out, and without getting authorization from either of us, they sedated her.

I was as furious as Domenico was when the tech brought her back to the room, informing us of the situation. He also let us know that he was advised not to tell us, so lucky for him, neither one of us lost our shit—not on him, at least.

Yesterday I was able to get Dom to go to my apartment to shower and change since it's closer than his house. He isn't ready to go back there, so Sasha brought him clothes to change into, as well as Ciera a change of clothes for when she wakes up.

It's been thirty-six hours since they administered drugs to keep her asleep, not knowing if she had any history of side effects or not.

While Dom was gone for an hour yesterday, I made a call to one of the members of senior leadership. My father has donated too much money to this hospital over the years for what that doctor pulled to go unchecked, and I know Tony used to match the dollar amount my father gave. I used to think it was a competition between them, and perhaps it was or perhaps it was an agreement among them.

Sasha cleaned up the mess I let happen in my apartment. I should have seen the signs that something was wrong with Ciera. I saw her fall when Tony crashed into her. His body weight alone would cause her to get bruised and banged up.

Sienna and Giovanni are handling the funeral arrangement. From what Sasha has been texting me, it'll be held a graveside

service on Wednesday at the site where Tony's deceased wife was laid to rest eighteen or nineteen years ago.

Lorenzo is funneling all of Dom's captains, as well as handling any legal bullshit. I was starting to think Domenico's kid brother must be a genius lawyer in training since cops haven't shown up to process either one of us since we're the ones who shot and killed Cormac. My curiosity got the best of me, and since I'd brought my laptop, I tapped into the Caputo's security feeds from the wedding reception.

There was a video showing Tony firing a weapon at the DJ who'd had his handgun raised and aimed. Another showed Cormac taking a shot, but not one angle showed Dom or me. I figured Ren erased the footage, but to my knowledge, he doesn't know how to do that, and Dom hasn't left Ciera's side except to shower.

After digging deeper, two cameras had been turned off right before the reception started. I'm confident that's no coincidence. The only logical explanation is that someone fucked up and turned off the wrong two cameras.

There should have been a fail-safe to notify Domenico the second those cameras were shut off, but I haven't had a chance to look into why that didn't happen. Something else has been too pressing and nagging at the back of my mind since Dom told me my door was open when he found Ciera slumped over my laptop.

After closing out of the Caputos shit, I pulled up the browser I'd left open after stealing Cormac's money from one of the banks in mid-town Manhattan known to service shady fucking clients. Their security is shit too, which is why I was able to route the one-point-four million dollars that had been in his account to an offshore account, and then I set it up to re-route three more times, splitting the transactions and funneling the funds to other banks.

I spent five hours tracing everything she'd done in the ten minutes I'd left her unsupervised when I went to shower and change clothes. Only a goddamn genius could do all of what she pulled off in that small window of time. Hell, it could have

been less since we don't know how long she'd been unconscious when Dom found her. She didn't have a concussion, which was good, but she did lose too much blood and had to be given a transfusion.

Dom finally fell asleep six hours ago with his head lying on the side of her bed and his right hand wrapped around her wrist like he thought she may not be there when he woke up. It was the first time he'd slept since we crawled out of bed two mornings ago—the day of his wedding.

I fell asleep at some point last night, only to wake up around one this morning to Dom barely able to keep his eyes open. He didn't even want to leave to get cleaned up yesterday. He only conceded so that we didn't end up in a fight and escorted out of the hospital. I thought I was going to have to take measures into my own hands and knock him out. Luckily, exhaustion did the work for me.

Closing my laptop, I slide it on the plastic cushion to my left of the small couch I've been sitting on and then stand, needing to stretch my legs. I'm ready to get the fuck out of here. I'm not even sure why I stayed. It's not like Domenico needed me, nor did Ciera, but here I've remained since we brought her to the ER the other night.

She's been restless for the past hour, so I'm taking that as a sign that she'll be waking soon. I'm surprised she hasn't woken Dom with the slight jerks her body just started to make.

My head swings to the door when it opens and in walks the male nurse she had on the day shift yesterday. He gave us a wide berth, only coming in to check on her when absolutely necessary. If he's smart, he'll do the same today and then get her discharged when she wakes up.

“Morning,” he greets as he wheels in a cart, but I'm not in a hello kind of mood, so I turn my back to him and stare out the window. We're on the fourth floor with a view that looks out at the front of the hospital where the main entrance is.

It's a rainy mid-morning, but it's not storming, just pissing every now and again. It's windy out there too. I can see several

young trees scattered around the landscape that are blowing in the distance.

“What the fuck do you think you’re doing?”

I pivot, finding Domenico with his hand fisting the nurse’s wrist and his stare wide awake but deadly, leaving no room for the pissant RN to get away from the hold he has without Dom allowing it.

“She’s agitated,” he stutters. “The doctor ordered something to settle her. It’s fine, sir.”

“It’s not fucking fine. She doesn’t need more drugs. She needs to wake the fuck up,” he spits as he rises to stand to his feet. That’s when I notice the syringe in the nurse’s hand; the hand Dom is gripping while the nurse is holding the arm that Ciera’s IV is in with his other.

“Which doctor?” I demand, stepping up beside him and crowding his space.

He releases Ciera and tries to step back but can’t do more than squirm.

“Drop the needle and tell me the name of the doctor that ordered you to dope her up?” Dom rephrases my question.

“Dr. Walsh. Aiden Walsh, he’s the chair of the emergency department here at the hospital.”

The nurse drops the syringe, and when it hits the floor, I step on it. After the length of several heartbeats, Domenico lets the young man go. Timothy is written in marker on the dry-erase board secured to the wall, indicating which nurse is on duty.

“You’re going to want to leave now, Timothy,” I tell him, getting into his personal space and stepping forward, forcing him to retreat. I continue walking toward him until he’s out of the door and I’m closing it myself.

Turning, I find Domenico with his hand resting against her throat. He’s not choking her. He’s not even applying pressure, but it works to soothe her. She calms, and once again, her body becomes still.

“She stumbled when we were getting off the elevator the other night. I should have known something was wrong. She was covered in blood, but I thought ...” I breathe, blowing out a harsh breath from my throat. “I thought the blood was Tony’s.”

I go to stand back by the window, bracing my shoulder against the glass and crossing my ankles.

“Walsh is an Irish last name,” Dom says, which we should have realized hours ago. Aiden Walsh is the same motherfucker that sedated her while she was out of our sight getting the MRI.

“You getting the feeling we’re being kept here, or maybe she’s being kept here on purpose?” I ask, more to myself than to Dom.

Do they know we stole all of Fitzgerald’s money?

Ciera didn’t have a concussion, so what reason would she need to stay knocked out? The claustrophobic freak-out in the MRI machine—if that is what that was—is plausible, but why give her so much sedation to keep her out this long?

“You think we’re being set up?” Dom voices aloud, thinking along the same lines as I am.

“Maybe. We did take out the police commissioner’s pseudo nephew or whoever the fuck he was to that high-ranking asshole.” I turn my head from the window to look Dom in the eyes. “I think we need to get out of here and regroup because our little kitten has a lot of explaining to do.”

“Meaning?” he implores.

“She stole millions from her father last night in the length of time that it takes to order a cup of coffee and for it to be handed over by the barista. She then transferred those funds to an international charity for women and children.”

CHAPTER 27

I groan as the throbbing ache in the back of my head intensifies. It's the worst of all my pains, but the constant itching is going to drive me to the point of insanity.

"Ciera?" Domenico's voice is softer than I've ever heard it, or maybe that's my clouded mind making me think that.

"She awake?" Krishna sounds farther away than Domenico but still close by.

A chair or something scrapes across the floor, but the sound is like nails on a chalkboard that feel like they're raking against my skull instead.

A whimper slips past my lips as I lift my eyelids. The overhead light isn't turned on, thank God, but the room is bright with daylight. Blinking, I look to my right, seeing Krishna watching me from where he stands by the window.

Flicking my gaze to my left, I find Domenico towering over the hospital bed, also watching me. There's a deep sadness residing in his dark brown eyes, but there is also hatred and anger storming in there as well. He's doing a crap job at hiding his emotions; if he's even trying.

But why drop the shield now?

As that question echoes against my thoughts, my mind goes back to the wedding, Lorenzo making me feel less awkward during my own reception, Tony welcoming me into this family as he not so subtly guided me to the tables lined

with food that LeAnna and I prepared before the sounds of shots popping off, one right after the other ...

Tony.

Oh, no.

No. No, no, no.

Tossing the sheet off the lower half of my body, I scramble to my knees and throw my arms around Domenico, despite the dizziness clouding my vision or that I'm probably the last person he wants consoling him.

"I'm sorry about your dad," I say, squeezing him like my life depends on it, which I know it does. And really, I should be questioning why I'm even alive right now, but that can wait. Tony Caputo is dead. He took a bullet that was meant for me.

Domenico shocks me when his left hand wraps around the small of my back while his other slips beneath Krishna's T-shirt, his fingers easily sliding under the fabric of my panties as he squeezes and holds me against himself. I didn't expect him to hug me back. I'm not sure what I expected, if anything, but it wasn't that.

Now that the events of that night have started flashing back, they won't stop.

I saw my father welding a gun in my direction, a triumphant smirk plastered over his chubby face like he'd won a prize, or a war. I'll never get the sound of that shot out of my head for as long, or as short, as I live. The noise echoed against my eardrums even after Tony crashed into me, his weight throwing me backward and falling to the ground.

Sliding my hands onto the tops of his shoulders, I push away to look him in the eyes. "I know it doesn't mean much, but I am sorry that ..." My voice trails off as if my mind knows something is missing.

My eyes snap to my left hand, seeing my naked flesh missing the pear-shaped diamond.

I suck in my breath as realization fully sinks in.

He really is going to kill me.

And why shouldn't he? It's not my fault that Tony is dead, but I am the product of the person responsible. I share his DNA. Living and breathing only ensures that a part of Cormac Fitzgerald lives as well.

The only thing worse than killing me is throwing me back into the arms of the monster that raised me. The fate he has in store for me is one I wouldn't wish on anyone. And after what I did ...

Shivers skirt over my skin as my body begins to shake in fear.

The fingers roughly digging into the flesh covering my jaw rips me from my thoughts, forcing my eyes to go back to Domenico's captivating stare. The pain in the back of my head ceases the moment our eyes lock.

"I have your ring," he announces as his other hand pulls a chain out that had been hidden beneath his black dress shirt. My ring dangles from the end. "You kept scratching at it in your sleep. When I pulled it off, a rash was hidden by the band."

That makes sense, I think to myself.

I nod my head so that he knows I heard him. When I'm about to explain that I don't wear jewelry unless I have to because I'm allergic to certain metals or all metals, his lips fuse together with mine, stopping the words that were on the tip of my tongue and leaving me dumbfounded.

My lack of resistance is all Domenico needs to part my lips and glide his tongue over mine. There's an unspoken claim pinging against my head as he explores my mouth. My brain finally catches up with the shock when he begins to retreat, spurring an urgency to chase what I'm not ready to let go of.

Slanting my head to the side, I follow his tongue, slipping between his smooth lips to tangle with his tongue once again. This kiss is better than the one he crushed against my lips after we said our *I dos*. It's lighter and sweeter but more intense. I can feel it down to the tips of my toes.

It's him that pulls away from me this time. His gaze finds mine. "You make it so goddamn hard to be gentle with you."

Gentle and Domenico are words that don't fit together. I'm almost brave enough to tell him I prefer his aggressive side when Krishna steals my attention from Domenico. "Come here, kitten," he beckons, and even from where I'm kneeling on top of the hospital bed, he has the air of a god swirling around his larger-than-life frame.

As if obeying him is second nature, I lower my butt to the bed, untangling my legs and placing them on the floor. My feet are covered in socks, but otherwise, I'm only wearing the strapless bra and matching black panties I put back on after I finished showering, along with the black T-shirt I found in Krishna's clothes. Someone else must have brought me socks. They are mine, at least, I think they are.

Standing from the bed, my legs are unsteady, and for a brief second, I wonder just how long I was asleep, but then Domenico is at my side, grabbing my hand and pulling me over to where Krishna stands.

Bending his knees and lowering himself, he tilts his head to the side as the side of his index fingers tips my chin upward. Then his lips descend onto mine in the softest kiss I've ever been given, ever felt against my lips.

Without pulling away from me, Krishna says, "Dom is at two while I was at zero. He doesn't get these silky lips all to himself. That wouldn't be fair, now would it, kitten?"

If I was supposed to respond to his question, he doesn't give me a chance as his lips press into mine, harder this time, and more demanding as he forces my lips apart with his tongue. He tastes different than Domenico but just as good. Where Domenico's kiss was sugary sweet, Krishna has a tangy flavor that pops across my taste buds.

Jeezums, a girl could overdose on both of them together. They taste better than any whiskey I've ever had. Anything that's ever graced my tongue before them is null and void. I'm not sure if they're every woman's dream come true or the best kind of nightmare.

Pulling away, Krishna straightens his spine while Domenico steps behind me, the front of his pants pressing against my butt. I can feel him through the thin material of both our clothes. He's hard, and when I look down between Krishna and me, the front of his jeans aren't flat against his crotch.

Snatching my chin between his fingers, the same as Domenico did a few minutes ago, Krishna squeezes my flesh in a firm grip, forcing me to look into his winter-blue eyes.

I gasp when his right hand squeezes my mound over the material of my underwear. Then he lowers his head back down until he's kissing me again.

"If you ever get hurt again and do not tell me, I'm going to spank this pussy raw," Krishna whispers into my open mouth, his blue eyes penetrating mine down to the center of my soul.

Krishna's right hand slips around to my back, the tips of his fingers sliding inside and down the back side of my panties while Domenico's right hand slips in from the front. Dipping his head so that his chin touches the exposed skin above the neck of the T-shirt I'm wearing, and his lips skim the shell of my ear. Then Domenico says, "And we're going to tie you up naked so that you can't touch yourself. You'll be forced to watch us fuck each other for hours while being denied your own release. We'll watch you squirm and your pussy drip for us, but you won't be able to come for days if this happens again. Is that clear, little pet?"

They both reach my center simultaneously, pushing in two fingers each and lifting my feet off the floor at the same time they enter me.

A grunt from the pressure they're causing rolls up my throat and breaches my lips before exiting my wide-open mouth. They pump in and out of me simultaneously, first slow, then faster, harder, and deeper until I feel like I'm going to explode from the inside out.

"Give me your lips, kitten. I can't have you screaming and letting the whole hospital think we're killing you in here,"

Krishna says, but all I heard was kiss me again while we make you come.

I tighten my grip around his shoulder with my right hand, digging my nails into the material of his T-shirt. With my other hand, I reach behind me, finding the back of Domenico's neck and wrap my hand around it. I pull with all the weak strength I can muster. My back arches as Krishna kisses my lips and Domenico sucks the skin between my shoulder and neck like he's trying to pull my blood through my pores and into his mouth.

My eyes roll into the back of my head, the pressure intensifying as they continue to pump in and out of me until I'm crashing between them. A scream rips from my throat, but it's lost as it slips down Krishna's.

"I need to fuck." Domenico's labored hot breath coats my sensitive skin from where his mouth was. Breaking my kiss with Krishna, I turn to look at him over my shoulder, but his almost pitch-black eyes are on Krishna like he's the juiciest steak he's ever seen and starving. "She isn't in any condition to handle what I have to give, nor do I want a goddamn hospital to be the first place I fuck her."

A part of my chest deflates knowing he thinks I can't handle him, but another part of me inflates at the thought of watching them both ... together. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't turned on over the images I've conjured up that I know deep down will never live up to seeing the real thing. I want to see them fused together the same as I want them connected to me, tearing my soul apart and replacing it with theirs.

"Then put her on the bed. She can watch," Krishna tells him as both their fingers slip out of me.

My head rolls to the side as I try to regain my wits. That's when a car with blue lights captures my attention. The back door to one of the SUVs opens and out steps a man dressed in a cashmere suit I'd recognize anywhere. He's always had the most expensive dress attire, jewelry, and undergarments that his dirty money can buy.

"No," I breathe out in a panic.

“Ciera,” one of them calls out my name, but all I see is *him*.

He may not be my worst nightmare, but he holds second place. He’s the one that brought my worst nightmare to life—and he’ll do it again if I don’t get out of here now.

“How long have I been here?” My heart starts to speed up as invisible needles prick down my spine, one right after the other.

“It’s Sunday. Almost mid-day,” Domenico answers.

Whipping around, dizziness momentarily disorients me, but I ignore the weakness in my knees as I latch onto my husband’s forearms and crane my neck back, fighting through the pain. Now that the pleasure has vanished, all that’s left is aches and what I know is coming.

“Please don’t let him take me.” My breathing starts coming in and out of my mouth rapidly. “I’ll do anything. You can kill me yourself, but please don’t give me to him.”

Tears form and sting my eyes as fear grabs ahold of my heart, slithering its way around the organ, coiling and restricting so tight that it feels like my blood flow stops.

His hands wrap around my arms just below my shoulders, the pads of his fingers digging into the meaty flesh. “No one is taking you from us. Do you hear me? What the fuck is wrong?” Domenico demands, his hands slightly shaking me as if that’ll make me answer him faster.

“Dom, look,” Krishna says.

Glancing over my shoulder, I see him point out the window to what I saw.

“The police commissioner is down there, but is that ...”

“Liam O’Donovan,” I answer, my eyes wide and unblinking. “I did something terrible, and he’s going to know it was me.”

I’ve been in the hospital far longer than I thought, and my great uncle has had plenty of time to board a plane to the U.S. and be here to retrieve me. I knew it was only a matter of time,

but when I stole Liam's money as well as my father's, I thought Domenico or Krishna would have killed me by now, and it wouldn't have mattered. He couldn't harm a dead girl.

But I'm not dead; not yet, anyway, and that leaves him the opportunity to make me pay for what I have done. And there is no doubt in my mind that he will make me suffer like I've never suffered before.

Not like when he let other men rape me.

It'll be far worse than that.

He'll draw out the pain and agony and enjoy watching every second of my torment.

CHAPTER 28

She's panicking.

I can almost see her heart hammering against her breastplate.

The grimmer the expression marring my wife's beautiful face becomes, the tighter my fingers dig into her upper arms. I know without lifting the sleeves of her shirt there are red marks that will later turn blue with the amount of pressure I'm applying, but for the life of me, I can't let go.

My head is yelling at me to release her, but my heart screams that she's mine. The monster inside me demands bloodshed for anyone wishing to hurt her.

I don't know what she's done, and frankly, I don't give one fuck if whatever she did has angered someone in her family. Those motherfuckers are already living on borrowed time. It's only a matter of time before I take out every last one of them.

Except for our little pet, my internal thoughts echo back at me.

"You have a pair of leggings on the bed," Krishna informs her. "Get those on, then find your boots. I'll distract whoever is at the nurse's station. You two take the stairs to the second floor. From there, follow the signs to the intensive care unit. Another elevator will take you down to the first floor of the building next to this one. I'll get my SUV from the parking garage and meet you at the front."

K's list of orders pulls me out of the possessive war storming inside me, making me remove my hands from Ciera while he steps around us and grabs his laptop from the small couch he took up residence on when she was assigned a room and brought here from the ER yesterday morning.

Jumping into action, Ciera steps to the bed but stumbles. I grip her around the waist, ensuring she doesn't fall, then I guide her the rest of the way. While she's sliding on the black leggings that Sasha packed for her, I snatch her faux fur-lined boots from under the bed at the foot and hand them to her. Krishna exits the room, leaving the door open as he heads to the nurse's station.

"You ready?" I ask, not having anything to grab since my cell phone and wallet are already secured in my pants pockets. She nods and then slides off the bed.

Stepping to her, I slide the armband off her, then lift her arm and pull the tape away from the crook of her elbow. She didn't have an active IV, but the port remained, so I remove the catheter as gently as possible and then retape her arm before putting the used medical equipment and her armband on the rolling table next to the bed.

"Let's go," I say.

Interlocking my fingers with hers, I pull her to the door. Her legs are steadier, but I pick her up by the time I get behind the stairwell door for us to descend the stairs quicker. I'd be lying if I said I didn't enjoy the feel of her arms wrapped around me. There is nothing awkward or weird when she does it like it's always felt when other women tried to grab me, hug me, pull me closer to them. It felt like ants were crawling up my back.

I reluctantly place her feet on the ground when we reach the second-floor door. Carrying her the rest of the way would bring too much attention to us. "Can you walk, or are you too weak?" I ask to make sure. If I need to carry her, I will, and people will have to gawk.

"I'm fine. I can walk."

I grab her hand again once we get in the next elevator to take us down to the first floor, and I keep holding her hand, unable to let her stand fully on her own, telling myself I'm doing it for Ciera, not me.

The doors close, leaving us looking at mirrored walls. I watch as Ciera's mouth drops open. "God, you didn't tell me I looked off my trolley."

"I have no clue what that's supposed to mean." I half-laugh because she's cute as fuck when she says weird shit. Even when she's cussing me out in strange Irish terms that aren't actual curse words, she's the cutest damn thing I've ever seen. "You look freshly fucked, baby girl, without having been fucked."

"What do *you* call what you and Krishna did?" There's a bit of attitude lacing that question.

"An appetizer. A prelude." I tip my chin down as I roll my head to look at her from where she stands at my side. One side of my mouth tilts upward, and I don't bother schooling my features. I want her to see the truth in my words as much as she hears me say them. "After we're finished fucking you, you won't be able to speak, much less walk, wife."

Snatching her hand out of mine, she turns to face my side, but she takes a cautious step back. "Why am I still alive? Why didn't you kill me?" she demands as her arms cross over her torso, below her big tits that are hidden beneath the T-shirt I want to rip off her.

If it weren't for the pink staining her cheekbones or remembering how her moans vibrated down to her pussy, I'd think she didn't enjoy the orgasm K and I gave her.

I stare at her, not saying a word, but my body turns slightly as if something inside me wants to snatch her back to my side.

She mustn't like my silence because she drops her left arm, takes a step forward, then jabs a finger into the center of my chest. "Why. Am. I. Still. Breathing?"

Faster than the length of a heartbeat, I reach out, snatching her delicate jaw between my fingers, gripping her so firmly it

would take the jaws of life to pry them off. Our eyes lock as I step forward, walking her backward until her back meets the elevator wall, then I tip her head back, knowing I'm likely hurting her where the stitches were sewn into her skin.

“You need to be very careful with me, Ciera. Defiant little bitch looks way too good on you. It turns me on. It makes me lose control. It makes me want to strip you bare right here, right now, and fuck you so hard against the cold mirrored wall that they shatter. You aren't ready to be fucked like that, little girl. But make no mistake, I'm going to shred you in the best possible way. I'm going to own your sweet little cunt so good you'll start to believe you're in love with me. Maybe even K too.”

“Answer my question.”

“Thinking your wife is dead will give a man perspective, pet. Just be fucking grateful that I want to eat you alive, not slit your throat.”

The doors open, but I keep standing in front of her, my hard dick pressing into her stomach, my fingers digging into her jaw, our eyes in a war to see which one of us blinks first.

Newsflash, baby, it won't be me.

CHAPTER 29

I'd like to say I stood my ground with Domenico, but after a lady and her son stepped into the elevator with us, the mother gasped and then covered her wee little one's eyes as she stared at the way my husband forcefully held me in place.

To her, I'm sure he looked every bit like an abuser.

The longer we stood there, eyes locked, the more pressure he applied with his fingers to my face, so I blinked first. He wasn't going to budge. He didn't care that we had an audience or that he was making an awful impression on a small boy.

He let me pull out of his grip, so I ducked under his arm and power walked out of the elevator, avoiding eye contact with the female stranger. I could feel her judgy eyes on me all the way to the automatic doors where Krishna was waiting for us.

I'd planned to jump in the back seat alone, but when I went to pull the door closed, Domenico was there ripping it from my hand and following me inside Krishna's SUV. He sped away before I'd fully slid over behind the driver's seat.

"What the fuck took you two so long?" Krishna asks, looking at us both through the rearview mirror as he turns onto a busy street.

"She got mouthy and my dick got hard." Domenico gives me a seething look like I'm at fault for whatever predicament he put himself in. "At this rate, it's going to explode before I fuck either of you motherfuckers."

“Don’t worry. If your dick stops working, I’ll put you down myself.” Krishna’s light blue eyes meet mine in the mirror. They’re darker today than they usually are, and it makes me wonder if he’s joking to mask his internal turmoil. “Trust me, kitten, he’s not worth dealing with if his cock doesn’t work.”

“Tell the others to meet us at Raymond’s,” Domenico commands, not bothered by Krishna’s comment. “I’ll book us a suite in the city. I’m not going back to Dad’s, and before you say shit, it’s not up for discussion. Before I think about anything else, I need to know what we’re dealing with.”

Domenico takes a deep breath, and then his head turns to look at me. Our eyes meet briefly before mine glance down, seeing him pat the top of his thick thigh over his trousers. “Come lay your head down. I still don’t know what they gave you or if there will be side effects. I should have already found out, but I didn’t think about it.”

“There weren’t any orders in her chart,” Krishna chimes in. “I guarantee you that doctor fucker drugged her on someone’s order to keep her there, and I’m betting it has everything to do with who is back there looking for her right now. Otherwise, why would Liam O’Donovan be there too?”

“How do you know what was in my medical record?” I ask as the obvious reason ping pongs against my forehead.

“You aren’t the only one with spy skills, Ciera.” Krishna’s right eyebrow arches as he stares back at me through the mirror longer than I’m comfortable with. “Tell me, kitten, what exactly did you do besides steal millions from your daddy?”

“Is it really stealing when he’s dead and I’m his rightful heir?” I counter, my voice having more confidence than I’ve ever outwardly spoken. I don’t want anything that was Cormac Fitzgerald’s. That’s why I gave all his dirty money away in hopes it could do some good for others who need it and deserve it far more than he did.

There’s always a thrill that comes from doing something bad and then getting away with it. When I set out to dissolve

all my family's funds that were touchable, I didn't get the chance to bask in the glory. I don't even remember getting all of my father's hidden accounts hacked, nor did I know if any transfers were completed until Krishna admitted to knowing what I did while he was showering.

The feeling of my victory is overshadowed by the realization that Liam knows I betrayed him in the worst possible way.

Do I care? On one hand, no.

I do wish I could have seen the look on Liam's face. Saw the fury wash over him in slow motion as it registered the puppet he thought he raised and owned stole from him, crossed him in a way he didn't believe a single person in this world had the courage to do. But the other part of me doesn't experience that bravery. The other side of my coin is filled to the brim with fear. It knows what awaits us. It's only a matter of time.

"I drained my uncle's accounts dry; two of them, anyway. It's not like he doesn't have enough cash secured from his auctions, his real business. I barely made a dent in his wealth, but he'll know it was me. He'll even figure out I wiped the Fitzgerald accounts as well, though he may question the one you did. It was sloppy, you were slow, and you left a trail I didn't have time to cover."

"Did you just call my skills slow?"

Domenico barks out a laugh as the disbelief of my words reddens Krishna's features.

"You're overly cautious when you slither in a back door. It costs you time and leaves a digital fingerprint." I flick my eyes to where Domenico is smiling proudly at me. "I don't know why you're enjoying this. Your methods aren't any better. You may be quicker than him, but you don't look ahead. Instead, you plow through, and you don't watch your back. That's even worse."

The humor is wiped from his beautiful face quicker than I can blink my eyes. Before I can suck in a breath, he slides to

the middle of the seat next to me, snatches my body like I weigh nothing, and then makes my center straddle his lap. He's hard and the feeling of him against me goes straight to my head, making me momentarily lightheaded.

"I've warned you too many times, pet. That mouth of yours is too fucking sexy for your own good." He fists the front of my shirt and yanks me forward until my lips crash into his in a head-on collision. Against my lips, he says, "Take the shirt off before I rip it off. I need to fuck before I'm past the brink of no return. I don't enjoy how my balls ache for you or how my dick is left unsatisfied."

His hand releases me as he goes for the belt buckle at the front of his pants.

"But we're in the middle of a city. There are—"

"The windows are tinted, kitten," Krishna cuts my argument off. "Now, be a good kitty and do as you're told."

I pull the soft material over my head, leaving me in a strapless bra with my legging high around my waist.

"Don't worry. I'm not going to fuck you, baby girl," Domenico says as he unbuttons his pants and pulls the zipper down, his dark eyes on mine. "I need consent for that and a wife that wasn't on her deathbed less than two days ago. But you are going to watch me fuck myself while I watch your dripping pussy weep for my dick."

Lifting his butt off the seat, he slides his trousers and boxer briefs down his legs and from underneath me at the same time. Looking down, his big, angry cock stares up at me as if asking for something I've been telling myself I don't want since the night we met in New Orleans.

Sex has never been fun for me, but I've also never been a willing participant. I can't imagine either of them, Domenico nor Krishna, going easy on me. Then again, they're both responsible for giving me the first orgasm that wasn't clouded with shame. It was the first and only orgasm that made me experience such rapture.

“You should see the look on her face, K. She looks as terrified as she does intrigued at the sight of my dick wanting her and pissed off it has to settle for my hand.”

My gaze snaps to his hooded stare and deviant smirk.

“Lose the bra too, then lean back so I can pull your pants down.”

As if my brain short-circuited, I lean back on command as I unfasten my bra. Tossing it to the floorboard, I grab the corner edges of the driver’s and passenger’s seats between the leather console at the small of my back.

Domenico doesn’t waste a second of time as he hooks his fingers between my skin and the waistband of my leggings, then rips them down my legs.

“Wait,” I call out. My head finally remembered something I can’t believe I forgot. “I was on my ...” I stop mid-sentence, not knowing how to say what I’m internally freaking out about. I started my period last Tuesday night. Mine only lasts five days, but I should be on the tail end.

Oh my, their fingers were inside of me earlier.

Did they know?

“You stopped bleeding last night,” Domenico informs me. “I’d say stop ruining the mood, but this mini-freakout you’re having is only making me harder, sweetheart.”

“H-how do you know that?” I ask, even though I’m sure I do not want him to answer that question.

“Kitten, we’re all three learning Dom’s new level of psycho this week. He wouldn’t let anyone else clean you during your state of unconsciousness.”

“Fuck,” Domenico breathes out. “Her pussy is so goddamn beautiful it hurts my eye sockets to look at it and not be able to slide inside her.”

“Yeah, who knew a pussy covered in curly red hair was a sight I’d been missing all this time,” Krishna comments, making me want to die from embarrassment.

I know women shave or wax their hair down there, but I shaved once and never want to experience that again. As far as waxing goes, it's not the thought of the pain that scares me. I don't want some stranger all in my business down there. I trim it, so it's not like it's an unruly mess.

"You've never fucked a woman with pubic hair?" There's amusement in Domenico's tone as he pulls his fisted hand to the end of his cock while looking from my center to my breasts, and finally, the darkest eyes I've ever seen meet my wide-eyed stare.

"No. Have you?"

"Once, but I wasn't into studying it like I am this one. Slide your ass to me, pet." Domenico tugs on himself as I scoot closer.

"Lean your head back, Ciera," Krishna says, his tone laid back. "If he gets to enjoy that pretty pussy, then I want your tongue fucking mine."

Is it just me, or do they actually have two personalities each? It's hard to keep up with their hard, say-the-wrong-thing-and-we'll-eat-you-alive, demeanor versus their oddly playful sides. Both are demanding, so at least they have consistency going for them.

Doing as instructed, I recline my back, leaning closer to the front of the vehicle so I don't strain my neck. With the stitches, I don't want to tear any loose, but at the rate they have me going, I'm not sure I can get through this without ripping my wound open.

"Be careful with her." There is a warning rumbling out with Domenico's words as Krishna kisses me, his tongue diving inside without being met with resistance on my part.

"I'm just tongue fucking her. You're the one egging on her pussy with the sight of your massive dick."

"Please don't kill us," I breathe out when his lips leave mine, and his eyes flick to the road before coming back to me.

"Kitten, I have full control of this vehicle despite my dick being painfully hard right now." He bites my bottom lip, and

then against my mouth he breathes into me as he whispers, “Now beg him to fuck you. Beg him to let your pussy swallow his dick whole. Beg him to let your cunt drink his cum, beautiful girl.”

Domenico slides the tip of his cock through my slick folds.

“It feels better when it’s wet, pet.”

“Oh, my god,” I say as my center coils tight inside me, aching to follow through on his command.

“I want to hear that pussy slurping his dick like you’re dying of thirst and his cum is the only thing that’s going to save you. Beg him, Ciera. Beg him to give it to you hard. Beg him to ram his dick so deep inside your womb I feel it on your tongue.”

Krishna’s tongue sweeps into my mouth, licking to the flat surface of my tongue and pushing himself so far back that I actually think that’s what he wants from me, from Domenico.

“Please,” I say, the want clear in the whine he forces from my throat.

“Please, what, Ciera?” Domenico’s tone makes my body tremble in need as he lifts my hips and then guides them back down, his cock running between my wet folds, coating himself in the juices dripping from inside me. He does it again, teasing me, making me ache, making me want him to fill me.

“Please, put it in me.”

“Put what in you,” he asks way too calmly, enjoying whatever torment my body reveals to him.

“Your cock. Please, Domenico.”

“Please, Dom, fuck me. That’s what I want to hear you say, Ciera.”

“Please, Dom,” I whine, hesitation stopping me, but my want has ventured into need. It feels like I’m about to die if he doesn’t push inside me. “Fuck me. Please fuck me.”

“Such a foul word coming from such a pretty mouth,” Krishna taunts, his eyes sparkling as he looks between the road

and me.

“Say it again,” Domenico demands.

“Please fuck me,” I plead, my voice loud, needy, and desperate.

“No,” Domenico seethes almost angrily, and I’m on the verge of crying because I think he’s rejecting me for a split second until he says, “Say Dom again. Say it, Ciera. Say it like it’s a goddamn prayer.”

“Please, Dom. Please fuck me. Fuck me harder than you’ve ever fucked anyone, including Krishna.” To my own ears, I sound like I’m issuing an order. My voice comes out angrily, matching his, and even though it is very much a plea of all pleas, it’s also a command for him to own me like he’s never owned anyone else.

“Oh, baby girl, you have no idea how badly you’ve fucked up.” His dick slams into me with so much force I’m fearful I’m going to fly through the windshield and into oncoming traffic. He goes so deep I feel him in every muscle, every cell, even my eardrums vibrate from the magnitude of force he sent through me.

Domenico leans forward, pistoning in and out. Sliding his right hand behind my back, he flattens his palm against me, bracing my back to take some of the strain I was exuding to hold myself up. Every time his dick fills me up, it’s more intense than the last time he entered my body.

Feeling the SUV stop as Krishna slams on the brakes and puts the vehicle in park, he reclines his seat as Domenico leans over me. Their lips find each other’s, and I swear I’m watching them fight for dominance as Dom keeps pumping himself in and out.

My thighs are pressed against Dom’s hips, but they shake uncontrollably, and the noise coming out of my mouth is like nothing I’ve ever heard before.

I moan at the erotic sight in front of me.

I scream with pleasure as Domenico shreds my insides to mush.

I mewl when Krishna's fingers find my nipple, pinching the tip. It's pleasurable and painful, and I want him to do the same to the other one. As if reading my thoughts or having a sixth sense, Domenico mirrors the way Krishna plays with my breast.

Every time Dom enters me, he grinds against my clit. It's pure torture when he pulls away until he returns, hitting something inside of me that I can't put words to as his hips circle. I'm falling over an invisible waterfall. Another scream crests my throat, my lungs forcing air from my body. Warm liquid bathes me as my inner walls pull everything out of him and into me, wanting to own as much of him as he does me.

Dom stills but doesn't pull out.

My mouth pulls air into my lungs as fast as my body exhales it.

Domenico and Krishna's lips stop moving, yet their eyes remain in an intense lock. After a heartbeat, Dom turns to me, training dark irises on mine. They're telling me something, but I don't know it well enough to decipher that smoldering look.

"Both of you out of the goddamn vehicle. Now," Krishna orders, his voice urgent and lacking any room for argument.

CHAPTER 30

Turning off the ignition, I meet Dom's eyes as he pulls out of Ciera. A whimper slips from her lips. All it does is fuel more fire to my dick that's in such agony right now I can't think straight.

It's only by the grace of the almighty that I got us here in one piece. The fucking noises she made drove me insane, needing her more than I've ever needed any goddamn thing in my life.

Opening the door, I step down to the ground as I go for the button on my jeans. I yank the zipper down while ripping the backdoor open to find half of my work is already done for me. Her boots are on the floorboard, and her leggings and panties have been removed.

Thanks, Dom.

Reaching inside, I grab her by the hips and slide her to me until I can get my hand under her ass to lift her out as I wrap her legs around my waist. Domenico follows her out of my SUV, fastening the button of his slacks as he pushes the door closed, a satisfied smirk firmly in place on his masterful lips.

That kiss alone, while he was fucking her and our mouths were fighting, put everyone we've ever shared before to shame. It was hot, intense, and more than I know what to do with at this point in time, so I slam Ciera's back against the door and window of my Mercedes AMG G63.

"You have two seconds to tell me no, kitten." Pressing into her, I hold her in place as I shove my clothes past my thighs.

My dick has never hurt this badly or wanted a pussy this much. If she denies me, I may very well fall to my knees.

Her breath flows in and out at a rapid pace. She's still trying to catch her breath, but when I see no attempt at refusing me, I impale her, stealing her need for oxygen from her desperate lungs.

"Oh, Jesus, God," she cries out, spurring my need to fuck her harder and better than Domenico. We're competitive. That'll never change. It's who we are. We're both dominant in everything we do. We both want to be better than the other even though we're more equally matched than either of us will admit out loud.

"That's right, kitten. I'm fucking this pussy now. I own it, and I own you. It's my dick that's going to make you scream louder."

Dom steps beside us, and wanting me to hear him as much as I feel him, he lets out a deviant laugh, challenging me to prove I can fuck her better than him.

Pulling one of Ciera's arms off my shoulders as I pound into her, Domenico intertwines his fingers with her while kissing the inside of her wrist. With his other hand, he slides his palm over my bare ass and down until his hand cups my balls. I momentarily lose my breath at the feel of his hand massaging my sack.

"Fuck," I let out, breathing the curse word across Ciera's exposed chest.

"He got your lips while I fucked you," he says, working his lips up her arm. "It's only fair I get them while he claims your pretty tight pussy this go-round, little pet."

I'm not going to last half as long as he did if he keeps doing that shit to my balls, but goddamn, it feels good.

Tilting her head toward him, he captures her delicate lips with his, pressing his hard cock against my hip as he continues guiding me to my release as if to show me that he owns us both. Hell, maybe he does, and at this moment, I'm okay with that.

“Is she on the pill?” I force past my lips.

“No,” he says without pausing his assault on her mouth.

“Didn’t you mention her doctor gave you a prescription to fill?”

“Yes.”

“And you haven’t?” I spit out, anger lacing my tone as the need to spill myself inside her reaches an edge I’m not sure I’m ready to jump off of.

“Nope.”

“And you want me to come inside of her?” Goddamn, I’m so close, too close. I can’t stop.

“I did.” He brushes her hair away from her neck, then his mouth leaves her lips, roaming down until he reaches her collarbone, kissing her soft skin as I keep pushing in and pulling back out. “She has a voice. If she doesn’t want us to come inside her, then all she has to do is say no.”

My eyes snap to Ciera’s. There is turmoil swirling in her green eyes. She’s asking herself why she isn’t telling me no. I can see it clearly as if she spoke the words.

Hell, I’m asking my own dumb ass why my dick is bare inside this heavenly pussy. But the thought of sheathing my dick and not being able to feel her bare walls tastes sour even though it was the furthest thing from my mind when I first entered her.

So here I am, releasing myself and it’s the best feeling I’ve ever felt. Until now, Dom was the only other person I’ve been inside without a condom, but this is different. She’s different, but that doesn’t mean Domenico is lacking. It’s just fucking different; both equally good and even more addicting than I care to admit.

“IS THERE a reason we’re at your parents’ estate when I clearly told you to take us to Raymond’s and have the others meet us

there?” Dom asks as he deposits Ciera on my bed. Once I pulled out of her, he pulled her into his arms so I could stuff my sated dick back inside my pants.

It’s rare for me to sleep here when I prefer my apartment in Brooklyn, but this was a better option. It’s an impenetrable compound with guards that patrol the property and three trained Doberman Pinschers that roam the inside.

“If you want to shower, it’s through that door, kitten.” I point to French doors behind her on the other side of the bed. “There’s a closet in there too. Wear whatever you want.”

“Don’t wash your hair,” Dom adds. “You don’t need to get the stitches wet. I’ll help you wash your hair later if it doesn’t hurt for you to lean your head over, or if you prefer, I’ll get one of the girls to help you.”

“A shower would be great.”

A blush stains her cheeks as she covers her breasts, making a valid effort to shield herself. Her tits are big and natural, and sitting on my bed naked with mine and Dom’s cum dripping from her makes me want to fuck her again.

“Relik,” I call out, followed by a whistle.

As if waiting by the door, he runs in and jumps on the bed.

Ciera gasps and yelps while scooting toward the headboard, her need for modesty forgotten.

“Sidet,” I order the command for sit in Russian. Then, in an equally harsh and authoritative tone, I say, “Myjesto,” for him to stay.

Tilting my head and meeting Dom’s stare, I say, “That’s why we came here. Or one of the reasons.” Flipping my eyes back to Ciera, I soften them for her. “He won’t hurt you, kitten. He’ll only bite if someone tries to hurt you. And then he’ll rip the motherfucker’s throat out.”

She swallows but doesn’t say anything as her pretty green eyes watch Relik in case she needs to run for her life.

“Go take a shower, Ciera,” Dom tells her. “If K says they won’t harm you, then they won’t. You have my word.”

“They?” she questions.

“There is one male, him, and two bitches in the house,” I clarify, watching all the color drain from her cheeks.

“Are you afraid of all dogs, or is it the look he gives off that says, I’ll eat you if you breathe wrong? Because that’s his permanent look, kitten. Make no mistake about it, he’s a trained killer, but he’s my killer, and he obeys me. If there is one thing you can believe to be true from my mouth, it’s that if I tell you he’ll protect you, then he will do so with his life.”

“Just the big, mean-looking ones whose name spelled backward is Killer,” she admits as she slides off the bed, her cautious eyes still on my dog.

Irritation crawls up my spine as anger washes over my scalp. It’s not aimed at her but at myself. It bothers me that she doesn’t trust me, and well, it’s not like I’ve given her reason to.

“Come on,” Dom beckons as he turns away from us, walking toward the door. “Leave her to clean herself and bond with Rellik.”

“Come find us when you’re done,” I say, then turn my back to her as I follow Dom.

“We’ll have you something to eat by the time you’ve finished, little pet.”

Closing the door, I quicken my steps to catch up before Domenico descends the staircase.

“Hold up,” I call to his back.

When I’m in reaching distance, I grab him around his bicep and swing his body around. Forcing his back to the wall, I crowd his personal space, pressing my chest against his.

“I need to know that your need to murder her was squashed after everything we just did.”

CHAPTER 31

“**M**urder is very much on my mind,” I answer him honestly. There’s no sense in denying what’s been swirling inside my head since I saw my father gunned down. “So many goddamn people are going to die by my hands in the coming days, K.” I pause, eyeing him harder than I ever have. “But Ciera isn’t one of them anymore.”

At least I don’t think she is. I’m not even sure if she really was, or if I would have gone through with what I’d planned to do to her the other night. The thought of putting a gun to her beautiful head makes me feel ashamed for the first time in my life.

“Good,” he says. Then taking a breath, he releases me, but his winter blue eyes stay locked with mine. “Because after being inside her, I’m more certain than ever that I would kill you if you tried again.”

I’d probably off myself before he got the chance, but I don’t voice that thought. As long as she doesn’t betray one of us, betray our families, then she’s safe. At least from death by my hands. I can’t guarantee I won’t murder her pussy again or strangle her throat with my dick.

“Her pussy is too good to waste,” I finally settle on replying even though he and I both know it’s pointless. He can read me like a book no matter the mask I wear the same way I can him.

Ciera’s pussy is the best either of us has ever had, but her mind is as intoxicating as the rest. She’s smarter than Krishna

and I put together. Neither one of us could have accomplished what she did in mere minutes. I'm not even upset that she donated all the money she stole. It's a fitting *fuck you* if I say so myself.

There's a lot I don't know about the woman my father had me marry, and for the first time in my life, I want to dig up all the dirty details but not to use them against her. I simply want to know it all.

The good. The bad. The ugly.

I've watched Ciera when Liam's name has come up in conversation. She doesn't love him. I don't think she hates him either, but that's because I don't believe she's capable of hating like I am.

Seeing her eyes round and her face pale when she saw her uncle from the window of her hospital room, it was clear he terrifies her.

And now I want to know why.

She wasn't a virgin, that much I knew from reading her medical record and after being inside her silken walls, I know it for a fact.

I also know that Liam O'Donovan is a sick motherfucker who sells pleasure and allows other like-minded rich fucks like himself to abuse women for his entertainment and theirs.

A year ago, my father received a video I planted on his computer. When I began digging into the police commissioner's background, I found it among other deleted files on his personal computer.

I don't know when the recording was taken or even who the teenage girl is. It was the sound of her screams, her pleading to the New York Albanian boss to stop raping her that gave away her youth. I knew she was young and the greasy dirtbag hurting her was not anywhere close to the same age.

Admir Kovaçi has been the reigning American-Albanian boss in New York City since he was twenty-two. That was nine years ago, making him thirty-one at the present time. I

know the clip is at least a few years old. Two years ago, he had the Albanian coat of arms tattooed across the top of his right hand. In the video, that tattoo wasn't inked on his hand.

When I found the recording, I figured Owen was using it as evidence to bring a case against Kovaçi, but as I dug deeper, I discovered the third voice on the video belonged to his brother Liam.

His image, nor the girl's face were ever shown, but he was in the background like a director on a movie set and they were his actors.

I thought sending it anonymously to my father would spur him to let me take out the Albanians, rid our city of their kind, or at least do it himself. But he never mentioned the video to me; the only other person who knows about it is Krishna.

We'd planned to figure out who the girl was, but then Dad went and killed the southern boss and his son, leaving Ren and me to go to New Orleans to take over and set up a new crew. We were lucky when the former Pittsburg captain approached me, asking for the job.

Things didn't slow down after we all returned. Within a two-week span, Lorenzo was kidnapped and beaten to the brink of death but survived when his wife rescued him.

My sister married her childhood crush, becoming a wife and a stepmother the same day my father dropped a bomb on me that I was to marry the only daughter of Cormac Fitzgerald six days after my sister's wedding.

And we all know how that fucking turned out. I gained a wife and lost my father on the same night.

As much as I wanted to blame Ciera by placing the onus on her, it's my fault Antonio Caputo lost his life. I'm responsible for my dad being killed. I know that as sure as I know my own goddamn name.

And as much as I would like to take that knowledge to my grave, I wouldn't be the man my father raised if I didn't own up to it. If I didn't tell Ren and Si the truth of my failure as a son, as the boss's second in command.

“She has more than a good pussy,” K says, shutting my inner thoughts out as he steals my attention, forcing my eyes back to his. “But you can’t fall for her any more than I can, Dom. We’ll never be able to eliminate every threat in order to give her what she deserves.”

He’s right. I know it in my bones that I can’t fall in love with Ciera or him. It would be a disaster, and I’ve caused enough of those to last two lifetimes.

The real problem is that I’m starting to think I’m nowhere close to as strong as I once believed. Ciera isn’t the only one burrowed deep within my chest. He fucking is too.

And if I allow either of them to see it, I’m fucked.

“I’m not the one you should be worried about catching feelings,” I say in a bored tone. “You need to carve her out of your own chest. Mine is fucking empty.”

Shoving him off me, I hit the stairs and quicken my pace, creating as much distance between him as I possibly can. Ciera hasn’t learned how to read me when I lie, but Krishna has known me for too long not to be able to see through me when looking me in the eyes.

That’s a problem I created and one I need to solve before I get someone else killed because my heart isn’t as solid black as I like to pretend it is.

CHAPTER 32

I didn't know how much I needed a hot shower until I was done scrubbing my skin with Krishna's soap and washcloth. The bar didn't have a masculine or feminine smell. In fact, I didn't smell anything from the soap block, but it did make me feel clean.

I lucked out when I found a razor and unopened blades in a drawer in his bathroom. I mean, I did snoop around hoping to find one, so I guess it wasn't exactly heaven-sent, but I'm once again hairless on my legs and underarms again.

For a minute, I contemplated shaving my mound, but neither seemed put off by the hair down there, so I left it intact.

Washing my hair did pose a bit of a problem. I have so much hair that it almost reaches the top of my butt when it's wet.

I could have asked Dom to help. He offered, after all, but I'm still having a hard time wrapping my head around the fact that he hasn't killed me, let alone stop to analyze what took place inside and outside of Krishna's SUV.

So, I washed my hair the best I could using the bench seat in the shower and the spray nozzle that you can detach from its base.

Now I'm towel drying my body off as Rellik watches me from approximately four feet from the shower door. It's a bit weird and a whole lot unnerving to be the center of his attention.

I believed Krishna when he said the dog wouldn't hurt me, but Rellik is still an animal and having experience with my uncle's dogs, I know they can turn on you without reason.

"Kill!" Sasha's excitement startles me as I'm tucking the corner of the towel down between the soft material and the outside of my boob.

She plops down to the tiled floor next to the dog, a big smile plastered on her made-up face.

"I've missed you, boy." Squeezing him around the neck and pulling him onto her lap, she finally glances up. "I'm starting to think you're a motherfucking majestic unicorn. First, you have Tony wrapped around your finger. Then Dom and my brother. My husband even likes you and now Kill too? Is your vagina sprinkled with fairy dust?"

"He looks like he's biding his time until he can eat me."

"No, he doesn't." She laughs, but I see no humor in my situation. "That's his normal pretty puppy dog look. If he didn't like you, you'd be dead before a scream had time to bubble up from your throat."

She dropped her head and then her hands grab both sides of his snout aggressively. "You better remember I loved you first, sweet boy. My feelings will be hurt if you trade me in for the newbie this quickly."

Releasing him, she jumps to her feet. She's dressed in black dress pants that fit snugly around her tiny waist and flair down her legs. Her top is canary yellow and sleeveless. It's businesslike yet looks sporty on her with the colorful ink that decorates both arms in a girly, yet don't fuck with me vibe.

"I brought your suitcase from Tony's house. It's by my brother's bed. When you're dressed, come downstairs. Just follow Kill. He's bringing you to the kitchen where the rest of us are."

Does the dog have human abilities? She didn't issue any type of command other than to me to follow their dog's lead.

Maybe Domenico's pet name is fitting, and it's me that's supposed to be the obedient creature instead of the guard dog.

I DID as I was instructed.

After putting on clean undergarments, leggings, and a short-sleeved tunic, I followed Rellik until I heard voices.

“Dad’s funeral is Tuesday,” Sienna announces as I stop in the opening to an enormous kitchen.

There is an industrial-sized stove to my left and an island with enough barstools to seat two to three families around it. Ren and Sasha are sitting with their backs facing me. Sienna is seated to my left, with Giovanni standing next to her while Krishna is leaning over the countertop on the other side of his sister but closer to where Domenico has his arms crossed on the opposite side of Sienna. Matteo and his daughter are missing, but it’s a big house, so they could be here or somewhere else.

Rellik pads his paws over to where two other fully grown Doberman dogs sit alert as they eye me in the same way Rellik was.

“It’ll be graveside as per his wishes,” Sienna continues. “Afterward—”

“Stop standing over there and come eat.” Domenico’s stare meets mine as he interrupts his sister to make my presence known.

The way his dark eyes appraise me is uncanny, much like the dogs. It’s impossible to tell if he likes what he sees or if he’s thinking about all the ways he can kill you before you’re the wiser. Whereas I can’t stop thinking or remembering the way he felt inside of me or how much I loved the feel of both of them touching me at the same time and wondering if he can read those thoughts on my face.

Stepping towards him, he pulls the stool that’s tucked underneath the counter out in front of him, telling me without words that’s where he wants me to sit. *Where better to keep an eye on me if I’m within reaching distance*, I guess.

“Continue, Si,” Dom says as I slide my bottom onto the cushiest seat I’ve ever sat on.

Pressing his chest against my back, Domenico reaches over me and pulls a pizza box in front of me. My stomach rumbles its need for food as the smell of grease and cheese wafts to my nose.

“Eat,” he growls in a low tone against my ear, making me feel him down to my core. My eyes glance to my right, seeing Krishna watching me as Domenico straightens from behind me. His front still touches my backside, but it’s not in an intimidating manner but rather a comforting one instead. “Spit the rest out, Sienna, so we can be done with this conversation.”

“Rainbow,” Giovanni calls out, pulling my attention away from Krishna. “Why don’t I take you to get something to eat while they talk.”

“Her name is Ciera,” Dom bites out from behind me as his left palm squeezes my hip, preventing me from moving. “And she isn’t going anywhere. You, on the other hand, are free to leave whenever the fuck you want.”

“*Ciera*,” Giovanni enunciates in a way that’s clearly supposed to get under Domenico’s skin. “Doesn’t like pizza.”

Dom’s fingers dig into my flesh over the material of leggings in a bruising manner, and as if my ears hone into the sound he’s making from behind me, I think his teeth are grinding together.

“This’s fine,” I say, reaching for the box and opening the lid. “It’s not a big deal.”

At this point, I’d eat anything, even that canned meat that grossed me out every time I’d see my brother, Killian, down the contents like it was the best cuisine he’d ever placed on his tongue. Multiple types of meat blended together and smooshed into a tin can that looks like cat food isn’t normal, but I’m starving. Pizza isn’t the most appealing food in the world, but it’s better than nothing and far superior to the feline delicacy.

“I’m dealing with enough shit,” Sienna barks, her eyes going from her brother to Giovanni. “You both can take your pissing contest somewhere else while the grown-ups discuss a man’s funeral.”

Her fists ball from where she sits across from me with her forearms resting against the marble of the countertop. Her jaw firms as her eyes close for the briefest of seconds as if she’s trying harder than she’s capable of to hold back tears.

“After Dad’s funeral,” Lorenzo interjects, continuing where his twin sister stopped when their brother interrupted her. “The captains want a meeting with you, Dom. I’ve already agreed to it because it’s better to handle them and make sure they’re all in line before dealing with anything else.”

“Fine. But I don’t want anyone to be told where that meeting will take place until after Dad is in the ground. Got it?” Domenico says, an edge to his tone mixed with anger and something else I imagine he’s working overtime to conceal from the rest of the world. *Grief.*

“Understood,” Ren agrees, his head tipping down in a nod.

“Eat, kitten,” Krishna says in a hushed tone. “Eat, or tell me what you want.”

I pick up a slice and quickly shove it into my mouth. I’m not going to complain or not eat what has been provided. I’m not ungrateful, nor would I suggest anyone catering to me. They have enough on their plates. I’m not going to give anyone a reason to turn me over to my uncle when their father’s death is reason enough.

No one has addressed the elephant in the room, and I’d be dumb to think I’m not their bargaining chip to be used for revenge against my family. Cormac may be dead, but I don’t think that’s going to sate Domenico’s need to abolish my family.

I’d be a fool to think what happened between Domenico, Krishna, and I changed anything for the better.

I need a fail-safe plan that doesn’t end with me being exchanged or six feet underground with the rest of my family.

The only problem is it took me years to plan the first one, and that was only a contingency in the event my uncle followed through with his promises to Admir Kovaçi in exchange for fifteen percent of his under-the-table profits.

Cormac Fitzgerald didn't have the authority to sell me to Salvatore Santo or give me to Antonio Caputo. Liam O'Donovan had already brokered a deal with an Albanian devil for my hand in marriage six years ago.

Whatever innocence I still had was stolen when I was thirteen as my uncle watched with a gleam in his eyes and a glass of whiskey in his hand. I was the start of his sick entertainment when he figured out he could use those weaker than him against rich men like himself to fill his pockets with more money than he'll ever be able to use in his lifetime.

Admir thought he was buying something he'd quickly become obsessed with, while my uncle was planting a seed in his organization that he could use to destroy them from the inside while watching it happen on the outside.

I set up protocols that if I were forced to marry the Albanian rapist, then several outspoken journalists trying to find dirt on Liam O'Donovan for years would be sent a file with proof of his wrongdoings. Murders he ordered. Money he exchanged for women and teenage girls. Drugs and guns he's traded for said women and girls from other countries.

If I'd been less of a coward, I would have handed over the evidence I'd gathered from years of snooping through my uncle's personal computer files before now. But even as I devised the plan, I wasn't sure any of it would see the light of day or if I was setting up innocent people to be killed for what I forced upon them.

Either way, it's a piss poor excuse and the fact that I held onto it for so long doesn't make me any better than him. Maybe even worse and I'll have to live with that for the rest of my life.

If I have one that is.

CHAPTER 33

DOMENICO

Passing time between Ciera's soft thighs and Krishna's rock-solid body is enough of a drug to make a man forget he's living through the most brutal grief of his life. They're a balance I didn't know I needed and I'm not sure I can keep either let alone both.

Together they aid me in showing the rest of the world that my father's death didn't break me when that's exactly what it did.

I thought my heart was broken beyond repair the day my mother was buried, but watching my dad take his last breath, that organ exploded, leaving a hole in my chest so wide I don't see how no one else sees it.

Sienna wasn't the only one Dad taught how to mask their true self from. He did a pretty damn good job with me too. He taught me to use my anger to frighten other people into submission. And I am angry that I'm standing with my siblings, the Nikolayevs, Ciera, my captains, Giovanni, Matteo and his family, as well as the priest presiding over the service and watching my father's black casket be lowered into the ground the same as I watched my mother's pure white one all those years ago.

The problem is my anger is so overshadowed by agony that I don't know how I'm standing rather than on my knees.

I would beg God, the devil, anyone, if it brought my father back to life. But that isn't a possibility, so I'm left with how

best to make those that are responsible pay in the most painful way imaginable.

I don't blame Ciera even though she harbors their DNA inside her subtle little body but being my wife doesn't make her one of us either. It doesn't guarantee her my loyalty either.

That is earned.

My mother was murdered by a man that I share genetic makeup with. DNA doesn't make a family any more real than someone adopted into one. If anything, adoption is wanted and something you have to fight to obtain.

She has to earn her place among us if she wants me to protect her. Wants my family to choose her. Even still, that doesn't mean I can love her.

After this experience, it's clearer than ever. I cannot fall in love with them. I'd never survive losing one of them, let alone both.

Pulling away from Ciera, forcing her wrapped hands to slide off my jacket-covered forearm, I step to the edge of the six-foot hole that now holds what remains of my father in all his lifeless form. Looking down, I toss the long stem red rose to the top of the casket.

I wish I knew what you were thinking when you decided to take a bullet for someone you barely knew. I wish you could explain that to me, Dad, because I've racked my fucking brain and I still don't get it.

You're gone, and I'm left to do what exactly?

Take charge?

I don't want this. I wasn't ready. I'm not even half the man you were. We were great with you as the head of our family. All I'm going to do is fuck it to hell and back, Dad. I'm not the boss you were. You were good and everything right.

I'm fucked in the head and like to kill people. You looked for the good, the redeemable qualities. I don't. Nor will I.

Lorenzo would have been a far better pick to lead us than me. No, scratch that. Sienna would have been the best choice.

She's stronger mentally than Ren and me combined.

You had no fucking right to leave us the way you did. And I'm furious with you.

But I'd also be lying if I said I was willing to trade Ciera for your life, and that makes me hate myself a little more than I already did.

If I'd pulled the trigger sooner, I could have prevented you from dying that night. She wouldn't have gotten hurt, either. You gave your life for her because I failed you as a son. Hell, I failed her as a husband before I even tried.

I'm sorry, Dad.

Knowing I won't be able to control the tear that drops from my right eyelid, I turn and start my trek to the gate that leads out of the cemetery.

Ren and Sienna will say their goodbyes before the rest in attendance. That'll give me enough reprieve to get my shit together before I meet with my capos.

I instructed Ren to escort them across the street and into the sanctuary. Father Ricci agreed to allow me the use of the cathedral. I thought meeting in a church might prevent bloodshed should any of them give me a reason to get trigger-happy.

In the end, it probably won't, but it was a nice thought at the time. However, the way I'm feeling now, there is nothing more I want than for one of them to step out of line and for me to show them what I'll do should they even consider going against me.

“GENTLEMEN,” I greet them all as Leo and Carmine take the seats directly across from where I'm seated behind the priest's desk. I had Giovanni do a sweep of the closed-off quarters before the funeral began, knowing I'd be using it to meet with the captains from Boston, Philadelphia, Newark, Chicago,

Detroit, and New Orleans. My captain from Ontario is missing, but I'll deal with him later.

Sienna sits on the edge of the desk to my right and closer to Leo, while Rocco and Thomas, my Philly and New Jersey captains stand against the wall to Leo's left.

Aldo and Andrea are brothers that govern the Midwest. They took up residence on the old, worn-out loveseat to the left against the wall. They're close in age to Thomas and Leo while Rocco was born the same year Ren and Si were. Rocco is best friends with Thomas's son, Bennett, having grown up in New York and attending the same school my sister and Matteo went to, a fact I'm not sure my sister is privy to.

Carmine is the oldest of all the capos, presiding over Boston and its surrounding areas for more than forty years. He's the only remaining capo that once worked under my grandfather.

"It's unfortunate that we meet under this circumstance, but it's even more unfortunate when I learn that all of the captains met in secret behind my back," I say to them even though it's Carmine my eyes are trained on.

He's either stupid or too far removed from our life that he didn't know the shit hole that is Raymond's dive bar was the first legitimate business Thomas purchased twenty years ago. So when Thomas suggested they meet there after Carmine requested an off-the-books meet-up, their conversation was recorded and sent to me just after midnight this morning.

I knew before walking in here which of them are with us and which are against us. Si and Ren heard the recording as did Giovanni a few hours ago.

My soon-to-be-former consigliere and I may have a tiff between us as far as Ciera is concerned, but the fact still remains, Tony Caputo trusted him. My father wanted him to be a part of this family, so I'll put my trust in him too. I haven't formally announced Sienna is taking his place in the family, but it's coming, and he knows it.

“Nothing was said behind anyone’s back that would not be said to your face, Domenico,” Carmine assures me, but there is tension in the wrinkles that line his gray eyes. “A boss was killed and nothing has been done to rid our world of the Irish scum responsible.”

The top of his lip curls as his stare does not waver from the stern look I’m giving him in return. If this is his attempt at asserting dominance, age, experience, or whatever, he’s doing a piss-poor job. It makes me question just how well he maintains authority in Boston, or lack thereof is more likely.

“Their days are numbered. I will see to it personally that every last one of them is executed.”

“Yet, you allow Fitzgerald’s wretched seed to stand among those of us mourning the former head of this family, your father. She isn’t fit to hang on a boss’s arm, much less be in the same room as the rest of us.” He sits forward in his chair, his face hardening as his index finger comes down on the desk in front of me. “I demand her head for the death of Antonio. If you don’t have the stomach to do it, son, say the word, and I’ll kill her for you.”

The room is silent as the reaper of death steals the air from around us. I’m surprised Carmine had the balls to say what he spit from his lips, but I’m even more amazed that I’ve remained seated, unmoving, and I haven’t pulled my loaded gun from its holster or shot him between the eyes.

That’s the type of control I’ve only seen my father elude. He was a master at not reacting or striking until the perfect time. Plus, he had me. More often than not, I was the predator sneaking up behind them, much in the way Lorenzo is doing now.

The knife slips from his leather jacket, the hilt falling into his palm. Ren didn’t dress in a suit for the funeral. Instead, he wore a black T-shirt, black jeans, and his black leather jacket that conceals more knives than even I know he has on his person. After being jumped, kidnapped, and rescued, he hasn’t taken that jacket off. I’m not sure he doesn’t sleep with it on.

“Call me *son* again, and it’ll be the last word you ever speak, old man,” I promise him.

The tip of the nine-inch blade in Ren’s right hand is pressed against Carmine’s carotid artery at the side of his neck at the same time my brother snatches a fist full of his gray hair and yanks his head backward.

“Do you know what happened to the last man that hurt one of our women?” Ren questions, referring to our mom, not Sienna. No one outside our immediate family, other than Krishna, knows about Vin kidnapping her, that my grandfather was the mastermind behind it, or even Rafe’s own recent brush with faith. “He suffered a long, drawn-out and painful death. I don’t have that type of patience. And you may want to make peace now versus later.”

Ren shoves the blade into Carmine’s flesh, exuding a type of strength I wasn’t sure my little brother had in him.

Taking out my cell phone from within my jacket, I shoot Giovanni a text to come inside while Carmine’s old body jerks like he’s having a seizure and painful gurgling sounds leave his mouth. I asked Giovanni to stand post at the side entrance to the priest’s office while Paul, one of my father’s made men, now mine, stood outside the door the men entered minutes ago.

“Anyone else want to threaten my sister-in-law’s life?” Ren asks, his head tilting to gaze upon the Barone brothers the same time the door to my right opens and Giovanni walks in.

“Hold the motherfucker still before he gets blood everywhere,” I order when not one person speaks up at my brother’s rhetorical question. Turning, I see Giovanni looking between Carmine and my brother with a smile ghosting his lips. “There is an opening for a captain in Boston. Do you want it?”

Snapping eyes that I now know match Matteo’s to mine, his boss, he nods, confirming he’ll take the position so that Sienna can accept her rightful place as my advisor.

“Good. Get rid of the body without Father Ricci or any other member of the house of God seeing his corpse.”

I should have shot him between the eyes. It would have been faster and cleaner, but I didn't want to taint the souls of the innocent outside these four walls. Ren was supposed to stab him in the heart so there was less mess. Instead, there is blood flowing from his mouth and where the knife still remains. At least Ren didn't yank it back out. That is the only silver lining to the bullshit I'm dealing with instead of where I should be.

Killing my wife's relatives simply for the blood running through their veins and the leader they once followed. It's time my little pet proves which side she's really on once and for all so there is no room left for doubt.

Ciera has to kill her brother in order to end his early reign as the youngest boss in the Fitzgerald line, and then she has to take over. Krishna believes there's a lioness hidden deep inside her. Guess we're all about to find out if that's true or if she is a mouse in a pretty package.

CHAPTER 34

It stung when Domenico pulled away from me in a manner that told me not to follow as he stepped to his dad's grave, silently saying whatever goodbyes he had on his mind. I wanted to be his strength. Help him like he'd done for me after he found me unconscious from blood loss and took me to the hospital.

I don't know why that changed his mind because there is no doubt in mine that he was going to kill me that night.

Dom doesn't pull away from Krishna the same way he does me. After I'd finished eating Sunday and they had wrapped up their conversation about Tony's funeral arrangements, I went back to Krishna's bedroom where I slept until I was brought takeout for dinner.

After that, they both stayed, each taking turns between my legs—each asking permission before they touched me.

I'm not sure which is more messed up, thinking it's weird that they asked for consent or never believing until the first time they asked, that's something men do.

They're brutal in the way they ravish my body, but they don't take by force which has always been what I've known.,

In my world, men demand and when you beg them to stop, they only make it hurt worse.

I haven't asked Dom or Krishna to stop, but then I haven't wanted to like every other time in the past before them.

I never knew there could be pleasure in the chase to gratification, or that fulfillment would be addicting.

Their faces spent so much time between my legs that I've memorized the feel of their tongues and the differences in their technique. With my eyes closed or blindfolded, I could tell you which man was licking me without knowing beforehand.

I haven't gotten the pleasure of watching Domenico and Krishna take turns on each other, but the way they hold each other's stare, the way they kiss each other, the way they shove themselves against the other or pull the other close is something I envy. It's something I'd be lying about if I said I didn't want it too.

They're in love with each other but I'm not sure either realizes it. It's either that or they won't allow themselves to acknowledge the feeling. But it's there. I can see it as clearly as the longing in my eyes.

Domenico was inside me this morning when his phone chimed with an incoming message. I came all over him in the best orgasm imaginable for him to pull out of me without getting off. He grabbed his phone and then walked out of the door without saying anything. He didn't even come back. I didn't see him again until I arrived at the cemetery.

I don't even understand what came over me. The second I saw him, I walked over, wrapped my hands around his arm, and didn't let go until he pulled away.

He hasn't said anything to me since last night when he was praising me and coaxing an orgasm out of me at the same time. One minute he can say the sweetest things, the next, his words are mean and leave invisible marks, but it's when he doesn't say anything at all or doesn't grace me with his beautiful dark eyes that it physically hurts me the most.

I sound like a deaf, dumb, and blind teenage girl. One who has fallen for the man, or men in my case, that isn't capable of holding their attention very long. A girl that can't possibly sate all their needs, wants, and desires.

I shouldn't want to be that girl, either. But I do. They don't even know it, but they've given me something I didn't know existed. They've shown me a different side of the world that I thought was permanently shrouded by gloomy clouds, hiding the sun and its warmth.

I'd do anything to keep this feeling locked inside and never let it go. I feel like it's borrowed time and one day soon they're going to wake up and realize I'm the third wheel to whatever perfect thing they already had before I was shoved in the picture.

"I don't know who the fuck any of you think you are, but this is my house, my family, and I'm in fucking charge," my brother spits, his face red with sweat coating his brow.

"Sorry, little kid, but it's time to go back to daycare," Krishna says, a smirk planted on his way too handsome of a face. "Your daddy no longer runs shit. And you're just a boy way too far over your head."

After Tony's funeral, the Caputos and their men went into the church. They were gone for an hour while I sat with Krishna and Sasha in K's SUV outside the Catholic Church.

When they all filed out, one of the men that followed them inside didn't come back out. It doesn't take a genius to figure out what happened to him. He kept looking at me during the service like I was beneath him, the dirt under his boots, the vilest thing he'd ever looked upon.

After Domenico got in Krishna's vehicle, Sasha got out, going to where Ren and Sienna climbed into another SUV that looked like Dom's but I'm pretty sure he and Lorenzo drive the exact same make and model vehicle.

Krishna pulled from the curb while two blacked-out SUVs followed us. It was nightfall by the time we drove across the bridge and into the city. I had a feeling about where we were heading. It was confirmed when Krishna parked out front of my father's brownstone.

He owns four of them. They're side by side on this side of the street with another house on the opposite side, directly in

front of the one he once resided in.

They didn't dilly dally around. Domenico pulled out a handgun, racked the chamber, and then turned his head so that ours met and said, *It's time to play a game, Ciera*. Then he jumped out and I followed them.

Four other men, one of them being Giovanni, got out of the other cars. The fourth guy wasn't at the funeral, at least not that I recall, but I remember him from the bar we went to last week. He was the bartender, so I'm not sure why he's here with them, but maybe he's one of Domenico's men, or formally Tony's, and I hadn't met him yet.

The housekeeper, slash maid, slash does whatever my father requested of her, answered the door. Domenico told her it was in her best interest to leave right then. I guess she saw the validity in his eyes because she ran like her life depended on her getting as far away as she could.

I guess it did since Dom shot the next man that came to the door. Krishna disappeared inside, then another shot was fired.

I walked in, seeing my brother running towards the back as Domenico and Krishna strolled after him.

When I stepped across the threshold inside Cormac's office, Dom and K had weapons aimed at where my brother was backed against a set of built-in bookshelves with his hands raised. His shirt is open; there's a gun tucked in the waistband of the boxers that snug his waist while his jeans fit looser down his hips.

"You all are the ones in over your heads. When the police commissioner finds out you were here, you all are done for. He'll lock you away for the rest of your lives unless his brother kills you first." A deranged laugh flies from his mouth.

"Well, I hate to break it to you, little boy," Domenico says from where I step in front of my father's desk as Dom walks around behind it as if he's already taken ownership of everything that was Cormac Fitzgerald. "Ciera is the firstborn. She's the heir to this sad excuse for a throne you thought was all yours."

“She’s a girl.” He chuckles. “She’s only useful for one thing. They don’t get power and she sure as hell isn’t getting mine.”

“It was never yours to begin with,” I speak before anyone else volleys back with Killian. I doubt even he knows the truth. “You aren’t Cormac’s biological son. You’re the result of an affair Mom had with his second in command. It’s why Dad had him and Mom killed, but he kept you to make everybody believe he had a son. I’m his only child. I’m his only heir. And you don’t get to take what is mine.”

I don’t want anything that belonged to my father. Everything Cormac had except property was given to a charity to be put to better use than anyone else, including me.

“You’re a fucking liar, you stupid cow.”

A growl comes from Domenico’s direction but I don’t turn to look at him to confirm the noise came from him.

“There’s a book behind you—the thick blue one. Inside you’ll find the forged birth certificate with another piece of paper that shows your paternity test Dad had done. You aren’t his son but you are my brother. Half brother, anyway. I’m telling you the truth.”

“Uncle Liam should have killed you. That’s why Dad sent you to him. He was supposed to get rid of you, not keep you around to allow his friends to tear your worthless ass apart.”

I can’t hold the gasp in, too shocked by his words.

“That’s right, sister. Everyone knew.”

Without thinking, I step in front of him and lift my left hand, intending to slap him across the face as he continues spewing words that are making it hard to think clearly with the pounding he’s causing.

“What do you think that Alban—” Killian doesn’t finish his sentence. I snatch the gun from his waistband and by the time the weapon goes off, blood splashes across my face, then his body crumbles to the ground.

I killed someone.

I killed my brother.

CHAPTER 35

“Got to say, I didn’t see that one coming,” Krishna admits with amusement in his tone and sin on his deviant mind.

No fucking shit, but now I’m standing here in front of everyone with my dick painfully hard, watching the intense anger from Ciera’s blood-splatter-covered face calm as she takes in what remains of Killian’s dead body.

Giovanni stands stock-still, his mouth wide open.

Thomas’s brows are pinched together in concern, while Rocco’s lips twitch as his eyes approve of my wife’s actions. Bennett looks different, but I’m slowly beginning to realize that he’s a hard one to read. The Barone brothers took a flight back to their part of the country whereas the others stuck around. Leo and Paul stayed at the Nikolayev’s compound even though Krishna has it fully locked down, but I wanted to take extra precautions where our pregnant sisters were concerned.

Krishna’s parents attended the service, but I ducked out before thanking them for coming. I’m sure K did it for me without asking and I’m grateful.

“I-I...” Ciera stutters, shock finally kicking in and that’s my queue to get everyone the fuck out of here.

“Giovanni,” I call out. Thomas looks my way too, so I eye him as well, letting them both know what I’m about to say is an order for them to carry out together. “Gather the bodies. Pile them on the police commissioner’s doorstep or

somewhere he'll see my message loud and clear when he steps outside tomorrow morning. I'm coming for them all. And I won't stop until I've eradicated every one of them."

They move at the same time, each going to one end of Killian's body. Bending at the knees, they pick his dead weight up and then tote him out of the office. They'll have to come back for the other two men at the front of the house.

Flicking my stare toward Bennett, I say, "I hope you really wanted this. There is no out now that you've seen this."

I won't allow anyone to implicate Ciera in any crime I commit. They'll die before I let someone put her on the authority's radar, not that she won't be married to me.

"I told you two years ago that I wanted in. That hasn't changed," he confirms, the conviction I wanted to hear in his strong voice.

Moving to Rocco, I pin him with a look that leaves no confusion. If Bennett fucks up, it's on him and Thomas. And I'll hold them accountable for his actions as I will Bennett himself. "Do a sweep of the house. Then do the same to all the others. You find trash, you take out the garbage. Have all the locks changed and each property secured. Text me when it's done."

They turn, and Rocco leads with Bennett following him. Krishna shuts the door.

"Come here, pet."

She does as she's told, shocking me how at times she obeys without question and other times she's defiant. I never know which I'm going to get. I like both sides and how she somehow knows exactly what I want her to say, or what I want her to do or not do. It's refreshing and thrilling at the same time.

Stepping behind her father's long desk, she stops a foot from me. I loathe the distance that's resided between us since I pulled out of her heat last night. I stayed long enough to make sure she got off, but I didn't allow myself the same release. Krishna had already passed out from sexual exhaustion, so I

left her to curl around him to sleep peacefully without the sour mood I knew Bennett's message was going to bring me.

Taking the handkerchief out from the breast pocket of my suit jacket, I pull her in between the edge of the desk and the front of my body. Lifting my hand, I wipe the blood from her makeup-free face the best I can. There are still streaks marring her beautiful face, but it adds to her already appealing features, enhancing what she has naturally.

In all honesty, I'd love nothing more than to fuck her senseless with every drop of Killian's blood painted on her face, but for what I have planned, I don't want his blood to get inside her mouth when we get messy.

"I want to defile your body on top of your daddy's desk, sweetheart." Dropping the cloth, I stick my thumb inside my mouth, licking the pad to get it wet. Then I run my saliva across her lips to clean any remaining blood. "While Krishna fucks these pretty little lips and paints your throat with his cum as your pussy milks my dick."

Dipping my head and cocking it to the side, my lips capture hers as my eyes beckon K to come to the other side of the desk. I can't get over how soft she feels and how she melts into my touch. When Krishna and I kiss, it's hard and we're both demanding more and trying to see how brutal we can be. With her, it's the opposite and more sensual than anything I've ever felt. I don't understand how she and I fit as perfectly as K and I do.

It shouldn't be possible. It defies all the logic in my head.

Wrapping my hands around the bottom of her ass where the meaty flesh meets the top of the back of her thighs, I squeeze and lift her off the floor and sit her on the edge of the desk.

Not being able to hold back the smile that breaks our kiss, I whisper into her mouth loud enough that I know K hears me. "You're not wearing panties, naughty girl."

When she doesn't ask me to stop, I pull back far enough to look into her emerald eyes as my hands untie the knot on her

wraparound blouse. I won't stick my dick inside her until she tells me she wants it.

“Say it, Ciera.”

“Fuck me, Dom.” If my sins don't get me a free ride to Hell, making her say dirty words and being turned on by hearing such foul language roll off her tongue in that pretty accent is sure to guarantee me a first-class seat. “Fuck me on his desk. Make me leak all over everything that belonged to him.”

Krishna pulls her blouse from her shoulders once I've loosened the knot enough to strip it from her sexy and sinful body.

“Lay back, my queen. Lay back and bask in what is now yours. This office isn't his any longer. It's yours. This desk is yours. In this office, you call the shots. You're in charge. What you say is law, Ciera. Do you understand me, Ciera? You're the boss now.”

Her brows pinch in confusion, but she nods her head anyway. She doesn't understand what I'm telling her, the things I'm saying, and hell, neither do I, but no other words have ever tasted more right on the tip of my tongue than the ones I told her that made Ciera, mine and Krishna' equal.

As she lies back, K braces her back, helping her down more comfortably. Like I wanted, her head hangs off the back.

Sliding her black shirt over her hips and down her legs, I toss the slinky material to the side as I look down at her, bare before us except for the strappy heels she wears. Knowing she hates them, I slip the back straps over her heels, removing her shoes and letting them fall to the floor. Then I grip her ankles and place her feet flat on the desk before pulling her legs apart.

“Doesn't she have the prettiest pussy you've ever seen?” I ask Krishna while my eyes are fixated on her glistening opening.

“That she does,” he agrees. His tongue juts out as his blue eyes gaze upon her mouth. “The prettiest lips too. Say it, boss lady.”

“Fuck my pretty mouth until your dick makes me choke.”

“Look at you improvising, kitten. Adding shit I didn’t know I wanted to hear. Unbutton my pants and take my cock out.” He pauses, watching as her hands lift above her head.

Guiding my aching dick to her entrance, I push inside her slowly, not wanting to hurt her neck that’s already in an awkward position, reclined like she is. A gasp slips from her open mouth and it’s the best music I’ve ever heard.

“Don’t let me hurt you, kitten. I’ll hold the back of your neck, but if anything starts to feel unpleasant, tap me anywhere and I’ll pull out,” he tells her, making her nod her head before he slides all nine inches of his dick past her lips, across her tongue, and down her delicate throat.

“Hey, K,” I call out, my brows pinched tight as I fight to remain in control as her pussy does shit to my dick that makes me feel out of control like I’m dangling from a rope and I’m watching as the threads slowly unravel, one by one.

His blue eyes snap to mine and like he knows how to read me, he leans over her until his mouth catches mine. I love the way we battle for dominance. It’s an endless war neither of us are willing to bend a knee to. He bites and licks and tries to overpower me the same way I do him.

Wrapping one hand around the back of my neck, I do the same to him. With his other, he slips his hand between where my pelvic bone grinds against Ciera’s clit. He takes over, rubbing her and when she moans around his dick it’s as if I can feel her throat constrict around me too, when it’s his dick experiencing her perfect fucking mouth while my dick is inside her tight little cunt.

“She feels so goddamn good,” he breathes into my mouth.

“I know,” I say back just as breathless because her heat is crawling up my back, dancing along my spine as his hot breath is trying to work its way down my throat as if to find her. They’re both quickly bringing me to my knees where I’m at their mercy.

I've never fucked this slow or measured, where I feel everything with her, with him. I can't fucking take this shit. The back of his hand rubs against my pubic bone, and it feels out of this world. I want his blunt nails to dig harder into the back of my neck, wanting him to draw blood. I want it to hurt while Ciera gushes around me, giving me pleasure I've never felt before.

As her walls convulse around me, forcing my release into her pussy and milking me for every last drop, I have to bite down on the bottom of Krishna's lip and squeeze the back of his neck to stop myself from saying three words that cannot ever leave my mouth.

I'm not blind. I know I'm in love with him. I also know I'm falling so goddamn hard for her that I can't think straight. My eyesight is twenty-twenty. My heart is just a motherfucking idiot for letting them breach its walls.

He grunts into my mouth, his own orgasm being sucked out of his dick by the same girl that's ruining both of us and fucking shit up without even breaking a sweat.

They're going to be my downfall, and I'm starting to think there isn't one goddamn thing I can do to stop the head-on collision I'm on.

I love him, and I think I might love her too.

Fucking hell.

CHAPTER 36

Her uncle is going to die.

His death was already set in motion, but now he's going to bleed tears from his eyes by the time I'm finished with him for hurting my kitten.

It's one thing to play rough with a willing participant. It's another to rape or even allow someone else to rape a girl that didn't want it. She didn't ask for it and sure as shit didn't deserve whatever hell he's put her through over the years.

All I have to go on are the words that Killian spewed to his sister before she killed him. I saw the look on her face when he said Liam Donovan let other men have her. She may not have confirmed that she's been raped, but she didn't have to. It was written in the shame she wore in her beautiful green eyes during those few seconds before her anger took control.

For that, Liam won't get a quick death. Her brother didn't deserve one either, but it's not like I can bring him back to life just so I can take my time with his tainted soul.

I'll admit, I didn't understand Tony's need to draw out his revenge against his father for taking the love of his life. Ciera isn't even dead, and she's also a hell of a lot stronger than I fully realized, yet I want to inflict so much goddamn pain on each and every person that's ever hurt Ciera, and she isn't even my wife.

I saw the same look mirrored in Dom's eyes. After Ciera had come and had owned our bodies like we were made just

for her pleasure, I saw the need for retribution shining back at me from Domenico's dark brown eyes.

I saw more, but I don't know what to do with that information. So, like everything else with Dom that gets too heavy, I shoved it to the farthest recesses in the back of my mind that it could go until we make things right for Ciera.

That was last night. By the time we got back, everyone else was asleep, and the house was quiet. I put Ciera to bed while Dom started making plans without consulting anyone else.

He wants to make a statement to the police commissioner and Liam O'Donovan—if the Irish boss is still in the country. Dom is having all five of Cormac's properties in the city gutted and redesigned. He was on the phone with an attorney late last night to start the probate paperwork to get anything that remains in Fitzgerald's name signed over to Ciera.

I hadn't expected the bomb she dropped last night that Killian wasn't Cormac's son. Not that it mattered, he still had to die for Ciera to own her father's assets legally. There could have been a will, but there was no point in taking that chance. I just hadn't expected Ciera to shoot her brother without being ordered to do so.

I knew what Dom had planned. I even agreed with him.

No matter how either of us felt about her, she had to prove she was on our side.

Her pussy is so good she could make a man shoot himself in the back if she wanted to. Not counting our encounter with her in New Orleans two months ago, she's been in our lives less than two weeks and already holds more power over us than I ever thought possible of another person.

I'm man enough to see the truth for what it is, not sure if Domenico is.

"Be warned," I say when I hear his footsteps stop behind me. "Your sister is liable to bite your head off or stab you or anyone else in the house with a dick today. Mine too, by the way."

A soft, humor-filled chuckle leaves his lips while I lift the glass of vodka in my right hand and take a sip. I'm staring out the open French doors that lead to a balcony inside my bedroom at my parent's house. It's a genuine laugh and the first I've heard from him since his father's death. It eases some of the tension in my chest, but I can't tell him that.

"You tell them they aren't allowed to leave the house alone without the dogs?"

"Yep."

I turn to face him. He was gone when I got out of bed this morning. Needing something to do, I spent several hours in the gym here on the property. I showered before I poured a glass of vodka, but I only bothered to put on slacks and a shirt. I haven't even buttoned the dress shirt, so it still hangs open.

His eyes quickly leave mine, roaming down my chest, which only makes my dick jump at the praising Dom's dark gaze is doing. Scanning his way back up, the heat in his eyes tells me what he wants before he opens his mouth.

"I need to hate fuck before I go looking to kill those scum of the earth dickbags before the time is right."

"The time was right last night. You just want to put on a show for your own amusement first." Raising my glass, I tip the contents into my mouth and swallow the remaining vodka, draining the glass dry, then I set it on the small table by the open doors.

He steps forward, his hands going for the clasp on my pants while I peel the shirt from my shoulders.

"I want to draw it out," he bites out, his tone harsh as he pulls the zipper down and then pushes my pants down my legs. "I want to take everything." I step out of the material when he shoves me toward his right, making my body move, then he walks me backward until the back of my legs touch the foot of the bed.

"I want them to see me do it and not be able to do a damn thing to stop me. I want to strip them of their power." His hand brushes against my dick through the soft material of my boxer

briefs as his eyes stay locked with mine. “I want them to know what it feels like to lose control. To be at someone else’s mercy.”

I swallow hard as his hand cups my junk. He’s aggressive, and he knows that’s exactly what I like. Placing my hands on the covers, I lean back as my thighs part to give him more access.

“I want them to see me watching them on their knees, begging me to stop. I want them to feel every second of pain and know it will not stop.” Moving his palm upward, he dips his fingers inside the waistband, running his long digits and open palm through my pubic hair until he reaches my shaft. With his other hand, he pulls my underwear over my ass and down my legs as his fingers wrap around my cock.

“You’re right, it will be for my amusement, but they don’t deserve anything less than what they’ve done to her.”

Looking down, he produces a six-inch blade from his left hand. He places it to my right on the bed. Then, he lets my dick go, replacing it with his left hand as he pulls another knife from the sleeve of his leather jacket. Once it’s on the bed, he shrugs the leather off his shoulders and down his arms.

“It’s hers to take,” I tell him, half-meaning the words coming from my lips. “Not yours.”

Reaching over his head, he pulls his T-shirt over and off his ripped body. My dick aches without his touch, but I will not tell him that. If he knows me at all, he’ll read it from my eyes, from my body that is on the verge of trembling for him.

“You’re only saying that because you want to get to them before I do.”

Pressing his crotch against mine, I feel how hard his dick is, sending tingles shooting up my spine and into my hairline at the back of my neck. My eyelids shut momentarily until I hear his belt buckle clink together as he unbuckles his belt. His jeans and boxers come down his legs as my hooded eyes open half-mast.

“It *should* be hers to take, but you’re right,” I admit. “I do, and I will make her uncle bleed from every pore on his wrinkled body. But first, we need her to tell us everything they did.”

My anger flares, combining with the heat wafting off my scorching body.

Leaning further into me, Dom steals my lips and forces his tongue inside my mouth. Only he’s not being his usual, ruthless self. His kiss is slow and measured. It feels like Pop Rocks are going off on my tongue. His lips are sugary sweet and his tongue even sweeter, telling me he ate a Tootsie Pop in the last half hour.

The sound of something squirting from a bottle tells me he brought lube and planned to fuck me when he walked in. He lifts my right leg, and when the tip of his dick touches the opening to my asshole, my fingers gather the bedcovers between them, fisting as he slides inside me.

My legs spread wider as my feet locate his hips. This is usually where he starts gyrating and tearing my ass apart. But that isn’t what he’s doing. He rocks inside me and then pulls back slowly. Before I can wrap my head around what’s going on, there’s a whimper from somewhere else in the room.

Domenico’s lips leave mine, then he turns his head away from me with my gaze following. Ciera is standing in the doorway, watching us, her cheeks red and her chest lifting and falling with each heavy breath she takes.

“Come here, pet. Take your clothes off. Every last stitch.” Domenico’s voice is rough and lethal, nothing like the out-of-control feeling that crawls up my spine.

Ciera obeys. I want to watch her, but the pull Dom has on my eyes keeps them locked on where he’s going in and out of my ass too fucking slowly that I’m barely hanging on. The fabric of the comforter between one set of my fingers rip, tearing with the amount of abuse I’m giving it.

He wanted to hate fuck. This is not hate fucking. Not even close.

Goddamn, this is more.

He can't fucking do this to me, yet my voice won't tell him to stop as he pushes in before sliding back out. My hands aren't forcing his hips to move faster like I should be doing. Dom keeps pushing in and then pulls back out, only to go right back to slowly entering me again.

Jesus fuck, it feels good.

“Crawl on the bed, Ciera.”

If she follows his order, I don't know because all I can see through my haze is him as his eyes drive inside of mine, giving me too much at one time.

“Come here,” he says. “Come take his dick like a good little girl, *wife*.”

My back falls to the bed as her curvy body straddles me. My head stays upright, watching as her tight pussy slips over my dick like her body was meant to take me inside of hers. Dom's dick is pleasure and pain simultaneously, whereas her pussy is a drug I never want to come down from. Together they feel incredible.

Dom grips her hips.

“Move with me, sweetheart.” He guides her up and down. When he enters me, her pussy drops, sucking all of me into her. When he pulls out, he slaps her hip. My dick loses her warmth as he takes her opening to the tip of my shaft. “Lean over, Ciera. Kiss him and own his mouth like your good little pussy owns his dick.”

Her long hair falls around me, then her soft lips are on mine, devouring me like the fucking sex goddess she is. She nips my bottom lips, then her tongue dives inside my mouth before I push into hers.

The smack echoes off the walls at the sound of Domenico's palm connecting with Ciera's ass. A moan vibrates down my throat while her silken walls clench around my dick, forcing my eyes to snap open and lock with the wide-eyed shock in hers that's less than an inch from mine.

“Spank her again,” I order, speaking to Dom while staring into Ciera’s beautiful irises. “Harder this time. Her pussy squeezes my dick so good.”

I’m done with this being their plaything and letting them both own me. It’s time I get in the game and fuck them just as thoroughly.

I push up, holding myself and Ciera with my hands pushed into the bed. Rocking my hips, I push my ass down Dom’s dick as I bounce Ciera up my shaft in the same motion. She breathes, and her head falls back to her shoulders. Domenico grunts and then shoves back through me.

The cracking sound of Dom’s hand coming down onto her flesh sends sparks up my spine and down to the tip of my dick. It sparks a fire in her eyes, but that could be my reflection through her pretty green irises.

“Put one of the knives in her hand,” Dom says, his pace finally picking up speed.

Feeling around to the end of the bed, I find the hilt of the blade and flip the handle around to face her as I hold it out for her to take. Her eyes widen and her head shakes.

Jolting my dick forward, I lean closer to Ciera.

“Do as you’re told, kitten,” I whisper against the shell of her ear as I hold Dom’s stare that would make the devil himself shudder with fright.

After she reluctantly takes the blade, Dom’s lips spread as he lifts his arm and flips his palm face up. “Cut me, pet.”

“What?! No.” She refuses, but with his other hand, he wraps his fingers around her neck and pulls her chest against his.

“Use the goddamn blade. Show me that you know how to hurt me, Ciera. Make me bleed.”

Swallowing, she rests the knife’s sharp edge across his palm, but she doesn’t make any movements that’ll cut him. Forcing her to comply, Domenico squeezes her throat, cutting off her airflow.

“Unless you want to pass out again, I suggest you cut my hand, *a pheata*,” he says, calling her his pet in Irish, and for whatever reason, using that term instead of the English version makes her jaw tic and then she slices through the skin in one quick, clean, swipe of the blade.

Crimson pools in his hand, but not for long. Releasing her throat, he smashes his bloody hand against her mouth and runs his hand down her neck and through the valley of her breast, painting her such a beautiful color that it makes not only my dick swell inside of her but Dom’s does too.

“What does she look like with my blood coating her?”

“Like a Viking warrior bitch that just slaughtered a village and is fucking on a pile of dead bodies,” I say, my eyes locked on hers.

Her muscles tense and then start to contract around me. Not being able to stop it, my ball sack tightens and my release shoots through the tip of my dick as Dom releases his cum inside my ass. Her walls don’t let up, making cum continue shooting out.

It’s in this moment that I realize how royally fucked I really am.

Being inside of her while he’s inside of me is earth-shattering. My ass may be raw from Dom’s thick dick, but it’s my soul they left tattered after burning straight through the center of my chest.

A man doesn’t come back from this shit.

They’ve ruined me and barely broke a sweat doing it.

CHAPTER 37

My head is so chaotic right now I can't think straight.

An hour ago, Sienna asked if I wanted to go with her, Sasha, and Brooklyn to get a manicure and a pedicure. Needing space from Domenico and Krishna, I said, absofuckinglutely, not even thinking about the words before they rolled off my tongue.

She looked at me like I had a screw loose but nodded and said let's go. So, now I'm in the back seat of Krishna's SUV with Sasha in the driver's seat, Sienna seated on her right and Brooklyn and me in the back. The three demon-looking dogs are in the cargo section.

It's not that I don't want to be around Dom or K, but it's more that when I am around them, the need to have both of them touching me at the same time is more than I know how to handle.

They're overwhelming, and just when I think the intensity can't bloom anymore, everything inside me inflates, filling every cell with an emotion I don't understand. I don't even know if it's good or bad.

"Hey," Sienna calls out as she glances over her shoulder, speaking to me. "After the nail salon, we have to stop and get a cake. Since we didn't officially celebrate Dom's birthday, I'm rectifying that."

"When was his birthday?" I ask, having not known he had one recently. It's not like I've been in their lives that long so it could have been a few weeks ago.

A smirk licks up one side of her mouth. “Your wedding day and Dom’s birthday were the same day. Did Domenico not tell you? You were Daddy’s birthday present to my big brother.”

“Domino likes Tootsie Pops. Not cake,” Sienna’s stepdaughter says in the snarkiest tone I’ve ever heard while the shock of Sienna’s admission sinks in. Brooklyn twists as much as she can to face me while strapped to her booster seat. “I know his favorite candy. Did you?”

“Still haven’t taken care of that, I see,” Sasha says under her breath in a way that we all hear her.

“You want me to shatter a girl’s first crush? Really? Don’t you remember yours?”

“Yeah,” she states. “I married him. You did too, bitch.” Glancing at Sienna from her right, she says, “I don’t think that’s in Brooklyn’s cards.”

Before Sienna responds, a phone from inside the vehicle starts to ring. Sienna picks her cell phone up from between her legs and answers it.

“Dude,” she says in an annoyed tone. “We’ve been gone for thirty minutes. She’s fine. You and K can live without her for a couple of hours.”

She’s silent for a second, then her head swings to me, her eyes full of surprise. “Say what?” she says into the phone while keeping her stare focused on me.

“I just don’t know what to say to all that shit right now.” More silence as she listens to the person on the phone.

Her tongue clucks and then she sighs in frustration.

“Fine. I think you’re right.”

She ends the call, drops her phone between her legs, then turns, looking out the window to the road in front of us.

“Care to enlighten the rest of us?” Sasha asks.

“It would seem that my brother’s wife and your brother’s girlfriend is—”

“I don’t think either of them think—”

“Honey, if they’re both diddling it, and did so more than once, then yeah,” Sasha comments, cutting off my rebuttal and meeting my eyes in the rearview mirror as if it’s stupid for me to think anything but what she indicated

“Sasha!” Sienna reprimands.

“What?” Sasha’s right hand flies off the steering wheel in an exaggerated gesture. “She doesn’t know what that means. I got this kid-coding shit down, thank you very much.”

Sasha sounds proud of herself, but I’m so confused right now that I keep my mouth shut.

“Anyway,” Sienna continues. “Nineteen-year-old Ciera back there is apparently in the top one percent of hackers across the world and released evidence that implicates the police commissioner in a trafficking ring of underage girls as well as video and audio recordings of him doing ... stuff.”

“Huh,” is all Sasha says.

“Dom ordered us to turn around and come back. Figures people are going to scour every square mile of New York for our little computer nerd.”

“So ... what I’m hearing is that she’s smarter than both you and I put together.” Sasha clucks her tongue in the same annoying way Sienna did a minute ago, and I’m starting to wonder why they both claim not to like each other when they’re so much alike.

“Well, she must be smarter than Domenico and Krishna too. They didn’t pull that off with a head injury, so I’m choosing to look at this newfound knowledge like that.”

“For once, I like your assessment better,” Sasha agrees while they speak about me like I’m not here hearing every word they’re saying. “But I’m tired of being cooped up in my dad’s house and being told what to do. I say we don’t go back just yet. At least let’s get our toes done first.”

“Might I remind you,” Sienna starts, “that the last time you didn’t follow Dom’s orders, he broke your bone.”

“She’s lying,” Brooklyn hollers, drowning out the gasp that leaves my lips. “Domino wouldn’t do that!”

Sienna whips her head around so fast to look behind her seat that it’ll be a miracle she doesn’t have a friction burn from the seatbelt across her shoulder.

“Brooklyn,” she scolds in a tone that has me leaning back in my seat. “Normally, I like your smart little mouth, but calling me a liar will not be tolerated. Bring it down a notch or ten. Capiche?”

“I’m sorry, Si,” she says, sounding remorseful.

“You’re forgiven.” Sienna gives her an appraising smile then twists back around to face forward in the passenger seat.

“We’re so going to get our asses handed to us,” Sienna comments. “And they’re probably going to show up at the nail salon and make a scene ... but I’m feeling transgressive too. Besides, who would be stupid enough to fuck with us?”

TWO HOURS later and feeling prettier than I ever have, we’re back in the SUV and headed to the cake shop Sienna had mentioned stopping by earlier.

It’s amazing what a little nail polish does to a woman’s confidence. I’ve never had the privilege to have my fingernails and toenails polished. I’ve always envied those that could freely do so because they wanted to.

They’re painted a deep shade of red. Crimson isn’t even my favorite color, but for whatever reason, when I saw the wall of every color imaginable, it was the tint my eyes were drawn to.

As messed up as it sounds, I think my subconscious picked it based on Domenico and Krishna’s reaction to the blood Dom smeared over my naked flesh. I don’t know why that act turned me on when it should have made me have the opposite reaction.

Isn't it immoral?

The way they make me feel should be sinful, wicked even, wrong, but that doesn't curb my appetite for wanting more. For wanting things I'm not sure they're capable of or willing to give me.

I'm the intruder in their life after all.

And we all know what men like them do to unwanted guests once their welcome has passed the expiration date.

"Stop looking so gloomy back there," Sasha states, making my eyes glance to hers in the rearview mirror. "Treating yourself to the simplest mundane things in life and defying men are wonderful joys. Smile, bitch. Their bark may be over the top, but their bite is much like that of a little puppy. The boys are harmless."

"Says the woman that was snatched by her hair, drugged off a dance stage, and then got her ass kicked by one of them while the others watched," Sienna chimes in. "You should run for politics."

"Nah, I'm not poised or polished for the big leagues."

She laughs, but it's drowned out by the sound of metal crunching that has me whipping my head around to peer out the back window. Two of the dogs start to bark while Rellik begins growling, his sound low and vicious.

"Holy fuck," Sasha says before the crash behind us fully registers before my stunned eyes.

"Oh, that's bad," Sienna adds.

The SUV that had been following us is no more. Two semi-trucks t-boned the vehicle from both sides. Paul, I think that was the guy's name, had been escorting us since we left Sasha's parents a couple of hours ago. There is no way he could have survived that impact.

"Get us out of here, Sasha," Sienna urges, fear laced in her tone as the same feeling climbs up my back in a cold sweated heat.

“Am I seeing things or is the street barricaded up there?” There is worry in Sasha’s voice now too.

My head whiplashes around to see what she’s talking about; sure enough, four black SUVs block the road across all lanes of traffic.

“There,” Sienna shouts and points to Sasha’s left. “Turn there. Brooklyn, unbuckle and get on the floorboard now.”

“Si, I’m scared. I want my daddy.”

“Yeah, I want him right now too, but it’s just us girls. We got this. I promise. Now, do as I say, sweetie.”

Sasha spins the steering wheel to the left, the vehicle already at too high of a speed for the sharp turn that my stomach somersault. Somehow she maintains control. I have no idea how, but I’ve never driven an automobile, so what do I know?

“Son of a bitch,” Sasha whines, and it sounds like her palm hit the steering wheel. “These motherfuckers are everywhere. Jesus, Ciera. How bad was the shit you released?”

“Did you not hear what I said about trafficking, underage girls, and the police commissioner of New York freaking City?” Sienna exaggerates. “Get with the program. She fucked their world up real nice.”

“Guys, maybe you should just let me out. They want me. They won’t stop until they have me.”

“Oh, you innocent little shrimp,” Sasha huffs. “Our brothers claimed it, so now we gotta protect it. Do you get what I’m saying? We aren’t letting them take you.”

“We got this, Ciera,” Sienna adds as she pulls out a handgun from her purse and then racks the chamber. “Just cover Brooklyn. K?” She gives me a broad smile, then to Sasha, she says, “Stop the SUV. I’m over this BS. I don’t run from anyone. And if one of those jokers makes me pop off a freshly painted acrylic nail, I’m going to stab someone in the eyeball.”

“Or you could shoot them with the firearm in your hand,” Sasha says as she slams on the brakes and my body jolts forward, the seatbelt keeping me from going far.

“Nah, that would end things too quickly. This is just to take out the majority. Then we have a little bit of fun and show those fools why we’re the wrong women to cross.”

“Couldn’t agree more.” There is way too much excitement in Sasha’s tone. “Open the glove box and hand me the two pistols K has stashed in there. Should be extra magazines too.”

“I don’t think this is such a good idea, you guys,” I argue, hoping they aren’t about to start a shootout as I unbuckle myself.

“Ciera,” Sasha calls out, blatantly ignoring what I said, “Be a love and open your door so that I have somewhat of a shield and then reach over and do the same for Sienna. K, thanks.”

Reluctantly, I pull the handle on the door and then slide over to do the same on Brooklyn’s side. After I slide back, Sienna and Sasha open their doors at the same time and slip out.

With all the doors open, I can hear screeching brakes followed by car doors slamming from behind our vehicle.

Yelling ensues next, and that’s when my spine straightens at the sound of his voice.

“It’s time to come home, Ciera,” Liam states from the rear.

“Don’t hold your breath, old man,” Sasha yells back.

Reaching down, I pull the satchel Dom made me carry into my lap. It holds the gun I snatched from Killian that I used to kill him. Before we left my father’s former residence, Domenico said it was mine. It could be a trophy or a reminder that no one steals what is rightfully yours.

Folding the flap open, I remove the weapon.

“You have sins to answer for, my girl,” he continues, speaking to me.

“You deaf, asshole?” Sasha asks, and from where I’m sitting, I can see Sienna looking for an opening to take a shot. “She isn’t going anywhere, but you’re welcome to try to take her.”

Shots pop off, one right after another, hitting the metal parts of our vehicle but I don’t know if it’s coming from the front or the back.

Climbing over the back of the seat, the dogs are whining and scratching at the rear door to be let out as I crouch down between them.

I must be dumb to join these animals in the back when they obviously want to maul something. Hopefully, it’s not me.

There is a spare tire that takes up a lot of the rear glass, but from what I can see out of it, there is one black SUV and black sedan parked behind us.

Two men, one whom I don’t know and the other Owen Donovan, the police commissioner, each have rifles or big guns aimed at us. Liam stands behind them, mostly shielded by the open back door of the sedan.

A shot is fired and my eyes snap to the man beside Owen. He goes down and if I had to make an educated guess, I’d say Sienna took him out.

That causes Owen to duck while his brother is issuing orders that I can’t decipher other than his aged face turning a bright red as he allows his anger to multiply.

The police commissioner redirects his aim away from Sasha’s side to point toward Sienna’s.

I decide in a split second what I’m going to do. Reaching in front of me, I pull on the door handle, opening it. The momentum of the eager canines swings it outward. The dogs leap out, so I take that opportunity to lift the weapon and aim it at Owen rather than Liam.

Pulling the trigger slow and precise, it goes off, the kick almost knocking me onto my butt. I don’t know if it was me or some defined force, but I hit the target somewhere on his body.

I don't give myself a moment to think about what I've done, I press my knees to the floor, straighten my shoulders and lean forward a little as I raise the gun higher.

I pull the trigger a second time, but ringing in my ears begins and the intensity grows. I drop my arms and relax my body until my left butt cheek settles to the side of my left ankle.

The dogs continue to bark, but otherwise, all is quiet for a heartbeat. Then the squeal of tires sounds somewhere behind me.

Seconds pass.

Maybe minutes.

Eventually, Sienna and Sasha come into view as they slowly step around the SUV, craning their necks to peek inside. They stare at me for what feels like ages, then look at each other before pivoting and walking to where bodies lay on the ground in the alleyway.

The guy Sienna shot is lying on his back, his white shirt stained crimson across his chest.

Owen is face down with his head to the side and his arms stretched out.

I don't know about Liam, the man I used to call uncle despite not actually being related by blood.

Unfolding my legs, I scoot to the edge and hop to the ground. I follow behind Sienna and Sasha until one of them closes the door my uncle had been standing behind.

There is a hole between his eyes as a bit of blood seeps out.

"How?" Sasha finally speaks. "You had one motherfucking target practice." Her arm lifts with the hand still gripping her weapon and motions between her and Sienna. "We've been shooting since we were kids. How the hell did you do that?"

"Guess she's better gifted than you are," Sienna answers for me.

“You couldn’t have at least let me have one of them?” Sasha’s eyes narrow on me, but it’s short-lived when rustling turns our heads.

Owen groans and tries to push up with his hands but falls back down.

Before I can say anything, another shot goes off, making me jump and my feet come off the ground.

“See, you got one,” Sienna comments. “Now let’s get the fuck out of dodge before the cops show up. We need to get home so one of the guys can erase any footage involving us.”

“But they came after us. They tried to hurt us, plus, they fired first,” I explain.

“Not chancing self-defense in front of a judge, sweetie. Now, let’s get out of here,” she says as I hear the first sounds of sirens in the background that jolt me to run back to the vehicle.

It’s not until we’re five minutes from pulling into the driveway at the Nikolayev’s that the gravity of what I did sinks in.

Liam O’Donovan, the most feared man in all of Ireland is dead—and I killed him. He was the first and only man I ever called *Daddy*. I only made that mistake once. I’d been four or five and the word just slipped out. He quickly told me he wasn’t my father. He said he wasn’t even my uncle, but that was what I’d call him because he’s the man fathers give their children to for punishment and I wouldn’t have been there if I hadn’t done something I shouldn’t have—been *born a girl*.

I never loved him. My first nanny was the only person I remember saying I love you too. I vaguely remember her now except when she looked at me it made me smile. He overheard me say those simple, sweet, innocent words to the hired help, or in her case, the captured and forced to do as you’re told.

He called me into his office, Maley followed. She wasn’t even two steps inside the door when he shot her between the eyes. Her body dropped and landed beside me. I still

remember the shock on her lifeless face. It's an image I'll never forget.

He then told me, *love is a bullshit term used to confuse the weak. Love doesn't exist. It's not real. Tricking your mind into believing you love someone or that they love you only ends in death.*

Sometimes I used to wonder if my uncle was the way he was because someone broke his heart, if he was born a bad person, or if he grew into one.

I guess I'll never know the answer to that question ping-ponging against the inside of my head. He would have never told me anyway, so it's not like I would have found out and I shouldn't even care.

I shouldn't care that he's dead. I shouldn't care that I took his life, my half-brother's life, or even *Owen Donovan's*.

I never knew *he* was Liam's brother. I did know my uncle had a brother that lived in America and was a high-ranking official in law enforcement, but I didn't think he ever came to visit his older brother in Ireland. But I was wrong. I had met him.

From time to time he would show up with other men like they were on holiday, and they'd be dressed in expensive suits; most even wearing a wedding band on their left hand.

Owen was the one that put me on Admir Kovaçi's radar. He was the one that pushed my uncle to make Admir an offer he couldn't refuse, but that was after Owen had helped to foster and grow the Albanian devil's obsession—with me.

For that reason, I am not sorry one bit about his death. I just wish I'd aimed better and it had been me that took the kill shot that had ended his evil life.

Four out of the five tormentors of my life are gone. But one remains. Somewhere. And men like him don't just give up an addiction just because their suppliers have vanished.

What if Liam's thoughts on *love* are factual, and it's not a tangible emotion?

What if I traded one man's fixation for two others, and it's my delusion causing me to see Domenico and Krishna differently from how I think about Admir?

One took and stole and never asked permission for anything his black heart had an appetite for. The other two waited for my consent every time. But how do I know I didn't just dream that up because I needed it? How do I know the warmth in my chest when I'm with both of them is anything more than my brain playing a trick on me?

How can someone be trustworthy if there is an absence of love?

CHAPTER 38

When the girls didn't return as instructed, I ordered my guy not to let them out of his sight. To call me immediately if he saw anything that even remotely looked suspicious or felt off.

Sienna and Sasha have zero to prove. We all know they can handle themselves better than the average woman. I commend my father and Krishna's for making sure anyone that tried to hurt them would live to regret it by their hands with the abilities they were taught.

I didn't know all the facts. I didn't know how far O'Donovan's reach extended. I still don't.

This wasn't about them doing as I say because I said so. This was about all of us being together and having each other's backs.

I want to wring their goddamn necks for this bullshit, and then I want to punch myself for not going after them. Had I, this would not have happened. They would have been here. They wouldn't have nearly gotten killed.

"All of you sit your asses on the couch," K orders as he, Matteo, Lorenzo, and I stand side by side with arms crossed.

"Not you, Brooklyn. You can go do kid shit. You aren't in trouble like the rest of them are," I say.

Sienna takes a seat first, then Sasha next to her left, and finally, Ciera sits on Sasha's other side.

After what happened to my father on his property, I sent our housekeepers and their families on an extended vacation to the other side of the country. It's just us here, Krishna's men, and the dogs.

I don't know who I can trust within my organization or even if my people had anything to do with Cormac gaining access. It could have been a coincidence the DJ had a relationship with Fitzgerald. With all the shit going on, now something else happening before I can even breathe, I haven't had a chance to dig to find out.

"Are you happy with yourself?" I demand, looking my sister in the eyes. "Paul is fucking dead."

"He was a snitch, but I didn't want the guy to die." Sienna muses.

"What in the fuck were the two of you thinking? I specifically said, bring your asses back," I shout with zero control in my tone. I'm pissed off.

"You could have been killed, Sienna. Brooklyn could have been killed, our unborn child, all of you could have gotten killed," Matteo yells, his voice booming more than mine vibrating through the room.

"You don't get to take risks with yours or our kid's life, Sasha," Ren fumes. "You were driving that vehicle. You should have had more sense than that."

"We had it under control," Krishna joins. "We were going to take care of them. Instead, the three of you risked all of your lives and put those not even fucking born yet in danger. Unacceptable."

"Oh, so it's like that?" Sienna stands. Her dark eyes going from me to Krishna and then back to me again. "The two 'bosses' needed to assert their dominance by slaying the dragons that hurt the damsel in distress."

Sasha stands, mirroring Sienna's stance. "Newsflash, assholes, there aren't any weak bitches here that need protecting from the big bad wolves." Her eyes roll as she

makes a gagging noise by sticking her finger in her mouth in a mock gesture.

It makes me want to break another one of her fingers. She's lucky she's pregnant with a Caputo.

"Sienna," Matteo bites out. "Follow me. We need to have a chat, wife."

"Fuck that noise. Come find me when you want to apologize for this little tantrum you've joined." Sienna steps around the coffee table, not sparing us another look.

"Same goes for me too, Ren." Sasha follows, but as she steps in front of Ciera, she looks over her shoulder. "Let's go, shrimp. You're with us."

"What the fuck did you call her?" K asks as the exact words bubble up my throat.

"Clearly, you two dicks are only teaching her how to swallow cock," Sienna throws at Krishna and me.

"She needs us to show her how to put a man in the doghouse when he's acting like a little bitch." Sasha's eyes narrow on my brother before turning and making a performance of her exit.

"Ciera," I growl when she jumps to her feet and scurries after them, not meeting my eyes as I watch her the whole time, planning all the ways I'm going to punish and reward her.

My sister was partially right. I did want to kill Ciera's uncle as well as the police commissioner. There's no telling what all Owen was involved in or if he harmed Ciera as well. But Sienna was wrong too. I don't need or want a damsel of any kind. I don't see Ciera as weak or needing a man to come to her aid at every turn. But that also doesn't stop the desire to kill a motherfucker on her behalf.

"Well, that didn't go as planned," Matteo says when they're out of sight.

He gives us his back and walks to where a crystal decanter is on display, surrounded by crystal glasses turned upside down.

“That’s because you and Lorenzo don’t have order in your houses,” Krishna spits out from behind me as I head in Matteo’s direction needing a drink myself. “Those two better not corrupt my kitten.”

“Do you not have anything besides vodka in this place?” Matteo says, annoyed.

“If you want something else, go to the fucking store, punchy,” Krishna notes. He isn’t Matteo’s biggest fan, either. Like me, he wouldn’t mind going a few rounds with the boxing champion for all the times he ignored my sister and dated that cum-guzzling whore he had a child with.

My sister’s new husband usually isn’t one to drink that often, but he doesn’t have a fight coming up anytime soon that I know of, so perhaps he wants to celebrate the girls not getting themselves killed tonight, or maybe he has something heavier on his mind.

“Where’s Giovanni?” I ask. “Or are we calling him *Dad* now?”

“Fuck off.” Matteo pours enough vodka into the glass that some spills over the rim. “You’re his boss. Shouldn’t you know the answer to that?”

I do know where he is. He, Leo, and Thomas left for Boston this morning to make sure Carmine’s former crew knew there was a change in rank. I sent backup in case Giovanni ran into any issues, but something tells me even if he did, the old fuck could handle it himself.

“Fair enough,” I comment as he steps to the side so I can pour myself a drink. “How are you processing the news that Giovanni is your father and Pete is not?”

“Like anyone that found out their mother was in love with two men, got pregnant by one of them, but then chose the safe one to marry. And for the record, Pete is my father, not Giovanni, but it doesn’t fucking matter because I’m not speaking to any of them. They’re all three goddamn liars.”

“You’re taking it better than I would,” Ren adds to our conversation.

Lifting the filled sculpted double old-fashioned glass, I ask. “Do you want a drink?” When Lorenzo shakes his head, I flick my eyes to K and lift the glass higher. He takes it, and I turn back to pour another for myself.

“What about your townhouse?” I question Matteo. “Have you put it on the market yet?”

“And why would I do that?” he counters, sounding genuinely curious when he can’t actually be that stupid, but maybe all those blows he’s taken have made him slower than I thought.

“I’m not my father, Matteo. He gave Si a lot of fucking rope, but he also made her believe that rope didn’t exist or that it wasn’t looped around her ankle. Mine isn’t an invisible rope. It’s a goddamn chain, and if you think for one minute that I’m going to let my sister live outside my walls, then you don’t know me at all. She’s my consigliere. She lives wherever I live.”

When I turn around, he’s half in front of me, half to the side. His ocean blue eyes land on mine, and I like that he isn’t intimidated by me. He wasn’t by my father either and that was impressive.

“She’s *my* wife. Sienna is going to be the mother of *my* child. She’ll be wherever *she* and *I* both choose to live. I’m not living here forever, and Si doesn’t want to go back to your father’s house for obvious reasons.”

“Good. So far, we’re on the same page,” I tell him. I have no intentions of staying here any longer than I have to. It may be better than a hotel, but it’s not a home. I had a home, but now it’s stained with my father’s blood. I won’t be going back there, either. At least not for a long time. “I’m sure you’ll like your wedding present and agree it’s suitable for all of you and any pluses that come after.”

“Our wedding was almost two weeks ago. You’re a little late, and I don’t even give a fuck, Dom. I can give Sienna anything she wants. A house in a different fucking state if she wants.”

“Didn’t say you couldn’t, just indicated that you won’t. I will, and it’ll be in the city with the rest of us, but you’ll likely have to wait another four to six weeks before it’s yours.”

And Ciera will have to willingly give away two of the four properties she now owns, but I don’t say that out loud. I’ll talk to her about it later, or in a few days after she’s recovered from almost getting herself killed, and after I’ve rewarded her for saving herself, our sisters, and that little toots with an attitude upstairs that I might like just a little.

I put my hand on the champ’s shoulder and look him in the eye. We’re almost the same height, though I have perhaps half an inch on him.

“Sell the townhouse, Matteo.” I pause, giving him enough time to hear the order in my tone. “Or I’ll burn it to the ground.”

CHAPTER 39

“**W**hat do you think?” Domenico asks from behind me as I scan my eyes around us.

Oh my. What do I think? There is so much to take in, not just here, the other houses too.

When Domenico asked—and I mean actually asked, not told or demanded—if all the brownstones I own could be renovated, if one could be given to Sienna and her family and another to Ren and Sasha, I said yes.

I don’t have any bad memories associated here. I barely spent any time in this place after I returned from Ireland to be able to make any. After seeing the changes Dom has made, the place my father once called home doesn’t even look the same.

The walls were painted, all new appliances were installed, and furniture Domenico bought was brought in. I even got to pick everything out for my house, which was strange and fun at the same time.

The buildings are all listed in my name legally, and no one has given us any problems that I know of. As weird and surreal as all of this is, this place feels like a home when I look around it.

It’s been nine weeks since the incident in the alleyway. Brooklyn turned six. A year ended, and a new one began. Just today, Sienna found out she’s going to have a boy, and Sasha is having a girl.

They're in their houses now, while I'm standing in mine. Sienna's home is in the middle, with Ren and Sasha's on the other side. There were doorways that lead into the other homes already installed, making me think they were placed there in case my father's house ever got raided.

Dom didn't mention walling them off, so maybe he likes that idea too, or perhaps he likes the idea that all three houses are connected, making it feel more like one big house than three individual ones.

"I like it. Everything is beautiful and homey." I turn around to face him. "Is that a word?"

"It's a word, and I agree with your assessment. You did good, pet. I like it here. I like everything inside it too."

"Does that mean you're going to live here too?"

He hasn't mentioned it. There's a building across the street. It's the one I haven't been inside, nor did I have anything to do with the decorating.

"Ciera, as much as a small part of me is telling myself to lie to you right now, I believe in until death do us apart. I'll give you all the freedom your beautiful heart desires, but I won't give you a divorce. You'll never be free of me, little pet. Yes, I'm going to live here too."

"There's no record of our marriage license," I remind him. We found that out a few weeks ago when Dom submitted tax information to his accountant. "You're technically free to do and marry any woman you want for real this time."

He picks me up and slams my butt onto the desk. It's the only piece of furniture in the house that isn't new. His fingers wrap around my throat and squeeze before I can gulp air into my lungs.

"The only fucking woman I'll ever be married to is you. The only other person I'll ever want in my bed besides you is that stupid fucking giant that was supposed to be here fifteen minutes ago but isn't. My dick only works for you two. When are you going to start trusting me?"

He eases up on my flesh, allowing me to take a breath, but when my lips part and I start to say, “I—” He flexes his fingers so that his blunt nails dig into the skin around the column of my neck.

“Don’t ever lie to me,” he warns. “You can cuss me out. You can slap me across the face, stab me if you want, but do not lie to me, Ciera. And until you tell me all the things I’ve been asking, then you do not trust me.”

“It’s not that easy. I don’t even understand what trust is.”

“Maybe not, but just so we’re clear on what I want to know. Repeat the questions I’ve repeatedly asked you.”

“You want me to tell you if there is anyone else out there that’s ever hurt me. You want to know if it was consensual when I lost my virginity.”

“And?” he draws out.

“You want me to let you do me in the butt.”

“Don’t say it like that. It’s not sexy at all. And no, that’s not what I want. I want you to let K and me replace those bad memories you have locked up like Fort Knox inside your head with pleasure and the feeling of us both inside you at the same time. It’s like nothing else I’ve felt. It’s so much more that I can’t put words to. We want to give that feeling to you too.”

A while back, the three of us were together. Dom was inside me while Krishna was inside of him. It had been similar to when I walked into K’s bedroom to find Domenico thrusting slowly in and out of Krishna, but this time I didn’t catch them in the act. It just turned into that position.

After we’d finished, Krishna had been cleaning himself in the bathroom when Dom told me he wanted to fuck me in the ass while I rode Krishna’s dick. Those were his exact words, which made my breathing labored, and I’d broken out into a cold sweat.

My reaction was a dead giveaway that something was wrong, but I refused to open up to either of them.

I'm about to tell him I want all that and more when he continues, "But since you don't trust me enough to tell me who, when, and where, spread your legs."

"Wait, what?"

"Spread. Your. Legs. Pet. Take off this dress and pull your panties to the side. I'm going to show you how much your body trusts me."

My mouth drops open, but when I don't move to do as I was told, he takes it upon himself to pull the sweater dress up my body and over my head. He pushes my knees apart but makes no move to take my boots off.

The gas hasn't been turned on, so there isn't any heat, and it's so cold against my naked flesh that my nipples harden beneath my thin bra.

As if the temperature in the room isn't fazing him, he pulls the cups of my bra down, forcing my boobs to spill over the silken black material.

"You have the prettiest titties. Have I ever told you that?"

He pulls my butt to the edge of the desk, dips his head, and steals my lips. Grabbing my wrists, he pulls my hand between my legs. I follow through with his order by gripping the material and pulling it to the side while the clink of his belt buckle lets me know he's undoing his pants.

He keeps kissing and owning my lips like they're his and his alone, but I know that's not true. There's an itch in my chest wishing Krishna was here too, but that thought quickly slips to the back of my mind when he enters me hard, forcing himself inside my body.

The first contact with him always burns as he stretches me apart. He's so thick, it still amazes me he fits in there at all.

Sometimes he does me hard and fast, other times slow and measured. This time it's both. He pulls out slowly, making me feel every ridge and every vein wrapped around his dick. When he enters, he does so swiftly, ramming himself back inside like he's running from the boogie man.

Opening his eyes, he finds mine. “Your pussy trusts me, sweetheart. Your sweet little cunt trusts me like I’m her fucking moon and sun.”

He’s not wrong there. She constantly salivates anytime he or Krishna are in the same room as me. She worships the ground they walk on and isn’t afraid to show them how wet they make me with just a simple look.

“You want to know how I know your body trusts me, baby girl?”

“How?”

“When was the last time you’ve bled, Ciera, because you’ve yet to bleed all over my cock, and frankly, I’m thoroughly pissed off by that fact and thrilled at the same goddamn time.”

My eyes widen at what he’s revealing. I haven’t had a cycle since I got married over two months ago.

He thrusts back inside me harder than the last, then slides out achingly slow, only to push forward with such force it feels like my insides are trying to come out of my throat.

“You didn’t really believe my siblings were going to be the only ones having babies, did you, Ciera? I didn’t want kids. Did you know that? I still didn’t want them when that doctor handed me that piece of paper with your birth control prescription written on it. But then I walked out of the clinic, and as if I was throwing away trash, I balled the piece of paper up and threw it in the dumpster next to the corner without you seeing me do it.”

My core tightens, squeezing him as a ripple in a current shoots through me, my orgasm making me scream as it exits. Dom’s cum shoots inside me, coating every nook and cranny, painting me with his seed.

He kisses my cheek, his lips making a path down my neck, then over to the dip in my throat and back up until his lips take mine, kissing me with promises.

Holy cannoli. I may be pregnant. Okay, there is probably no maybe to it, but whose baby is it?

He pulls back until his dark irises find mine.

“K didn’t stay with us last night,” I state.

“I know.” His brows crease as tension clouds his stare.

“Why?”

“He’s working shit out in his head.”

I don’t like the sound of that. I hate that he isn’t here. He should have been here when Dom asked me about my cycle. He needs to know too.

“How long is that going to take?” I finally ask.

“He better not take too fucking long,” Domenico says with a growl in his tone.

“And if he does?” I can’t help but probe, needing to know where Domenico stands.

“Then we’ll have to remind him where he belongs and who he belongs to.”

“Which is who?”

“Us, my pretty pet. He belongs to us.”

CHAPTER 40

KRISHNA

It's been a week since the Caputos moved off my parents' estate and into the properties Ciera came to own in the city.

It's been two days since I've been inside my kitten—over thirty-six hours since I've even seen Dom.

It was strongly suggested that it would be in my best interest to vet the contender for the Canadian Pakhan spot since our countries border each other, and Moscow doesn't want another explosion to deal with. My father told me to tell them to go fuck themselves, but it seemed like a distraction I could use.

I knew I couldn't go cold turkey from Domenico or Ciera, which is why I slept in my bed in my apartment in Brooklyn for the past ten long fucking nights. I can't say that I've slept much. I can't say that I haven't wanted to kill anyone that's pissed me off in that time, either. Pretty sure the jackass that I saw pull a girl down an alley after I left a club last night didn't live after I shot him in the dick and then put a knife through his throat so hard I hit his spine.

I'm a little on edge, to say the least. It's like I'm experiencing major withdrawals without an addiction to any known vices. Though, Ciera's pretty little pussy might call me out as a liar on that.

Pretty sure my dick is feening to slide between her thighs, and that's why I'm wrenching the door open and walking into the brownstone across from where Dom made him and Ciera a home.

Domenico turned this one into an administrative space. He even offered the top floor to me since he took the second floor. It's more industrial inside and set up with offices instead of bedrooms.

Despite the organ in my chest screaming at me to say yes, I turned that offer down. That muscle and the one tucked into my pants just wanted to be close to the sweetest girl I've ever met as well as an asshole that's been fucking up my head since I was a petulant teenager that couldn't control his own dick.

Together they've turned my world on its axis, and I can't figure out how to right it again.

Distance should have worked.

It hasn't.

I thought if I went to a club and found a random, it would take the edge off. All I did was succeed in making one chick cry, another thank me because it was a sign she needed to find the Lord, and a grown man actually pissed his pants because he was that scared.

That's when I left, killed a would-be rapist, and went home and broke shit. I needed new furniture anyway.

After taking the stairs two at a time, I find Dom's office. When I walk in, I'm forced to stop or trample over Ciera, so instead, I allow my front to meet her back as my left hand finds her hip bone. She's trembling, and her fear sets off alarm bells that ring inside my ear, down to my toes.

My fingers squeeze her curves in what I'm sure will leave a bruise tomorrow as my other hand reaches inside my jacket for my semi-automatic weapon.

"What the fuck is going on?" I demand.

Domenico saw me enter, so he didn't react to the authority in my voice. The other man does. His slender frame, donned in a cashmere suit, turns to face me. I recognize Admir Kovaçi before the sneer on his top lip forms.

"Get your filthy Russian hands off my bitch."

Well, that was a fatal mistake.

I can feel the second Ciera's fight or flight instincts kick in, so I hold her in place, not allowing her to run.

"I owned her first, and I'll own her last," he continues.

If the first statement hadn't sealed his fate, that one sure as fuck would have.

"Guess we now know the who," Dom chides, his deadly eyes going from Ciera to me.

In a bated breath, Dom moves with a quickness I didn't see until Admir's body is convulsing with two prongs sticking out from his neck from a taser. He crumples to the floor in front of Dom's desk.

"Go home, pet, and so you aren't confused, that is an actual order. I don't want you here for this. Send Ren over, and sweetheart, don't wait up. I don't think we're going to be home tonight."

Leaning down, I plant a soft kiss on the corner of Ciera's mouth and then smack the side of her thigh. "Do as you're told, kitten. This is our turn to play."

And it's going to be gruesome, I say in my head.

The one thing we did get Ciera to answer was the man that took her virginity didn't have her consent. For that, he will die, but not before he suffers unfathomable pain.

Looks like a war with the Albanians was just penciled into my schedule.

CHAPTER 41

We were gone for forty-eight hours. I hadn't planned for it to take that long to kill a man, but he deserved everything he received.

I'm glad I didn't let Ciera watch. The things we did to the man that raped her multiple times over the course of years weren't images she or anyone else needed in their heads for the rest of their lives.

But me? I'll take pleasure in knowing he was given the same treatment she was forced to endure for God knows how long.

Giovanni knew men who don't take too kindly to sick fucks like Admir and how they hurt others, so we let them have him for the first eighteen hours. The following fifteen hours were spent with me, Krishna, my brother, Giovanni, and even Matteo, who used him as a personal punching bag. For the rest of us, he was a living, breathing target for knife practice.

I honestly didn't think Matteo had it in him, but after it was said and done, the champ finally earned his place in my family as well as my loyalty.

The final fifteen hours were used to get rid of the body and maybe a couple of hours of hate fucking between K and me.

That leads us to the here and now.

Krishna didn't come home again last night, and I'm fucking done with that bullshit.

“Why am I here?” K demands, crossing his arms as he widens his stance.

“Because we”—I flick my finger, indicating the two of us—“needed to talk. Alone.”

An hour ago, I sent him a text message to meet me here, on the third floor of the house I turned into office space for all of us except Ciera, though she knows she’s welcome to use any space here. It’s hers, but I thought having her own office in her own home would please her more than one across the street.

“Then start speaking, motherfucker. I have shit to do.” He doesn’t look at me. His eyes roam around the room, taking everything in for the first time.

“The only shit you’ll be doing is bending over and puking up the contents in your guts after I slam my fist into it if you keep on with your bullshit.”

Pushing off the edge of the desk, I step towards him, unsure if I will carry out my threat or kiss him instead.

It’s been too damn long.

Besides the few hours we had together four days ago, he hasn’t been around. He hasn’t texted. He hasn’t seen Ciera, and it’s affecting her more than she’ll admit. There’s a void in our bed without him in it.

Stopping in front of him, I reach around his left side, wrap my hand around the edge of the door and swing it closed.

“You aren’t sleeping in my bed. You aren’t even sleeping in your own,” I admit. He may not be around, but I still know where he is at all times of the day and night just like anyone else that means shit to me. I’m psycho in my stalking, but they all know I do it, him included.

I step a few inches closer, the material of my button-down shirt touching his as his arctic eyes finally settle on mine.

“Whose bed have you been in?”

“None of your goddamn business, motherfucker.”

“Have you cheated?” Planting my palm flat against his chest, I shove him backward until he’s against the door and I’m crowding his personal space, putting our shoes toe to toe.

A sardonic laugh leaves his lips, but all it does is piss me off, making my fingers bend as I fist his shirt.

“I’d have to be in a committed relationship for it to be considered cheating.”

“Have you fucked anyone else?” I seethe, spit flying from my mouth and hitting him in the face.

After taking a breath, he finally says, “No.”

Relief eases the vise gripping my heart. Leaning forward, my heels coming off the ground slightly, I smash my lips to his as my hands reach for his hips, holding him in place.

He kisses me back just as brutally, but the taste of bliss on my tongue is short-lived when he shoves me away.

“Do that again and I’ll gut you like a fish.”

What the fuck?!

Not heeding his warning, I step toward him again, only this time I wrap my hand around the back of his neck and yank him to me. Our lips smash together, his breath hot as it mingles with mine.

Instead of shoving me away, he drives his fist into my ribs, stealing the air from my lungs.

“Just because I didn’t fuck someone else does not mean I didn’t go looking. I’m just not into toys I can easily break.”

Before I can register what I’m doing, my fist clocks him in the jaw, the force of the punch sending a ripple of pain up my arm.

“Putting your dick in places it isn’t allowed or letting anyone other than Ciera or I touch you will only get them sent to the county morgue and a blade shoved through your eye, Krishna.” I let the honesty in my lethal tone slam against his thick skull, but his bored expression sends me over the edge.

“You are mine, goddammit. I’ll share you with my pet, but that’s it.”

“In what fucking world does you being *married to her*, me fucking *your* wife, or me fucking *her* husband, work? It doesn’t. This is over. We’re done.”

“Like hell we are.” I shove my index finger against his temple. “So get your shit in there straight and be home tonight. If I come looking for you and find you with anyone else, and I do mean any-fucking-body, I will paint a goddamn canvas with their insides while you watch.”

Having had enough of me being in control, he pushes against my chest, knocking my feet backward. He does it again, and then a third time until my ass is braced against the edge of his unused desk.

“Do you love her?” He gets in my face. Our eyes lock and our lips are so close I can feel his breath fanning across mine.

“Yes,” I answer honestly and without hesitation. That emotion shouldn’t be possible. Not for me. I thought I put every safeguard in place to prevent myself from falling in love. Somehow, it slipped through a crack in my armor and planted seeds without me knowing.

“Have you told her?” There’s a bite in his tone like he’s jealous, but there is not an ounce of surprise in his eyes.

“Not yet.”

His fingers claw against my chest through the thin material of my shirt as he fists the fabric, the same way I did him minutes ago, grasping at his control.

“Then why are you here with me? Why did you demand I come to see you?”

“She wasn’t the one I fell in love with first.” My admission comes out calm when in reality, the organ in my chest is jackhammering against my breastplate.

“Don’t.” His fingers flatten, and then he shoves, but since my body can’t go any farther, my back only reclines away from him.

“She doesn’t get to hear it before you do,” I continue, suddenly needing to say everything on my mind just as much as I want him to hear them come from my mouth.

“Stop,” he barks.

“I love you.”

“I said—”

“I fucking love you. I loved you first. Do you hear me?” I push forward with the intent to get in his face, but he jumps back like the invisible flames burning my body, as I wait for my words to sink into his head, have the ability to burn him alive.

“That doesn’t mean shit to me. I said we’re fucking done, so *hear* me, motherfucker. It’s over.”

HE WALKED OUT AFTER THAT.

He left me standing in his office, alone, after I handed him half of my fucking heart.

He didn’t just stomp on it and leave.

His words sliced my chest wide open when he said my love meant nothing to him; that *I* mean nothing.

My knees gave out at some point. I landed on my ass with my back against the mahogany wood, my head cast down and bent between my knees.

It feels like he ripped out not only his half of my heart but Ciera’s half as well. I’ve never felt anything this gut-wrenching in my life, and I didn’t think anything could compare to the pain of losing my parents.

He broke my goddamn heart with three sentences.

That doesn’t mean shit to me. We’re fucking done. It’s over.

And I let him.

I let him reach inside my chest and rip the muscle clean from my body.

“Domenico?”

I hear Ciera’s voice, but the vision in front of me is nothing more than glassy images that I can’t make out.

“Dom,” she calls out to me again, her tone louder, more assertive. I should look up, answer the command in her voice, but I don’t have the willpower to do so.

Hands push down on my knees, forcing my feet to slide across the carpeted floor as my legs straighten. Her feet step on each side of my legs, then her sexy, curvy body squats in front of me as her ass sits on my lap and her hands cup my face, forcing me to look her in the eyes.

The fact that liquid spilled from my eyelids when she tilted my head back should have been enough reason not to let her see me like this—a mess of a man. A weak man, affected by the words and actions of another.

“Talk to me.” Her thumbs swipe across my cheeks, ridding my face of the evidence that tears were there to begin with.

“He broke up with us,” is all I say while kicking myself for not stocking his or my office with alcohol. Drinking has always been a leisure activity and certainly not one of need like it is right now.

“What do you mean?”

“Krishna left. He doesn’t want to be with us anymore.”

It’s probably only me he doesn’t want, but I’m too much of a pussy to admit that to my wife.

She chews on her bottom lip before asking, “He doesn’t want us anymore, or he just doesn’t want to share you with *me* anymore?”

The line between her brows deepens with worry as her bottom lip wobbles.

Not being able to bear that thought going through her pretty head, I lift my hand and wrap it around the back of her

neck, then I pull her forward until her lips connect with mine.

Honestly, I didn't consider that as a reason for K calling us quits. As I turn her words over in my head, it doesn't compute as logical. He's just as hooked on her as I am.

"It's not anything you did or didn't do, Ciera," I say against her lips because I can't pull myself away from her.

"What happened then?"

"I told him I loved him, and he said it wasn't enough. Then he walked the fuck out."

"And you let him?"

"What would you have me do, pet? Beat his ass until he changed his mind?"

"You said we'd remind him why he belongs to us. So, if that's what it takes." Her shoulder lifts and then drops. "Did you tell him I'm pregnant?"

"No." I laugh for the first time because she's cute when grasping at anything, but it's short-lived. "Baby girl, I'm not playing the trap game with him. If he doesn't want us both, then it really is over."

We waited to take a pregnancy test even though we both knew what the test would show. *Positive*. We waited because she wanted all three of us to find out together. We'd planned to do it two nights ago, but K didn't show. When he was a no-show last night, I got pissed off and made her pee on the damn stick even though she wanted to wait.

"I don't accept that," she states, and before my mind can catch up, she hops off my lap and stands to her feet. "He didn't tell *me* he was breaking up with us, though I guess I wasn't officially part of the relationship, but I don't care. I want to hear it from K himself."

"He said that too." I climb to my feet as well. "Well, not exactly that but pretty much that."

"What did he say?"

“That we would have had to be in an actual *relationship* for anyone else to be considered cheating.” Fuck, my chest hurts. And I swear the pain only continues intensifying.

“He was with someone else?”

Horror is written all over her face, so I clarify. “No, Ciera. He just meant that we weren’t in a real relationship, a committed one.”

“That’s bullshit. We are in a relationship. Or we were.”

“Do you even know what type of relationship we were in? Because it’s not a normal one, baby girl. It’s not even accepted by most, or even legal.”

“So,” she says so bluntly that it makes me smile again. “What are they going to do? Throw us all in jail because we love more than one person?”

Stepping to her, I reach under her ass, squeezing her cheeks as I lift her. She wraps her legs around my waist, then I turn and sit her on top of the empty desk, making her untangle herself from around me.

“And who all do you love, Ciera?”

I lean into her, forcing her back to round and recline.

“Dom,” she says too sheepishly for my liking. I prefer her bolder side, but her shy side is still a part of who she is, and it’s a part of her that I love as much as every other beautiful part.

The back of her head rests against the hard surface of the wood as I tower over her. Running my lips across her jaw, I stop below her ear and ask, “Are you in love with Krishna the same as I am?”

“Yes.”

Gripping the hem of her sweater, I lift the material to her chest. Then I move my face down her body as my fingers glide the top of her leggings down her hips.

“Do you love our baby even though you haven’t met him or her?”

“Yes.”

I kiss the center of her stomach, then move my lips down to her navel, kissing her soft skin. My eyes close as my mouth pulls air into my lungs. I try to steady my erratic heartbeat. A part of me is dying to know how she feels about me. The other part is scared of what the answer will be. I know what our bodies sing when we're fused together but hearing the words roll off her tongue would make it as tangible as it feels.

“I love you too, Dom,” she admits when I don't ask the question locked behind my lips.

Her words breathe life back into my sunken chest, filling me with an emotion I honestly thought I'd shut off years ago. I wasn't supposed to fall in love with one person, let alone two.

Moving to her side, I continue peppering kisses on as much of her skin as I can.

“Would you stop?” Giving it her best effort, she pushes against the top of my head but doesn't move me an inch. “You're making me feel more self-conscious than I already do.”

“Why would you ever feel self-conscious? Especially around me.”

“For obvious reasons.”

“Then you're going to have to dumb it down for me, Ciera, because I don't see any obvious reasons.” She's so fucking beautiful. From the moment I first laid eyes on her, an obsession started to form. Then I touched her. From there, an addiction weaved itself into every sensory in my body that I've yet to fully sate.

“Because you're kissing and feeling all over my fat. All that's doing is making me feel gross.”

That makes me pause and jerk my head up to find her hands covering her eyes like she's embarrassed.

“Have I ever given you the impression that I don't like any part of you? Has K?”

“You hate my last name,” she argues. “Not to mention, I was a sure thing for both of you.”

“Your last name is Caputo, by the way. I eradicated the original one. Second, you’ve never been a sure thing. Krishna was not the one I considered didn’t feel the same way I do. He *chose* to be with me. You didn’t. You were forced into this. If we’re honest, you’re still being forced. I’ll never let you leave me, pet. I may claim to not want to trap K with a baby, but let’s face it, that is exactly what I did to you. I chose not to wear a condom, Ciera. It was very much a conscious decision.”

One she made too when she never asked either of us to wear one, but perhaps she didn’t feel she was allowed to ask, so that’s on me too.

“Until you and Krishna, I never knew sex could be enjoyable. I only knew pain. After that first orgasm, I wanted it again, only I wanted more than my fingers making me come. I wanted you both, and I didn’t want to feel something synthetic between us. A baby wasn’t even on my mind.”

“And now?”

“I want to have all of your babies and Krishna’s too. Is that wrong?”

“No, baby girl, that’s fucking perfect.”

I tilt my head back down and kiss her, starting under her bra in the center of her abdomen, working my way down past her navel to where the waistband of her leggings is folded over. Before I can yank them down even farther to get to the part I want to kiss, she starts to squirm.

“Dom?”

“Yeah?” I say against her velvety-soft skin as I tug on the material to lower it, kissing until I reach her neatly trimmed public hair. The back fabric finally pulls past her ass, giving me the access I want to her pretty pussy. Running my lips over her mound, I dip my tongue and part her lips. She’s wet, but then she always is when I get her like this.

“Mmm,” she moans.

“Ask your question,” I tell her, my breath coating every wet part of her.

“Are you going to be okay with it if we find out the baby is Krishna’s and not yours?”

You’d think having a conversation about a child while eating your wife’s pussy would be a turn-off, but it’s not. Maybe it’s because I wanted her pregnant. Perhaps it’s because the life she’s carrying inside her is mine.

Without moving my mouth, I flick my eyes up to see her lifted onto her elbows and her head tilted toward me.

“Whether the kid is biologically mine or his, Ciera, the baby is still mine. You’re mine. Now, can I go back to trying to make you come all over my tongue and K’s desk?”

“Yes, but then we go get our guy, right?”

“Fine. But if he breaks your heart too, I can’t be held responsible when I shoot him.”

Not giving her a chance to respond, I dart my tongue out to lick her clit, and with my hand, I push two fingers inside her heat.

She mumbles something, but as I’m fucking her silky insides while sucking on her sensitive nub to drive her nerves crazy, I can’t understand a word coming out of her mouth. I don’t go easy on her pussy, either. I pump my fingers into her fast and hard while making sure I touch her G-spot with the pads of my fingers.

Fuck, I wish it was my dick inside her instead of my fingers, but I love doing this to her almost as much as I love driving myself into her warmth.

Her moans get louder. With my free hand, I smack her thigh, making her gush onto my fingers. Her walls start to quake, and I swear I can feel them squeezing my cock from within my pants instead of two of my digits.

After she comes and is panting as she returns to earth, she grabs onto my head with both hands, forcing my face to look up, meeting her hooded gaze.

“If he breaks either of our hearts”—she says breathlessly—“I’m going to shoot him myself.”

“You’re hot when you talk about murdering someone.”

“I said shoot, not that I would kill him.” She takes a deep breath and then forces it back out through her parted lips. “I’ll just shoot him in places that won’t kill him until he realizes he’s ours and only ours.”

“You’re fucking cute when you sound a bit psycho.”

Reluctantly, I push off her even though I’d like nothing more than to stay nestled on top of her soft body. We need to find Krishna and beat some sense into him. If nothing more, he deserves a punch in the face for trying to kill me emotionally. I also need to do something else.

“Hey, Ciera,” I call out as I gently pull her to stand before me. Spanning my palm across her throat with my fingers gripping her jaw, I tip her head back, seeking her green eyes. “I love you too, pet.”

Her gaze widens in surprise, her eyes sparking with an unnatural glow inside the green.

Dipping my head, I find her lips with mine and kiss her, hoping I’m showing her just how much she is loved by a man not even I thought was capable of such a thing.

I’m starting to believe my dad was smarter than I ever gave him credit for. He may have given me the best birthday present that happened to coincide on the worst day of my life, but I made her mine, and it’ll be up to me to keep her loving me the way she does.

Losing her love would kill me.

That I’m sure of.

But it may be too late if Krishna doesn’t love us. I’m not sure I have my father’s strength to go years without both of the loves of my life, both by my sides and me by theirs.

I can’t fathom living with that type of turmoil the way he did every day since my mother’s death. I can only hope that he’s found his peace and that he’s finally with her again.

“Come on, sweetheart. We’re going to find our guy.”

CHAPTER 42

I'm a goddamn idiot.

I got so lost in my own head, from feeling like an intruder between Dom and Ciera that I stabbed myself in the heart without realizing what I'd done before it was too late.

By the time my chest tightened and I felt like I couldn't breathe, the words were said. I couldn't undo it.

"Boy, are you listening to anything I'm saying?"

Not really. "Yes, Mom."

Okay. I heard every word she lashed out in her Russian accent, but they were jumbled along with every other thought flickering through my head. The only thing I can see clearly is the memory of the look in Domenico's dark eyes when I said his love didn't mean shit to me.

I panicked, and like a dumb fuck, I lied like a coward and fled like a scared boy.

That's how I ended up on the phone with my mother while hugging a bottle of whiskey. I ran out of vodka days ago and haven't replenished my supply.

Anytime I'm in doubt over business, I go to my dad. Whenever it was something heavier, like matters of the heart and my tarnished soul, I've always turned to my mom. Only I tend to forget she isn't like other moms. She doesn't coddle or pat me on the back and reassure me that everything will be okay.

Mine smacks you in the back of the head and calls you a dumbass.

“Love isn’t something you can run from or toss to the side like it’s unimportant. It’s not something you lie about, either. Who the hell am I even speaking to? *My* Krishna isn’t afraid of anything or anyone. He certainly doesn’t give one single fuck how others see him.”

“That’s not what it’s about, Mom.”

Maybe that’s part of it if I’m honest. They’re married to each other, not to me. Regardless, I’d always be the third wheel, and I refuse to be the side dish, or worse, their dessert.

I want her to be as much mine as she is his. I want him to belong to me like he does her. I don’t see how that’s achievable. Not to mention I have Moscow breathing down my neck through the Canadian fucker they asked me to groom. I don’t know how my father kept them out of his shit. They want me to take a wife and produce an heir even though that isn’t typically how it works in the Bratva.

They wouldn’t care if I had ten women in my bed or even ten men, but having one of each out in public is another story. Ciera already went through enough shit that I don’t want to drag her into mine as I find my way as the Pakhan of the US.

A lot of people were scared of my father, which gave him freedoms I haven’t earned. They could decide to take me out as easily as my father took out one of theirs. In fact, I’m surprised they let it go; that there hasn’t been any backlash other than the Russian brotherhood being too friendly toward me—too buddy buddy for my liking—as though we’re all old friends.

“Son, when you figure out you still have balls between your legs and start to use them again, call me back. Until then, call your father for the ‘poor me’ bullshit you caused yourself.”

The call ends before I can call her a bitch like the petulant child she and I know I’m acting like. I also know it won’t get the reaction I want, either. It would take more than calling her

by that derogatory term for her to hop on a plane just to beat my ass.

After everyone moved out of my parents' house and I returned to my apartment in Brooklyn, I brought Rellik with me. Sasha took the girls with her. Pretty sure Kill's continued low growls are directed at me for taking him away from his females, but if I have to suffer from abstaining from mine, then he can be my partner in that shit whether he likes it or not.

Besides, he's my dog and should choose me over bitches anyway.

I mean, I wouldn't, but I'm not the one considered to be man's best friend. He's failing on the one job he was trained to do.

I'm lifting the crystal glass to my lips when a pinging noise sounds around the room, telling me that a code to unlock my door was just entered. If it's my sister here to steal my dog, she can eat shit. His sorry ass is stuck in this hell with me.

I swallow and glance up at the same time. When I see Ciera, I almost spew what hasn't finished flowing down my throat.

Dom enters behind her, but he doesn't spare me a glance as he deviates, going toward the kitchen. I don't even see the blade leave his hand and fly through the air until it punctures the leather seat back to my left, where I'm sitting in the middle of the couch.

I flick my eyes to my dog, who doesn't even attempt to move when he's staring me in the face like he wants to chow down on the motherfucker.

What the fuck?!

When I peer back in front of me, Ciera stands on the other side of the coffee table, her arms raised and outstretched, a nine-millimeter in her small hands.

"Kitten, why are you brandishing a gun in my direction?"

“Don’t worry about this little thing. It’ll only be used depending on how you answer.”

“That’s a bit psychotic,” I say. *And way hotter sounding than it should be*, but I keep that admission to myself. “Answer what?”

“Why you’re a gobdaw?”

“I don’t know what the fuck that means.”

She purses her lips, but she’s so damn cute when she says Irish words that no one else understands but her.

“It means you’re a bit of a twit. Don’t have your shit together. A bit dumb,” she informs me, matter-of-factly.

Rellik barks. I turn my head to where he’s sitting in the corner.

“You shady motherfucker. You just agreed with her, didn’t you?” I stare dumbfounded at my dog.

“That’s because he’s an intelligent creature.” Dom walks back into the living room, a crystal glass filled with amber liquid clutched in his right hand.

“Why did you break up with us, and why didn’t you tell me yourself?” Ciera drops her left hand from around the gun, then lowers the weapon to her side. Glancing down, I see her finger isn’t in the trigger well, so I remain seated instead of taking it from her. She’s continued to practice with my sister and Sienna, but that doesn’t mean she can’t make a mistake, especially when emotions are high, and it’s clearly written all over her face that she’s emotional and upset.

“Is that what you told her?” I ask, my question directed to Dom, who has yet to look at me.

“Among other things.” His dark orbs slowly ascend until they meet mine from where he stops behind Ciera. Swapping his glass to his other hand, he takes the gun from Ciera, shoving it down the waistband of his pants behind his back.

“Kitten,” I say, focusing back on her and not liking the look of hurt and confusion she’s wearing. “It’s complicated.”

“Well, un-complicate it,” she demands. Like a whirlwind, she spins, pulls something from Dom’s pocket, then turns back around and tosses it to me. “Because I’m pregnant, and we’re having a baby.”

“Ciera!” Dom spits out. “What about not trapping him wasn’t clear?”

The white plastic stick lands between my legs, but I don’t have to look at it to know what it is. I heard what she said. *They’re having a baby.*

“Congratulations,” I bite out, the taste bitter across my tongue.

“Did you sustain a concussion recently?” Domenico asks in a tone that makes me think he’s serious.

“You may be above trapping him, but I’m not,” Ciera says over her shoulder to Dom. Turning back to face me, she plants her hands on her hips. “You really are thick. When I said ‘we’re having a baby,’ I was talking about all three of us, moron.”

“Wait. What?” Suddenly, all the air evaporates from my lungs as I stare at Ciera while feeling around my lap for that plastic stick thing. Locating it, I wrap my fingers around the thing and lift it out in front of me. My eyes dip and sure enough, it reads *pregnant* in black print on the digital display. My wide gaze goes back to Ciera and Dom. “Whose baby is it?”

“Unless you have psychic abilities, we won’t know which one of us is the father until after he or she is born,” Dom enlightens me. “She isn’t having any unnecessary tests done, so we’ll both have to wait.”

I agree with him. I wouldn’t want to jeopardize Ciera or the baby.

This isn’t how I saw this day ending.

I walked away so that they could have each other and be happy.

But this changes everything.

Whether my DNA is intertwined with Ciera's or not, that baby is mine. The little momma carrying him or her is mine too.

I fucked all of this up. It hurts to even look at Dom after what I said to him, but he knows me better than anyone. That may be my only saving grace with us.

Standing, I set my glass and the pregnancy test down on the coffee table and then step around it to where Ciera is positioned in front of Domenico.

I'm about to snatch my little kitten off the ground when Dom pulls her out of my reach. Then he steps into my space, getting damn near chest to chest.

"Just because she may be carrying your child doesn't mean it changes anything. *You* walked out. *You* chose to leave. *You* said it was over. *Again*," he growls.

"Domenico, stop it." Ciera tugs on his wrist, but he doesn't move from in front of me, nor does his eyes look away from mine. "You know he loves us, so can we please be back together now?" she pleads, and it's cute.

"You're a little presumptuous, kitten." My gaze remains locked with his as I take in all the pain he's revealing. His dark eyes hold me captive, letting me see the depths of his soul, the storm swirling inside the brown surrounding his pupils.

He wasn't the only one I shredded with my words when I told him his love didn't mean shit. In actuality, it meant everything. We've always shown each other our feelings, but we've never said them.

"Then tell me I'm wrong," she challenges. "Say you don't love us and we'll leave."

"You aren't wrong, Ciera," I admit to her and to him. My eyes begging him to believe me.

"Finally," she says, and then slips the fingers of her right hand through my left ones while she stands beside both Dom and me.

"Not until he grovels," Domenico seethes.

“I don’t grovel.”

Dom’s nostrils flare.

“You hurt Dom’s feelings and need to fix it.” Ciera drops her grip on both of us and crosses her arms as her hip kicks out. It makes her look bossy as fuck and sexy at the same time. I’d typically smirk at that but now isn’t the time or place. My actions did hurt Dom. If I knew the right thing to do or say, I would have done it already.

“Wasn’t the first time I’ve hurt his precious little feelings, kitten. Won’t be the last either.”

Regrettably, the first time was my sophomore year of college, the first time we slept together. Even then, it wasn’t just a fuck. I thought he was an itch I needed to scratch. We’d danced around our attraction to one another for years. I just needed to fuck him in both holes and be done with the desire he invoked in me. And I did fuck him six ways to Sunday that night, but it didn’t satisfy shit.

We fucked each other all night. When I woke up with him in my bed, I panicked. A lot like I did a couple of hours ago. I told him I’d had my fill and that he didn’t even come close to the best lay I’d ever had.

I’m a habitual liar. The fact is, the only person to come close in comparison to Domenico is Ciera. Individually, they fulfill something inside me that I didn’t know I needed or wanted. Together, they make me feel crazy, out of control, and maybe a little bit like a fucking god.

So, definitely crazy.

Lifting my right arm, I snatch his throat between my fingers and squeeze, wanting to bruise his skin the way he enjoys doing to Ciera. And maybe I do too, but Dom is harder to mark than she is with her fair skin versus his deeply tanned flesh.

“We both know how each other feels. You know it,” I snarl, ticked off that he’s making me do this shit.

“No,” he refutes. “We know how *I* feel because *I* said the words. *I* told you I love you, but you turned your nose up at

my admission, and then you walked out like I'd puked all over your shoes."

"I love you too, motherfucker. Jesus. I've been in love with you since high school just like our pathetic sisters and their first love bullshit. Are you fucking happy now?"

I yank him forward, smashing his lips into mine as I squeeze his throat harder, demanding he kiss me back instead of giving him time to respond, fearing that he will push me away the same as I did him. It's what I deserve. It's what he should do.

It takes him longer than it should have to reciprocate, holding out until his body needs the oxygen I've cut off. I release my fingers when he gasps, only to find his waist and pull him closer to my body. His tongue dives into my mouth first, and like the needy bitch he sometimes is, he chases what he knows I can give him. His hand finds the back of my neck, wrapping his long, strong fingers around me, squeezing as he kisses me more brutally than he ever has before.

"You're ours," he growls into my mouth, the heat from his breath coating my insides as I pull as much of him into me as I can. The possessiveness in his tone creates goose bumps across my arms and down my spine, making me want to revel in them. "Tell him, Ciera."

"We're yours, and you are ours, Krishna."

Fuck yes.

Shoving me hard, I stumble backward while Domenico pants, his heated, hooded eyes making him look like the predator I know him to be. His chest rises and falls, then while his eyes are on me, he says, "Now suck his dick, pet. Show him who he fucking belongs to. That if he ever leaves us again, it'll be in a goddamn body bag."

When she goes to kneel, I snatch her around the waist, yanking her flush with my front. Dipping my head, I look her in the eyes while my lips hover a hair's breadth from hers. "I love you too, Ciera." Then I smash my mouth to hers, my tongue diving inside while my heart prays she's feeling just

how much I love them both, while my mind is reeling with more than I can comprehend.

EPILOGUE

It upset me when I found out there wasn't any record of our marriage being filed. Logically, I should have been overjoyed. I was forced to marry Domenico, after all. Even though that's true, when I think back on it, I don't think Tony would have made me go through with it if I'd outright refused or asked him not to make me do it.

I was so relieved to be out from under my uncle's thumb, and away from anyone I shared DNA with that I would have drunk any Kool-Aid the former boss had supplied me with, even if it was poisonous.

Still to this day, I don't know if it was the police commissioner, my great-uncle's brother, that had something to do with essentially nullifying our marriage or if Tony botched the wedding on purpose so that if Domenico didn't want me for a wife, then it would be as if we'd never said vows.

We weren't really married.

From Krishna's viewpoint, he was thrilled over that revelation. Me, not so much. I understood why he felt the way he did. With Dom and I married, he felt like the third wheel. And although I had the illusion of being married, I felt like an intruder between them.

Shortly after we all made up earlier this year, Domenico asked K and me to marry him. He explained it wouldn't be considered a lawful marriage, and after everything, I was okay with that. I finally understood that a piece of paper didn't

represent love and fidelity among a couple, or in our case, a polyamorous relationship.

I didn't need a man of God or even a judge in a country I've yet to fall in love with to declare us married. I didn't even need a ceremony, but they gave me one anyway.

I only had one request. The wedding had to be after the babies were born. Right before Dom proposed, we discovered I was pregnant with two and thought they were twins. Since twins run in Dom's family, we believed them to be his, but that wasn't the case exactly.

Come to find out, my body had released two eggs. Domenico's sperm fertilized one and Krishna the other. We were shocked, but I fully believe it was a sign that what the three of us have was meant to be. It was a blessing.

The boys were born on September twelfth, sharing a birthday with their late grandfather. We waited thirty-six hours to get the results back from the paternity test to assign them names. Konstantin was born first. He's technically K's son and Ariane is Dom's, but both of my men consider the boys theirs.

That was three and a half months ago. I thought waiting to get married until I wasn't pregnant would be better. I wouldn't have any baby weight to contend with, but that didn't turn into reality. I may not be as heavy as I was at the height of my pregnancy, but I still carry more weight than I like about myself. It doesn't matter that Domenico and Krishna tell me I'm beautiful daily. I feel this way, and I think it's perfectly normal not to like everything about oneself.

I just don't care enough to do anything about it. I still hate every single thing about exercise, not to mention I don't have the time in my life for it now that I'm a mom of two infants, and that's without factoring in growing an empire in New York City.

My great-uncle may be dead, but someone else was always waiting to claim his throne in Ireland. With the help of Dom and K, I made it known that anyone who didn't want to follow a cruel leader in Ireland or here could seek refuge in mine. Frankly, I don't even care if they're of Irish descent or not.

Diversity is good and beautiful and needed to build something lasting with unbreakable strength.

Sienna and Sasha had their kids on July fourth of this year. They even delivered at the exact same time.

Si had a boy she and Matteo named Antonio, after her dad.

Sasha and Ren had a girl, Alina. And, of course, within hours of delivering, Sasha didn't even resemble a woman who had just given birth. She was back to her perfect pre-baby weight and looking like one of those drop-dead gorgeous women you see on TV posed in a fight stance to advertise an upcoming fight. I've never actually seen her kickbox other than when she and Sienna are working out together. They seem to bicker more than throwing punches or kicks.

At least it took Si a little more time to recover after she had Antonio than it did Sasha. Even months later, I still feel like my body went through a train wreck bringing two humans into this world.

"Ciera, darling," Mischa calls out in his thick Russian accent.

"Yes?"

"Do you take Domenico to be your husband?"

"I do," I say gleefully.

"Do you also take Krishna to be your husband?"

"I do," I state, hearing the joy in my voice and unable to contain the smile that spreads across my face.

"As judge among our people, I pronounce you all married to each other." My father-in-law winks at me, then glances at Domenico to my right. "Welcome to the family, son."

Taking a step back from us, Mischa inhales a deep breath, then looks around the courtyard before saying, "If you'll excuse me, I have five grandkids to steal from my wife. She doesn't get to hog them all day."

We had our wedding in the garden behind our house. The fences between our three properties were taken down, so it's

really three yards made into one.

Brooklyn turned seven a couple of weeks ago, and she's just now finally warmed up to me. She still fawns over Domenico, but she started calling him Uncle Domino when the boys were born. She narrows her eyes on me a lot less these days, so I guess there has been progress on that front.

It's not like I can blame her or hold anything against her. If scary hot is a thing, Domenico wears it better than anyone. Krishna's blond locks are still deceiving to the naked eye. It's when you get to know him or really peer deep into his winter-blue eyes that he sends a chill down your spine.

"It's time to get you out of that dress, pet," Domenico whispers into my ear.

"We have a party to attend and babies to put to sleep. The fireworks will be going off soon too," I add. I chose New Year's Eve for our wedding date. I wanted to start the new year as one, so getting married at night on the thirty-first of December felt like a good plan.

"Fuck that. I have a marriage to consummate. Besides, we're doing the grandparents a solid," Krishna proclaims.

Nikita and Mischa spend more time being retired here in New York than they do in Florida since Sasha had Lina.

"Baby girl," Domenico calls out as he places his finger below my chin and then tilts my head back to look him in the eyes. "We either take this to our bedroom or we can fuck out here in front of our guests. I don't care which it is, but you're about to not have a stitch of clothing on your body."

"What happened to the part where you're supposed to kiss the bride?" I ask them both, first eyeing Dom and then turning my head to where K is facing us both.

Lifting his hand, Krishna's thumb runs from one corner of my mouth to the other, my lipstick likely smearing in the process.

"Oh, we're going to kiss your lips, kitten, but unless you want my parents to see my face nestled between your thighs, you should run."

Oh, hell, he's serious.

I look to Dom to help me out here, but he just crosses his thick arms.

Oh, grand, they're both on the same page.

MY OVERHEATED naked flesh rests against Domenico's front and between his legs. His lower back is against the pillows at the head of our king-size bed. His lips cover mine, devouring every square inch of my mouth with his tongue as his right hand squeezes my throat in the way he's made me come to need it just as much as I want it.

Krishna's face hovers over my pussy, my legs spread wide for him. Two fingers hold my lips apart as his tongue ravishes my swollen clit. Two of his other fingers slide in and out in a rhythmic pattern.

They're playing me like my body is their instrument and the sounds coming from my throat and the soaked opening between my legs is their music.

My hips buck and gyrate of their own accord. My fingernails at Dom's shoulder dig into his tightly-drawn skin. My insides coil tighter before releasing and sending endorphins flowing through me. My screams and moans of pleasure slip down Domenico's throat as the orgasm rocks my body. I swear on everything, I hear fireworks popping off every other second in the distance.

Their tongues and lips retreat from me at the same time.

"How thoroughly kissed are you now, pet?"

A breathless moan is the only answer I can give Dom in my spent state.

"Do you feel married to us yet, kitten, or did we do a piss poor job?" Krishna gloats.

"Sorry, baby girl, but there is no rest for the wicked. It's time to sit on daddy's dick."

I could have crawled under the table and died the first time I heard him say *that* during foreplay. Since the boys were born, making him a father, he's slipped that name into conversation quite a few times. Coming from his sexy mouth, he makes it difficult not to swoon every time it rolls off his tongue during sex or when referring to himself as one of the boys' dads.

Pushing up from the bed, I flip around and crawl on his lap. When I lower, he has his thickness posed for my entrance. Even after taking both of them most days, except for the six weeks intercourse was off the table while my body recovered from delivering the boys, he still takes a second to get used to when his dick penetrates me. They both do.

"That's it, kitten. Take his dick so Papa can have your pretty ass."

It took a while for me to allow them inside my back entrance. After being taken there against my will so many times when I was younger, I didn't think I could ever open that part of me to either of them. They just wanted to take away the bad memories, and even though those are still there, they pulled off what I once thought was an impossible feat.

They gave me pleasure.

"Come to me, sweet girl," Dom beckons, and on his command, I lean into him and plant my lips against his as I rock my hips.

"Goddamn, you feel good." Domenico's breath fans my mouth and across my face.

As always, when we're in this position, Dom's hands find my breasts, palming them first, then his fingers play with my nipples in the lightest strokes and tweaks that shouldn't be possible, but he knows what I love, and he gives it to me every time.

Krishna's warm hands find the globes of my butt cheeks. In slow motion, he runs one hand up the length of my spine and the other down the crack of my butt until he feels Dom's balls. I know this because whenever his hand dips under me

like that, my husband clenches his abdominal muscles as his cock jumps from within me.

Kneeling behind me, his hand roams back up and only leaves me long enough to lube his cock and line it up with my entrance, then he presses inside, forcing my hole to open for him.

I'm not going to lie, there is still pain associated with the act we're performing, but I'm no longer fighting against it.

He's slow as his long length inches inside. They both go easy, ensuring my mental state isn't harmed by their need to fuck me simultaneously.

This isn't just about their needs. Once I learned to relax, I finally understood what they felt when being inside me while the other was in them.

It's glorious.

It's a sense of closeness like nothing else. A feeling of being filled to the brim. Exhilaration. Elation. Joy. Happiness.

Before Krishna is fully seated inside me, he pulls back even slower and then pushes back in. He grips my hip, moving me away from Dom as he pulls himself backward at the same time.

This is where K takes control of Dom and me, guiding the way I slide back and forth against Domenico's cock. The way he enters and pulls out of my ass.

"She feels so fucking good," K finally comments, adding to Dom's praises.

"Can someone remind me why we aren't allowed to impregnate her again, because it sounds like a fan-fucking-tastic idea."

"God, doesn't it?" Krishna agrees.

I'm not opposed to having more children, but they are not keeping this girl barefoot and pregnant. Given the chance, there is no doubt in my mind that they would. So, I went on birth control after my first postpartum visit with the doctor that delivered our babies.

It wasn't the same physician I saw all those months ago. I didn't like her. I wanted someone else and ended up seeing the same OB-GYN that Sienna saw throughout her pregnancy and delivery.

"It's not forever," I chastise, or attempt to through a moan as I slip to the base of Domenico's cock as Krishna pushes all the way into me. "I just think we should enjoy the boys for a little while."

And I do. I want to experience everything with Kon and Ari. I want to give them the childhood I didn't have. I want them to know what love feels like and not have to question what's normal versus what's not. Maybe when they start preschool, I'll be ready to try again. Only time will tell.

"The boys need sisters to torture." Domenico's lips coast along my jaw and down the column of my neck as my head reclines.

"And to protect," Krishna whispers close to my ear as his hand wraps around my throat, squeezing lightly. His chest presses into my back as he continues to push my pussy, forcing my body to make love to Dom while he makes love to me from behind.

There is a tickle that flows down my ear when they kiss each other.

It's my favorite part. When we're all three connected, I feel like my life couldn't possibly get any better. There isn't one material possession I'd take over having them like this. The only thing I love more than my husbands are my sons, but Domenico and Krishna are right up there with them.

Eventually, I would love to give birth to their daughters, but for now, I want to enjoy my boys.

THANK you for reading Deviant Knight. Brooklyn has a story planned, but it'll be a standalone, as a spinoff to The New American Mafia. I can't tell you when her and Lorik's book is

coming because I have several others planned next. If you enjoyed this series, check out Dirty Blue by me.

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BAD PRINCESS

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DEVIANT KNIGHT

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

N. E. Henderson is the author of sexy, contemporary romance. When she isn't writing, you can find her reading or in her Maverick, playing in the dirt. This is Nancy's ninth book.

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