



CAPTURED

by a sinner

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

MICHELLE HEARD

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Dedication

This one is for all my readers.
You've changed my life in so many ways.

Viktor is for you.

Songlist

Click here - [Spotify](#)

Sinner & Saint – Tommee Profitt, Beacon Light, Moiba Mustapha

Tragic – Tommee Profitt, Fleurie

Don't Mess With My Mind – EMO

Monsters – Tommee Profitt, XEAH

Hard For Me – Michele Morrone

Be Careful – Tommee Profitt, Laney Jones

Coming Back – Robin Loxley, Smudge Mason

Lovely – Daisy Gray

With You Til The End – Tommee Profitt, Sam Tinnesz

Can't Help Falling In Love (Dark) – Tommee Profitt, Brooke

Where You Are – Tommee Profitt, Mike Mains

In Your Arms – Ryan Louder, Ashley Serena

Synopsis

After the Priesthood wipes out my family, I find myself kidnapped and held prisoner by the head of the Bratva – a man who's as charming as he is terrifying. My days are filled with chaotic emotions and fear, and with time, I realize Viktor Vetrov wants more than just my obedience.

He wants all of me, but I refuse to fall for his filthy promises of ecstasy.

The instant I gain my freedom, I run straight back to the Cosa Nostra. But, I quickly learn there are worse monsters in the world than the one who held me captive.

With no family left, choices are made for me. None are in my best interest.

I'm forced to marry a man twice my age who doesn't have a gentle side.

I only have one hope. Viktor Vetrov.

But asking the head of the Bratva to save me will leave me indebted to him.

Do I give myself to the old monster who will use and abuse me, or do I give myself to the attractive devil who wiped out my family?

Captured By A Sinner

*Mafia / Organized Crime / Suspense
Romance*

STANDALONE in The Sinners Series

Book 5

Authors Note:

To do Viktor & Rosalie's story justice, it has been written in two parts that takes place over several years, so you get their past and present.

This book contains subject matter that may be sensitive for some readers.

Although it's not a dark romance, it does have triggers.

There is triggering content related to:

Loss of Family.

Abduction.

Graphic abuse – Verbal, emotional, and physical.

Threat of rape.

Sexual assault.

Role-play of sexual violence.

Extreme graphic violence & death.

18+ only.

Please read responsibly.

Priesthood:

*A gathering of Mafia dons that was in effect
a convocation of the nation's priesthood of
organized crime*

**“Only a villain will do what’s necessary to save you. He’ll
burn down the world if he has to.”**

~ Rosalie

Family Tree

Viktor Vetrov



Family Business: Bratva

Father: Dimitri Vetrov

Mother: Ariana Vetrov

Godfather: Alexei Koslov

Uncle: Damien Vetrov

Best Friends: Luca Cotroni & Mariya Koslov

Rosalie Manno



Family: *(Deceased)*

Chapter 1

Rosalie

Viktor; 25. Rosalie; 17.

I'm exhausted after all the studying. Thank God it's done, and the only thing left is graduation day.

Dressed in my tight shorts and tank top, I always wear when I plan on taking a nap, I flop down onto my bed and put in my earbuds. I listen to my favorite playlist on repeat while lying on my stomach and looking at the list I made.

A smile plays around my lips. Bali. Portugal. Greece. Italy. Or maybe I should visit Finland, Norway, and Iceland. Then there's also Japan, Scotland, and Ireland.

Damn, it's hard to choose.

I'm taking a year off before deciding what to do with the rest of my life, and I plan on traveling to some of my dream destinations. The thought is both exhilarating and scary. I'm finally free from school to do anything I want, but I have no idea what that 'anything' entails.

My family is wealthy, so there's no need for me to work. I could lead the life of a socialite, or I could do some charity work, or I could study further. *Ugh.* Scratch the last one. I don't want to think about anything school related for a long while.

With the music blasting in my ears, my thoughts drift off to sandy beaches, all-night parties, and sleeping late.

The Mediterranean sea. Castles. Waterfalls.

It's going to be ama—

An earbud is plucked from my ear, instantly making me frown. “What the hell?” I glance over my shoulder, and it’s as if my ability to comprehend anything up and vanishes into thin air.

I stare at the man.

The sound of gunfire registers.

Oh, God. There's a strange man in my bedroom.

In a split second, I take in everything about him.

His dark brown hair. His black as night eyes. The strong jaw that looks like it’s been carved from stone.

He’s tall. *Like freaking tall.* His body is muscled. Not in a bulky way, but firm with the promise of a six-pack beneath the black long-sleeve that clings to his chest like a second skin.

He’s absurdly hot, giving off a bad boy vibe that would make most of the girls at school drop their panties in a heartbeat.

But there’s nothing hot or dreamy about this situation.

Alarm shudders through me, and right before my senses flood back with panic chasing their heels, it sinks in – his eyes are filled with brutality. His stance is ready for action. He’s holding a gun in his right hand.

Holy. Freaking. Shit.

Too slow, fear trickles into my veins, then, with a hell of a rush, panic hits me so hard, I fall off the bed.

My breaths instantly explode from my lips as I scramble to my feet. My heart pounds violently against my ribcage as if to spur me on to move faster.

I dart in the direction of the door but don't make it as a strong arm wraps around my middle, and I'm swept into the air. My back slams against his solid chest, and feeling the strength in his body, which easily holds mine imprisoned, rips a terrified scream from me.

Hot air hits my ear, sending shivers racing over every inch of my exposed skin. "Do as I say and you'll get out of this alive."

W-w-what?

My lips part as my lungs greedily suck in a harsh breath while my eyes widen.

Survival mode courses through my veins, the random popping of gunfire sounding distant, the heat from his body too much to bear. It feels like he might set me on fire.

I yank against his hold, but it only has his arm tightening around my middle until it's painful. Like a person possessed by a demon, I struggle to free myself. My body squirms and wrenches. My nails rip at his sleeve and hand.

My breaths are nothing more than burning gasps, my heart fluttering viciously in my chest.

In a single and way too easy move, he slams me down onto the thick plush carpet. The air whooshes from my lungs, followed by a panicked squeak. With a powerful hold, his

fingers wrap around my throat, and the icy metal of his gun is pressed to my forehead. His muscled legs straddle me, his upper body locked and ready to attack above me.

Like gusts of destructive winds, horror slams into me.

My hands grip his wrists, a desperate cry torn from my very soul.

“Calm the fuck down,” he snaps harshly, the timbre of his voice deep and menacing, promising nothing but pain and death.

My breaths burst violently from my lips, my wide eyes locking on his unnerving dark and ruthless ones. “L-let me go,” I plead, my voice drenched in terror. “P-please.”

He takes a deep breath before repeating, “Calm down. Just do as I say and you’ll get out of this alive.”

Out of what?

My body is wound so tight my muscles are screaming in protest. My voice sounds as vulnerable as I feel. “What’s happening?”

Slowly he tilts his head to the left, his eyes burning on my face. The way he’s staring at me makes my terror increase tenfold.

Shit. Shit. Shit.

His grip around my throat loosens until it feels like a caress, then he says, “I’m going to let you up. Don’t try to run.”

Like hell, I won’t.

Shakily I nod so he’ll get off of me.

Without much effort, the man, who looks like he's in his mid-twenties, climbs to his feet. The gun is no longer aimed at me when he takes hold of my arm and tugs me to my feet.

My tongue darts out to wet my parched lips, my eyes flicking between the bay window where I've spent many nights reading my favorite books and the door.

Just then, another man appears in the doorway. He looks a little older than my captor but just as dangerous and heavily armed.

Shit. It's hard fighting off one... but two?

With the first wave of shock starting to fade, it registers we're under attack.

I haven't lived under a rock. I know what my family does for a living. My grandfather was an associate of the Cosa Nostra. Or at least he was until my Dad died in a car accident, and we moved to Chicago and later to Canada. Six years ago, my entire life changed when I lost my father, and I was forced to say goodbye to Alissa, the only friend I had. Between moving from Chicago to Canada, I never managed to make any real friends, and I've lost contact with Alissa.

I've always known of the mafia, but I've never been directly involved in any of their dealings, so this is downright terrifying.

I don't know what to do.

Do I listen and hope I get out of this attack alive, or do I fight back and try to escape?

Where are my grandfather and Uncle Ricco?

Surely they're fighting back? Maybe one of them will come to save me. Or one of the many guards working for our family.

The thought makes hope trickle back into my heart.

"Aww shit," the man at the door mutters as if I'm the biggest inconvenience of his life. "What the hell are we going to do with her?"

"I'll handle her," the man gripping my arm says, his tone leaving no room for argument.

Without any explanation of what the hell is going on, I'm hauled out of my bedroom and dragged down the hallway and stairs. I stumble halfway, the only thing keeping me from falling the merciless hold on my arm.

The second we stop moving, I start to struggle to free my arm. My captor lets go, but before I can dart away, his arm locks around my neck, and my back is yanked flush against his chest.

"Don't fucking touch her! She has nothing to do with this," I hear my grandfather shout. It rips my attention away from my captor, only to see my grandfather on his knees in the middle of the living room.

Another man kicks Grandpa in his stomach while roaring, "But you fucking tried to kill my wife and sister?"

Oh, Jesus.

The icy metal of the gun presses against my temple, making every muscle in my body freeze.

We're all going to die.

Shit.

I don't want to die.

“What’s your name, little one?” my captor asks, his tone laced with threats that cause more terror to crash over me.

I’m torn between wanting to cower at his feet, begging him to spare me and fighting back with every ounce of strength I have.

These men are ruthless. You have to fight.

I grit my teeth, and not wanting to show just how scared I am, I bite out, “Rosalie.”

I was named after my mother, who died giving birth to me.

My captor rubs his cheek against the wild strands of hair hanging around my face and shoulders, then takes a deep breath.

Dear God.

Shit.

My muscles tighten, even more, my fingers digging into the fabric covering the forearm wrapped around my neck.

“Hmm. Little Rose. You smell mouthwatering.”

NoNoNoNoNo.

There are worse things than death, and for the first time, the fear of being raped flares through me like wildfire, destroying the meager hope and sense of safety I had left.

If you don't fight, you will not survive today. They'll do horrible things to you before killing you.

My muscles lock up, and my jaw is clenched tight as I growl, “Fuck you.” I try to slam the back of my head against his nose in the hopes of getting free, but he easily avoids me, letting out an amused chuckle.

My nails dig deeper into his forearm, and I become highly aware that I’m wearing a pair of tight shorts and a tank top that exposes my midriff. No bra. No shoes. I might as well be standing in my underwear in front of all these men.

I only wear this outfit when I’m in the privacy of my own bedroom. I’d always cover myself with my oversized sweater whenever I needed to go to the kitchen for a snack.

Every inch of me trembles from the merciless waves of terror washing over me.

“I need plastic bags,” the scary man standing by Grandpa says.

“On it, boss.” One of the other men quickly leaves the living room.

Why? Are they going to suffocate us? Jesus.

My eyes dart around, and I count eleven men. There’s no sight of any of our guards.

I look at Uncle Ricco and notice the blood staining his clothes. His color is ashen.

No.

The man doing most of the talking slowly stalks toward Uncle Ricco. I desperately shake my head when he pulls a massive knife from where it’s strapped to his leg.

“I’m going to assume Ricco is not only your nephew but your right-hand man, right?” he drawls as if he’s bored.

“This is between you and me,” my grandfather says, his voice an angry rumble.

The man grabs hold of Uncle Ricco’s jaw and presses the gleaming blade to his throat.

Oh, God. No!

An emotion unlike anything I’ve ever felt before snuffs all the light from my life as I watch in absolute horror how my Uncle’s throat is brutally sliced open.

Flashes of Uncle Ricco holding me at Dad’s funeral, buying me a gift to make me smile, telling me a joke to make me laugh – the memories drain the blood from my face as I watch his own spill from his neck.

A scream is ripped from me, and I start fighting with every ounce of strength in my body.

“Fuck you!” Grandpa roars.

My horror-stricken gaze darts between Uncle Ricco, who’s bleeding horribly, and Grandpa as another man kicks him. When Grandpa falls onto his stomach, the man steps on his back to keep him from getting up.

“Fuck you. I’m going to fucking kill you,” Grandpa roars, his face red with rage.

Uncle Ricco makes sickening noises as he tries to breathe, his blood soaking his front and staining the carpet.

No.

No.

No.

Drained of life, my body sags in the hold of my captor, my eyes glued to my dying uncle.

I don't realize I'm crying until my captor's tongue flicks against my cheek, catching a teardrop. His voice promises nothing good for me when he taunts, "I'm going to enjoy her."

Unbearable devastation and raw hopelessness soak deep into my bones, making my body feel twice as heavy.

"Please," Grandpa begs. "She's a child, only seventeen."

All my life, I've been protected.

I've only had two boyfriends. The furthest I got was second base. Our hands didn't even stray beneath our clothes. I probably would've given Matt my virginity if he didn't cheat on me with Kaylee. Uncle Ricco spent night after night holding me while I cried my broken heart out.

There were always comforting arms to hold me.

I've never had to fight for anything.

I've never been exposed to violence.

I've never seen death.

Until today.

The man holding me starts to move, dragging me to where the front door used to be. It's only a hole in the wall now, debris lying everywhere.

"I can wait until she's eighteen. Watch her blossom like the little rose she is before making her my whore."

God. No.

My terror intensifies sharply, and I fight against his hold on me, desperately shrieking, “*Nonno!*” My grandfather is my only hope.

“Please,” Grandpa cries. “She’s just a fucking child!”

My captor yanks me over the rubble and out into the night that’s starting to fall over the mansion. The soles of my feet sting from the debris digging into them as I’m forced to walk.

“*Nonno!*” I scream, kicking and hitting with everything I’ve got.

“Jesus fucking Christ,” my captor snaps right before my feet leave the floor, and I’m hauled over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

My hands slap against his muscled back, but I can’t kick because his arm locks my thighs to him. My eyes keep touching on bodies, blood, and weapons, and it all makes me wiggle and thrash harder.

I hear a car door being opened, then my body’s flying backward as I’m thrown onto the backseat. My captor’s hand cups the back of my head as if he’s trying to ensure I don’t bump it, which is weird because it’s clear he plans on killing me after he’s done raping me.

With wide eyes and more fear than I can handle, I stare up at him as he braces himself over me.

“This is for the best,” he mutters right before his fingers wrap around my neck, and the airflow to my lungs is cut off.

Debilitating fear and panic have me clawing at his arms, my body bucking like a wild horse.

“Shh...” he hums as if to soothe me.

My terrified gaze is frozen on his. As I’m dragged into the bottomless pits of fear, knowing I’m about to die, he looks calm.

As if he’s not killing me but doing me a favor.

As if he’s not starving my lungs of air.

My heart thrashes in my chest.

A strangled sound escapes me as my arms grow numb, and my body becomes heavy until it refuses to move.

Still, I keep staring at him, pleading with my eyes.

Don’t kill me.

I haven’t had a chance to live. There’s so much I wanted to do. I had so many dreams.

Please. Don’t kill me.

He leans closer and presses a kiss on my forehead. “Go to sleep, Little Rose.”

Tears escape my eyes, and his lips catch one again.

My eyelashes flutter closed, my lungs screaming.

My body is screaming.

My soul is screaming.

No.

Chapter 2

Viktor

Blyad'.

When I agreed to help Nikolas take down the Sicilians, I sure as fuck didn't think I'd be kidnapping a girl. Whenever I watched the house prior to the attack, I never saw her come and go.

My loyalties lie with the Priesthood, a group of mafia heads created by Luca, who's my best friend and the head of the Italian mafia, and today the Sicilians paid for constantly invading Liam and Nikolas' territories.

It's nothing more than business.

But I sure as fuck didn't expect her. *Little Rose.*

I had to sedate her once we boarded the private jet to keep her from fighting.

As I carry her limp body into my house, I know I'm going to get a ton of shit from my family for taking her. It was either that or one of us killing her, and I wasn't about to let that happen.

Why?

She's nothing to you.

The answer comes instantly like a slap upside the head.

It's because she was so fucking scared. Her fear stirred something in my chest I've never felt before. Something I don't want to think about.

My house is situated on a property the whole family shares, so they're bound to find out Rosalie's here. The estate holds three mansions – my parents' place, Uncle Alexei's, and mine. There are also a couple of guesthouses that are mainly used by our guards.

My father and Uncle Alexei are inseparable and ran the bratva together before I took over. The bratva is mine by birthright as my grandfather, on my mother's side, ruled before he died.

Over the past two years, I've worked my ass off to make a name for myself. Sure, I was feared because of the legacy my family created, but now grown men piss themselves because everyone knows there's nowhere you can fucking hide to get away from my wrath should you incur it. Having a conscience is for the weak, so if someone gets on my wrong side, I'll hunt them down, and I won't hesitate to torture, maim, and kill anyone who dares to oppose me.

Rosalie's cheek rubs against my shoulder, her eyes drowsily fluttering open and closed as she struggles to fight the sedative.

Again something too tender for the likes of me stirs in my heart.

“Shh...” I murmur. “Everything's going to be okay.”

The girl was one hell of a surprise. An exquisite one at that. When I saw her lying on the bed, her perfect ass on full

display, her toned legs crossed at the ankles, my first thought was that she looked like a wet dream come to life. I hardened in a split second.

Then she looked at me, and I swear the ground shook beneath my feet with the force of a thousand earthquakes.

Rosalie Manno is nothing short of an ethereal vision.

She makes me feel fucking overprotective but also brings out a dark side I never knew I had. It's different from the one that doesn't think twice about ending a life.

It's savage and predatory.

I want to protect the girl, but at the same time, the beast in me wants to feel her tremble and use her tears to satisfy the hunger growing in my chest since I first laid eyes on her.

Entering the guest room, I carefully lay Rosalie down on the king-size bed. Her dark brown hair is long and wild, her olive-toned skin looking a little too pale.

I allow my eyes to drift over all of her, the tank top that doesn't do much to hide the swells of her firm breasts, the stretch of silky skin around her abdomen, the tight shorts showing off the taunting gap between her thighs.

Jesus.

I hear footsteps, and as I glance over my shoulder, it's to see Luca coming to stand in the doorway. He glances at Rosalie, and it has me reaching for the covers and throwing them over her to hide her body from my best friend's view.

"Your whore?" he asks, his tone clearly stating he doesn't know what to make of my actions.

During the flight back, I stayed with Rosalie in the bedroom in case she woke up, so we haven't had a chance to talk about the fact that I kidnapped the girl.

"I only said I'd make her my whore to torture Antonio Manno."

"So you'll let her go?"

I glance at Rosalie's sleeping face before heading out of the room. I shut the door and lock it, pocketing the key. Walking down the hallway, I feel Luca behind me, but I only answer him once we're in the living room and I'm pouring drinks.

"No."

His right eyebrow lifts as he takes the tumbler of whiskey from me. "May I ask why?"

I take a sip of the vodka, savoring the quick burn. "The girl just lost everything, Luca. She has nowhere to go."

"She can go to the Cosa Nostra."

Shaking my head, I let out a humorless chuckle. "Not happening, brother. Drop it."

Luca's eyes lock with mine, concern tightening his features. "Just don't do anything you'll regret."

My family is known for a lot in the criminal world, anything from dealing in arms and assassinating high-value targets to cybercrimes and money laundering. But we don't hurt women, and we sure as fuck don't condone sexual slavery. Aunt Isabella's spent her life bringing down sex trafficking syndicates with the help of Uncle Alexei.

I give my friend a look of warning. “The safest place for the girl is with me.”

Luca nods before finishing his drink. “I’m going to get some sleep. Try to get some rest.”

Nodding, I swallow another sip of vodka, my eyes following Luca as he opens the front door and leaves. I set the tumbler down and slowly turn my head in the direction of the stairs.

I have no idea what I’m going to do with Rosalie Manno. I took her to protect her, but I’m pretty sure she’s not going to see it that way.

After she turns eighteen, I’ll let her go. Until then, I’ll feed and clothe the girl.

Pulling my phone from my pocket, I dial Sacha’s number. He’s been with the bratva since before I was born and is my most trusted man. The man is practically family. I instructed him to get all of Rosalie’s belongings, so she’ll at least have something familiar while staying with me.

“Viktor?” he answers after the second ring.

“Did you get everything?”

“Yes. I’m on my way back.”

“Good.”

Letting out a sigh, I tuck the device back in my pocket and head to my bedroom so I can shower and change into comfortable clothes before facing off with the Sicilian princess.

While standing beneath the warm spray of water, my thoughts are inundated with the day's events. Rosalie's fear when I licked the tear from her cheek was palpable. It created an inferno of protectiveness and possessiveness inside me.

No woman has ever had this effect on me.

Sure I feel protective of the women in my family, and I'd die for any of them in a heartbeat.

But Rosalie triggered different emotions within me.

Not ready to figure out why, I shove the thoughts down and step out of the shower so I can dry off.

After pulling on black sweatpants and a t-shirt, I grab an extra shirt and walk to the guest room. There's silence behind the door as I unlock it, and when I shove it open, it's to see Rosalie leaning out of the open window and staring down at the garden below.

"If you jump, you'd probably break a leg," I mutter as I walk into the room. "Or two."

She spins around, her chest heaving as her fear quickly tightens the air.

I drop the shirt on the bed. "There are guards all over the grounds, so you won't get far."

Her tongue darts out to nervously wet her lips, her eyes glued on me.

Christ, she has the most expressive eyes I've ever seen.

There's nothing I can do to stop myself from taking in her petite body. She has curves in all the right places, and the

fucking V between her legs makes my cock stir behind the fabric of my sweatpants.

Crossing my arms over my chest, I order, “Put on the shirt. Your clothes are revealing and distracting as fuck.”

She darts to the bed, and trembling like a leaf caught in a hurricane, she pulls the shirt over her head, capturing her hair beneath the fabric. Thankfully, the shirt falls to the middle of her thighs.

I step forward, and it makes her freeze like a hunted deer, her breaths quickly turning shallow until she’s practically gasping.

When I take another step, she stumbles backward, her fear-filled eyes never leaving me. With every step I take, she matches mine until she’s backed up against the wall. Her gaze darts wildly around the room, and when I lift my arms, she recoils, tucking her chin low and pinching her eyes shut.

I slip my hands beneath the silky strands of her hair and gently pull her hair from the fabric so it will fall freely down her back. Her eyes flick up to mine, only to quickly dart back down to the floor.

She smells soft and sweet and looks so fucking vulnerable it has my heart squeezing.

When she peeks up at me again, I ask, “Do you know who I am?”

She shakes her head, the single word quivering over her lips filled with a world of vulnerability. “N-no.”

“Viktor Vetrov.”

My name registers with shock and terror, draining the color from her face.

She's definitely heard of me.

Chapter 3

Rosalie

After I woke up and realized he didn't kill me, I had a surge of hope that I might survive this. It's snuffed out the instant I hear his name.

Oh. My. God.

Viktor Vetrov is the head of the bratva. He made a name for himself two years ago when he took over control of the bratva and eradicated part of the Chechen mafia for setting foot in America. My grandfather was highly impressed and spoke about it for days.

The only reason the Cosa Nostra continues to rule New York is because the Priesthood respects old blood. The five ruling families of the Cosa Nostra have always held power over New York, and as long as they don't deal in the Priesthood's territories, an unspoken treaty is maintained.

Jesus, he's part of the Priesthood.

I've overheard my grandfather and Uncle Ricco talking about the five men who make up the most feared criminal group in the world and the problems they presented for the family business in Chicago and Canada.

Their biggest worry was Viktor Vetrov and Luca Cotroni, the head of the Italian mafia. I've heard the two men are best

friends and unbeatable.

Viktor is also known as the Hellhound. It's said there's nowhere you can hide because he's the best tracker. He's highly intelligent, ruthless, and kills without hesitation.

Shit. It's a miracle I'm still alive.

My throat tightens from all the terror as I stare at the man whose second nature is to torture and kill.

He tilts his head slightly, making him look even more predatory as his eyes sharpen on my face, then he murmurs, "You've heard of me."

Shaking uncontrollably, I nod.

The corner of his mouth lifts in a satisfied smirk. "Good. Then you know how stupid it would be to run."

God. I don't stand a chance against him.

A million questions bombard me, and I glance around the room to get a much-needed break from the brutal intensity shining from his eyes.

The embroidered white bed covers and pillows look as plush as they felt. Everything in the room is made of dark wood – the doorframes, the windowpanes, the vanity and chair, the walk-in closet, and even the floor. There's another doorway that I presume leads to a bathroom.

"Rosalie," Viktor says, so I'll focus my attention back on him. When our eyes lock, he continues, "You'll be safe here until you turn eighteen."

Then he'll make me his whore like he told my grandfather.

My grandfather.

Is he...?

Even though I know deep down what the horrible answer is, I ask, “My grandfather?”

“Dead.”

The word slashes through my entire being.

My breaths come fast, my breaking heart rattling in my chest.

They killed my family.

I'm all alone.

I suck in a painful breath that's choked by a sob forcing its way out of me.

Viktor reaches a hand out to me, and without thinking, I slap it away. Everything in me spirals out of control until there's only violent turmoil.

My body reacts on its own, and darting forward, I slam my fists against Viktor's chest. I hear a scream filled with equal parts of horror and sorrow.

I keep hitting his chest until he grabs hold of my wrists, and my body is spun around. He forcefully crosses my arms over my chest and locks them in place with his much stronger ones. His foot swipes mine from under me, and I'm taken down to the floor. My butt hits the wood so hard, it makes me hiccup.

I let out a hopeless scream, and it morphs into uncontrollable sobs as grief drags me into a bottomless pit of despair.

Sitting between Viktor's legs, his arms are wrapped around me, my back pressed to his solid chest.

"Shh..." he tries to soothe me, but the sound only sends icy shivers rushing over my feverish body.

The horrible events of the day flash through my mind. Uncle Ricco's throat being sliced. My grandfather threatening and begging.

Viktor licking my tear and saying I'll become his whore.

Viktor strangling me.

I wish I didn't have to face a second of this life without my family.

God, I wish they killed me first.

But they didn't, and now I have to face the nightmarish fact I've been captured by the head of the *bratva*, and he can do whatever he wants to me.

My body slumps in his hold until the back of my head rests against his shoulder. Through blurry vision, I stare at the window, thinking the first chance I get, I'll jump.

"You will be safe here," Viktor says again.

I let out a burst of air filled with all the bitterness of what my life's become. My voice is scratchy as I mutter, "Says the m-man who k-killed my family."

Viktor loosens his hold on me, then I'm tugged to my feet. He turns me to face him, and our eyes lock. Where his are filled with the violence ingrained in his bones, mine must show the trauma and grief I've suffered at his hands.

His right hand moves from my shoulder to my cheek, where he captures a teardrop with the pad of his thumb. To my horror, I watch as he licks the drop from his skin.

With the full force of his intense black eyes on me, he murmurs, “So sweet.”

Dear God.

My gasps are so fast it sounds like I ran a marathon, and every muscle in my body aches from how tight they are.

As Viktor keeps staring at me, the expression on his face grows darker.

When it feels like my heart might burst from my chest, I whimper, “Please let me go.”

To my surprise, he chuckles, a flicker of amusement easing the brutal tension in his overly attractive features. “Where would you go, Little Rose? You have nothing.”

“M-my family is...” Intense pain squeezes my heart. “... was wealthy.”

“The key word being *was*. Everything your grandfather had belongs to Nikolas Stathoulis.” He takes a prowling step closer making my hands fist at my sides. “Everything but you.”

He keeps moving closer until I’m forced to tilt my head back to keep eye contact with him. It only lasts a couple of seconds before I lower my gaze to his chest.

My entire life has been ripped from beneath my feet.

All the dreams I had of traveling the world will never come true.

Unbearable hopelessness darkens everything inside me, causing despair to soak deep into my bones.

“Except for you.” Viktor’s words have my eyes flying to his. “I did you a favor by taking you, Little Rose. Nikolas would’ve killed you.”

I swallow hard, forcing my chin to lift higher. “Don’t expect me to thank you.”

He chuckles again, the smirk doing nothing to make him look any less ruthless.

A shuffling noise sounds up from the hallway drawing Viktor’s attention away from me.

I glance at the open window as Viktor turns his back to me, and when another man appears in the doorway, I don’t hesitate and run.

My hands grip the windowsill, and I throw my body out of the room. Just as I let go, fingers close around my right wrist. I’m yanked back into the room with so much force, the windowsill scrapes against my stomach and legs.

I’m thrown onto the floor and my body skids from the motion. Before I can push myself up, Viktor grabs hold of my shoulders, and I’m forced onto my back.

Within a second, I find myself in a familiar position with Viktor’s body braced over mine and his fingers around my throat. Luckily there’s no gun pressed to my head this time.

Viktor’s breathing is steady, where I’m breathless from the failed attempt to escape. His eyes burn on mine as he leans closer.

Panic spins in my stomach and my hands grip his wrist when he's way too close for comfort.

The words rumble from him like thunderclouds on a stormy night. "Do you want to die, Little Rose?"

Yes.

No.

I don't want any of this.

I want my family and life back.

Viktor brings his left hand to my face and brushes a knuckle over my cheek. "Try something like that again, and I'll cuff you to the fucking bed."

Feeling lost and frustrated, I turn my head away and stare at the legs of the chair.

Viktor yanks me to my feet, then mutters, "Unpack and make yourself at home. Your stay here can be pleasant or hell. The choice is yours."

Viktor looks at the other man. "That's all for now, Sacha. Go get some rest for your flight back to Russia."

When I don't move, Viktor's eyes snap to me. "I said unpack!"

I dart to the foot of the bed where the bags were left, and doing my best to suppress a sob, I open the luggage. I'm surprised to see my belongings and clothes.

I can feel Viktor's eyes burning on me as the other man leaves the bedroom. When I rip a pair of sweatpants from the bag, I stop to quickly drag them up my legs. Finding an

oversized shirt, I take off the one Viktor gave me and pull my own over my head.

I throw Viktor's shirt onto the floor, and unable to handle being in his presence, I glance at the shut door. "Is that the bathroom?"

"Yes."

"May I use it?"

"Of course."

I dart forward, and when I've hurried inside and get to close a door between Viktor and me, a sob shudders from me.

Pressing my forehead to the door, I try to gasp through the horror of my new reality.

In a matter of hours, I've gone from happy teenager to being the future whore of the head of the bratva.

Sinking down to the tiles cries jerk my body.

I cry for the loss of my grandfather and uncle.

I cry for the loss of the innocence that will be taken from me when I turn eighteen.

Which is next week.

I only have five days.

Wrapping an arm around my waist, it feels like I'm breaking into a million pieces.

Chapter 4

Viktor

While Rosalie weeps in the bathroom, I take a seat on the bed and look at the documents Sacha brought.

The first thing I notice is that Rosalie's birthday is much sooner than I thought.

There's no way she'll be ready to head out on her own by next week. She'll need weeks, if not months, to process her grief.

I let out a sigh because that's only half the truth.

Blyad', I've grown a conscience when it comes to the girl.

I shake my head and try to focus my attention on the documents.

I'll keep her until she's twenty-one.

Three years.

A frown forms on my forehead as I lift my head to stare at the shut bathroom door. Just then, the sound of Rosalie's cries change until it sounds like she's struggling to breathe.

"Christ," I mutter as I drop the documents and climb to my feet. The door only opens halfway before it knocks into something.

I step inside to see Rosalie lying on the floor, her tears forming a pool on the tiles. Red blotches cover her face and neck, a broken expression making her eyes look bruised and more vulnerable than my heart can handle.

Crouching, I take hold of her shoulders and pull her into a sitting position before I slip my arms under her knees and back. Lifting her to my chest, I straighten to my full height and carry her back to the bed.

I should tuck her in and give her a sedative, but instead, I find myself sitting down on the covers. I wrap my arms around her shuddering body and hold her tightly.

“Everything’s going to be okay,” I try to reassure her.

She shakes her head, lost sobs drifting over her lips. “Nothing will ever b-be okay again.” Her body is limp as if all the energy has been drained from it. “You’ll keep me c-captive. I’ll turn eighteen, and you’ll rape me until you g-grow b-bored of me. Then you’ll hopefully k-k-kill me.”

Hearing her words makes my jaw clench, and anger seeps into my heart.

She sobs again. “Or you’ll h-hand me d-down to your m-m-men.”

Lifting my right hand to her jaw, I take hold of her chin so she’ll look at me. When our eyes lock and I see the raw fear trembling in her soft brown irises, I force my features to relax so I don’t look like the fucking grim reaper.

“None of that will ever happen.”

Her eyes search mine. “I can’t b-believe a w-word you say.”

I shift her to sit on the bed and climb to my feet. Walking to the window, I pull it shut.

“I’m only keeping you because you have nowhere to go.”

“I can go to New York,” she tries to argue.

I shake my head. “It’s not negotiable. You’ll stay here.” Turning around, my eyes settle on the distraught girl. “Until you’re twenty-one, then I’ll let you go.”

Her gaze widens on me.

I cross my arms over my chest and stare at her for a moment. “I won’t force myself on you, and I sure as fuck won’t allow any of my men to touch you. You’ll be safe, Little Rose. It’s the one thing I can promise you.”

Her eyebrows draw together, and there’s a flicker of hope on her face. “What will you do with me for three years?”

Letting out a sigh, I start to walk to the door. “I’ll feed and clothe you.” I gesture at her scattered belongings. “Unpack. I like my house neat with everything in its place.”

Slowly, Rosalie stands up from the bed and glances at the window. It has me saying, “You’re free to go outside, but you can’t leave the property without my permission.”

There’s a flash of a dare in her eyes. It’s a nice change of pace from the grief-stricken look. “I’m allowed to go outside?”

A smirk curves the corner of my mouth up. “Yes, but don’t do something stupid because the freedom I’m giving you can just as easily be taken away.”

I can see her thoughts racing behind the brown of her irises, and I know neither of us will shut an eye tonight.

I don't trust she won't try to make a run for it, and she doesn't trust me not to hurt her.

“When you're done unpacking, come to the living room. I'll make us something to eat.”

I leave the room and head back down to the kitchen. I haven't eaten since lunch and am well past the point of starving. Taking ingredients from the fridge and cupboards, I start to make a chicken casserole.

I've always loved watching my parents cook and learned how to make food at an early age. It's soothing and one of the few things that calms me.

My thoughts are inundated with Rosalie. In a matter of hours, I've gone from saying I'd keep her until she turns eighteen to deciding to hold onto the girl until she's twenty-one.

Something about her has gotten under my skin.

I chop up the chicken with more force than usual.

Manno and his nephew had to die, but I hate that an innocent girl got caught in the crossfire. I might be unforgiving and ruthless when it comes to work, but I have a soft spot for kids.

She's no fucking kid.

She'll be eighteen in five days.

Still, she's so fucking innocent, hurting her will be like ripping the petals of a blossoming rose.

Soon the aroma of frying onions, chicken, and mushrooms fill the air. I take a moment to pour myself a tumbler of vodka and sip on the drink while I continue preparing the meal.

When the casserole is baking in the oven, I feel the air shift. Seconds later, Rosalie slowly comes down the stairs. She moves cautiously like a deer, stopping every couple of steps. I can feel the tension coming off her in waves.

I continue wiping down the counter as I murmur, “You done unpacking?”

“Yes.” She inches closer to the sliding doors that lead to the patio until she stops in front of them, staring at the lit landscaped garden.

Picking up the tumbler, I walk to her and pull the doors open. A breeze caresses her hair.

She looks so fucking fragile in the oversized shirt and sweatpants, but at least all the fabric covers her body.

When I nod toward the patio furniture, Rosalie takes a deep breath and steps over the threshold. Her body is tense as if she expects me to yank her back inside at any moment.

She stops by the steps leading down to a path that branches out toward the other mansions and glances over the property. “There are other houses?”

“My family. You’ll meet them soon.”

Surprise flutters over her gorgeous features, and her eyes flit to mine. “You’ll allow me near your family?” Confusion chases the shock from her face. “Aren’t you afraid I’ll hurt one of them?”

A burst of laughter escapes me. “Good luck trying.”

“I’m talking about the women,” she mumbles.

I tilt my head. “It’s cute that you think you stand a chance against any of them.”

Rosalie glances at the other mansions and the lights shining from the windows, then wraps her arms around herself.

Her voice is nothing more than a fear-filled whisper when she asks, “Why didn’t you just kill me? Why did you kidnap me?”

I take a sip of my vodka and glance over the property. “Nothing I say will set you at ease, Little Rose.” I turn my gaze back to hers. “With time, you’ll learn I’m a man of my word. The Vetrovs and Koslovs don’t take pleasure in hurting women, especially fragile little things like you.”

More hope trickles into her eyes. “Is it true that Isabella Koslov takes down sex trafficking rings?”

“Yes.” A grin tugs at my mouth because my aunt is as badass as they come. Leaning back against a pillar, my gaze sweeps over the property again.

Even though I’m home where half an army is on guard, I’m always ready for an attack.

“You know a lot about my family and me,” I mention. “Were you training to take over from your grandfather?”

“No. I had nothing to do with the family business. ”

Grief tightens her features, making my hands itch to take hold of her so I can hug her until the heartache lessens.

She looks down at her feet, taking deep breaths as she rides out the wave of sorrow, then, with a trembling voice, asks, “What will happen to my grandfather and uncle’s bodies?”

I finish the last of my vodka and inhale deeply before answering, “Everything has been burned down.”

Her eyebrows draw together with intense pain. Her lips part, her arms wrapping tighter around her middle.

When I step toward her, she quickly moves back, shaking her head. She presses a hand to her heart, shakes her head again, then spins around and runs into the house.

I watch her until she disappears up the stairs to return to her bedroom before I walk to the kitchen. Setting the empty tumbler down on the counter, I open the oven and remove the casserole.

Feeling exhausted, I grab a plate and help myself to a good portion of the casserole. I sit down by the island and shovel food into my mouth, but it doesn’t taste as good as it usually does.

I’m not the most patient person on the planet, and I’m used to doing everything my way. I’m especially used to having my own space where I can unwind. With Rosalie in my house, all of that’s out the window.

She’s just lost everything that was of value to her, and she’s being held captive by you. It’s going to take a long while for the girl to heal and to learn that she can trust you.

It will take a hell of a lot of patience on my part.

There's a banging sound from upstairs, and dropping my fork, I get up with a heavy sigh leaving my chest.

I stalk up to the first floor, and when I shove Rosalie's bedroom door open, I'm met with an overturned table lying by my feet. Rosalie slams the chair against the wall, rage tightening her features.

I stand and watch her until she drops the chair and wildly glances around the room for something else to destroy. Her eyes land on me, and with a cry, she lunges in my direction.

I block the punch she tries to throw, wrap my arm around her waist and hoist her over my shoulder. Her fists connect with my back until I toss her onto the bed.

With a quick move, I straddle her, pinning her hands down on the mattress on either side of her head. Her chest heaves, and with a growl, she tries to buck her hips to throw me off, but it's useless.

I restrain her without much effort and lean in close. "You think you can fight me, Little Rose?"

She lets out a frustrated cry, turning her head away from me.

"That's what I thought." I let go of her wrists, and she quickly crosses her arms over her chest. I grip hold of her jaw and turn her head back so she'll look at me. Our faces are inches apart as I warn her, "Don't fucking damage my property, or I swear to God I'll give you the spanking your grandfather never did."

Her eyes widen, and it looks like she's getting the message.

“Do you fucking understand me?” I grit the words out between clenched teeth.

The fear quickly replaces the rage as she whimpers, “Y-yes.”

Letting go, I climb off her. “Clean up this fucking mess and come eat!”

Christ. I'm going to have my work cut out for me with the prickly thorns Little Rose is starting to show.

Chapter 5

Rosalie

There's a violent storm of emotions ravaging every inch of me. I feel out of control, scared out of my mind, and utterly vulnerable.

Nothing in my world makes sense anymore.

I've lost everything, and I won't even get to have funerals for my grandfather and uncle.

The Priesthood are monsters, and I'm held captive by the worst of them all.

Sorrow overwhelms me, and I roll onto my side into a fetal position. Burying my face in the plush covers, I cry for everything that's been ripped away from me.

Uncle Ricco will never tell me a joke again. I won't hear his laughter booming through the house.

I won't smell the cigars my grandfather loved so much.

I cling to the last memory of the three of us having breakfast. I had fruit loops, and Uncle Ricco kept stealing them from my bowl until I made him his own.

My shoulders shudder, and my tears dampen the covers.

It hurts so much more than when I lost my dad. Because I still had Grandpa and Uncle Ricco to console me.

I wasn't alone, unlike now.

I also can't get the image out of my mind of Uncle Ricco's throat being cut. I keep hearing him gargle and struggle to breathe. I keep seeing him die.

I pinch my eyes shut as tight as possible, my arms wrapping tighter across my chest. I pull my knees up and curl into a small bundle.

How much did my grandfather suffer before they killed him?

The thought of being alone in this hell is unbearable and scarier than anything I've ever experienced. It makes it hard to think straight, and my emotions keep spiraling out of control.

My entire family is dead, and I'm held captive by Viktor Vetrov.

God.

The couple of times I tried to fight back didn't help one bit. Viktor is a million times stronger than me. The man is highly trained and easily tosses me around like I'm some ragdoll.

What's going to become of me?

Viktor said I'd be safe here, but how do I trust the words of the man who helped kill my family?

My only hope is that his family will intervene, especially Isabella Koslov. She's against anything sex trafficking-related. Surely she'll help me?

The thought that they burned down my home and the only two people who loved me shudders through my body. Nikolas

Stathoulis took all the money.

I have nothing.

Even if I manage to escape, how will I get to New York, and will the Cosa Nostra even take me in? I'm not a part of the five families. I'm nothing to them.

Viktor was right. I have nowhere to go.

Feeling destitute and forlorn, I have no idea what I'm going to do. I don't know what my future holds.

God, I don't even know if I'll live to see tomorrow.

Slowly my tears dry up until emptiness is all that remains.

Realizing that the monster who captured me is the only person I have right now in this godforsaken world is an extremely bitter pill to swallow.

Maybe if I do as he says, he'll leave me be. It will give me the time I need to process the trauma and figure out what to do.

My body is weak from the dark emotions ravaging me, but still, I push myself up and climb off the bed. I go to the bathroom and splash water over my face. When I look into the mirror, I see red marks on my neck from where Viktor's fingers were.

Lifting my shirt, there are more red abrasions from where the windowsill scraped against my stomach when he yanked me back into the room.

At least I'm not bleeding.

It could've been worse.

My shoulders slump, and it doesn't sit well with me that I'm trying to make the nightmare not as horrible.

Before my emotions can spiral out of control again, I walk back into the bedroom and put all the furniture in its respective places.

I suck in a fortifying breath of air, then leave the bedroom and slowly inch my way down the hallway. The fear that's become my constant companion since I laid eyes on Viktor doubles with every step I take.

When I take the stairs down, I peek in the direction of the living room and see Viktor sitting on a couch, nursing a drink. He seems deep in thought as he stares at the liquid in the tumbler.

Dressed in a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt, he still looks every bit the daunting enemy he is. But even in my distraught state, I still have to admit the man is deadly attractive.

If I weren't caught in this nightmare, I'd easily fall for his good looks.

But I know better.

I know what power lies beneath his skin and the brutality he's capable of.

I pause at the foot of the stairs, and my eyes drift over his exposed forearms, the veins snaking beneath his skin only making him seem invincible.

I'll never be able to fight him off.

Glancing over the living area, I take in all the luxury. All around the mansion, the furnishings are the same dark wood as

in my bedroom. There's a soft, white leather couch and a massive entertainment system with a TV that fills most of the one wall. The kitchen is state-of-the-art with granite tops, and there's an open-plan dining room.

Even though I'm a prisoner, the mansion feels warm-ish. If it weren't for Viktor's threatening presence, I'd actually feel comfortable staying here.

The man might be a monster, but he has taste.

I notice a plate of food on the island. There's a bottle of water as well.

I have zero appetite, but I'm thirsty.

Viktor doesn't move as I walk to the island, but he murmurs, "Feeling better?"

I open the bottle and drink half of the cool liquid before muttering, "No." Turning to look at him, I say, "You hurt me."

His head snaps up, his eyes sweeping over my body before locking onto the red marks on my neck.

I brush my hair aside so he can see all of it and lift my shirt so he'll also see the abrasions on my stomach.

I'm not going to pretend the marks aren't there.

He leans forward and sets the tumbler down on the coffee table before getting up. I quickly lower the shirt when he walks toward me.

The man is so intense it feels as if the very air surrounding him tenses and shifts with every step he takes.

He makes me feel smaller than a bug that he could easily squash if he wanted to.

I'm entirely at this monster's mercy.

With hard tremors raking through my body, it takes more strength than I have to stand still and not cower back when he stops inches from me. His eyes burn on the marks covering my skin, and try as I might, I can't stop myself from flinching when he lifts his hand and brushes his knuckles over the side of my neck.

"I'm sorry, Little Rose," he whispers.

Hearing the regret in his voice has my eyes going wide as saucers. An apology was the last thing I expected.

His dark gaze locks on mine. "You're more fragile than I thought."

I wish I was stronger.

Viktor lowers his hand, then stares at me until I feel the overwhelming need to squirm.

"Stop testing my patience, and I'll be more careful with you."

Is he actually making a deal with me, or is it an order?

He gestures to the plate. "Eat."

I shake my head. "I'm not hungry."

"I didn't ask if you're hungry. I said eat," he mutters, the expression on his face darkening even more.

I press back against the counter, my hands finding the granite and clinging to it.

Viktor tilts his head, and everywhere his eyes touch on my face, it feels as if my skin goes up in flames.

“Please, let me go,” I whisper.

I have no idea what I’ll do, but anything has to be better than being this man’s captive.

Slowly, he shakes his head. “The world will trample something as fragile as you. You might not believe it, but this house, staying here with me, is the safest place for you.”

Anger and frustration start to bubble in my chest. Clenching my jaw, I lift my eyes to his. “You belong to the Priesthood who killed my family. You destroyed everything I held dear. This is the last place on Earth I’ll ever be safe.”

The corner of his mouth lifts into a dangerous smirk, causing all my muscles to tighten.

“It doesn’t matter what you think, Little Rose. Until you’re twenty-one and have had time to...” He lifts a hand, brushing a finger over my jawline, “blossom, I’ll make every decision for you.”

My lips part to argue, but they’re sealed shut when he adds, “Take the time to grow stronger and mourn your family.”

My family.

I shake my head, then turn my face away from him and stare at the fridge.

I don’t want any of this. It’s madness.

How will I survive three years with this man?

Will I even make it to my eighteenth birthday?

And if I do, what kind of future lies ahead of me?

“Eat, Rosalie,” he murmurs with something akin to compassion softening his tone.

My eyes dart back to his face, but he still looks like the lethal head of the bratva who can end my life in a split second.

When I don’t move, Viktor reaches past me and drags the plate closer. He scoops a bite of food onto the fork, then brings it to my mouth.

My skin goes up in flames, and I look at the fridge again.

“I will force feed you if I have to,” he warns me.

Not wanting that to happen, my chin quivers as I take hold of the fork and shove the food into my mouth.

Asshole.

When I swallow the bite and scoop more food onto the fork, Viktor murmurs, “Good girl.”

Instant anger explodes through my veins. Before I can think it through, I grab the plate and shove it against his chest. The plate lands on the floor with a loud clatter.

Breaths heave from me. “I’m not your *good girl*. Don’t try to condition me!”

Instead of losing his temper, a smile spreads over his face. He looks down at the wasted food clinging to his shirt and lying at our feet, then his eyes flick to mine.

“You have one minute to clean up this mess.”

“You can go to hell,” I hiss.

When I try to dart past him, his fingers clamp around my bicep, and I’m yanked right against his side. His face is a mere

inch from mine as he orders, “Clean up this mess, or I’ll spank you.”

What?

For a moment, I’m torn between making a run for it and doing as I’m told. The air grows unbearably tense, then my shoulders slump.

When Viktor lets go of me, I grab a roll of paper towels, and crouching by his feet, I wipe up all the food. I throw it in the trashcan, but then he says, “My shirt isn’t going to clean itself.”

“You’re joking,” I gasp, quickly regretting my outburst of anger that got me in this predicament.

His eyes narrow on my face. “Does it look like I’m joking?”

No. Not at all. It looks like it’s taking all his self-restraint not to carry out his threat of spanking me.

I grab more paper towels, and my cheeks go up in flames as I dab the food from his shirt.

When I toss the paper towels in the trashcan, Viktor takes hold of the back of his shirt and drags the fabric over his head in a move that’s hotter than anything I’ve ever witnessed.

My jaw drops as I get a full view of his chest.

Jesus.

Chiseled abs and a perfect V disappearing into the low-hanging waistband of his sweatpants instantly make me breathless.

There are so many tattoos.

God.

Viktor has a star inked on each shoulder and a weird cross made of skulls with angel wings on the sides in the middle of his chest.

There's a dark row of hair from his navel to the fabric.

My tongue darts out to wet my dry lips, and I feel a flare of panic in my chest.

Of course, the devil himself will look like a damn angel.

Just because he's the most attractive man I've ever laid eyes on doesn't mean I'm attracted to him. That would be insane.

Viktor Vetrov is a monster who killed my family and took me from everything I loved.

My eyes snap to his, and seeing that he was watching me stare at him has me fleeing past him and up the stairs to my bedroom. I slam the door shut and press my back to it.

Sucking in deep breaths, I close my eyes and try to erase the image of his bare chest and abs from my mind.

I hate him.

I hate him so much.

No matter what happens, I can never forget the pain he caused me today.

Chapter 6

Viktor

Even though I only had two hours of sleep, I'm ready at eight o'clock to face whatever the day will bring.

Rosalie hasn't come out of her bedroom since she practically drooled at the sight of my chest. It was an interesting moment, but it doesn't mean shit in my books. She's a girl with nowhere to go, and that's the end of the story.

Knowing Rosalie won't be able to escape the grounds, I head over to my parents' place so I can explain my reasoning behind kidnapping Rosalie. I'm more worried about Aunt Bella than my parents and Uncle Alexei. After all, my dad kidnapped my mom to save her life. That's how they met.

When I step into the house, I hear my dad say, "I'm sure he has a good reason. Let's wait to hear what it is."

Of course, they would already know. I swear a bird can shit in Russia, and they'd know within an hour.

That's why I'm so good at tracking. I was trained by the best.

Entering the dining room, everyone's eyes turn to me. I let out a sigh and pull a chair out. I sit down and look at my family. "I took the girl because she's only seventeen and has

nowhere to go. It was either that or one of us killing her, which I wasn't going to allow."

Just like I expected, my parents nod, understanding on their faces.

"When is she leaving?" Uncle Alexei asks.

I lock eyes with my godfather. "Once she turns twenty-one."

His eyebrows lift. "Four years?"

"Three," I correct him. "She's turning eighteen next week."

"That's a very long time to keep the girl against her will," Aunt Bella says. "It will do more harm than good."

I turn my gaze to my aunt. "Rosalie has nothing and no one. Sure I can shove money into her hand and send her on her way, but she won't survive. The girl is weak. She doesn't have any survival instincts."

"She can't be a captive for three years, Viktor," Aunt Bella argues.

We stare at each other for a moment before I say, "It's not your call to make. The girl is staying with me where she will be safe. It's not open for discussion. I'm merely offering you an explanation out of respect."

She shakes her head, clearly not happy with my decision.

Letting out a sigh, I tighten my control on my temper. "Rosalie doesn't have an ounce of strength in her body. She's beautiful and innocent. She's the perfect target. Word is

already out that I took the girl. Do you really think our enemies are not going to target her?"

"Viktor has a point," Dad agrees. "The fact that he took her already shows he cares. Anyone of the thousands of enemies we have might think it's a good idea to try and use the girl against him."

"I'm sure Viktor knows what he's doing," Mom stands up for me. "He won't hurt her."

Aunt Bella doesn't look convinced. "You took part in killing her family. I can't see her ever feeling safe here. It must be traumatizing for her."

"It's not your problem," I remind her.

Before anyone else can say another word, I stand up. "Rosalie will be safe with me. It's the only thing that matters. This subject is no longer open for discussion."

When Aunt Bella lets out a huff, I add, "Need I remind you that you married the man who practically kidnapped you."

My aunt lost her memory in an accident, and Uncle Alexei pretended they were engaged to keep her with him. In my books, that's a hell of a lot worse than what I'm doing.

I have Rosalie's best interests in mind. Not my own.

"Viktor knows what he's doing," Uncle Alexei mutters. "He's the head of the bratva for a reason. I trust he'll do what's best for the girl."

I give my uncle a chin lift, grateful that he's backing me.

"I've given Rosalie the freedom to roam the property, so you could run into her anytime. She's not to leave the grounds

without my permission.”

“So I’m allowed to befriend her?” Mariya speaks up for the first time. She’s only two years younger than me, and we were raised as siblings since birth because our fathers are inseparable.

I smile at the woman that’s like a little sister to me. “I’d like that.”

“Are you leaving her alone today?” Mom asks.

I shake my head. “I’ll work from home for a week.”

“I’ll make lunch. Bring Rosalie over so she can meet us,” Mom says.

I nod before walking out of the room. When I get back to my place, it’s quiet, and Rosalie’s door is still closed. I knock and wait three seconds before I open it.

She’s sitting on the floor with her back to the bed, her knees pulled up and her arms wrapped around them. She doesn’t bother looking at me as I enter the room, and when I sit down on the bed, she turns her face away from me.

Leaning forward, I rest my forearms on my thighs and look at her. “Do you really want to do this the hard way?”

“Just leave me alone.” Her voice sounds empty, the words nothing more than a hoarse whisper.

I nod and stand up. “We’re having lunch with my family today.”

“Not interested,” she mutters before letting out a heavy sigh.

“You don’t have a choice in the matter.”

“Just like everything else since you broke into my house and killed my family.” Her voice disappears, and she tucks her face into the crook of her arm.

“It’s the way of the mafia and bratva.”

Her voice is muffled as she says, “Whatever helps you sleep at night.”

I don’t like justifying my actions, especially not twice in one fucking day, but still, I say, “Your grandfather and uncle invaded our territories. They knew what would happen and still didn’t back down. We gave them warnings, which they ignored. Their deaths are on them, and you’re lucky to be alive.”

“Lucky,” she scoffs. Scrambling to her feet, she glares at me, but it has the same effect as a kitten hissing. “Tell me, was I *lucky* when you forced me to watch my uncle being slaughtered like a pig? Was I *lucky* when you ripped me from my home and killed my grandfather?” She steps closer, lifting her chin with more bravery than I thought she possessed. “Was I *lucky* when you strangled me?”

She sucks in a quivering breath, her composure quickly starting to crumble, but her voice is laced with hatred as she continues, “Was I *lucky* every time you yanked me around like some ragdoll and when you left bruises on my body?”

I take a step closer. “Yes,” I bite the word out. “You weren’t raped and tortured, Rosalie. That makes you fucking *lucky*.”

Our eyes burn on each other, the atmosphere loaded with our anger.

“You’re a monster,” she hisses. “Nothing more than a despicable human being.”

“Still, I’m better than your family.”

Don’t. Rosalie might not know, and she can’t deal with another blow so soon after the trauma she’s already suffered.

Her features pull with disgust. “You’re not. My grandfather and uncle would never kidnap a girl and hold her against her will.”

No, they’d just get them addicted to drugs and sell them to the highest bidder when they can’t pay their outstanding debt.

That’s why the Cosa Nostra severed ties with Manno. The Sicilian mafia is only interested in dealing in arms, drugs, and racketeering, whereas the Mannos had a taste for the more depraved side of the criminal world.

But it’s clear Rosalie doesn’t know what her family dealt in, and I’m not about to drop that bomb on her.

“Lunch is at twelve,” I mutter before turning around and leaving the room.

“I’m not going,” she shouts after me.

“Either you fucking walk on your own two legs, or I’ll drag you there, but you will go,” I shout back.

“Asshole!”

I let out an unexpected burst of laughter and shake my head.

At least she isn’t crying. Honestly, I prefer her fighting with me. It shows the girl has some strength in her.

Walking into my office, I sit down at my desk and look at the monitors I installed on the entire left wall. I type in Rosalie's details and watch as information fills the screens – everything from her birth and school records to her social media accounts.

Graduation is in two weeks. I'll have to remember it, so Rosalie doesn't miss out.

I notice she has no friends on social media, which I find weird. All the accounts she follows are travel related, and it's clear she loves old castles and waterfalls from the images and videos she's liked.

She doesn't post anything about herself, though. Only staged pictures of food, fashion, and nature. Rarely does she write anything, so when I find a picture of a Labrador puppy with the caption, 'One day,' I take note.

Ugh. Puppies shit everywhere and chew on everything.

But it's her birthday next week, and a puppy might be just the thing to cheer her up.

Before I know what I'm doing, I'm searching for Labrador breeders, but there are no available litters in the US.

"Never thought I'd smuggle a fucking dog into the country," I mutter as I send an email to one of my contacts in the UK.

When I'm done gathering every bit of information about Rosalie I can find, I focus on work, making sure the incoming shipments are on schedule and all my men are taking care of business.

Chapter 7

Rosalie

God help me.

I lie on the floor next to the bed with my eyes shut tightly.

I don't want to face the world without my family. I don't want to think of the bleak future that awaits me.

I can't deal with the trauma. It's too much, threatening to strip me of my sanity.

I hear Viktor's footsteps come down the hallway and press my back hard against the base of the bed as I curl into a tight ball.

"Get up," he orders.

Leave me alone.

"Rosalie." Warning laces the single word.

I ignore him, just wanting to lie here until I die.

"Jesus fucking Christ," he snaps, then he grabs hold of my arm and yanks me to my feet. I'm shoved in the direction of the bathroom. "Shower and change your clothes. We're late for lunch."

My jaw clenches, and my throat tightens. Spinning around to face him, I shout, "I'm not going!"

“*Blyad'*, you're testing my patience,” he grumbles, his expression rivaling a thundercloud.

I lift my chin, determined to at least stand my ground. He might have kidnapped me, but I sure as hell won't obey his every command. “I. Don't. Care.” Feeling reckless and like I have nothing to lose, I take a step closer. “Kill me.”

Viktor's eyes narrow on my face. “Don't tempt me, Little Rose.”

Losing my sanity, I dart forward and slam my fists against his chest. “Kill me!”

Viktor's arms lock around me and secure me to his chest with a brutal hold. I squirm and fight but quickly grow tired. The emotions I've managed to squash down during the night erupt like a volcano and force broken cries from me.

He places a hand behind my head and curls his body into mine, his other arm remaining locked around me. I feel him press his mouth to my hair. “Shh...”

Engulfed by Viktor and in desperate need of comfort, I press as close to him as I can while weeping for everything I've lost.

“Jesus, Rosalie,” he murmurs, concern tightening the words. “I'm so fucking sorry for the pain you're going through.”

The apology won't bring back my family, but it eases some of the heartache – enough for me to breathe and for my sanity to return.

My arms are caught between us, and I manage to grip hold of his shirt, needing the comfort he's offering just for a little

while longer.

“If you don’t believe anything else, just believe that I won’t hurt you.”

It doesn’t matter. I’ve already been hurt in ways I’ll never be able to recover from.

Viktor pushes me back an inch, his hands frame my face, and I’m forced to look up at him as lost sobs flutter over my lips. His eyes bore into mine, and for the first time, there’s no sign of the brutality always lurking in the dark depths of his irises. There’s only compassion.

“You’re going to be okay.”

I shake my head, my skin brushing against his palms. “I won’t.”

I’ve lost too much.

The happy girl from yesterday died with her family, and in her place are broken shards of who she once was.

“You will. It’s just going to take some time.”

Because he doesn’t look like the head of the bratva but a man who actually has a beating heart in his chest, I dare to plead, “Please, let me go.”

Slowly he shakes his head, the compassion vanishes, and he pulls away from me. “Stop asking. I’ll only give you your freedom when you’re twenty-one.”

My shoulders slump, and turning around, I walk to the bathroom and shut the door behind me.

“You have ten minutes,” he calls out.

Inhaling deeply, I turn on the faucets and watch as the water sprays against the tiles.

I'm so tired. Physically. Emotionally. Mentally.

I won't be able to fight for three years. But giving in is not an option.

Maybe I'll be able to talk to Viktor's mother. Or, with a little luck, I'll get to meet Isabella. Maybe one of the women will be willing to help me.

The thought is the only thing giving me the strength to shower. When I step back into the bedroom, I'm relieved to see Viktor's not waiting. I quickly dress in a pair of jeans, a t-shirt, and sneakers. I braid my wet strands, then leave the bedroom.

When I walk down the stairs, Viktor's eyes sweep over me. "Much better." He holds his hand out to me, but I ignore it and walk past him.

I don't take in the beautiful garden but search the perimeter walls for a way to escape. There are guards stationed everywhere, quickly snuffing out the hope of ever escaping this prison.

"The mansion on the left," Viktor mutters when I reach a fork in the path.

That means Isabella's house must be the one on the right. If she's not joining us for lunch, I'll go to her and ask for help.

When I reach a set of open French doors, Viktor places his hand on my lower back and nudges me inside. I pull away, shooting a scowl up at him. "Don't touch me."

He holds his hands up in a surrendering gesture, then tips his head toward the door on our right.

When I walk into a dining room, my feet instantly come to a faltering stop as all eyes turn to me. Five people are seated at a long rectangular table. Three women and two men.

Viktor walks past me and pulls out a chair. “Come sit.”

My eyes flit between the two older women, trying to figure out which one is Isabella, as I take a seat.

Viktor sits down at the head of the table, then gestures at each person. “Alexei, Isabella, and Mariya Koslov. And these are my parents, Demitri and Ariana Vetrov.”

My eyes are glued to Isabella, who’s staring at my neck. Her voice is low with anger when she asks, “Why are there marks on her neck?”

“Rosalie put up a fight. I never intended to hurt her,” Viktor explains. “I had to subdue her because she was having a panic attack after seeing her uncle being killed.”

Mariya reaches for my hand, and it quickly has me pulling both of mine beneath the table, not wanting anyone to touch me.

“I’m sorry for your loss,” she murmurs.

My loss? I’ve suffered more than just a mere loss, and now I’m expected to have lunch with the enemy and smile and thank them for taking me in?

Shaking my head, I let out a bitter chuckle. “This is insane.” I keep shaking my head as I rise to my feet. “I’m not doing this.”

I dart past Viktor and out of the dining room. I find my way to the French doors and sprint as fast as I can toward the boundary wall.

Before I can reach it, four guards move in front of me.

I come to a faltering stop, wildly looking for another way to escape. When I glance behind me, it's to see Viktor standing by the path, his arms crossed over his chest as he watches me.

"My men have work to do, Rosalie. They're not going to chase you around the property all day long," Viktor calls out.

I look at the Russian soldiers and feel stupid for even trying to get to the wall. Frustrated, I turn around and stalk back to Viktor's house and straight to my bedroom. I slam the door shut, wishing I had a key to lock it.

Not even a second later, it opens, and Viktor mutters, "So much for having lunch with my family."

"You can all go to hell. I have no interest in getting to know your family," I snap as I step out of my sneakers.

Just because I have to stay here for three years doesn't mean I have to interact with any of them.

"I'm trying to make you feel at home."

I roll my eyes as I climb onto the bed and yank the covers over my head. "Leave me alone."

I hear the door shut and when I peek from beneath the covers, I'm relieved to see Viktor's gone.

So much for asking Isabella to help me.

Honestly, she looked scary as hell. Beautiful but scary nonetheless.

The hope I had before I met Viktor's family is gone, and the desolate feeling is back. It doesn't take long before my grief and trauma break me down, and I cry myself asleep.

Chapter 8

Viktor

I hear footsteps, and when my eyes flick from the monitors to the doorway, it's to see Dad and Uncle Alexei coming into my study. They take a seat, then proceed to stare at me.

Letting out a sigh, I relax back in my chair. "I'm done discussing the subject."

"We just want to know if you're sure about this," Dad says. "Three years is a long time to take care of a stranger."

"I know." I glance from Dad to Uncle Alexei. "But the alternative is not an option."

"Send her to the Cosa Nostra," Uncle Alexei says.

"You know the Mannos didn't part on good terms with the five ruling families of New York." I inhale deeply, then explain, "I just want to give her a safe space to heal. Once she's twenty-one, she'll be more mature and able to face the world."

"She's beautiful," Uncle Alexei mutters, and as direct as always, he asks, "Are you interested in her?"

Yes, there have been moments I've felt attracted to her, but I have no intention of pursuing the girl. She's too broken.

“Her looks have nothing to do with my decision to help her.”

Uncle Alexei raises an eyebrow at me. “If you say so.”

Shaking my head, I let out a chuckle. “Drop the subject. I’ll do what’s best for Rosalie until she’s ready to leave.” I lock eyes with my uncle. “Then I’ll cut all ties with her.”

The corner of his mouth lifts in a smirk. “I’ll believe it when I see it.”

Tapping my fingers on the desk, I ask, “Is Aunt Bella going to be a problem?”

My uncle shakes his head. “I’ve talked to her. She knows you have the girl’s best interest at heart.” He gives me a look of warning. “Just make sure the girl doesn’t cause unnecessary drama. I don’t want our lives disturbed.”

I nod. “Will do.”

They glance at the monitors on the wall, then Uncle Alexei lets out a huff. “Christ, I’m getting old. I don’t know what half that shit means.”

Grinning at him, I chuckle, “I’m checking underground chatter and information on a high-value target I’m keeping track of.”

When it comes to anything technology and hacking related, I’m fucking good. I’ve designed a couple of apps allowing me access to anything I might need to keep an eye on the criminal world.

Dad’s the first to get up. “Your mom will pop in later to check on the girl.”

I nod again. “Rosalie could do with female company, and hopefully, Mom will be able to offer her some comfort.”

I walk my father and uncle out onto the patio and watch as they head back to their homes.

I turn around and take the stairs up to the first floor to check on Rosalie. She’s been quiet for hours, and I want to make sure she’s okay.

Well, as okay as she can be under the circumstances.

I’m just about to knock on the door when it opens. Rosalie startles, instantly taking a step back.

We stare at each other for a moment before I ask, “Are you hungry?”

She has to be starving. Besides the single bite of casserole, she hasn’t eaten anything since the attack.

Her gaze rests cautiously on me as she nods.

I gesture down the hallway. “I’ll fix us an early dinner.”

“I can make myself a sandwich.”

Letting out a heavy breath, I signal for her to walk. Rosalie keeps glancing back as I follow her to the living area. She pauses in the kitchen, looking uncomfortable.

I take a seat at the island and point at the fridge. “Help yourself.”

While she takes tomatoes and cheese from the fridge, she keeps glancing at me, clearly on edge being around me. I watch as she reaches for a knife, the corner of my mouth lifting.

Slowly she cuts slices off the tomato. Her body tenses, her fingers flexing around the handle.

“I’d think twice if I were you,” I murmur softly.

She cuts another slice, and her hand starts to tremble. Tension comes off her in waves, her lips parting so her tongue can nervously dart out to wet them.

The instant she makes her move, I’m up. As she raises her arm, I grab hold of her wrist, and with an easy twist, she’s forced to drop the knife. The sound of it clattering on the tiles mixes with a frustrated cry from her.

I let go of her, and taking a step back, a burst of amused laughter escapes me. “That’s the shitiest attack I’ve ever seen.”

“Screw you,” she mutters, twin flames burning on her cheeks.

Crouching, I pick up the knife and hold the side of the handle out to her. “Let’s try that again. This time pretend you actually want to kill me.”

Her eyes dart to mine, shadows of fear dancing in the depths of her irises. Cautiously, she takes hold of the handle.

I step back and hold my arms up in a surrendering gesture. “Go on. Try to stab me.”

Her gaze flits between my face and chest, her body wound so tight, I’m worried she might strain a muscle.

Rosalie lunges forward, and wanting to build her confidence, I hold still and only move at the last second. Again I grab her wrist, but this time I don’t twist it to force the knife out of her hold. Instead, I yank her against me, and as her head

tilts back, I lean down. Our faces are an inch apart, and I can feel her breaths rushing over my lips.

Blyad', she's breathtakingly stunning.

Attraction flames up inside me, making me overly aware of her. I take in the golden flecks hiding between the soft brown of her eyes. Her button nose makes her look cute as fuck, and her heart-shaped lips beg to be kissed.

When she tries to put some space between us, I wrap my right arm around her to keep her in place. I stare into her eyes until they start to burn with anger.

“Now take that anger and use it. Let it make you stronger,” I order, my tone too low and intimate.

She yanks against my hold, trying to free her hand.

“Come on, Little Rose,” I taunt her with a smirk. “I’m barely using any strength.”

She lets out a growl then stomps on my foot. It rips laughter from me, but I let her go.

“This isn’t funny!” she screams, throwing the knife at me.

The blade nicks the side of my arm before hitting the floor and skidding to a stop.

Rosalie’s eyes are wide as saucers, her body frozen in shock.

I lift my hand to the wound, and my finger comes away with drops of blood. Giving Rosalie an impressed smile, I nod. “That’s much better.”

Her features tighten with disbelief. “I just hurt you, and you praise me for it? Are you insane?”

I shake my head and lock eyes with her. “I’m relieved. With training, you’ll be able to stand up for yourself when you leave. I won’t have to worry about you once you’re gone.”

Her eyebrows draw together. “Are you really going to let me go?”

I pick up the knife and rinse it off before I continue making the sandwiches.

“Yes, Little Rose.” My eyes flick to hers. “Once you’re twenty-one.”

When I’m placing slices of cheese on the bread, Rosalie says, “You’re bleeding.”

“I know.”

“Aren’t you going to treat the wound?”

I shake my head. “I’m not going to clean up after you.” Using the knife, I point to a cupboard. “You’ll find a first aid kit in there.”

“I’m not touching you with a ten-foot pole,” she grumbles.

I raise an eyebrow. “I’m starting to think you’re defying me, so I’ll spank you.” I set the knife down on the counter and prowl closer to her. “Is that what you want, Little Rose?”

She takes a faltering step backward, shaking her head so hard, the strands of hair fly around her shoulders.

My hand darts out, and I capture the back of her neck. With a tug, I have her body crashing into mine. Her lips part with a gasp, her hands coming up to grip my sides so she won’t lose her balance from the sudden movement.

Lowering my voice and lacing the words with seduction, I say, “You don’t have to test my patience to get my attention. All you have to do is ask.”

Anger wars with uncertainty on her face, then she whispers, “Let go.”

I tilt my head, and leaning closer, I allow my lips to brush over her flushed cheek. “Is that really what you want?”

Her breaths are coming hard and fast, and for a moment, I feel her grip on my sides tighten. The word wooshes from her, “Yes.”

I let go of her so fast that she stumbles backward.

I nod toward the cupboard. “Get the first aid kit and clean the mess you made on my arm.”

This time she doesn’t argue and quickly retrieves the box.

While I place the sandwiches on plates, Rosalie tears open an antiseptic wipe. She scowls at me as she moves closer and dabs up the drying blood.

“I wish the knife hit your neck,” she mutters under her breath.

I give her a playful grin. “There’s always next time.”

She lets out an annoyed huff. “You’re insufferable.”

I chuckle, and while Rosalie disposes of the wipe and puts the first aid kit away, I carry the plates out onto the patio.

When she comes to the patio, she doesn’t take a seat at the wrought iron table but picks up her plate and heads back into the house.

With a broad smile on my face, my teeth sink into the sandwich.

There's hope for you yet, Little Rose.

Chapter 9

Rosalie

It's my birthday, and my nerves are shot to hell. I have no idea what will happen today and whether Viktor meant what he said about not forcing himself on me.

Besides the altercation in the kitchen the other day, when he asked me if I wanted to be spanked, nothing like that has happened again.

Just thinking of his lips brushing over my cheek makes my heart beat violently in my chest. My emotions are all over the place. I'm terrified of the man and hate it whenever my stomach flutters, which seems to be happening more and more often.

Every day has been the same. I'm left alone in my bedroom and only see Viktor when it's time to eat.

On my second night in this hell hole, his mother came to see me, but I refused to talk to her.

Standing by the window, I stare at the garden situated in the middle of the three mansions. There's a huge fountain that's bigger than any pool I've seen before, with a statue of a black horse and water splashing around his hoofs.

Day by day, it's getting harder staying cooped up in the room. I miss interacting with people.

I miss my grandfather and Uncle Ricco.

God, I even miss school. How sad is that?

Being alone is starting to wear me down much sooner than I thought it would. I'm even contemplating wandering out into the garden in the hopes of seeing one of the women.

My pride and grief keep me from leaving the room, though.

The wounds are still too raw, and it feels like I'll betray my family by interacting with any of the people on this property.

Movement draws my attention away from the water feature, and when I see Viktor, my heartbeat instantly speeds up, and my mouth dries out. He always wears black cargo pants and a shirt for work, so seeing him in a gray suit has my stomach doing cartwheels. The way he walks makes him look hot and powerful.

Even the devil is beautiful, Rosalie. The man is a monster and rotten on the inside. He killed your grandfather and uncle. Don't forget your grief for one second.

I turn away from the window and glance around the room that doesn't offer any entertainment. I'm so bored I wash my hair on a daily basis and even stick to a skincare routine, which I never used to do. I pack and unpack my closet and move the furniture around just to stay busy.

I wish I had my kindle so I could lose myself in my books.

Letting out a sigh, I take a seat on the chair by the vanity table and scowl at my reflection.

Don't give in.

These people are your enemies.

You're a prisoner, not a guest.

A knock at the door has my head snapping up.

Viktor only calls me for lunch and dinner, so the unscheduled visit at this early hour has my heart going crazy in my chest.

*God, please don't let this turn into the worst day of my life.
Don't let him rape me.*

The door opens, and I'm instantly dizzy with fear. Standing up, my legs tremble and threaten to give way beneath me.

It's on the tip of my tongue to start begging when Viktor's eyes narrow on my face. "What's wrong?"

I suck in desperate breaths.

Realization flashes over his features. "Jesus, Rosalie. Calm down. I'm a man of my word. I'll never force myself on you."

His promises mean nothing to me.

To my utter surprise, he places a gift on the bed and says, "Get ready. We're going out."

What?

I gape at him, which makes him chuckle. "I'm taking you out for the day."

"I get to leave the property?" I ask, wondering if this is some kind of trick.

He nods toward the black box that's tied with a silver ribbon. "Put on the dress, birthday girl. I'll wait downstairs."

I watch as he leaves, still not sure what's going on, but the promise of getting out of the house is too much to ignore. I quickly walk to the bed, and with trembling fingers, I pull the ribbon loose. Lifting the lid off, I move the silver paper out of the way and stare at the pale blue fabric.

When I take it out, I gasp at how pretty the summer dress is. It's my favorite color, and half my clothes are in the same shade.

Unable to stop myself, a smile slowly curves my lips. The gift shouldn't mean anything to me.

I shake my head and quickly step out of my jeans and t-shirt so I can slip on the dress. I grab a pair of pumps for my feet and take a couple of seconds to look at my reflection in the mirror.

The dress fits perfectly.

I turn my gaze to the doorway, and with the overwhelming temptation of being among other people, I leave the bedroom.

When I come down the stairs, Viktor tucks his phone into the breast pocket of his suit jacket and glances up at me. He looks so striking in the formal wear I lose my ability to breathe for a moment.

Lifting his arm, he holds his hand out to me.

Not wanting to be difficult and risk my chance at freedom, I place my palm in his. My cheeks flush when his strong fingers wrap around mine, and I'm pulled to stand in front of him.

His eyes drift over my face, and his voice is low and deep as he says, "You look breathtaking, Little Rose."

Before I can stop the words, my manners push them over my lips. “Thank you.”

A pleased smile transforms his face from brutal to so damn attractive, I have to look away.

When he weaves his fingers with mine, I feel uncomfortable being so close to him, and at the same time, attraction. The latter emotion makes guilt rear up in my chest.

Viktor leads me to the front door, and when we step out of the house, I’m met with a large paved driveway and a yellow Lamborghini.

There’s also a black SUV with five armed guards.

“Try to keep up,” Viktor jokes with his men. He opens the passenger door and helps me climb inside. Suddenly he leans over me, and I freeze as he clips my safety belt into place.

Before he pulls back, he looks at me with a playful grin. “Got to make sure you’re safe.”

My stomach somersaults like crazy, and I glance at the expensive leather of my seat just in case the unwanted attraction shows on my face.

Viktor slides behind the steering wheel and unbuttons his jacket before he puts on his safety belt.

We’re really leaving the property.

The powerful engine roars to life, and it rumbles as he drives toward two giant iron gates. They swing open, and once he’s steered us onto the road, my body is pushed back into the seat as he rockets down the street.

My heart hammers in my chest, and I grip the sides of the seat.

Viktor glances at me, then lets out a chuckle before he slows the sports car down to an acceptable speed.

I glance out the window at the houses, and soon the wealthy neighborhood falls behind us as we approach a city.

God, I don't even know where I am.

The realization hits so hard that I gasp.

“What?” Viktor asks, a frown quickly forming on his forehead.

“Where am I?”

“LA.”

Holy shit.

I turn my shocked gaze to him. “How did you get me out of Canada?”

He chuckles arrogantly. “Smuggling is one of the things I’m good at.”

“One of the things?”

With his attention on the road, he expertly steers the powerful vehicle through morning traffic.

I look at the buildings and feel a glimmer of excitement when we turn onto Rodeo Drive.

We drive past high-end brand stores and then weave through more streets before Viktor brings the Lamborghini to a stop.

My lips part, and I'm hit with a wave of emotion as I stare at the Barnes and Noble building.

"You brought me to a bookstore?" I ask.

"It's one of your birthday gifts." He glances around the area, then says, "Don't make me kill anyone today." He nods toward the store. "You'll put everyone in there at risk if you try anything stupid. Got it?"

When I just stare at him, he adds, "Don't forget who I am just because I've been nice to you."

The head of the bratva and my kidnapper. How can I forget?

He'll probably kill all the innocent people in Barnes and Noble if I try to ask for help.

I nod quickly, thinking I can try to escape by using the restroom. That way, I won't endanger anyone.

Viktor climbs out of the car and comes to open the passenger door for me. Unintentionally, I take hold of his outstretched hand and follow him into the store.

I'm hit with the magical feeling you can only get when surrounded by thousands of books.

Viktor leads me to the fantasy section and gestures at the shelves. "Get whatever you want, Little Rose."

I pull my hand free from his and brush my fingers over the spines as I read the titles.

Seeing as I don't have my kindle, and there's no guarantee I'll escape, I grab a box set of Twilight and shove it into Viktor's hands.

Again the man surprises me when he points to a section. “There’s the Nightworld series.”

Hold on a second.

Slowly, I turn my head to Viktor. “Do you read fantasy as well?”

He shakes his head. “I did my research. It was easy to hack your Amazon account.”

Of course.

I roll my eyes then help myself to all the Nightworld books.

Every time I pass a book to Viktor, he hands it off to one of the guards, so I lose track of how many I’m getting.

I grab every book I find by Jennifer L. Armentrout, then search for the Divergent series.

When I walk past the Fifty Shades of Grey collection, Viktor chuckles, “Not into BDSM?”

“Nope.” I let the ‘P’ pop.

I get lost in all the books until I completely forget about the loss I’ve suffered and that I’m actually out shopping with my captor.

“Dammit,” I mutter, glancing over the shelves again.

“Which book are you looking for?” Viktor asks.

“The third book in this series.” I hold book one open so Viktor can see the list of titles. “Deadly Dreams.”

He glances over the shelves, then walks to the counter and speaks to the cashier.

My eyes dart to the five guards, and I find them all watching me.

Damn, there goes an opportunity to run.

While Viktor is at the counter, I glance over the shelves one last time and help myself to five books I haven't read yet.

When I turn around, Viktor is standing with *Deadly Dreams* in his hand. "They had one in the back."

Before I can stop myself, a smile stretches over my face.

Viktor's lips part, awe on his face as if he's looking at one of the wonders of the world. "Jesus, you should spend every second of every day smiling."

Unwelcome warmth floods my heart. I dart past Viktor and rush to the counter, trying to ignore how his compliment affects me.

When Viktor joins me at the counter, the cashier shows the final amount for the books I bought. "That will be two thousand, three hundred and ninety, sir."

My eyebrows shoot up, and my lips part in a gasp.

Dear God, Rosalie.

Viktor doesn't look upset by the amount at all and pays it happily with a black credit card.

I'm not going to feel guilty. It's the least he can do.

The five guards carry the bags out of the store, and Viktor walks next to me. When we reach the door, we have to step aside for a woman with a baby.

I manage to exit the store before Viktor, and my heart lurches. Before I can even think the plan through, my legs are moving, and I run away.

Reaching the end of the block, I glance over my shoulder but don't see Viktor running after me. I turn left, but before I can reach the next road, the Lamborghini comes to a screeching stop by the pedestrian crossing.

My breaths explode over my lips as I change direction, only to have the SUV pull up in front of me. When I swing around again, I slam into Viktor, and his arms wrap around me. His mouth finds my ear, then the warning rumbles from him like thunder, "Make a scene, and I'll kill whoever tries to help you."

When he pulls back to look at my face, my eyes lock with his, and I see the promise of death in his dark brown irises.

My shoulders slump, and so damn frustrated and hopeless, I walk to the Lamborghini with legs feeling like they're made of lead.

Knowing we're probably going back to my prison because of my escape attempt, I slump into the seat and swallow hard on the tears threatening to fall.

God only knows what Viktor is going to do to punish me.

He could do anything from spanking me to raping me, and there's nothing I can do to stop him.

But what was I supposed to do? Just go book shopping, be thankful, and go back to my prison?

I had to try and escape, and I'll continue to try every chance I get because Viktor is a monster who rules over the

bratva. He's one of the men who killed my family. He kidnapped me.

I can never forget that.

I can never think of him as an ordinary man because that's the last thing he is.

He'll always be my enemy, and now I've upset him.

My heart beats heavily in my chest as all the fear creeps back.

Chapter 10

Viktor

All the way home, Rosalie stares out the window, swallowing hard on the urge to cry.

I knew she'd try to make a run for it. Honestly, I would've been disappointed if she hadn't.

When I bring the Lamborghini to a stop, Rosalie takes off her safety belt with trembling hands. She waits for me to walk around the car and open the passenger door for her before she scrambles out and runs into the house.

When the SUV comes to a stop, I tell Joseph, "Bring the books inside."

"Yes, boss."

I head into the house and take the stairs up to the first floor. I push Rosalie's door open and find her staring at the shelves I had my men install while we were out.

"Do you want the books sorted alphabetically or by author?" I ask, happy with the work my men did. The shelves fill the entire left corner of the bedroom, forming a reading nook for Rosalie.

Joseph comes into the room, followed by the other men. They place the bags on the floor, then look at me for further instruction.

“Ah...” Rosalie nervously licks her lips, probably thinking she’s in a ton of shit for trying to run. “I’ll sort the books on the shelves.”

I nod to the door for the men to leave, and once we’re alone, I grab the bag closest to me and start unpacking the books.

When I found her kindle account on Amazon, I was relieved because it gave me something to buy her, seeing as her puppy won’t be arriving until later tonight.

“Where do you want them?” I ask.

Rosalie stares at me, then picks up a bag. “I’m not going to apologize for running.”

“I don’t expect you to,” I mutter as I start to organize the books by author name and series order, that way, they don’t get mixed up.

She gapes at me as if I’ve grown horns. “Aren’t you angry?”

“I would’ve been disappointed if you didn’t try to escape.” I place a box set on the shelf, then lock eyes with her. “I’d hate to think you have no spine, Little Rose.”

Confusion flutters over her perfect features. “You wanted me to run?”

“Yes.” I lift an eyebrow at her. “That’s why I stayed back when the woman and her child entered the store. I gave you a head start.” I shrug as I pick up more books. “Though, you didn’t get very far.” I shoot a glance at her sexy as fuck legs. “Instead of sitting in your bedroom all day long, you should jog around the property. Build up some stamina.”

I watch as her confusion grows and turn to face her. “As I’ve said before, it would be nice to know you can survive in the world once I let you go.”

Slowly she shakes her head. “You’re the weirdest kidnapper.”

Laughing, I continue to unpack the books.

Every time I think we’re done, Rosalie changes her mind, and we start all over. First, the books are standing back to back, then they’re in piles.

Finally, when some are stacked on top of each other and others are standing, I ask, “Happy?”

“Yes.”

For the second time since I took her, a smile spreads over her face, transforming her into an otherworldly being. But the instant she notices I’m staring at her, the smile fades away, and it feels as if the sun is setting on my world.

“You have a beautiful smile, Little Rose,” I compliment her.

Just like earlier, an uncomfortable expression settles on her face.

“I know it’s going to take time, but one day you’ll realize I’m a man of my word.”

She turns her gaze to the books. “Don’t hold your breath.”

I step closer to her, and when I wrap my hand around the back of her neck, her lips part, and her pupils dilate.

She might hate me, but deep down, a part of her is attracted to me.

I stare into her eyes and watch as her breaths speed up. With her full attention on me, I say, “It doesn’t matter where you run to, Little Rose, I’ll always find you.”

I lift my other hand and frame her face. A million emotions flash through her eyes as I lean forward and press a kiss on her forehead. I take a deep breath of her soft natural scent. “Until I’m ready to let you go, you’re mine.”

Her breath hitches, and when I pull back, she frowns at me. “I’ll never be yours. Don’t talk about me as if I’m something you can possess.”

My fingers brush over the flush on her cheek, then I step away from her. “I saved your life, which means you belong to me.”

Anger explodes in her eyes. “Like hell! You and the rest of the Priesthood attacked my home, killed my family, and kidnapped me.”

There’s so much sorrow and hatred on her face, it makes me think she’ll never see me as anything but her enemy.

Rosalie presses her hand to her heart as she exclaims, “You didn’t save me, Viktor. You destroyed me.”

I stare at her for a moment before I say, “I don’t care if I have to be the villain in your story. At least I’ll keep you alive, and it’s the only thing that matters.”

She takes desperate breaths, then points to the door. “I’m done talking. Just leave.”

Hoping she’ll calm down before tonight so I can at least give her the puppy, I leave the bedroom and shut the door behind me.

She just needs time to realize everything I've done for her the past week was in her best interest. I have three years, so I'm not going to push her to accept me as her friend.

We did kill her family, and if someone did that to me, I'd want them dead.

The thought has me realizing that Rosalie will probably always see me as the enemy.

My phone starts to ring, and pulling it out of my pocket, I see Luca's name flashing on the screen.

"Hey," I answer as I take the stairs down to the living area.

"I haven't heard from you in a while. Everything good?"

"Yes, I just made sure Rosalie got settled. What's new on your end?" I walk into the study and take a seat behind my desk.

"Nothing new." Luca pauses, then asks, "Are you really going to keep the girl?"

"She's no longer a girl," I reply as I type in the passwords on all my apps. "It's her birthday today. She's eighteen."

"Jesus, Viktor. Should I be worried?"

When I chuckle, the warning is clear in the sound. "Did you seriously just ask me that?"

"Sorry." Luca sighs. "It's just so unlike you to do something like this."

"Stop worrying about it."

I search everywhere to check if Rosalie has been reported missing, but there's nothing.

I shake my head. “You know what’s sad?”

“What?”

“No one even knows Rosalie is missing.”

“Yeah, that sucks.”

I hack into the security footage for Barnes and Noble and rewind to the time we were there.

“I have to go,” I say as my eyes focus on Rosalie’s face while she’s taking book after book off the shelf.

“Okay. Will I see you Friday night?”

“Yeah.”

We hang up, and I relax back in the chair, watching the footage of earlier. I take in all the emotions flashing over her beautiful face as she looks at the books.

The protective and possessive feelings I’ve had since I laid eyes on Rosalie have only grown over the past five days. It’s surreal how quickly I got used to having her in my space.

Watching the screen, I admire every inch of her, thinking the light blue dress looks stunning on her. The color compliments the olive tone of her skin.

My thoughts turn to earlier when I saw a flash of interest in her eyes, and I wonder what would’ve happened if we weren’t enemies and I didn’t kidnap her.

There’s never been a shortage of women willing to warm my bed, but I get the feeling even if Rosalie and I had met under different circumstances, she wouldn’t have been an easy catch. Not because she’s high maintenance but because she’s inexperienced.

I'd be fucking surprised if she isn't a virgin.

The corner of my mouth lifts at the thought.

I have three years. I'm sure if I turn on the charm, I can make Rosalie forgive me and fall in love with me.

Is that what you want?

“Christ,” I whisper when I watch her smile on the screen after I found the book she wanted.

I'm dead sure I want to make her smile again.

Chapter 11

Rosalie

No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get into any of the books. Not even Twilight.

My thoughts kept going to Viktor and what he said about me belonging to him.

It worries me because if he thinks I'm his, he might try something. Or worse. He might think he's entitled to my body.

Dinner time has come and gone, and having skipped lunch, I'm hungry as hell. Usually, Viktor would come to get me, but not today.

Walking to the door, I open it and peek into the hallway. I don't hear any movement around the house. I walk to the top of the stairs and don't see Viktor in the living room.

Taking the stairs down, I don't find him anywhere, and it has my eyebrow lifting.

I would've come down sooner if I'd known he wasn't here.

I walk to the kitchen and see a single white rose and a note on the island. Opening the note, I read it.

I'll be back soon with dinner and a surprise. Watch some TV or read a book while you wait.

I set the piece of paper down and stare at the rose.

I should throw it away.

Even though the flower is already dying, I can't bring myself to throw it in the trash. Instead, I take out a glass and pour some water into it before sticking the rose inside.

"I'm thirsty too," I whisper.

Opening the fridge, I glance over the selection of drinks and help myself to a bottle of orange juice. I look around the open-plan living space, then walk toward the stairs and head up to the first floor.

While I sip on the juice, I peek into the other rooms until I find a study. My eyebrows lift when I see all the monitors on the one wall.

I snoop around but don't find anything interesting. I make my way to the bedroom, at the opposite end of the hallway to where mine is, and nudge the door open.

Where my bedroom is decorated in white, this one is all black.

I'm not surprised. Of course, the devil prefers his personal space dark.

I hear a door opening downstairs and quickly shut Viktor's bedroom door. Running to the top of the stairs, I'm just in time, so Viktor doesn't see that I came from the wrong direction.

He sets a large pizza box down on the island and smiles at me. "I see you got my note."

I nod as I walk closer, the aroma of the food quickly filling the air.

He flips the lid back, then says, “The half with pineapple is yours.” He shivers as he pulls two plates from the cupboard. “I don’t know how you eat fruit on your pizza.”

“It’s yummy.” I pick up a slice and take a huge bite.

It surprises me how much Viktor knows about me. First the dress, then the books, and now my favorite food.

I watch him while we load our plates, and when Viktor walks to the patio, I hesitate. I glance at the stool by the island, and I’m just about to take a seat when he says, “It won’t kill you to sit out here with me.”

“That’s what you think,” I mutter. Still, I walk out of the house and take a seat at the table.

While I finish a slice, I stare at the fountain that’s illuminated with spotlights.

I’m halfway with my second slice when Viktor asks, “If you could have anything, what would it be?”

Without hesitation, I answer, “My freedom.”

He lets out a chuckle. “Besides that.”

I throw a scowl his way and take another bite of my pizza.

There’s only one thing I want, but because we moved so much, I couldn’t have one.

“Come on, Little Rose,” Viktor urges playfully. “Tell me.”

“A dog.” I let out a sigh. “Hopefully, I’ll survive the next three years, and once I’m settled down in my own place, I’ll get one.”

“You’ll survive,” he murmurs. Viktor gestures to something behind me, and I glance over my shoulder. One of the guards steps out of the shadows next to the mansion, and my lips part on a gasp.

Instantly, I’m overcome with emotion at the sight of the Labrador puppy in the guard’s arms.

“She’s yours,” Viktor says.

Slowly, I get up, the pizza forgotten. With my eyes glued on the golden bundle, my chin starts to tremble from the happiness hitting me in the chest.

The guard sets her down, and I inch closer until I can crouch in front of her. She scoots closer, cautiously sniffing my hand, which smells like pizza. When her little tongue darts out and licks my finger, laughter bubbles over my lips.

“Hi,” I whisper.

She looks up at me with huge brown eyes, and I instantly fall in love. Careful not to hurt her, I pick her up and cradle her against my chest.

“Hi, beautiful.” She licks my jaw, drawing more laughter from me. I turn around and ask, “What’s her name?”

“You need to give her one,” Viktor answers, his voice sounding hoarse.

My eyes dart to his face. “You didn’t name her?”

He shakes his head. “She’s your birthday gift, Little Rose. You get to name her.”

He got me a dog.

Overcome with emotions I'm far from ready to feel, I stare at him until my puppy licks my jaw again.

I lower my gaze to her and can't help but smile. "Hi, Luna."

I press my face into her fur and struggle to keep the tears at bay.

"You need to train her. I don't want her ripping my house to shreds, and if I step in shit, all hell will break loose."

A burst of laughter explodes from me. "I'll take good care of her."

Viktor gets up and comes to rub her head. Our eyes lock, and I'm unable to stop myself from saying, "Thank you. She's perfect."

His eyes warm with an emotion I pretend not to notice as he whispers, "Just like her mother."

Suddenly he walks back into the house. "I got pee pads, toys, and food. She needs to get her vaccination shots. The first one is scheduled for tomorrow."

I stare at Viktor as he brings bags into the living room, feeling a little amazed.

He didn't have to do anything, yet he tried to make my birthday special.

Don't, Rosalie.

Wanting to enjoy my first moments with Luna, I gather the bags in one hand and head up the stairs. When I'm in my bedroom, I kick the door shut and sit down on the floor with Luna between my legs.

“God, you’re so cute,” I coo as I rub her head and press kisses to her fur. “I’m going to love you with all of my heart.”

Emptying the bags, I take the bowls out and quickly fill one with water. When I set it down, it takes a good ten minutes of coaxing before Luna drinks some.

I pet her head. “Don’t worry. You’ll get used to everything soon.”

Just like I have to.

Overcome with emotion, I gather her against my chest and let the tears fall.

At least I’m not alone anymore.

While I pour all my affection out on my puppy, I can’t help but think that Viktor has really gone out of his way to make my stay pleasant.

He could’ve thrown me in the basement and tortured and killed me.

God, things could’ve been so much worse for me if one of the other four had taken me. Nikolas Stathoulis would’ve killed me.

I’ll never admit it out loud, and I’ll only think it this once – maybe Viktor did save me.

Chapter 12

Viktor

God damn, the powerful emotions I felt when I heard Rosalie laugh scared the shit out of me.

I watched her fall in love with Luna and got jealous of a puppy.

After cleaning up and putting the leftover pizza in the fridge, I lock up and switch all the lights off. Taking the stairs up, I go to Rosalie's room and softly open the door. She's curled up on the bed, fast asleep, with Luna snuggled against her chest. She didn't even change out of the dress. The fabric is bunched high around her thighs, giving me a glimpse of black lace panties.

Christ.

Luna's eyes open, she takes one look at me, then falls asleep again.

Lucky dog.

I walk closer and carefully pull the covers over Rosalie's legs, then get my ass out of the room and shut the door.

Today was a win in my book. With a smile playing around my mouth, I head to my bathroom and turn on the faucets in the shower.

I strip out of the suit I had to wear for the meeting with a prospective arms dealer early this morning.

Stepping under the warm spray, I replay the day in my mind. I got more than one smile out of Rosalie. It wasn't a perfect birthday, but at least she laughed, which is more than I had hoped for.

I keep seeing Rosalie's smile and how fucking gorgeous she looked in the dress. The woman has the sexiest fucking legs I've ever seen. I have to admit, I missed seeing them. She's kept them covered in jeans since she got here.

I need to buy her more dresses and get rid of all the jeans.

I squirt body wash into my palm, and when my hands glide over my skin, I remember the interest in Rosalie's eyes when she saw me in the suit.

She might hate me, but I'm sure she's attracted to me.

My fingers wrap around my semi-hard cock, but instead of washing myself, I start to thrust into my fist.

I never jerk off. If I need to release some tension, I get a woman. But the thought of going out and finding a warm pussy holds no appeal for me since Rosalie moved into my house. And most of the women pale in comparison to my Little Rose.

I brace a hand on the wall and let the spray of water hit the back of my neck, and as my thoughts turn to the first time I saw Rosalie lying on her bed with her perfect ass in those tight shorts, I thrust harder, wishing I was balls deep inside her.

My fist tightens until pleasure trickles through my body.

Jesus, what I'd give to have her fingers wrapped around me while she looks at me with those soft brown eyes.

I lose myself in what it felt like to hold her body against mine when I had to restrain her, what a turn-on it was to feed her, and how hot it made me whenever she tried to fight back.

My fist pumps my hard-on until I'm breathless, my mind filled with images of Rosalie.

Christ, I wish I could feel her bare skin against mine.

When I bring up the memory of Rosalie lying beneath me with my fingers wrapped around her throat, her hips bucking to get me off, the orgasm explodes through me.

"Rosalie," I groan as I slump back against the tiles. I let the orgasm tear through me, my body jerking from the overwhelming pleasure.

I watch as my release hits the tiles and thrust into my fist a couple more times to ride the last of the ecstasy.

When the pleasure fades away, I rest my head against the wall and stare at the water.

It's clear I'm falling for Rosalie. My sperm washing down the drain is proof of that.

But I'm worried Rosalie will never be able to look at me and not see the man who took part in killing her family.

Blyad'.

Just take one day at a time. You have three years to work for her forgiveness.

"Luna, no!" I hear Rosalie's panicked voice.

My eyebrow pops up because I'm pretty sure it's coming from my room.

"No, don't walk and poop all over the place," Rosalie shrieks.

Turning off the faucets, I step out of the shower and wrap a towel around my waist. Yanking the door open, it's to see the puppy trying to eat her own shit while Rosalie's pushing her away so she can wipe it up.

"What. The. Fuck," I mutter, wondering how the hell this happened. There's a row of tiny turds over my floor.

Rosalie's head snaps up, and her eyes go wide as saucers. "Ah... uhm." Her gaze burns over the waterdrops on my chest, down to the towel, then back to my chest. Her tongue darts out to wet her lips, then she starts blinking faster.

Luna grabs a chunk of shit and beelines out of the bedroom.

"Crap," Rosalie mutters, then she darts up and runs after the dog.

I start to chuckle, but when Rosalie cries, "No, drop it. Don't! Eww!" I lose it and burst out laughing.

Sidestepping the remaining shit on the floor, I walk to my ensuite closet and quickly pull on a pair of sweatpants. Just as the fabric covers my cock, Rosalie walks back into my bedroom.

Her eyes zoom in on my pelvis, then she spins around and sputters, "S-sorry. Tell me when you're dressed so I can clean up."

“I’m dressed,” I chuckle.

She turns around, and her eyes almost roll out of her head as she tries to look away. “Are you going to put on a shirt?”

“You can be glad I’m wearing sweatpants. I like to sleep naked.” Walking to the bathroom, I grab some toilet paper and hold it out to Rosalie. “I’m not touching the landmines. It’s all yours.”

She takes the toilet paper from me and quickly wipes up the mess, then flushes it down my toilet.

“Where’s Luna?” I ask.

“In my bathroom.” Rosalie looks a little green. “She ate the poop.”

“Yummy,” I tease her.

She points to where the mess was. “Sorry, I wanted to take her outside, but she ran into your room.”

I cross my arms over my chest and stare her down until she starts fidgeting. “Can you make coffee?”

She gives me a hopeful look. “If I make you some, promise you won’t be mad at Luna.”

“Negotiating, are we?” I can’t keep the grin from forming on my face.

“I make really good coffee,” she tries to sweeten the deal.

“I promise I won’t be mad at Luna,” I say so she won’t worry.

A smile threatens to tug at her lips, but she hurries out of the room before it can fully form.

I don't bother putting on a t-shirt because I want to see Rosalie's reaction to make sure I'm not imagining that she's attracted to me.

I head downstairs and turn on the lights. When I open the sliding doors, I hear Rosalie behind me.

"Will it be okay for Luna to run around outside?" she asks, her voice a little strained.

"Of course."

Crossing my arms over my chest, I lean my shoulder against the pillar and watch as Rosalie sets Luna down.

"I'll keep an eye on her while you make coffee," I say.

Rosalie nods and hurries to the kitchen.

I watch Luna sniffing everything in sight as she explores the patio before daring to go a little further down the steps. When I glance over my shoulder, I catch Rosalie staring at my back with a frown.

"What?" I ask as I turn to face her.

She quickly shakes her head and stirs the two cups of coffee.

"Out with it," I order.

She carries the coffees to the patio and sets the cups on the table. Her tongue darts out to wet her lips as her gaze searches for Luna.

"Little Rose," I urge her to start talking.

"Ah..." Her eyes finally come back to me. "Why do you have so many tiny lines tattooed on your left side?"

I move closer and pick up a cup. “Every line represents a life I’ve taken.”

Shock tightens her features, and her eyebrows draw together as if she’s sad for the fuckers I’ve killed.

I tilt my head, my gaze locking with hers. “Every single one deserved to die.”

She glances away, then shakes her head. “My grandfather and uncle didn’t.”

I take a sip of the coffee and have to admit it’s really good.

“I don’t kill innocent people.”

Her eyes snap back to mine. “Yet you threatened to kill anyone who tried to help me?”

The corner of my mouth lifts. “If they interfere in my business, they’re no longer innocent.”

Her lips part, and she stares at me as if I’ve turned into a monster right in front of her eyes.

I’ve gone out of my way to be gentle with her, and it might’ve been a mistake. Rosalie seems to have forgotten who I am.

“Don’t look so shocked, Little Rose. I’m the head of the bratva, after all.”

“Yeah, I shouldn’t have looked for any redeeming qualities in you,” she whispers, sounding sad.

Abandoning her cup of coffee, she hurries down the steps, grabs Luna, and hightails it back into the house.

And just like that, all the progress I've made with Rosalie is gone, and I'm back to being the villain in her story.

Chapter 13

Rosalie

I discovered a piece of the garden away from the other mansions on the side of Viktor's house. It's where I spend my days with Luna, and I don't risk running into any of Viktor's family members.

I've trained Luna to sit and stay and am working on getting her to lie down.

Whenever Viktor is home, Luna and I return to my room, where she naps while I read one of my books.

If it weren't for Luna and all the books, I would've lost my mind.

I stole a notepad and pen from Viktor's office so I can keep track of the days. Every month is a celebration because it brings me closer to my twenty-first birthday.

There are still thirty-three months to go, and God only knows how I'll get through them. Some days are easier than others, and with Luna's help, there are moments I forget about my predicament, and the loss of my family isn't as sharp and heartbreaking.

Viktor's been busy with work, and there are even days when I don't see him at all. Like the past two days. He hasn't been home, and I hate that I slip up and miss him.

What worries me most are the moments I forget who he is. The routine doesn't help either because this place is starting to feel like home.

And I can't have that happening.

I can't forget I'm a captive on this property and that my captor is the man who killed my family.

"Lie down, Luna," I say, patting the grass.

She playfully jumps back, then comes to sniff my hand.

"No. Lie down," I try to train her with a gentle voice, softly pressing on her back until she lies down. "See, like this."

I hear a car's engine, and before I can grab Luna, she darts toward the black SUV and wiggles her tail and butt in the most adorable way when Viktor climbs out of the vehicle.

I rise to my feet, and unable to stop myself, my eyes drink in the sight of him.

I miss him when he's not around but hate whenever he's home. My emotions are extremely conflicted when it comes to the man. And crippling guilt always follows them.

I start to frown when my eyes lock on the red stains covering his rumpled dress shirt and suit jacket.

Blood.

Shock and worry surge through me, my heart instantly beating faster.

As Viktor crouches to give an excited Luna attention, I hurry toward him, asking, "Did you get hurt?"

He straightens up and shakes his head as he glances down at his shirt. "It's not my blood."

My eyes widen and zoom in on the stains, my mouth growing dry.

Viktor watches my reaction, then tilts his head. "It's nice that you were worried about me, though."

Guilt rears up like a hurricane because I shouldn't give a damn about what happens to him.

"Come, Luna," I say with numb lips and spinning around, I hurry back into the house.

Conflicting emotions swirl in my chest.

As I shut the bedroom door behind us, Luna jumps onto the bed and lies down, her big eyes watching me with furrowed brows.

I'm relieved that Viktor didn't get hurt, but I'm also disgusted because he probably killed again.

More lines to tattoo onto his back. It's a good thing they're tiny, or he'd run out of space.

Hey, at least he didn't kidnap another girl.

Lifting a hand, I brush my hair away from my face and shake my head.

This is insane. How can I care about my captor?

It's probably Stockholm syndrome.

I sit down on the bed and rub Luna's head, finding comfort in touching her.

I don't know how I will survive like this for another thirty-three months. The clashing emotions are giving me whiplash.

Every time I start to forget who Viktor is, and my heart begins to open to him, something like this happens to remind me he's the head of the bratva.

He restrained and forced me to watch my beloved uncle die in the most horrible way.

He threatened to rape me and strangled me.

He has no conscience.

But, he has also gone out of his way to make my captivity as pleasant as possible.

Jesus, Rosalie! Listen to yourself. 'Captivity' and 'pleasant' never go hand in hand.

There's a knock at my door, and it opens before I can deny entry.

Viktor's dressed in a clean shirt and sweatpants, which means he'll be home for the rest of the day.

"Let's have lunch," he says.

No, he orders. He never asks.

"I'd rather starve," I mutter, turning my attention to Luna, who's already in dreamland.

"Or I could force feed you," he threatens.

I let out a sigh and climb to my feet. "Or you could kill me." Shooting him a glare, I push past him and walk down the hallway.

I sit down on a stool at the island and watch as Viktor grills chicken breasts that he uses to make sandwiches.

My gaze takes in every attractive inch of his body, his strong jaw, full lips, and dark eyes.

“You’re staring,” he murmurs.

“Just wondering how you can kill people so easily.”

He lets out a chuckle. “It’s the way of our life.”

“Not mine,” I mutter.

His eyes flick to me. “Yours as well, Little Rose. You were born into the Sicilian mafia.”

I shake my head. “I was never a part of that world.”

He narrows his gaze on me, and fear skitters down my spine. It doesn’t happen much anymore, but it’s jarring as hell when it does.

“What do you think your family did for a living?”

I don’t know.

When I keep quiet, he says, “It’s a good thing you don’t know, Little Rose. I don’t think you’ll be able to handle the truth.”

What does that mean?

As if Viktor can read my mind, he shakes his head. “It’s better if your memory of your family isn’t tainted. You need something good to hold onto.”

There he goes again, making it look like he cares about me.

“You exhaust me, Viktor.”

He freezes, his eyes burning into mine. “That’s the first time you’ve said my name.” A pleased look curves the corner of his mouth into a hot as hell grin, then he orders, “Say it again.”

Shaking my head, I scoot off the chair.

Before I can dart in the direction of the stairs, Viktor moves in front of me, giving me a look of warning. “Stop running.”

I’ll never stop.

I raise my chin to look up at him, wanting to seem stronger than I feel.

Viktor lifts his right hand to my cheek, and his touch makes tingles explode beneath my skin. It feels like every cell in my body is going off like fireworks.

“Don’t,” I whisper.

When I take a step back, I bump into the island. Viktor moves closer until our chests touch, and his manly scent engulfs me.

Oh, God.

His voice is so low and deep, it sends goosebumps over my skin. “Don’t what?”

I turn my head away and stare at the fridge. “You know.”

When he leans down, I quickly shut my eyes, but that’s a bad idea because now I feel every movement he makes, and his breath skimming over my jaw and ear has my sensitive skin tingling like crazy.

His hand grips my hip. “Don’t touch you?”

I swallow hard on the intense attraction making my abdomen tighten while heat flushes between my legs.

This isn't right.

“You smell mouthwatering, Little Rose.” His lips brush against my throat, and a strangled moan escapes me.

He said similar words to me right before they killed Uncle Ricco.

Shoving against his chest, I dart to the side and run for the stairs.

My heart is beating out of control, and overwhelming shame pours through my veins like hot lava.

Whenever I'm attracted to Viktor, I feel like I'm dishonoring my family.

This is too hard. I can't deal with these conflicting emotions.

Hiding in my bedroom, I remind myself of everything Viktor has done and who he is.

I force whatever feelings I have for him into a box of shameful thoughts, hoping to God I'm strong enough to keep it sealed shut because I can't fall in love with him.

Chapter 14

Viktor

Viktor; 28. Rosalie; 20 – Two years since capture.

Blyad'. I only have a week left.

Every fiber of my being is against letting Rosalie go, but I can't go back on my word.

And it's not like anything's going to change. I had three years, and she's fought me every step of the way.

She'll never forgive me for the part I played in killing her family.

There were times I seemed to get through to her, but she'd shut down so fast, and it would become more difficult to bridge the gap between us.

I'm worried she'll forget about me the moment she leaves.

I can't blame her, though.

Letting out a sigh, I get up and leave my office. I walk to the side door, and leaning against the doorjamb, I cross my arms over my chest and watch Rosalie run the obstacle course she set up for Luna.

Jesus, I'm going to miss the dog as well.

Over the past three years, Rosalie has blossomed into a stunning woman. There's no sign of the seventeen-year-old

girl I kidnapped.

I wonder if she knows how much stronger she's become. The girl would cower and flinch, whereas the woman doesn't hesitate to tell me to go to hell and trash her room to make a point that she hates living here.

All of my friends married the women of their dreams, and I'm forced to say goodbye to mine.

There were so many things I wanted to share with her, but Rosalie never allowed me to cross the line. I couldn't even take her to Luca and Mariya's wedding.

She also doesn't want me to share anything about my day or things happening in my life.

Rosalie has built an insurmountable wall between us.

Christ, she's so much stronger than me.

"It's rude to stare," Rosalie mutters as she gathers Luna's toys.

"I only have a week left to look at you. I'll stare all I want."

Her eyes dart to mine, and I see the conflict warring in them.

I know, without a doubt, Rosalie is attracted to me. I'll even go as far as to say she's in love with me. But as long as she's unable to forgive me, none of that matters.

When she pushes past me, I grab hold of her arm to hold her back. Turning my head, I lock eyes with her. "Don't hide in your room tonight. Watch a movie with me."

There's zero hesitation when she answers, "No." Tugging her arm out of my grip, she walks into the house.

Not happy with her reply, I ask, "Why not?"

Rosalie places the toys in a basket, lets out a sigh, then looks at me. "Because you always give me orders, Viktor. You never ask."

Frowning, I shake my head. "I ask."

"No, you don't. It's always an instruction."

I walk closer to her. "Will you watch a movie with me tonight?"

Rosalie lets out a dry chuckle. "Only you can make a question sound like a demand."

I take hold of her hand and brush my thumb over her soft skin. "We only have a week left, Little Rose. Please, will you spend some time with me?"

Her eyebrows draw together, and I watch the conflicting emotions flash over her face.

When she starts to pull her hand from mine, I tighten my grip. Stepping close to her, our bodies touch. I cup her cheek with my other hand, giving her a pleading look. "In seven days, I have to let you go. Just give me a week where you don't hate me."

Sadness creeps into her eyes, making the golden flecks in her brown irises more prominent. "I can't, Viktor."

When she tries to step back to put some space between us, I let go of her hand and wrap my fingers around the back of

her neck. Holding her in place, my mouth crashes against hers in absolute desperation.

She tries to turn her head, whimpering, “Don’t.”

Our rushing breaths mingle. Every muscle in my body strains, begging me to forsake my humanity and take what I want.

“Please,” she begs with a trembling voice. “I won’t survive the guilt.”

The powerful emotions I feel for this woman force me to let go of her. It takes all my strength to walk away from her.

A crack starts to form right down the middle of my heart when I stalk out the front door.

“Stay here,” I order Joseph and my other men.

I climb into one of the SUVs, and starting the engine, I speed out of the property and away from the woman that’s crawled so deep beneath my skin, I’ll never be able to get her out.

Blindly, I drive to Luca and Mariya’s place, and when the elevator opens to their penthouse suite, I stalk inside.

Luca’s guards must’ve notified him that I’m here because my friend comes rushing down the stairs. “What’s wrong?”

“I need to crash here tonight. You can’t let me leave.”

Worry tightens his features as he comes to stand in front of me. “Why? Who do you want to kill?”

I shake my head. “I can’t be near Rosalie until I’ve calmed down.”

Understanding flashes over his face.

“What happened?” Mariya asks as she comes down the stairs.

Glancing between my little sister and best friend, I shake my head.

It feels like I’ve already lost Rosalie.

You never had her.

Frustrated, I shove a hand through my hair and walk to Luca’s alcohol cabinet. I grab a bottle of vodka, and not bothering with a glass, I pour the liquid down my throat.

Mariya comes to place a hand on my back, giving me a concerned look. “Hey, talk to me.”

I shake my head again and stalk to the stairs. “Carry on with your day. I’ll be in one of the guestrooms.”

I take the first room and shut the door behind me. Pouring more vodka down my throat, I’m desperate for the liquor to lessen the pain that’s tearing through my heart.

I thought I’d be able to make her fall for me.

I thought, with time, Rosalie could forgive me.

I was wrong.

Christ.

Every single memory of her is ingrained into my mind. Her rare smiles. Her even scarcer laughter.

How beautiful she looks in a dress.

The love shining from her whenever she looks at Luna.

The way her breathing speeds up when I touch her. At first, it was from fear, but over the passing months, it became desire.

I refuse to admit how I feel about Rosalie. I can't think the words, never mind say them. If I do, I'll go back on my word and keep her forever.

And I can't do that to Rosalie.

I can't be selfish with her.

Just like every other day during the past three years, I have to put Rosalie first. I have to do what's best for her.

And I'm not it.

I'll always be a reminder of what she lost – what the Priesthood took from her.

Chapter 15

Rosalie

I'm worried out of my mind, which only makes my guilt so much worse.

Viktor hasn't been home in five days, and I'm contemplating walking to his parents' house to ask if he's okay.

These people are nothing to you. They belong to the bratva, Rosalie.

Just two more days, then you'll finally get to leave.

If you show you care, Viktor won't let you go.

Stay strong.

For Grandpa.

For Uncle Ricco.

You don't feel anything for Viktor. These emotions are nothing more than Stockholm syndrome.

Instead of thinking about Viktor, I should worry about my future. I'll need to find a place to stay and a job.

Luna licks my hand to get my attention, and I ruffle the fur on her head. "Hey, girl. Do you want to go inside and take a nap?"

She sits up straight and tilts her head as if to say yes.

“Yeah, it’s hot today.”

I walk back into the house and shut the door so none of the cool air from the AC will escape.

When we enter the bedroom, Luna jumps onto the bed and lies down on her side. I kick off my shoes, then take a pair of shorts from my closet.

It’s way too hot to sleep in jeans.

After dragging on the shorts, I crawl onto the bed and lie down. I stare at Luna as my thoughts turn to the incident between Viktor and me.

It was the first time he kissed me.

God, it was hard to pull away.

When his lips slammed into mine, I almost dissolved into a puddle of hormones.

It was also the first time I saw the desperation in Viktor’s eyes. He’s always been calm and collected, never losing control.

It makes me worry how we’ll get through the last two days. I’m not sure I can keep pushing him away.

I’m not that strong. Especially not when I see the heartache in his eyes.

Life is so unfair.

If it weren’t for the fact that he’s the head of the bratva and part of the Priesthood, we could be together.

He’d just be an ordinary guy I could fall in love with.

It would be as easy as breathing to love him. He's shown me so much kindness during my stay here and has done everything possible to make me feel at home.

The times I fought back, he never lost his temper.

Not once did he abuse me.

But Viktor is far from ordinary. He's a trained killer, a ruthless bratva boss, and my kidnapper.

Just two more days.

My chaotic thoughts and emotions chase me from the bed. Unable to stop myself, I walk to Viktor's bedroom so I can smell his scent.

I open the door and glance over the dark furniture and bedspread. I step inside and brush my fingers along the wall as if I can steal some of the memories this room might hold.

Looking at the bed, I realize I've never seen Viktor asleep.

Does he look peaceful or ruthless when he's lying in this bed?

Suddenly, I feel the air shift, and spinning around, I see Viktor watching me with an enraged look.

Shit.

We stare at each other, and three years' worth of emotions tense the air until my breaths speed up.

Only two more days.

But I don't want to say goodbye.

I want to run into his arms and beg him to keep me forever.

I want to be free from my guilt to love him.

Viktor moves so fast that I don't have any time to avoid him. His arms wrap around me, and his mouth slams into mine with so much force I whimper.

His tongue thrusts past my lips, and the way he loses control should scare me.

Maybe it does, but I don't get a chance to examine it because Viktor kisses me with so much desperation and need, it clouds my mind.

All the emotions I've worked so hard to bottle up explode like fireworks through me. I lift my arms and wrap them around his neck.

When my tongue brushes against his, a growl rumbles deep from his chest, and the last of his control is obliterated.

My hands move to the sides of his neck, and I kiss him with every emotion he's made me feel.

I lose his mouth as he peppers my jaw and neck with hot kisses. "Just give me these last two days. Please."

I'm too weak to stand my ground, and instead of pushing Viktor away, I shove the memory of my family into the darkest corner of my heart. "Okay."

His hands frame my face, and his eyes bore into mine. "You'll be mine to do with what I want?"

God.

Anticipation and desire spin wildly in my stomach. "Yes."

"Promise," he demands.

"I promise."

“I kept my word, Little Rose. I didn’t force myself on you for three years. You better not break your promise,” he orders.

He looks at me with so much relief I can taste it on my lips right before his mouth claims mine in a searing kiss.

Viktor’s hands grip my hips, then they feverishly explore my body as if he can’t touch me enough. His lips knead mine until they tingle, his teeth tugging and nipping with such experience, it makes me lightheaded.

My fingers tangle in the short strands of hair at his nape, my skin starting to buzz with the need for more while my heart pounds in my chest.

I’m so enamored with him that every touch and kiss from him pulls me into a world where my darkest fantasies beg to be released.

Drunk on passion, I want this ruthless man who lives by a code of violence to own me in every way.

“Viktor.” I have no idea what I’m begging for against his lips, I only know I need him to do more. To touch me harder. To kiss me until I can’t breathe. To make me feel things I’ve never felt before. “More,” whimper.

“Jesus Christ,” he grumbles, then I’m shoved onto the mattress. He grabs hold of my thighs and yanks me down until my butt is at the foot of the bed.

When he unbuttons my shorts and drags the zipper down, his knuckles brush against me. My abdomen tightens, and heat floods the valley between my legs.

Self-consciousness threatens to pop the bubble of lust I’m caught in as he drags my shorts and panties down my legs.

I've never been naked in front of a man, and as I try to close my legs, he shoves them open and lowers his head as he kneels on the floor.

My eyebrows fly up, and my mouth drops open when the velvety feel of his tongue laps at my most private part.

Oh. My. God.

The pleasure is instant and so intense, my hips buck off the bed. Viktor grabs hold of my sides and forces me down on the mattress as he starts to lick and bite at the sensitive bundle of nerves.

“Oh, God.” The words rush from me, and my hands find his hair, my fingers gripping fistfuls. “Viktor,” I cry when the sensations threaten to overwhelm me.

I feel his hand move, then the pad of his finger rubs around my opening, making the sensations spike and stealing my ability to breathe. I can only manage moans and whimpers, my back arching and every muscle in my body tightening.

Viktor pushes his finger inside me and sucks so hard on my clit, my entire world splinters into paralyzing ecstasy. Cries are torn from me, and my abdomen clenches hard, my body convulsing.

He crawls up my body while pleasure keeps hitting me in waves. His finger moves in and out of me, making the orgasm last longer, and he stares at me with so much awe and emotion I can almost believe he loves me.

“You're so fucking beautiful,” his voice rumbles like a thundercloud. “You taste exquisite, *moya Malen'kaya Roza.*”

My hands frame his face, and I pull him to me so I can kiss him. I need him to keep my mind clouded, or I'll start to think, which would be a disaster.

Viktor allows me to kiss him, and tender love spills from me.

I'll never be able to admit how I feel about him, but I'll at least get this one chance to show him.

"Rosalie," he breathes against my lips. He wraps an arm around me and shifts me up the bed before lying down on top of me. His weight presses me into the mattress, making me feel safe and adored.

My hands slip beneath his shirt, and trailing my fingers over his muscled back, I relish in the feel of the power rippling beneath his skin.

Viktor takes hold of my shirt and pulls it off. There's a moment I feel self-conscious as he unclips my bra and throws it on the floor, but then his mouth closes over a nipple, and my back arches. He massages my breasts and feasts on my nipples until they're hard and sensitive.

I manage to pull his shirt over his head, finally ridding him of a piece of clothing. My hands explore the prominent ridges of his abs and chest, and I trail a finger over the star on his left shoulder.

Viktor moves off the bed, and I watch as he takes his sweatpants off.

Shit, he doesn't wear boxers.

I'm lying naked on his bed, but still, I'm not prepared as I stare at his hard length. Having never seen that part of a man,

I'm not sure if it's normal or whether all men are so long and thick.

Viktor opens the bedside drawer, and my eyes grow bigger when I see him take a condom from a box that says *Durex XXL*.

This is really happening. I'm about to have sex for the first time.

Viktor rolls the condom over his cock, and the sight of him touching himself makes heat flood my body all over again.

He crawls over me, and when he lies down, he pulls my left leg over his hip and settles down on top of me. Feeling his hardness pressing against me is both overwhelming and scary.

Viktor kisses my jaw, then asks, "Have you had sex before?"

No.

I nod, afraid he will stop if I answer the truth.

"Do you masturbate?"

Hell no.

I nod again, my cheeks going up in flames.

A sexy grin tugs at his mouth. "Have you fantasized about me?"

Not the way he thinks. There were days I was weak, and I dreamt things were different so we could be together.

"Yes," I lie.

"Good, I don't have to torture myself by taking it slow."

Oh shit.

Viktor's mouth captures mine, and the kiss quickly turns wild and possessive. His hand slips between my legs, and he thrusts two fingers inside me. It stings, and I quickly have to swallow back the squeak.

It doesn't take long before the discomfort morphs into pleasure, and soon my hips are moving to meet his hand thrust for thrust.

Moans and sighs spill from me, and I'm swept into a world of passion where it's only Viktor and me.

Viktor's kisses grow with urgency until he's devouring me, and he pulls his hand from between my legs. I feel the head of his cock pressing against my opening, then my mouth rips from his, and my body arches from the intense pain as he slams into me.

"Motherfucking Christ," Viktor hisses. "You're fucking tight." He presses his forehead to mine, his features strained and breathtakingly attractive from the effort it's taking not to move.

When the sharp ache deep inside me lessens, I finally manage to suck in a breath of air.

Viktor's eyes burn into mine. "How badly does it hurt?"

My freaking butt is numb from the pain.

I quickly shake my head. "Not much." I force a smile to my lips and wrap my arms around his neck so he can't pull back. "I'm fine."

He presses a gentle kiss to the tip of my nose and grips hold of my left thigh. When he pulls out, it burns, and I try to

brace myself, but the second he thrusts back into me, the pain is back.

I tighten my hold around him and bury my face against the side of his neck so he can't see my face.

“You still good, *moya Malen'kaya Roza?*” he asks hoarsely.

I don't know Russian, but I can guess he's calling me his little rose. I love hearing it in his language.

“Yes.”

Only when Viktor thrusts into me for the third time does it sink in that I gave him my virginity.

I cling to him until the pain finally starts to fade, and the moment my body relaxes beneath him, Viktor loses control.

His fingers dig into my buttocks, and he holds me in place as he starts to hammer into me.

I feel him everywhere – his skin rubbing against mine, his cock stroking and hitting against my inner walls, and his breaths on my lips.

Not once does he break eye contact as he claims my body, the expression on his face tense and ruthless as if he's conquering the world.

Suddenly, he pulls out, and my body is yanked up. Viktor forces me to straddle him, my shins resting on either side of his powerful thighs. The position pushes my legs as wide open as they'll go.

I wrap my arms around him, squashing my breasts against his solid chest.

With his left arm wrapped tightly around my lower back, he surges inside me, stretching me to the max.

A whimper escapes my parted lips.

“Christ, your pussy takes me so well, *moya Malen’kaya Roza.*” His dirty words make my abdomen clench hard. He groans with satisfaction, “You’re so fucking tight. It feels incredible to be inside you.”

Viktor looks down between us as he pulls out, but then he frowns, and his intense eyes dart back to mine. I glance down, and seeing the blood, I gasp.

Shit. I didn’t think about that. There’s so much blood you’d think he murdered my vagina.

Instead of calling me out, Viktor cups my cheek with his right hand, and taking my mouth in a tender kiss that makes my toes curl, he pushes back inside me.

Chapter 16

Viktor

She lied.

She fucking lied about having sex, and that's why it hurt so much for her.

Knowing I'm the first man inside Rosalie and that her virginity belongs to me and her blood coats my cock fill my chest with relief. At least I'll always keep a part of her with me, and she'll never be able to forget me.

It takes all my strength not to fuck her the way I planned. The slower thrusts allow me to feel every tight inch of her wet heat, making the moment a million times more intense.

I have two days to worship this beautiful creature, and I plan on spending most of the time with her in my bed.

I relish the feel of her skin brushing against mine, and lowering my hand from her cheek, I squeeze her breast hard, loving how tight her nipple pebbles.

Breaking the kiss, I press my forehead to Rosalie's, and watch her face as I keep filling her. Her cheeks are flushed, and the golden flecks in her brown irises look like tiny fires. Emotion is etched onto her features, and no matter what lies she continues to tell me, I know without a doubt this woman loves me.

I'll never love another woman the way I love you, baby.

Tears start to shimmer in her eyes, and not wanting her to cry, I kiss the fuck out of her.

I move faster, filling her with hard thrusts until she gasps against my lips, and I feel her body tensing. Pushing my hand between us, I flick my middle finger against her clit, and Rosalie starts to move with me.

She rides me faster and faster, her gasps turning to moans and whimpers. I rub the fuck out of her clit, and my cock keeps hitting her deep until she shatters. Her arms tighten around me, and she cries right by my ear, making pleasure sizzle down my spine.

My balls tighten, and shoving Rosalie onto her back, I relentlessly pound into her until my body arches as my orgasm hits.

I keep hammering into her while I come, my jaw clenching from the intense ecstasy exploding through me.

Only when we're both coming down from our orgasms, do I slow my pace. I don't pull out immediately, enjoying the last couple of thrusts as residual spasms keep making her pussy clamp around me.

My eyes drink in her flushed face, and the possessiveness I feel for her fills every inch of my chest. "You're mine," I say with determination. "I might let you go the day after tomorrow, but you're mine, Rosalie. I'll give you all the time you need, and when you're ready, you'll come back to me."

I bury myself deep inside her and press her body into the bed with my full weight. My hands frame the sides of her

head, and with her eyes locked on mine, I say, “If I ever catch you with another man, I will kill him.”

Her chin starts to quiver, and instead of arguing with me, she nods.

I fuse my mouth with hers, and we spend minutes just kissing before I pull out of her. I walk to the bathroom and dispose of the condom. After I’ve cleaned myself, I wash my hands and splash water over my face.

When I look up, my eyes connect with my reflection in the mirror.

Rosalie Manno belongs to me.

I hear footsteps, and when I walk back into the bedroom, Rosalie and her clothes are gone. There’s only the blood stain on my sheets.

She better not think she’s going to hide in her room. She promised me two days, and I want every second.

I pull on a clean pair of sweatpants, and when I check her bedroom and find it empty, I feel relieved.

I take the stairs down and head to the side door. Resting my shoulder against the doorjamb, I cross my arms over my chest and watch Rosalie as she waits for Luna to finish peeing.

When she glances at me, her eyes only touch mine for a second before she quickly looks away. Her neck and cheeks flush, making a smile curve my lips.

Luna notices me, and I have to brace myself as she runs and jumps up. I rub her soft fur. “Did you miss me, sweet girl?”

“She did,” Rosalie answers.

Hearing the double meaning in her words, my eyes snap to hers. “I missed her too. Staying away was one of the hardest things I ever had to do.”

Once Luna is done saying hello to me, I walk to Rosalie and take hold of her hand. I tug her closer, and tilting my head, I stare into her eyes. “You okay?”

She nods quickly, then looks away.

“Are we going to lie to each other these last two days?”

She nods again, her voice hoarse as she whispers, “I can’t face the truth.”

I lift a hand and brush my knuckles over her cheek. “Then we’ll lie, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*.”

It feels more intimate when I call her my Little Rose in Russian.

Needing to ease the tension in her, I say, “Let’s make something to eat and watch a movie. I just want to relax with you.”

I tug Rosalie into the house and force her to sit on a stool.

When I open the fridge, she asks, “Do the tattoos on your shoulders and chest mean anything?”

“The stars mean authority,” I explain.

“Because you’re the head of the *bratva*?”

“Yes.” My eyes flick to hers, and seeing the curiosity on her face, I relax.

“Can I ask something else?”

“You can ask anything.” I take chicken and vegetables out so I can make stir-fry.

“How did it feel the first time you killed someone?”

Jesus, that’s long ago.

I actually have to think for a moment while I rinse the vegetables. “I was thirteen when my dad and Uncle Alexei took me with them to an arms deal. Things went sideways, and I had to kill one of the fuckers. It was either him or me.” Opening the pack of chicken breasts, I cut them into strips. “Watching the life drain from a human being had me puking my guts out. I couldn’t eat for a week.”

Compassion laces her words as she asks, “Then why do you do it?”

I lock eyes with her. “To protect what’s mine, *moya malen’kaya roza*. In our world, it’s kill or be killed.”

She’s trying to understand me, but I can see she’s struggling.

Setting the knife down, I walk to her and take hold of her chin. “You love Luna, right?”

“Yes.”

“What would you do to protect her?”

Her eyebrows draw together, the conflicted emotions returning to her face.

I lean down and press a kiss to her lips and say, “You promised me two days. Don’t think about the mafia and *bratva*. Don’t think about anything but me.”

When she nods, I kiss her again until she's breathless. Pulling back, I brush the pad of my thumb over her swollen bottom lip. "I want you to do something for me."

Confusion flutters over her face. "What?"

"Let Luna go outside. I need you all to myself for what I have planned."

Rosalie opens the side door, so Luna can go play, then shuts it. She looks nervous as she walks back to me.

When she's in reaching distance, I pull her behind the island. "Get down on your knees."

"Why?"

"You're going to suck my cock, *moya Malen'kaya Roza*."

Instantly her face flushes, and she looks self-conscious, then she admits, "I don't know how."

The corner of my mouth lifts. "I'll teach you."

Rosalie places her hand on the island and carefully lowers herself onto her knees. When she looks up at me, an inferno of possessiveness burns through my veins, and I harden in a split second.

My fingers brush along her jaw, and reaching her chin, I tug at her bottom lip with my thumb. "You're so fucking beautiful." I nod to my clothes. "Take them off."

Rosalie grips hold of the waistband and pulls the fabric down my legs, then she stares at my cock.

"Wrap your fingers around the base," I instruct her.

The instant her fingers brush my sensitive skin, my cock jerks with need.

I watch as wonder fill her eyes. “Your skin is like velvet.” She moves her fist up and down, exploring more. “I didn’t expect it to feel this way.”

“Every inch is yours, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*. Part your lips and suck me into your hot, little mouth.”

The blood practically buzzes in my veins as I watch her mouth open. When she takes the head of my cock into her warmth, and I feel her tongue brush against me, I grab hold of the back of her head and almost sway on my feet from how good it feels.

After years of jerking off, this is heaven.

“That’s it, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*. Now take me as deep as you can,” I order.

I watch as my cock is sucked into her mouth, the view of Rosalie on her knees and her eyes staring up at me for approval more erotic than anything I’ve seen.

I’m not going to hold out much longer. My voice is hoarse as I instruct, “Take a deep breath and relax your tongue.”

When she’s ready, I grip a fistful of her hair and thrust as deep as she’ll let me. The head of my cock hits the back of her throat, making her gag.

The sound strips me of all control, and I start to move faster and harder, needing to come down her throat.

Her eyes start to shimmer as she gags on every thrust. I brush my thumb around her lips as I pull out, reveling in the

feel of them stretched around my wide girth. “So fucking perfect.”

Rosalie takes every thrust until pleasure shoots down my spine and my cum fills her mouth. I breathe hard from the intense orgasm, the word rumbling from me, “Swallow.”

I watch her drink every drop before I slowly pull out. Grabbing hold of her shoulders, I yank her to her feet and crush my mouth to hers. I taste myself on her tongue just like she tasted herself earlier after I ate her pussy.

When I break the kiss, I stare into her dazed eyes. “Good girl.”

This time she doesn't bite my head off but smiles, looking proud that she was able to give me a blow job.

Christ. It's going to kill me to let her go.

Chapter 17

Rosalie

I hardly slept the past two days.

At first, I was totally consumed by Viktor. With every kiss and touch, I fell hopelessly in love with him.

I'm sore as hell from all the sex.

I'm still packing when Viktor says, "My men will pack the rest. You need to come with me."

Every second it's becoming harder to deny him anything. I take his outstretched hand and let him lead me to his office.

Every screen is filled with a different apartment. I frown at Viktor. "What's this?"

"Choose which one you want," he orders.

I gape at him. "You're not buying me an apartment."

"They already belong to me. You can stay in whichever one you want."

I shake my head. "No. I want to get my own place."

"Then I'll transfer it onto your name." He tilts his head, his eyes narrowing on me. "I need to know you're not living in a dump."

“Viktor.” Moving closer, I lift my hand and rest my palm against his jaw. He turns his head and presses a kiss to my skin.

God, he’s making this so hard for me.

I give him a pleading look. “I need to do this on my own. Once I leave this house, you’ll have no say in my life.”

Pain tightens his features. “I’m not going to let you leave here empty-handed.” He walks to his desk, and I watch as he types on his laptop. New screens open up on the monitors, then he points at the middle one. “That’s your bank account. I’ve already transferred funds for you to use.”

When I start to shake my head, he snaps, “It’s not up for discussion.”

In shock, I look at the large sum.

Fifty million. Viktor’s insane!

Knowing he’s going to fight me on this, I brace myself. “I’ll make you a deal. I’ll take enough to last me six months. It will give me time to get a job, and I’ll be able to enroll at college.”

His features tighten until it looks like he’s going to be sick. “Let me take care of everything. Why would you want to study at a college if I can pay for an elite university?”

It feels weird being the strong one. I’ve never seen Viktor like this, and it’s breaking my heart.

“Please stop,” I beg. “You’ve had three years to look after me. Against my will. I want to experience life on my own. I need this, Viktor.”

I have to find out who I am without Viktor. Without my family. I have to search my emotions and make sure what I feel for Viktor isn't Stockholm syndrome. I have to deal with the grief and guilt.

I have to do this for myself.

I point at the monitor. "Only leave thirty thousand dollars in the account. Ten thousand for every year I spent here."

"Fuck no," he snaps. "That's nothing! At least take twenty-five million. It's half."

"No. Thirty thousand is enough," I argue, standing my ground. When he opens his mouth, I dart forward and press my fingers to his lips. "Stop, Viktor. I'm begging you. Let me go on my own terms, and I promise, if things don't work out and I need you, I'll call."

He stares at me for a long moment before he nods. "But you're taking the phone I got you. It's not negotiable. It has my number on it."

I give him a trembling smile. "Okay."

He gives me a pleading look. "Please, just take Joseph to guard you."

"We had this discussion yesterday. I'm not taking guards. It will feel like I'm still a captive."

"*Blyad'*," Viktor curses. "I'm really regretting my promise to let you go."

"I kept mine," I remind him. "I gave you two days. Give me my freedom."

He shakes his head as he takes the device and charger out of his drawer and hands them to me. “I have one more thing.”

I watch as he pulls a slender black case from the drawer. When I open it with trembling fingers, I stare at the necklace and a rose pendant.

My throat closes up as I say, “It’s beautiful.”

“I had it made for you.” Viktor lifts the chain out of the case and moves behind me.

I gather my hair, and when he places the platinum necklace around my neck, tears threaten to fall.

Why does it feel wrong leaving him?

God, I’m so messed up.

Viktor wraps his arms around me and presses a kiss to the top of my head. “Happy birthday, *moya Malen’kaya Roza.*”

I grip hold of his forearms, and my shoulders shudder under the strain of the heartache.

“Boss, everything is ready,” I hear Joseph say.

I feel Viktor nod, but he doesn’t let go of me. Instead, his hold on me tightens, and he presses kisses to the side of my neck and face.

“You don’t mind taking care of Luna until I send for her?” I ask, my voice quivering. I need to settle down before I can bring her to New York.

“At least I’ll have one of you for a little longer.”

God. My heart.

“I have to go,” I plead.

Or I won't leave at all.

I feel a tremor rake through his body before he lowers his arms. I turn around and rush to the door, but Viktor's hoarse voice stops me. "Rosalie."

I don't turn back to face him. "Yes."

"Tell me one last lie."

My body starts to shudder as tears spill down my cheeks. "I hate you, Viktor." A sob escapes me, and the rest of my words come out strained. "I won't miss you at all."

I dart out of the room and flee from the house that's been my prison for three years.

I have so many mixed feelings about my captivity. There were bad and good days. I lost so much, but I also gained.

Sobs burst from me when I hear Luna bark. I quickly climb into the backseat of the SUV, and when Joseph drives toward the gates, I glance out the back window. Seeing Viktor standing next to Luna, my heart shatters into a million pieces.

Tears stream down my face, and it takes the last of my strength not to ask Joseph to stop the car and run back to them.

You have to do this, Rosalie. For yourself.

Don't look back.

You have to deal with the sorrow, the guilt, and the love that stole your heart.

You have to figure out what is real and what isn't.

Don't look back.

I close my eyes and cover my face with my hands as I weep while Joseph drives me to the private jet that's standing ready to take me to New York.

Chapter 18

Viktor

I watch the SUV drive out of the gates, every muscle in my body straining not to run after her.

She needs this, Viktor. If she comes back out of her own free will, she will be yours to keep. Forcing her to stay is everything your family is against.

“You did the right thing,” Dad suddenly says behind me.

“Then why does it feel wrong?”

He pats Luna’s head. “Come, girl.” He throws an arm around my shoulder and steers me to the house I grew up in. “You’re both staying with us tonight. I’m not letting you out of my sight.”

“I’ll be fine,” I mutter as I pull back. “But Luna can stay with you.”

“Viktor.” Dad gives me a look of warning. “Just give it twenty-four hours for the initial pain to pass.”

It will never pass. I just watched the woman I love leave.

I need to fucking fight, and bleed, and kill.

“I’m going to head over to Luca and Mariya. I’ll stay with them,” I lie. Before he can try to stop me, I walk to one of the SUVs.

“Viktor,” Dad shouts. “Don’t do anything stupid!”

I wave at him before I climb into the vehicle, then drive to one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in LA to pick a fight with a gang known as the Z-Boys.

Usually, I couldn’t give a fuck about street gangs, but I need to let off steam, or I’ll implode.

There’s a hollow ache in my chest as if my heart’s been ripped out.

It has, and it’s flying to New fucking York.

Pulling up to the middle of the gang’s turf, I get out and shout, “Come on, motherfuckers. This is your one chance to take a swing at the head of the bratva.”

The shadows start moving, and group by group, they creep out onto the street. Razor, one of the higher-ups, walks toward me. “Why are you here, brother?”

A ruthless grin spreads over my face. “I was hoping you’re in the mood for a fight.”

He lets out a chuckle, then shakes his head. “Nah, man. I don’t need the bratva blowing up my neighborhood.”

“Sorry, *man*,” I mimic him as I walk closer. “I wasn’t asking.” I take a swing, hitting him square in the jaw to piss him off.

Razor catches himself before he falls, and laughing, he spits blood onto the street. He gestures at a group of his men. “Give the man the beating he wants.”

Fucking finally.

When the first guy is within reaching distance, I move forward. Without any effort, I block his punch, and grabbing hold of his arm, I throw him over my shoulder, then slam my foot down on his elbow. The satisfying sound of bone snapping in half reaches my ears.

I can't believe she left. After the past two days, I finally got to love her, I thought she would change her mind and stay.

Just because she fucked you doesn't mean she loves you.

Turning, I lunge at the next guy, and grabbing hold of his shoulders, I use his body to pull me up and deliver a double-flying knee kick to his jaw, knocking him out cold.

Rosalie loves me! I fucking know it.

A dark chuckle escapes me as years of training take over, and I move on to the next man. The inside of my foot connects with a knee, and the man cries out as he drops to the ground.

I saw it in her eyes while I filled her with my cock. She fucking loves me, and still, she left.

I dart forward, sweeping a gang member's feet from under him and kicking him in the head.

Christ. The ache in my chest grows until it becomes unbearable.

Slowly the group thins out, and the other men back up to the sidewalk, looking scared to fight me.

"Come on," I call out. "You're a bunch of pussies."

"Viktor!" I hear Luca shout, and glancing over my shoulder, I watch as he jogs toward me with an army of guards.

I tilt my head at Razor. “Seriously? You called Luca?”

“You’re out of it, man. I can’t have you beating on my men. You need to take your shit elsewhere.”

“Fucking, scum,” I roar as I run for him.

Razor starts to back up before breaking out into a sprint to get away from me.

“Viktor!” Luca shouts again.

Jesus, you can’t get a good fight anymore.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Luca snaps when he reaches me.

I throw my arms wide and glance around the area. “Isn’t it obvious? I’m teaching a bunch of pussies how to fight.”

My friend stares at me, worry etched deep into his face. “Is she worth this?”

Without hesitation, I answer, “Yes. She’s worth every drop of blood on this fucking planet.” Intense heartache bursts through me like wildfire, destroying my sanity as it burns. I shake my head and stagger a step back. “She’s worth everything.” I suck in desperate breaths of air, then look to Luca for help. “I’m not going to survive without Rosalie. Christ, Luca, I love her. I can’t face a day without her.”

He wraps his arms around me and holds me in a tight grip as I struggle to breathe. “We’ll get through this.”

No, I won’t.

A life without Rosalie is unimaginable.

Who would've thought a girl with soft brown eyes would be the end of me?

I've fought wars and killed hundreds, and all it took was a woman to bring me to my knees.

Chapter 19

Rosalie

My first three days in New York, I stayed at a hotel until I found a studio apartment on top of a Sicilian restaurant. It's in the old neighborhood where I used to live with my family, and it won't take a huge chunk out of the money Viktor gave me. With the low rent, I'll be able to stretch the funds for eight months.

I'm not going to lie. I'm scared out of my mind being on my own for the first time in my life.

At least you're surrounded by a Sicilian community. You just need time to adjust.

I came to New York because it's the last place that felt like home. It's where I spent most of my life before my father died, and we started moving from city to city.

But it doesn't feel like home anymore because I have no family here. Coming back here has only intensified the grief because I see familiar places I used to go to with my family. Especially Central Park, where I used to accompany my grandfather for walks on Sundays. He'd tell me stories of when he was young, and we'd easily spend two hours in the park.

The house we used to live in is run down, and the flowers I planted are all gone. There used to be a big tree in the front yard where my dad and Uncle Ricco built me a treehouse, but that's gone too.

I've lost so much since I left New York. It was stupid of me to think things would magically get better once I returned.

After fruitlessly searching for a job all day long, I return to my apartment. It was already furnished when I signed the lease. That's a relief, at least, and it will do until I can afford something better.

I shut the front door behind me and lock the three bolts in place that took me hours to install. Slumping down on the couch, I kick off my sneakers and let out a tired sigh.

I only sit for a few minutes before the intense heartache hits, and I burst into tears. Lying down on the couch, I curl into a bundle and ride out the wave of pain that comes in waves.

I miss playing with Luna and having her sleep next to me.

I miss hearing Viktor come home and nag me to join him for dinner. I miss his scent, the way he walks, the intense look in his eyes, and his strong arms.

God, I miss them so much.

Sniffling, I swallow back the tears and pull the phone Viktor gave me from my pocket. I open the messenger app, and when I see Viktor still hasn't read the text I sent to say I arrived safely, my heart breaks more.

What did you expect, Rosalie? You told the man to let you go, and that's what he's doing.

I didn't think it would be this hard, though. Just a simple text from him saying 'okay' or even a thumbs up would make me feel better.

Geez, four days, and you're crumbling. You wanted this, so suck it up and start sorting out your emotions.

Getting up, I make myself a cup of coffee before I sit down at the kitchen table. I pull the notepad closer and look at the list of pros and cons I've made of my feelings for Viktor.

Under cons, I have Viktor taking part in killing my family, him kidnapping me, and the fact that he's the head of the bratva and kills a lot of people.

Under pros, the list is endless. He was never violent with me. He provided for everything I needed and never expected anything in return. He didn't force himself on me. He was kind and caring. He got me a puppy.

This is stupid.

As soon as I find a job, I'll get a psychologist to help me figure out if what I feel for Viktor is real.

It sure feels real.

Letting out a sigh, I glance at my luggage I still have to unpack. I only brought a couple of books. Viktor will send the rest with Luna once I'm ready.

Find a job so Luna can join you in New York. She'll make everything better.

Pulling out my phone again, I open Google and search for jobs. I don't have any experience, which makes it really hard.

Maybe you should study a short course to help you get a job?

I search for courses, and seeing a couple in the beauty industry makes my eyebrow rise.

I could do that.

I call the school that offers the course, and when the lady tells me the next course starts the day after tomorrow, excitement trickles into my chest.

Ending the call, a smile tugs at my lips. The course is a start in the right direction.

Feeling hopeful, I get up and start to unpack my luggage. The closet is much smaller than I'm used to, so I pick the most practical clothing and leave the rest in the bags.

A knock at the front door has my head snapping up and my heart hammering in my chest.

Don't get your hopes up. It's probably the landlord.

Not wanting to just open the door to anyone, I call out, "Who is it?"

"Alissa."

My lips part in a gasp, and my eyes widen with surprise. I quickly unbolt the door and yank it open. "Oh. My. God."

"Surprise," she says with the cute smile I remember. "Mrs. Caruso told me you're back and renting the apartment above her restaurant, so I rushed right over."

"It's been so long," I cry as I dart forward to hug the girl who was the only friend I ever had. "God, I missed you."

Her arms wrap around me. “I missed you too.”

We hold each other for a long moment before I let go and invite her inside.

“Tell me everything I’ve missed,” she says as she sits down on the couch.

“There’s a lot to tell,” I chuckle. “Would you like some coffee?”

“Please.” She glances around the tiny apartment, then tilts her head. “I have to ask why you’re living here?”

“It’s affordable.”

A frown furrows her brow. “But your family is wealthy.” She gives me a comforting smile.

Alissa’s father is one of the heads of the Cosa Nostra, so she knows what kind of lifestyle I’m used to as we come from the same world.

As I stir the warm liquid, I shake my head. “Not anymore.”

I hand a cup to Alissa and sit down next to her.

“What do you mean, not anymore?”

I inhale deeply and lift my eyes to the girl I used to share all my secrets with. No, she’s no longer a girl. Alissa’s grown into a beautiful woman. Her hair is no longer reaching down her back but cut into a super cute pixie style.

The scar on her chin has faded. She got it when she fell out of the treehouse.

She’s changed in so many ways but also still looks the same.

Thinking her dad would've told her about what happened to my family, I ask, "You heard about the attack on us in Canada? Right?"

Again she frowns, her eyes widening. "No. What attack?"

"Your dad didn't tell you? I'm sure he would've heard."

"Daddy never tells me anything. What happened?"

The need to talk to someone about everything I've been through overwhelms me for a moment. That's when I realize I've never spoken about it. I've been bottling everything deep inside.

The moment passes, though, because I'm not ready to talk about my trauma. Also, I haven't seen Alissa in years, and offloading the mountain of grief and heartache on her so soon after seeing her again would be wrong.

I shrug and shake my head. "I'll tell you another day." I take a sip of my coffee, then change the subject by asking, "What have you been up to? Did you study after school?"

Alissa lets out a burst of laughter. "Oh, hell no. I've been living the high life as a socialite. All the events and parties keep me busy." She drinks some of her beverage. "You still make the best coffee."

Three years ago, I thought I would be a socialite and travel the world.

Wow, so much has changed.

Alissa sets her cup down on the worn coffee table, then says, "I can't stay long. I just wanted to say hello."

A smile curves my lips. “Thanks for coming over.” Getting up, I add, “It was really nice seeing you again.”

She glances around my studio apartment, then says, “I don’t know what happened that you have to live like this, but you’re welcome to stay with me.” She scrunches her nose. “No offense, but my closet is bigger.”

I let out a self-conscious chuckle. “None taken.” Shrugging, I try to explain as best I can. “I know it’s not much, but I’d rather stay here.”

Alissa gives me an endearing smile. “Well, the offer stands if you change your mind.” She starts to walk to the front door, then pauses. “I’m having an intimate party for my twenty-first on Saturday. Please come.”

“I will.” I grin, thinking it will be nice to see Alissa’s parents again and to spend more time with her.

We hug before I let her out, then I glance at the tiny space.

It’s not much, but it’s home. For now.

Chapter 20

Viktor

The past week my body's been running on rage and alcohol.

I knew it would be hard letting Rosalie go, but I didn't think it would be debilitating.

I tried to drown the heartache with vodka, and if it weren't for the fucking meeting in Peru, I'd still be drunk as fuck.

But here I am with Luca, staring at Juan-Paul while he fumbles with a modified Glock.

Modified my ass.

Juan-Paul grins then hands the weapon to me. "It carries a bigger caliber bullet, but it's lighter."

Right.

I only spare the piece of shit gun a glance, then aim at the target. Before I can pull the trigger, the clip falls out and lands with a clatter by my feet.

A dangerous chuckle escapes me as I turn to Juan-Paul, who looks like he's about to shit himself. Sweat pours down his temples.

He shouts at one of his men, slapping him upside the head, then gives me an apologetic look. "It needs some work."

I nod as I set the weapon down on the display case.

“Viktor,” Luca murmurs, worry lacing the word.

My eyes snap to Juan-Paul. “Who’s bright idea was this?”

“M-mine,” he stutters.

I reach behind my back for one of my Heckler & Kochs as I nod. “You had me fly out all the way here for this piece of shit?”

“I’m sorry, Sir. Just give me a couple of minutes to fix it.”

My fingers flex around the handle of my weapon as I bring it up between Juan-Paul and me. I nod at the Heckler & Koch. “Are you trying to sell me shit?”

“No, Mr. Vetrov. The men should’ve made sure it worked,” he throws the blame at the two men cowering behind him.

I turn the barrel of my gun on them, and they instinctively step backward. “Which one fucked up?”

“Viktor,” Luca mutters, sounding tired from keeping me out of trouble the past week.

Ignoring my best friend, I grit the words out between clenched teeth, “Who. Fucked. Up?”

Both men point at each other, and I let out a burst of laughter. When Juan-Paul start to laugh, I aim the gun at his right foot and pull the trigger.

With a shout of pain, he drops to the ground. I crouch down in front of him and press the barrel to his head. Locking eyes with the fucker, I say, “You promised me a modified Glock and didn’t deliver. Next time you make me fly out for nothing, I’ll end you.”

“Y-yes, Mr. Vetrov,” he stammers, relief filling his eyes.

I rise to my feet and mutter, “I expect a discount.”

“Of course,” he agrees. Not that he has a fucking choice.

When I turn my attention to Luca, he just shakes his head.

We leave the sweltering warehouse, and I say, “What a waste of fucking time.”

Luca lets out a sigh. “Like you had anything better to do.”

I did. There’s a fuck-ton of pain in my chest I have to somehow process.

“We had a deal,” I say as I hold my hand out to Luca. “Give me my phone.”

The fucker took it so I wouldn’t drunk-call Rosalie and beg her to come back.

He pulls the device out of his pocket and shoves it into my hand. I glance at the dead phone, then give Luca an unimpressed look. “You couldn’t charge it?”

He smirks at me. “Figured it would give Rosalie another nine hours before you start hounding her ass.”

“Fucker,” I grumble as we climb into the Jeep.

The flight back to LA is fucking long, and sleep evades me just to torture me.

Now that I’m sober, clear images of Rosalie fill my mind, each one a dagger to my heart.

By the time I get home and plug my phone into my charger, I’m grumpy as fuck and regretting not killing Juan-Paul.

I switch on my laptop and start typing furiously. The monitors light up with the information I've been dying to see.

One shows me that Rosalie is in Sicilian territory, and when I zoom in via a CCTV camera, I notice there's a restaurant.

She's probably having dinner.

On her bank records, I see hotel expenses and a deposit for an apartment has gone off.

I start digging but can't find out where she's living.

The monitor, with a view of the restaurant, draws my attention, and I lose my ability to breathe when I see Rosalie coming around the side of the building.

Jesus.

She's wearing a sexy as fuck black cocktail dress that ends mid-thigh and heels. The heart-shaped bodice shows off her cleavage, which I'm not fucking happy with.

Grabbing my phone, I switch it on. I ignore all the missed calls and messages and dial her number.

When it starts to ring, I watch as she digs her phone out of her handbag. Shock registers on her face, then it's quickly followed by relief.

"Hi," her voice comes breathless over the line.

"What the fuck are you wearing?" I snap.

A frown forms on her forehead. "Excuse me?"

"The dress. You better get your ass back to your apartment and change out of it, or I swear I'll fly out and rip it off your

body.”

I watch as anger tightens her features. “You don’t reply to my text and call me out of the blue to boss me around?” Her chest heaves, making her cleavage more prominent. My cock hardens at the sight. “In case it hasn’t sunk in, I’m no longer your captive, Viktor. I will wear whatever I want.”

She fucking hangs up on me then glances around until she spots the CCTV camera. The woman glares at me before she continues to walk down the street.

I lean back in my chair, a smile forming on my face as I watch her sexy ass sway beneath the fabric.

Christ, I miss you, moya Malen’kaya Roza.

Like a starving man, I drink in the sight of her toned legs and the silky brown strands hanging down her back until she disappears out of the view of the camera.

Just hearing her voice and getting to see her eased some of the pain in my chest.

I hear barking and get up from the chair. When I head down the stairs, I see Luna sitting by the sliding doors, her tail wagging and tongue hanging out.

I push the sliding doors open, and Luna wags her tail so hard even her backside wiggles. I crouch down and let her lick me. “Yeah, I missed you too, sweet girl.”

“You’re home,” Dad calls out as he walks up the path.

“Yeah.” I straighten to my full height. “Thanks for looking after Luna.”

“Your mother loved having her around,” he replies as he comes to stand in front of me. Giving me a worried look, he asks, “How are you holding up?”

I shrug. “I’m fine.”

I don’t think I’ll ever be fine again. Not with Rosalie on the other side of the country.

Dad nods to his place. “We haven’t sat down together for dinner in a while.”

I gesture to the stairs. “Give me an hour to catch up on work, then I’ll come over.”

I need my fucking phone to charge before I go anywhere.

Dad gives me a look of warning. “Don’t make me come get you.”

I let out a chuckle and watch as he walks back up the path.

Patting Luna’s head, I say, “Come, girl.” She follows me up the stairs but goes to Rosalie’s bedroom.

When I glance inside, my heart constricts painfully.

Jesus, I can still smell her scent.

I walk into the bedroom, and sitting down on the bed, I slump back and stare up at the ceiling.

Luna comes to lie next to me and lets out a whining sound.

“I miss her too,” I whisper, rubbing a hand over the aching space in my chest where my heart is.

Come back to me, Rosalie.

Chapter 21

Rosalie

Arriving at the Parisi mansion, I pay the cab driver and climb out.

Staring at the house and beautiful gardens where I spent a lot of time growing up, a smile curves my mouth.

God, I haven't been here in ages. It still looks the same, though.

The mansion was built in a Mediterranean style. Trellises with vines cover the walls, reminding me of Romeo and Juliet.

Alissa and I used to climb down the trellises and pretend we were on a secret mission as we sneaked through the vast gardens, trying to see how far we could get before a guard spotted us.

Seeing something from my past that hasn't changed is comforting.

I walk through the massive iron gates and smile at the guard. "I'm here for Alissa's party."

"Name," he grumbles, eyeing me up and down.

"Rosalie Manno."

His eyes narrow on me, then he nods to a golf cart. "Alessandro! Take the girl up to the mansion."

“Thank you.”

I climb onto the golf cart and smile at Alessandro, but he doesn't bother acknowledging me.

I glance at the flower beds and trimmed hedges as we drive to the front door. Mr. Parisi steps out onto the porch and watches as we come to a stop at the foot of the steps.

A wide smile spreads over my face as I climb off. “Hi, Mr. Parisi.”

His eyes sweep over me. “Rosalie. I was surprised when I heard you're back in New York.”

I take the steps up. “I only got back last week.”

We lean in and kiss each other's cheeks, then Mr. Parisi says, “Follow me.”

“Everything still looks the same,” I mention as we walk into the house.

I hear music coming from out back, where the party is already in full swing. I'm a little surprised when Mr. Parisi leads me to his study.

The moment I step inside and see the other four heads of the Cosa Nostra sitting on the couches, my stomach tightens with nerves.

Mr. Parisi shuts the door, then says, “You remember Mr. Caruso, Mr. Amoto, Mr. Messina, and Mr. Greco, right?”

Swallowing hard, I nod. “It's nice to see you all again.”

Mr. Parisi leans back against the heavy wooden desk and gestures at a chair that's been placed in the middle of the room.

Cautiously, I move closer and sit down, clutching my handbag on my lap.

Something is very wrong.

Mr. Parisi stares at me for a moment, then asks, “Why did you come back to New York?”

My tongue darts out to wet my lips. “I grew up here.”

“Still.” He pushes away from the desk and shoves his hands into his pockets. Tilting his head, he continues, “Your family was banned from New York.”

What?

“This is Cosa Nostra territory, and no Manno is welcome. Your grandfather knew this when we cut ties with him.” His eyes narrow on me. “I thought we made it clear when we assassinated your father.”

Waves of chock rush over my skin, and my lips part on a gasp.

The Cosa Nostra was responsible for the accident my father died in?

The corner of Mr. Parisi’s mouth lifts. “But you didn’t know this, right?”

“N-no,” I whisper, too shocked to talk louder.

“Then I’m going to assume you also don’t know about the money your grandfather stole from us.”

Money?

What money?

“No,” I whisper again.

This is the total opposite of the welcome I expected, and it's jarring as hell.

"Educate her," Mr. Greco grumbles, his eyes roving over me like a hungry wolf.

Panic flares in my chest, making my heart beat hard against my ribs.

Mr. Parisi makes a tsking sound. "Your family stole ten million from us. You were lucky to leave with your life the first time, but if you don't pay us the money your family stole, you won't be so lucky a second time."

Oh, God.

The first thought to enter my mind is that I'm in a world of trouble. The second is Viktor.

But I can't call him for help. Not after I declined everything he wanted to do for me.

And it will lead to bloodshed.

That's if Viktor even comes to help me.

Shit. Shit. Shit.

"I don't have that much money," I say, the panic I'm feeling tightening my words.

"Right. Stathoulis took everything when he killed your grandfather and uncle," Mr. Parisi says. "Viktor Vetrov held you captive for three years. Why did he let you go?"

The sudden change in conversation makes me pause.

There's an unspoken peace treaty between the Cosa Nostra and the Priesthood. One wrong word can start a war.

I choose my answer carefully but stick to the truth. “Viktor promised me my freedom when I turned twenty-one.”

“Why?” Mr. Parisi’s eyes narrow on me. “The head of the *bratva* isn’t known for showing mercy.”

My mind races while my gut tells me to keep quiet about the relationship I built with Viktor.

God, I’m so glad I didn’t tell Alissa anything.

I go with the only acceptable answer I can think of. “Viktor grew bored of me. He told me to get out of his city. I only got to take my clothes. I have nothing else. Until I find a job, I can’t pay you back.”

Booming laughter comes from Mr. Greco. “What kind of job can the whore of the *bratva* get? You’ll never be able to pay us back.”

Desperate to escape this dire situation, I give Mr. Parisi a pleading look. “I didn’t know what my family did. I’ll leave New York immediately.”

He shakes his head. “That’s not how the *Cosa Nostra* works, Miss Manno. You *will* repay the debt.”

How?

If I suddenly ask Viktor for so much money, he’ll want to know what changed my mind, and he’ll see straight through any lie I try to tell him.

You also told him to go to hell less than an hour ago.

My mind is flooded with panic, and I can’t think of a single thing to say.

Finally, I whisper, “I need time.”

Mr. Parisi watches me with a sharp gaze. “I’ll give you the same amount of time I gave your grandfather. Twenty-four hours.” He smiles, but it only makes him look more threatening. “Just remember, there are no other Mannos to kill. If you don’t pay, it’s your life we’ll take.”

Dear God.

My mouth is bone dry, my heart fluttering fearfully in my chest.

What am I going to do?

Mr. Parisi gestures to the door. “Go wish Alissa happy birthday, then make up an excuse and leave. I don’t want you associating with my daughter.”

My legs are numb, but I force myself to stand up. Every breath I take is so loud in my ears. With a trembling hand, I open the door and let myself out.

Ignoring the party, I rush to the front door and dart down the steps.

What am I going to do?

The only thing I can think is to ask Viktor for the money, but I told him I wanted to survive on my own.

I stumble in the high heels but catch myself and keep rushing toward the gates.

I have twenty-four hours. I’ll pack my belongings and sneak out of New York.

Yes!

Feeling as if I’ve being hunted, I start to run, and I don’t stop until I reach the end of the street.

I call for a cab, constantly glancing over my shoulder.

God, I wish Viktor was here.

The thought hits me square in the chest, and I grab hold of the rose pendant, needing to touch the last thing he gave me as I realize I felt safe with Viktor.

Holy shit. I trust Viktor.

I glance over my shoulder again, then check how long before the cab arrives.

I'll pack my clothes and take the first flight back to LA. I'll tell him how much I missed him and beg him to take me back.

Hopefully, the Cosa Nostra won't come after me.

Are you hearing yourself? A week ago, you insisted on leaving Viktor, and now that you're in trouble, you want to run back? You can't use him when it suits you.

Shit.

My breath hitches, and I shove my hand into my hair. If I go back to Viktor, it has to be because I've forgiven him, and I want to spend my life with him.

The cab pulls up to the curb, and I quickly climb into the back seat. After I've given my address, I slump back against the seat and take my phone out so I can search for a place to run to.

When I unlock the screen, I see a message from Viktor and quickly open it.

My lips part and a sob forces its way out of me when I look at the photo of Viktor and Luna.

We miss you.

PS. Never wear that dress again.

I cover my mouth with my hand and stare at the photo all the way back to my apartment, wishing I was with them and not here.

Chapter 22

Viktor

Luca and Mariya dragged me to Vancouver for the party Tessa is throwing for Nikolas.

I'm not happy. I'd rather stalk Rosalie via any camera I can get my hands on and spend time with Luna.

But here I am, getting off the private jet with my little sister giving me a look of warning. "If I catch you checking your phone, I will take it."

"I'd like to see you try," I mutter, knowing very well Mariya is more than capable of fighting me. She won't win, but she'll do enough damage to make me hurt.

When we were younger, I tried to subdue her so I could tickle her. I walked around with a busted lip and aching balls for a week. Needless to say, I never tried to tickle her again.

They all mean well. They're trying to keep me occupied so that I won't wallow in my heartache.

It's also so I won't kill the first person who pisses me off.

My hand itches to pull my phone out of my pocket so I can check the tracking device I had embedded in the rose pendant of the necklace I gave Rosalie.

When Luca takes hold of Mariya's hand and she gives him a loving smile, I feel a jab of heartache.

I'd give everything I own to have that kind of relationship with Rosalie – to call her my wife.

My phone beeps, and I quickly yank it out.

“No!” Mariya snaps.

When she tries to reach for the device, I glare at her. “Touch it, and none of us will make it to the party.”

She gives me a disgruntled look. “You're a sucker for punishment.”

I swipe on the screen, and seeing a text from Rosalie makes a smile spread over my face. I quickly tap on it.

I miss you too.

My fingers rush to type out a message.

Are you working through your emotions?

I watch as it shows she's typing.

Rosalie: Yes.

Viktor: That's good. And? Have you made any breakthroughs?

Rosalie: Yes. I just need a little more time.

Viktor: How's the apartment? What's the address? Do you need more money?

It doesn't show that she's typing as I climb into the back of the SUV.

We're halfway to Nikolas' place when a text finally comes through.

Rosalie: I have to go. I'll be in touch soon.

Tilting my head, I stare at the words. An uneasy feeling settles in my gut because she didn't give me the address of where she's staying.

I quickly check her tracking device, and it shows she's at the Sicilian restaurant again.

Maybe she got work there?

Still, why didn't she tell me?

There's a sinking feeling in my heart, thinking she doesn't want me to know where she's living because she doesn't trust me.

That fucking sucks.

If Rosalie can't trust me, then we'll never find our way back to each other. Without trust, there's nothing.

"What's wrong?" Luca asks.

I shake my head and tuck my phone back into my pocket. Staring out the window, I notice we're turning into the street where *Aphrodite* is. Nikolas opened the club as a front to smuggle arms from Gabriel, who's based in Seattle. It's made it easier for them to transport the weapons over the border between the two cities.

When the SUV comes to a stop, I throw the door open and climb out. Straightening my jacket, I glance at the long line of people waiting to get into the club.

Three women at the front of the line check me out. Before Rosalie, I would've invited them to join me, but those days are long gone. I'm a one-woman-man which means I'm fucked for the rest of my life if Rosalie doesn't come back to me.

Letting out a sigh, I ignore the bouncer and walk into the club so I can drown my sorrows.

With Luca and Mariya following behind me, I head up to the VIP section. The area has been closed off for Nikolas' party, and I notice only his family and the other men from the Priesthood have been invited.

I walk to Nikolas and pat him on the back. "I hear you're an old fucker now? Forty is just around the corner."

He turns to me while chuckling. "Fuck you for reminding me."

We give each other a brotherly hug, then he searches my face. "You look like shit."

I raise an eyebrow. "And yet, I still look better than you."

"Everything okay?"

I nod, then smile as Liam Byrne, the head of the Irish mafia, and Gabriel Demir, the head of the Turkish mafia, join us.

When I'm done greeting the men, I head to the bar. "Stoli. Give me two bottles," I order my favorite vodka.

I plan to drink as much as possible in the least amount of time.

I take the two bottles and tumbler from the bartender and find myself a table to sit at that overlooks the dance floor

below.

As I pour myself a drink, the men of the Priesthood each take a seat at my table.

“So...” I say, forcing myself to sound normal and not like a man who had his heart ripped out. “How’s married life treating you all?”

Nikolas shakes his head. “We heard what happened.” He lifts an eyebrow at me. “I honestly thought you’d never let the girl go.”

I give him a look filled with warning. “That’s the one topic not up for discussion tonight.” Throwing my head back, I empty the tumbler, savoring the burn of the strong alcohol.

“Luca told me about the fuck up in Peru,” Gabriel says, wisely changing the subject.

I let out a chuckle and shake my head. “Fuck up is the understatement of the year. I regret not killing the fucker.”

Mariya walks toward us, followed by the other men’s wives.

The only woman I’d marry is in New York.

The thought makes my heart squeeze painfully. Ignoring the tumbler, I bring the bottle of vodka to my lips and drink until I need to breathe.

“No talking business tonight,” Tessa says. She and Nikolas just celebrated their third anniversary.

Liam and Kiara have been married for two years.

I watch as Gabriel pulls Lara onto his lap. They’ve been going strong for a year.

I let out a disgruntled sigh as I glance at the newest couple. My best friend and my baby sister.

And then there's me – the fucker who couldn't hold onto Rosalie.

Jesus.

I pour more vodka down my throat. If it weren't for the bond I have with the Priesthood, I'd be on my way home already.

“It's time to blow out your candles,” Tessa tells Nikolas.

He scowls at her. “You make it sound like I'm thirteen.”

She lifts an eyebrow at him. “Sometimes it feels like you're thirteen.”

Everyone laughs, and when they leave the table and walk to the huge-ass cake, Gabriel hangs back and moves to the seat next to me.

We watch as Tessa lights the candles. The woman somehow got all thirty-nine on the cake.

“I'm going to piss myself laughing if she burns down the club with all those candles,” I mutter.

Gabriel takes the bottle of vodka from me and pours some into his tumbler before giving it back. “Why did you let her go?”

“I said the topic isn't open for discussion.”

“Viktor.” When I turn my aggravated gaze to him, he says, “It's clear you love her. Why did you let her go?”

“I’m not going to force my kidnapped victim to stay with me.”

“I kidnapped Lara. If I’d let her go, we probably wouldn’t be married now.”

“It’s different for you and Lara,” I mutter.

“How so?”

I lock eyes with him. “You saved Lara. I fucking took part in killing Rosalie’s family. Huge fucking difference, brother.”

Gabriel nods, then he says, “There’s only one problem with that story.”

“What?”

“You didn’t take part in the killing. Nikolas was the one who killed them.”

I shake my head. “It doesn’t change how Rosalie feels. I can’t force her to forgive me.”

“True,” he murmurs before downing half his drink.

I let out a sigh. “I want her to be with me out of her own free will. I’m not going to take that choice from her.”

Gabriel pats my shoulder then sits with me for a while longer before he joins the rest of the group.

Taking my phone out of my pocket, I send Rosalie a text.

Why won’t you give me your address?

I empty half a bottle, and when she hasn’t read the message, I send another.

Is it because you don’t trust me?

Again it goes unread.

I check the tracking device and see she's still at the restaurant. I check what time the restaurant closes and frown when it shows the doors shut at ten pm.

Fuck. I wish I had my laptop with me so I could check the CCTV footage. I think back to what I saw earlier – Rosalie coming from the side of the building.

A smile spreads over my face when I realize her apartment must be close to the restaurant. Or on top of it.

Gotcha, Little Rose.

Fuck, at least I know where she lives. It's a huge relief.

Chapter 23

Rosalie

I could only take two bags and a carry-on and had to leave the rest of my belongings behind. I wasted as little time as possible, only changing out of the dress into jeans and a t-shirt, then I grabbed the luggage I never unpacked and made a run for it.

My nerves are shot to hell when I take a cab to the airport. I've decided to fly to Toronto. It's another country and the last place I was with my family. Hopefully, the Cosa Nostra won't follow me there.

I have no idea what I'll do if they come after me.

If I go back to Viktor now, it will be because I need his protection, and that's not fair to him.

My thoughts are inundated with so many things it's hard to focus.

I loved every second of the last two days I spent in Viktor's arms, but I still feel guilty. It's hard to explain. Making love to Viktor felt right, but my conscience can't forget that he took part in killing my grandfather and uncle.

It makes me a bad person. Right? I slept with the man who wiped out my family.

I fell in love with my kidnapper.

I let out a burst of laughter that turns into a sob.

God, it feels like I'm being torn in half. Part of me wants to be with Viktor, and the other part can't betray my family.

And now the Cosa Nostra is threatening to kill me.

Because your grandfather stole ten million dollars from them.

"Shit," I whisper, my eyes blind to the scenery passing us by as we drive to the airport. "What did you do, *Nonno*?"

When we pull up to the departure terminal, I quickly settle the fee and climb out. The driver unloads my luggage, then wishes me a safe flight.

Grabbing my luggage, I hurry into the terminal and rush to the section for American Airways to book the flight.

Just as I'm about to join the queue, a man steps in front of me. He pulls his jacket to the side, exposing his gun, then says, "Mr. Parisi wants to see you."

My eyes dart to the man's face, and I take in the brutal expression, warning me not to try to run.

"I'm instructed to kill you if you give me any trouble," he threatens.

Oh, God.

The shock of being stopped right before making my escape knocks me back a step.

The man nods in the direction of the exit. "Walk."

My legs turn to lead as I start to move.

Would he really shoot me if I tried to run?

Yes. This is the mafia you're dealing with.

With every step I take, my heart beats faster and faster. I start to slow down as we approach the exit, but the man grabs one of my bags from me and takes hold of my arm with a brutal grip. I'm yanked forward, and a soft cry escapes me.

"I will fucking shoot you," he threatens again.

All the other people are too busy rushing to their destinations to notice I'm being forcefully dragged out of the airport.

Another man comes to take my luggage. I try to twist my arm out of the painful grip the man has on me while I'm strongarmed into the back of an SUV. I'm shoved so hard, I sprawl over the backseat.

No!

I scramble into a sitting position, and while the men are busy climbing into the vehicle, I quickly pull my phone out of my handbag.

Just as I press dial on Viktor's name, the device is ripped from my hands, and the call is ended.

Shit. Please, let it show a missed call.

"Try a stunt like that again and..." He pulls his gun out of the holster and presses it to my temple, then shouts, "Bang."

My whole body jerks with fright, and fear sends shivers rushing through me.

He doesn't holster his weapon again but rests it on his thigh as the other man drives us to the Parisi's mansion.

I'm forcefully yanked out of the SUV and dragged into the house. Music is still coming from outside, where Alissa is celebrating her birthday.

Was she in on it? Was that why she came to visit me and invited me to her party?

A sense of betrayal rocks me to my core as I'm hauled to the study and shoved into the room. The door slams shut behind me, and with wide eyes, I stare at the five heads of the Cosa Nostra.

Mr. Parisi gestures to the chair I sat in earlier, but I ignore it. I'll rather stand.

My heart is pounding a mile a minute, my mouth dry from the breaths rushing from me.

I should've left all my belongings. I should've taken the cab earlier out of the city before they could get guards to watch me. I should've told Viktor what was happening while I had the chance.

Shit, I was so damn stupid.

When I don't move, Mr. Greco gets up, and with three steps, he reaches me. His palm connects so hard with my cheek, I fall to the side. Pain engulfs the entire left side of my face, my skin prickling as if tiny flames are licking at me.

"I'm not surprised you tried to run," Mr. Parisi says. "I haven't met a Manno that's not a coward."

My emotions are all over the place as I push myself into a sitting position and press my palm to my flaming cheek.

It's the first time in my life someone has hit me, and it has my mind reeling with shock.

Not even Viktor hit me when he took me captive. He might've yanked me around and forcefully restrained me, but he never hit me.

"Did you really think we wouldn't watch you?" Mr. Amato asks.

God, I'm so stupid.

The man who stopped me at the airport steps forward. "She tried to make a call, but I stopped it. The phone is locked."

Mr. Parisi takes my phone and glares at me. "What's the password?"

I shake my head desperately because God only knows what will happen if they read the texts between Viktor and me.

Anger tightens his features. "Who did you try to call?"

"Nine-one-one," I lie as I scramble to my feet.

"The woman doesn't have the money to repay us," Mr. Amato says. "Just kill her and be done with it."

NoNoNoNoNo.

Before I can plead for my life, Mr. Messina snaps, "The debt needs to be settled!"

"How do you propose we get the money out of her?" Mr. Parisi asks.

Panicking, I'm about to say I'll get it even if I have to ask Viktor, but Mr. Greco comes to stand in front of me, his eyes

sweeping over me with depraved hunger that makes me feel physically ill.

“I’ll pay the debt on the condition that she marries me.”

What? There’s no way in hell I’m marrying a man three times my age.

Mr. Greco is easily fifty years old, and the evil glint in his eyes just makes him look... gross.

“Have you lost your mind, Salvatore?” Mr. Parisi laughs.

I’m shoved into the chair as the men start to argue.

“I vote for a quick death,” Mr. Amato mutters.

This isn’t happening.

“I’ll find a way to pay,” the words burst from me, but no one cares to listen.

Frustration floods my chest, and my hands tighten into fists.

“I can do with a young wife after the old one died on me,” Mr. Greco says.

Dear God.

I start to shake my head, but Mr. Greco backhands me right off the chair. I fall with a hard thud, my vision going black and a copper taste fills my mouth.

“You really want to marry the woman?” Mr. Parisi asks.

“Yes. I think it will be poetic justice seeing as her family traded in sex slavery.”

What? No!

Shocked out of my ever-loving mind, I stare at all the men as Mr. Greco's words sink in like burning coals.

"We didn't," I argue as I climb to my feet.

"Shut up, bitch," Mr. Greco roars. "Why do you think we cut ties with your family? They were selling pussy on every street corner."

The things I've found out today... Jesus, there's so much about my family I didn't know. The debt. Sex trafficking. How my father really died.

God, was everything my grandfather and uncle told me a lie?

"Christ," Mr. Amato curses. "I've had enough of this."

"I'll pay her debt on one condition," Mr. Greco continues with his vile plan. "The wedding has to happen before I go on my trip to Sicily."

"You're leaving in four days," Mr. Parisi replies.

As the men discuss my fate, intense fear fills every inch of my body until I'm a trembling mess.

There's a moment's silence, then Mr. Parisi says, "It goes to a vote." He looks at the other men. "Who's in favor of the marriage?"

One by one, hands go up. Only Mr. Messina disagrees.

"It's settled then," Mr. Parisi says, his eyes coming to rest on me. "Mr. Greco just saved your life. You're to be married in four days." He turns his attention to the man who's so much older than me, while Mr. Greco looks at me as if he's going to

rip me to shreds. “We expect the funds to be transferred before the vows are said.”

Horrified by what just happened, I give Mr. Parisi a pleading look. “I can get the money. I just need time.”

Mr. Greco lets out a dark chuckle, then grabs hold of my arm and yanks me against his body. Revulsion hits me so hard, bile churns in my stomach.

“Unlike your grandfather, we don’t go back on a deal once it’s made.” He chuckles again, the sound making me feel sick.

“Please, don’t,” I beg while trying to yank free. “I can get the money to pay you.”

“What’s done is done,” Mr. Parisi mutters, waving a hand to the door.

“Nooo,” I cry.

I yank against Mr. Greco’s hold, but he pulls his arm back, and even though I try to block the blow, his fist connects so hard with my jaw, lights explode behind my eyes before I sink into a pit of darkness.

Chapter 24

Rosalie

I regain consciousness and find myself lying on the floor in a bedroom.

I can still hear the music from the party. It's a relief to know I'm at the Parisi's' mansion and haven't been taken away while I was out cold.

Pushing myself up, the left side of my face aches and feels swollen. I lift my hand, but the moment my fingers brush over my bottom lip, I flinch from the pain.

With a groan, I stand up and glance around me.

I'm in one of the guestrooms. There's a bed and a dressing table, and everything is decorated in the lace and frills Mrs. Parisi always loved so much.

Then I remember what happened. My stomach sinks from the weight of the fear pouring back into me.

The Cosa Nostra is going to force me to marry Mr. Greco. The man is so much older than me.

It's insane!

My breaths start to come faster, and I wrap my arms around myself.

How did you let this happen, Rosalie? You're so stupid!

Who gets kidnapped twice in a lifetime?

Panic drives me to the window. I open it wide and glance down at the ground beneath.

Suddenly the memory of when Viktor kidnapped me pops into my head. I remember how he apologized for hurting me when he yanked me back into the house to stop me from falling.

Not once after that night was there a bruise on my body.

Unlike now. I have a busted lip, and my face probably looks like I ran into a wall.

I'll be forced into a marriage, and it doesn't take much imagination to know what will happen. Mr. Greco will rape me. He'll force me to have his children. He'll beat me.

Viktor did none of those things.

God.

Rosalie, you made a big mistake, and now you'll pay for it in the worst way possible.

I crouch by the window as the realization shudders through my body.

I'd give anything to be back with Viktor and Luna. He made me feel safe and treated me with respect. Even when I fought him, he never raised a hand against me. Those last two days, he made me feel so loved and cherished.

I'm so glad he was my first because if I don't manage to escape, the memory of Viktor will have to carry me through the dark days ahead.

God, I had a chance at a love of a lifetime, but I let it go because of my family, who turned out to be bigger monsters than the Priesthood.

The disappointment and heartache create a storm in my chest.

Enough! Find a way out.

I stand up and glance down at the ground again. “God, this was so much easier when I was a kid,” I mutter as I throw my leg over the windowsill.

I hold on tight as I swing my other leg out, then find my footing between the holes in the trellis. Slowly, I start to move down, searching for spaces to hold onto.

Suddenly, I hear the wood snap. I suck in a breath, then the trellis pulls away from the house, making me shriek.

No!

I climb down further, but the wood must be worn with age, and it gives way. Another shriek escapes me as I fall. I hit the ground so hard my teeth clatter, and a sharp pain flares through my right hand and wrist.

Knowing someone must’ve heard me, I try to ignore the pain and dart to my feet. Holding my right hand to my chest, I run across the lawn toward the boundary wall, but I have no idea how I’m going to climb it.

Suddenly something plows into my back, and I slam into the perfect green lawn. An excruciating sharp pain shoots through my arm. It’s so intense that my vision blurs, and a wave of nausea hits, making my body feel feverishly hot all over.

The weight gets off me, then I'm grabbed by my wounded arm and yanked up. An agonizing cry rips from me.

I'm dragged back to the house by a guard, where the heads of the Cosa Nostra are gathering, all looking at me with anger.

Mr. Greco stalks toward us, and when he raises his arm to hit me, I instinctively duck away. The guard yanks me back, causing more pain to engulf my arm.

Before I can let out a cry, a fist connects with my face. I sway on my feet. The only thing keeping me standing is the guard.

"What's going on?" I hear Alissa's worried voice, then she shrieks, "What are you doing to Rosalie? Let go of her!"

"Go back to your party," Mr. Perisi snaps at his daughter.

"No," she argues. "What the hell is going on here?"

My vision comes back, and I turn a pleading gaze to Alissa. "H-help me."

Her face is torn with shock, but when she tries to take a step in my direction, her father grabs hold of her and shoves her back inside the house. "Don't test my patience, Alissa. This is business. Go back to your friends."

"Daddy," she gasps. "Rosalie is my friend."

"Go, Alissa," Mr. Parisi shouts at her.

"No!" she screams back, and it's so convincing, I'm starting to think Alissa is just as shocked as I am, and she never had anything to do with this.

Maybe she's just as in the dark about her family's business as I was about mine.

“They’re going to make me marry, Mr. Greco,” I tell her, my voice hoarse and pleading. “I didn’t know what my family did.”

“Enough,” Mr. Parisi roars. He points at me. “Alessandro, get the girl back to the room and make sure one of the guards seals all the windows so she can’t try to escape again.”

“Yes, boss,” the guard answers, then he grabs hold of my shoulders and forces me to walk past everyone.

Alissa tries to reach for me, but her father holds her back, which has her crying, “This isn’t right, Daddy.”

Out of desperation, I shout, “Alissa, call Viktor. Tell him what’s happening.”

“Shut up,” Mr. Greco snaps before slapping me against the back of my head.

A dizzy wave hits me before I’m overwhelmed by a wave of nausea again. This time I gag, but nothing comes out.

Shit, I think I have a concussion.

I’m dragged up the stairs and shoved back into the bedroom.

Mr. Greco follows us inside, then orders, “I’ll stay with the woman while you get something to seal the window.”

The door shuts behind the guard, and as another wave of dizziness hits, Mr. Greco yanks me to his body.

He locks eyes with me, then grins cruelly. “I don’t think anyone will mind if I sample my bride-to-be.”

“D-do—” I don’t manage to finish the word as everything goes black.

The morning light is bright when I come to, and it takes a moment for my sight to adjust.

My head is pounding so badly, my eyes start to water. When I try to move, my right arm comes alive with searing pain.

“Morning,” I hear Alissa whisper, then a cool cloth is brushed over my forehead. I turn my gaze to her and watch as her chin quivers, and a tear spirals down her cheek. “I’m so sorry. I threatened Daddy that I’d disown him as my father if he didn’t let me take care of you.”

I struggle to sit up, but with Alissa’s help, I manage.

Then the last memory of Mr. Greco shudders through me. Panic flares hot in my chest, and I scramble off the bed. Running to the bathroom, I slam the door shut.

It doesn’t feel like anyone was inside me.

God.

“He didn’t... rape you,” Alissa says on the other side of the door. “I ran after you, which means my dad came after me. We found you unconscious, and Daddy told Mr. Greco to leave... and wait until after the wedding.”

I lean my forehead against the door and let out a breath of relief.

Thank God. I still have time to find a way out of this nightmare before Mr. Greco can force himself on me.

“Please come out,” she pleads.

Alissa’s been on my side since she found out what’s happening. I really need an ally right now.

I open the door and lock eyes with the girl who used to be like a sister to me.

Her face crumbles as she throws her arms around me. “I wish I could help you, but I don’t know how.”

Sobs start to shudder through me, and I grip her with my left arm. “Please. Just call Viktor Vetrov. He’ll come to get me.”

“I don’t know his number.” Alissa pulls back to look at me.

I don’t know it either, so I can’t give it to her.

The little bit of hope I had vanishes, leaving a hollow sensation in the pit of my stomach.

Desperate to escape, I ask, “Do you know a way to get me out of the house?”

Alissa shakes her head.

“You can try to smuggle me out. I can hide in the trunk of your car.”

Alissa’s chin starts to quiver again. “Alessandro is guarding this bedroom. We won’t make it past him.”

Shit.

“I can’t marry Mr. Greco,” I whisper, distraught by everything that’s happened and not being able to find a way out of this nightmare.

After everything I learned about my family, it now seems so stupid that I left Viktor. He might be a villain, but that's what I need right now.

Because only a villain will do what's necessary to save you. He'll burn down the world if he has to.

With every fiber of my being, I know Viktor would do that for me. If only I could let him know what's happening.

He never lied to me. He kept every promise he made.

Oh, God.

I wrap my left arm around my waist as sobs burst from me.

I walked away from the one person I could trust all because I was loyal to a family who made a living from sex trafficking.

Alissa pulls me back into a hug and holds me as I cry.

With everything I know about my grandfather and uncle, I realize there's no more guilt for falling in love with Viktor but only heartache and regret because I left him.

If he comes to save me, he'll kill people. He might even kill Mr. Parisi, and I wouldn't hold that against him because it would mean I don't have to marry an old man and spend the rest of my life being raped and abused.

Sometimes people deserve to die – just like my grandfather and uncle. They had to pay for their sins.

It doesn't mean I don't love them anymore, it just means I understand why things had to happen the way they did.

And now I have to pay for the sins of my family too.

Chapter 25

Viktor

“If the fucking gun falls apart again, I’m killing the fucker,” I threaten as Luca and I walk into the warehouse.

Juan-Paul scurries around like a mouse as he tries to prepare everything for the presentation.

“You better not waste my time again,” I warn him, the promise of death ingrained in my words.

Please waste my fucking time, so I can kill you.

“Everything is ready, Mr. Vetrov,” he says, but he doesn’t sound too sure of himself.

I pull my Heckler & Koch from behind my back and train the barrel on him. “Shoot the fucking gun and pray it works.”

With sweat already pouring down his temples, he nods and picks up the modified Glock. With a nervous expression, he aims at a target, and when he pulls the trigger, nothing happens.

A ruthless smile starts to tug at the corner of my mouth as Juan-Paul stutters, “W-wait. L-let me t-try again.”

Stupid fucker.

Knowing what might happen, Luca and I take a couple of steps back.

When Juan-Paul pulls the trigger again, the second round slams into the previous incomplete discharge, and the weapon explodes in the fucker's hand, spraying him with shrapnel and some of the remaining bullets.

Fortunately, none of the bullets instantly kills the idiot. He drops to the floor, and it takes a moment before he becomes vocal from the pain caused by his injuries.

Slowly, I walk closer and press the barrel of my gun to his temple. Locking eyes with him, I mutter, "Let me show you how a real gun works."

"N-no!"

I pull the trigger and watch as the light in his eyes is instantly snuffed out.

"Feeling better?" Luca asks.

I shrug. "A little." Then I grin at my friend. "It was fun watching the weapon explode in his hand, though. I'll take today as a win."

Not bothering with Juan-Paul's men, Luca and I walk out of the warehouse. I climb into the passenger seat of our SUV while Luca slides behind the steering wheel.

Taking out my phone, I check whether Rosalie has replied to any of my messages, but there's nothing. Only the texts I sent her.

Why won't you give me your address?

Is it because you don't trust me?

Are you ignoring me now, moya Malen'kaya Roza?

I stepped in your dog's shit.

I'm getting worried.

If you don't reply, I'm flying out to New York.

Don't test me, moya Malen'kaya Roza.

“Has Rosalie replied?” Luca asks as he drives us to the airfield where our private jet is waiting.

“No.” I haven't heard from her in three days and to say I'm worried is the understatement of the fucking century.

I check her tracker and see that she's still at Giovanni Parisi's house. I know his daughter is the same age as Rosalie, so I assume she's reconnected with an old friend.

It was Alissa Parisi's birthday yesterday. That's why Rosalie wore the cocktail dress.

The moment we step aboard the private jet, I pull my laptop out and start to type. I bring up all the CCTV and security cameras near Parisi's house, but everything looks quiet.

Luca leans closer and checks the screen, then asks, “Who's place is that?”

“Giovanni Parisi.”

His eyebrows dart up. “Why the fuck are you looking into the Cosa Nostra?”

“Rosalie is there.”

My friend gives me a worried look. “Please don't start a war with the Cosa Nostra. It took me years to establish the peace treaty.”

I let out a chuckle. “Don’t worry. I think Rosalie is visiting Alissa. They’re the same age. With the families having ties, I’m sure the girls were friends.”

A call comes through on Luca’s phone. “It’s my dad.”

“Hey, *Papá*,” he answers. “I’m good, and you?” He listens, then lets out a chuckle. “I’m watching Viktor sulk.”

I glare at my friend.

He chuckles again, then explains, “He let Rosalie go, and she went to New York. I’m stuck babysitting him, so he doesn’t do anything stupid.” Suddenly Luca sits up straight, worry furrowing his brow. “Hold on. I’m putting you on speaker so Viktor can hear.”

“Hello, Viktor,” Uncle Lucian’s voice comes over the line.

“Hey, Uncle Lucian. What’s up?”

“If Rosalie is in New York, she might run into trouble.”

“Why?”

“It happened before you and Luca took over your respective positions. You must’ve been... seventeen?”

Growing impatient, I ask, “What happened?”

“The Cosa Nostra disapproved of the Mannos dealing in sex trafficking. That’s why they moved to Chicago before Liam drove them out and they settled in Canada.”

“I already know this,” I mutter.

“The Mannos are banned from the city, Viktor,” Uncle Lucian says, worry tensing his voice. “Antonio stole money

from the Cosa Nostra, and I'm pretty sure they're behind the accident that killed Rosalie's father."

What?

My heart starts to beat faster.

"Why didn't you tell me this when I took over the mafia?" Luca asks, his worried gaze settling on me.

"It wasn't of importance to our business. Honestly, I never even thought of it. It didn't matter in the grand scheme of things because the Mannos didn't even register on our radar," Uncle Lucian answers.

Every muscle in my body tenses as I say, "Let me get this straight. You're telling me the Cosa Nostra banned the Mannos from New York. Antonio stole from them, and now Rosalie is in fucking enemy territory?"

"That sums it up," Uncle Lucian mutters.

"*Blyad'!*" Shooting out of my seat, I walk to the pilot and instruct, "Change direction to New York."

"Yes, Mr. Vetrov."

I stalk back to Luca, then anger explodes in my chest, and I kick one of the leather seats.

I yank out my phone and dial Rosalie's number, but the call immediately goes to an automated message.

"*Blyad'*," I snap as fear trickles into my heart.

I hurry back to the pilot and ask, "How long will it take?"

"Five hours and forty-five minutes, Mr. Vetrov."

Christ.

I go back to Luca and lock eyes with my friend, who's still on a call with his father.

"I'm calling Parisi," I mutter.

"Don't," Uncle Lucian snaps. "It will give them time to think of a plan before you arrive. Also, take the time to calm down. If you get there and the girl is not in any danger, it won't start an unnecessary war, and you can pretend you just wanted to say hello. If she's in trouble, the fact that you're there in person will show them you're not playing, and they might let her go unharmed."

He's right.

Unable to stand still, I start to stalk up and down the short length of the plane.

Christ. I hope to all that's holy, Rosalie is just visiting with Alissa, and she's not in trouble.

Or worse, ... already dead.

No!

My breathing speeds up at the thought that I might already be too late.

"Rosalie better be alive when I get there," I say, my voice hoarse from the worry and anger. "Or I'll wipe out every Sicilian in New York."

"Let's pray it doesn't come to that," Uncle Lucian says.

"I'll call you when we know more," Luca tells his father.

He ends the call, then opens a group chat with Nikolas, Gabriel, and Liam.

“This is a surprise,” Nikolas answers.

“Viktor and I need the three of you in New York,” Luca informs the other members of the Priesthood. “Just as back up.”

“For?” Liam asks.

“Apparently, the Mannos are banned from New York, and they fucking owe the Cosa Nostra money,” I mutter, my tone filled with rage.

“So Rosalie walked right into their hands,” Nikolas says. “That sucks.”

“This happened when you were already the head of the Greek mafia,” I tell Nikolas. “You didn’t know?”

“Fuck no,” he chuckles. “I didn’t know about Manno’s existence until the meeting where Liam and Luca told me who he was.”

“Liam?” I ask.

“I only knew the fucker was causing trouble in my territory, and nothing about his past, or I would’ve warned you.”

True.

“This is a clusterfuck,” Gabriel gives his opinion. “I can be there in five and half hours.”

“Me too,” Nikolas assures me.

“I’ll be there in three,” Liam says. “What do you want me to do?”

“Hang back until we’re all there,” Luca answers. “Let Viktor talk to Giovanni. If Rosalie isn’t in any trouble, then it won’t look too suspicious, but if we all confront the Cosa Nostra, there will be an instant war.”

“Got it,” the other men agree.

“Liam, bring weapons. I only have my two Heckler & Kocks,” I say.

“Will do.”

“We’ll meet at my place in Central Park South. I’ll have Luca text you the address.”

Everyone agrees before we end the call.

I sit down and open my laptop again, hacking into the security cameras around Parisi’s home. It’s still quiet.

Jesus, let Rosalie be okay and just visiting with Alissa.

The flight is taking fucking forever, and ten minutes before we land, I notice activity at Parisi’s house.

“We’ve got movement,” I mutter.

Luca leans closer so he can see the screen.

Giovanni escorts his wife and Alissa to a car, then watches as they drive away before he nods toward the house. Two guards come out of the front door, dragging Rosalie, who’s yanking against their hold.

Blyad’.

The air leaves my lungs in a rush and every muscle in my body tenses.

“Fuck,” Luca snaps.

Every bruise on her beautiful face takes a brutal swing at my heart. Where her skin isn't marked black and blue, it's pale as fuck. Her features are torn in agony, telling me she's in a fuck-ton of pain.

Jesus fucking Christ.

My breathing speeds up, and white-hot rage explodes in my chest.

I watch as she's forced into an SUV. Parisi climbs in the back with her, then they drive off the property.

Wrath, unlike anything I've felt before, makes my body tremble. I'm going to wipe out the Cosa Nostra.

My voice is filled with carnage and destruction. "I'm going to fucking kill them."

I yank my phone out of my pocket to call Parisi, but Luca grabs hold of my arms to stop me.

"Don't! Right now, she owes them money. They won't kill her. But if you call and threaten him, that will change. We have the element of surprise. With the tracking device, you know where she is. We'll get Liam to follow them."

I start typing fast and bring up Rosalie's tracking device's signal.

Luca gets Liam on the line. "We need you to tail Parisi. He has Rosalie, and she's been roughed up, so it's fair to assume this is going to turn into a fight. Keep your distance until we join you. We don't want to lose the element of surprise."

"Will do," Liam replies. "Where are they now?"

I give the GPS coordinates to Liam, then say, “If it looks like they’re going to kill her, you need to intervene. I know I’m asking a lot. You’ll be up against two guards and Parisi.”

“Don’t worry, Viktor. I’ll save her if things go sideways.”

The private jet touches down on the tarmac with a soft bump.

My voice is strained as I say, “Please don’t let her die.”

“She won’t. I promise,” Liam assures me.

“I owe you.”

“No, you don’t. It’s my turn to be there for you. I’ll make sure your woman doesn’t get killed.”

“Thank you.” My voice disappears from all the emotions wreaking havoc in my chest.

The pilot advises us that we’re about to land at the private airfield, but all my attention is on the tracking device showing me where Rosalie is.

“I have sights on the SUV,” Liam suddenly says.

“Can you see if Rosalie is okay?”

“I’m not close enough.”

“Don’t give your position away,” Luca reminds Liam.

“They’re stopping by a church,” Liam advises us. “Do I follow them inside?”

“*Blyad’*,” I snap.

“There are a lot of people. It looks like a wedding,” Liam says.

What?

I glance at Luca, and just as the thought crosses my mind, Luca asks, “You think they’re having her marry someone as payment for the debt?”

It wouldn’t be the first time it happened in our world.

“Liam, stay hidden. Check how many guards we’ll have to deal with,” I order. “Get the weapons ready.”

“On it.”

When the private jet comes to a stop, I quickly close the laptop and shove it into my bag. Getting up, I rush off the plane to where Gabriel and Nikolas are already waiting.

I’m coming, moya Malen’kaya Roza.

Shutting down my emotions so I’ll be clear-headed, vengeance pours through my veins.

Time to kill.

Chapter 26

Rosalie

I'm dragged into the church via a side entrance, and when I try to yank free again, Alessandro hauls me over his shoulder and carries me up a set of stairs.

"Let me go!" I scream, pounding my left fist against his back.

He carries me into a room and throws me down on the floor. Excruciating pain splinters through my right arm, numbing my shoulder.

I quickly climb to my feet, but he shoves me back, then shuts the door behind him.

I slam my left fist against the door. "Let me out! You can't do this."

Frantically, I glance around the room for a way to escape, but there's not even a window to climb through. I start to look for anything I can use as a weapon, pulling open a cupboard that's filled with arts and crafts.

I grab the biggest paintbrush I can find, my breaths exploding over my lips.

Hearing footsteps, I hold the paintbrush ready in my left hand, my eyes glued to the door.

When it opens, Alissa comes in, followed by Alessandro and Tommaso. The guards are carrying a wedding dress.

“I won’t marry Mr. Greco,” I say, my voice trembling with frustration and panic. “I’d rather die.”

“Don’t fucking tempt us,” Alessandro grumbles. “Get dressed.”

I shake my head, taking a step back. “No.”

Tommaso comes at me, and I try to stab him with the paintbrush, but he easily swats my hand away. He moves behind me and grabs my arms, yanking them behind my back.

I let out an agonizing cry from the jarring ache in my right arm.

“Stop,” Alissa cries. “You’re hurting her.”

“Get out,” Alessandro snaps at her.

“No!”

The guard grabs hold of her and shoves her out into the hallway before shutting the door on her. To my horror, he locks it to keep her out.

With a menacing look, Alessandro stalks to me. Tommaso tightens his hold on me as Alessandro takes a knife from his pocket and cuts my shirt down the front.

Feeling borderline hysterical, I scream, “Stop!”

“You had a chance to dress yourself,” Alessandro sneers at me. He unbuttons my jeans, and when he pulls the zipper down, intense fear slams into me.

My breaths sound ragged, and my heartbeat is erratic.

Alessandro yanks the jeans down my legs, and I start to kick and thrash in Tommaso's brutal hold.

Alessandro slaps me hard between the legs, pressing his face close to mine. "We can't fuck you, but we can hurt you."

Paralyzing shame and horror rip my soul to shreds. Bile churns in my stomach from the disgust filling every inch of me.

My eyes are wide on the monster in front of me.

His middle finger rubs over my slit.

Overwhelming anger and humiliation have me gritting out, "S-stop."

"S-s-s-stop," he taunts me with a cruel smile curving his lips while he pushes my panties aside. I clench my legs hard, but his arm stops me.

When his finger touches my skin, it rips a hopeless cry from me.

"That's enough," Tommaso snaps, his hold on me lessening a bit.

"Are you going to dress yourself?" Alessandro leans closer until I can smell cigarettes on his breath. "Or do you want me to do it for you?"

My throat strains as a tear escapes, and my voice breaks over the words, "I'll d-do it."

A triumphant smile spreads over his face, but at least he pulls his hand away from me.

Tommaso shoves me forward, and I quickly grab hold of the dress. I can feel Alessandro's eyes burning over my bare

skin, and I hurry to step into the wedding dress. Yanking the chiffon up my body, I shove my left arm through a sleeve before struggling with my right arm.

Tommaso comes closer, and it has me shrinking away from him.

“I just want to help,” he assures me, none of the cruelty on his face that’s on Alessandro’s.

I watch with a pounding heart as he helps me get my right arm into the tight sleeve. With his head bowed, he whispers, “Stop fighting. You’re just making it harder for yourself.”

“I’ll never stop fighting,” I bite the words out between clenched teeth.

When Tommaso steps away from me, he gives me a look of pity.

Alessandro picks up the veil and holds it out to me. “Cover your face. No one wants to see a bride with bruises.”

I grab it from him, muttering, “Fuck you.”

I’ve never cursed as much as I’ve done in the past four days.

“Wouldn’t you like that?” he taunts me.

Tommaso gives Alessandro a look of warning. “Go wait outside. I’ve got this.”

The two guards stare at each other before Alessandro stalks out of the room.

My eyes lock on Tommaso’s face. “Help me, please. I can see you’re not like them.”

He takes the veil from me and arranges it on the top of my head. Before he pulls it over my face, he looks at me. “You have no idea what I’m like. I might not rape you, but I will kill you.”

The little hope I got from Tommaso protecting me disappears.

He covers my face, then gestures to the door. “After you.”

I can't do this.

I gather the chiffon of the skirt and walk into the hallway. Alessandro leads the way down the stairs, and when we stop by double doors, the wedding march dramatically fills the air from where it’s played on an organ.

God.

When I step back, Alessandro grabs hold of my right arm and yanks me forward.

“No!” I cry, and even though my arm aches terribly, I try to pull out of his hold.

Tommaso grabs my left arm, and the guards drag me down the aisle as I kick and scream.

Greco is waiting by the altar with a priest who doesn’t seem shocked by what’s happening in his church. Guests fill the pews, and I get a glimpse of Alissa crying where she’s sitting between her father and mother.

NoNoNoNoNo.

I’m brought to a stop by the altar and forced to face Greco, who smiles triumphantly, an evil look in his eyes.

“I won’t marry you.” My words sound stronger than I feel, and to bring my point across, I spit at him.

In the middle of a church full of people, he slams his fist into my jaw. My legs go numb, but Alessandro and Tomasso keep me from falling, forcing me to remain standing in front of the vile old man. I can feel blood trickling from the corner of my mouth where my lip split open again. A drop splats onto the white dress, followed by another and another.

The priest starts to talk, his voice booming over everyone.

Sobs burst from me, and I keep shaking my head, repeatedly saying, “I won’t.”

Only Greco says his vows, and I’m not even asked to say ‘I do,’ then the priest announces, “I pronounce you husband and wife.”

“No!” I shout, the sound echoing around the church.

The church doors creak loudly, and everyone turns to see what the disruption is.

My entire body goes weak at the sight of Viktor shoving the doors wide open with a gun in each hand. Light streams in behind him, making him look like a god.

Rage comes off him in waves, quickly tensing the air. It looks like his features have been cut out of stone. He’s dressed in black cargo pants and a long-sleeve shirt, the same outfit he wore when he kidnapped me.

Viktor dips the barrel of his gun in the bowl of blessed water and slowly signs the cross as his eyes drift over everyone until they stop on me.

“*Moya Malen’kaya Roza,*” he murmurs, a flicker of pain on his face when he sees the state I’m in.

“Viktor,” I whimper, straining against Alessandro and Tommaso to get free even though my legs are too numb to hold my weight.

All the heads of the Cosa Nostra rise to their feet, turning to face Viktor, who’s slowly stalking up the aisle.

He’s a sight to behold, all power and wrath – and nothing like the man who was kind and patient with me while I stayed in his house. There’s nothing sweet and caring about him.

The head of the bratva is here to take what’s his.

Thank God.

“What’s the meaning of this, Mr. Vetrov?” Mr. Parisi asks.

Viktor aims a gun in my direction, and his voice sounds deadly as he says, “You have something that belongs to me.”

Alessandro and Tommaso let go of me, and I instantly slump to the floor, chiffon billowing around me.

Before the guards can draw their weapons, shots ring through the air, making me jerk with each blast. I shriek when Tommaso and Alessandro drop dead on either side of me.

“Stop!” Mr. Parisi shouts. “Our families are here. Let’s talk like civilized men.”

There’s movement behind Viktor as the other four men of the Priesthood walk into the church. Heavily armed, they stand ready for action.

Intense fear bleeds through the church, murmurs fill the air, and people start to move, trying to get out of the pews and away from the Priesthood.

Using what little strength I have, I force myself up on my feet and say, “Did I forget to mention I belong to Viktor Vetrov?”

Greco gives me an enraged glare, but this time he doesn’t dare hit me.

Relief hits so hard, I start crying from absolute happiness.

Viktor came to save me.

Viktor’s eyes lock on mine. His eyebrows narrow, and his features grow tenser. “Who laid a hand on her?”

“Rosalie never told us she belonged to you,” Mr. Parisi says.

For a moment, Viktor closes his eyes as if he’s a second away from losing his shit, then he growls, “Who. Hit. Her?”

“Greco,” I say, my voice loud and clear.

Viktor’s eyes snap back to my face, and finally finding the strength, I rip the veil off and step toward the man I love with all my heart.

The man I never should’ve left.

Greco grabs hold of my left arm, and as he yanks me backward, another shot rings through the air, hitting him in the left shoulder. With a grunt, he stumbles back, shock registering on his face.

As quickly as physically possible, I walk to Viktor.

He only spares me a second to look at my face, then orders, “Go to Luca, *moya Malen’kaya Roza.*”

Luca hurries forward and wraps his arm around my shoulder before pulling me to where the rest of the Priesthood is standing.

Nikolas moves partially in front of me while Luca and Liam stand on either side of me, and I feel Gabriel at my back.

Unlike the first time I met the Priesthood, they’re protecting me today.

God, how everything has changed.

I watch as Viktor stalks toward the altar, his fingers flexing around the handles of his guns.

“Vetrov, this is no place for violence,” Mr. Parisi snaps while he indicates for his wife and Alissa to leave.

Viktor tilts his head at Mr. Parisi. “Yet there’s blood on the fucking wedding dress you forced my Little Rose to wear. I’d say this is the perfect place for violence. I’m sure the priest won’t mind saying a few words for the dead.”

“If this doesn’t end now, the peace treaty between the Cosa Nostra and the Priesthood will become null and void,” Mr. Parisi threatens.

“You forced my woman to marry Greco,” Viktor chuckles. “That fucking destroyed the peace treaty.” Viktor aims his weapon at Greco. “There’s only one way I’ll consider peace between you and us.”

Mr. Parisi glances at Greco, then looks back at Viktor. “What do you want?”

“Greco and me. Here and now. A fight to the death. I’ll even agree to no weapons just to make it fun.”

“Shit,” I whisper, my eyes going wide.

“Of course, he wants to kill him with his bare hands,” Luca mutters, then gives me a pointed look. “Never leave Viktor’s side again. He’s been driving me insane.”

Nikolas, Liam, and Gabriel all chuckle.

Because the men don’t seem worried, I relax a little.

Then it really hits – Viktor came for me, and because Greco tried to marry me, Viktor is going to kill him.

I get to watch the monster die by the hands of the man I love.

“I’ll never leave him again,” I whisper, more to myself than Luca.

Chapter 27

Viktor

It's taking every ounce of my strength not to shoot Greco between the eyes because I want to see him bleed while I beat him to death.

Turning my back to Greco, I walk to Luca and hand my weapons to him. I glance at Rosalie, and seeing the bruises and blood on her face, gives me another surge of rage.

She's so fucking beautiful and petite, yet the fucker hit her.

I wink at her, then turn to face Greco. "Let's do this."

Greco takes off his tuxedo jacket and tosses it to the side. While I slowly walk closer, he unbuttons his cuffs and rolls up the sleeves.

I know the man is trained. He might be over fifty, but he has years of fighting behind him.

I crack the muscles in my neck, the corner of my mouth lifting when he takes in a ready stance.

The church has cleared out except for the priest, the members of the Cosa Nostra, the Priesthood, and *moya Malen'kaya Roza*.

Greco lunges at me, but I move to the side, stepping close to a row of benches. He lets out an impatient growl, coming at

me again. Grabbing hold of the back of a bench, I twist my body into the air, delivering a double kick to the side of his head.

Greco sprawls over the floor as I land on my feet.

Chuckling, I taunt him, “Come on. Don’t tell me you didn’t see that coming. Are you getting old?”

I wait for him to get up. He shakes his head, then glares at me. “You’re still wet behind the ears, Vetrov. I killed long before you were a sperm in a ballsack.”

I give him an arrogant smile. “Yeah, but were you trained by Demitri Vetrov and Alexei Koslov?” I shake my head. “I didn’t think so.”

Darting forward, I use the weight of my body to plow into him. Grabbing hold of his sides, I lift him into the air for a moment before slamming him down on the ground. Straddling the fucker, my fingers wrap around his throat, and squeezing on a pressure point, it makes it easier to keep him in place.

My fist slams into his nose, causing blood to spurt from him. His eyes tear up, his mouth gaping open so he can breathe.

“You touched my woman,” I grit out between clenched teeth right before my fist meets his face again.

While he’s dazed from the punches, I slap his cheek. “Come on, old man. I didn’t hit you that hard.” I slap him again. “Christ, can you even get it up anymore? Do you have to take Viagra?” I let out a chuckle as his features start to tighten with anger from the serving of humiliation I’m giving him.

Slap. “Not so strong when you have to fight someone your own size.” *Slap.* I lean forward to get into his face. “You’re a pussy.”

He grabs hold of my left arm and twists hard while using his entire body to roll over. I quickly jump to my feet, and as Greco gets up, he pulls a knife from his pocket. Jumping, I spin into the air, kicking the knife from his hand before my other foot slams into the side of his head.

As the fucker drops, I let out a disgusted growl as I kick him in the stomach.

He coughs and wheezes as he struggles to his feet, and says with a smirk, “My only regret is that I didn’t fuck her raw.”

Everything inside me stills as I stare at the man who tried to steal Rosalie from me.

Greco manages to take a couple of steps back to put some space between us so he can recover from the blows I dealt him.

Darting toward the fucker, I grab hold of his shoulder and twist my body around his. Wrapping my legs around his neck, my hands grip the sides of his head, and using all my strength, I break his neck. Greco immediately drops, and I land with him dead at my feet, his eyes wide open.

Taking a step away, I savor the moment.

“Are you satisfied now?” Parisi asks.

My eyes flick to his, and not bothering to answer him, I walk to my friends. I take my guns from Luca. I stalk back to where the priest is standing, horror etched onto his face.

“Kneel,” I bark to the priest who dared to fucking pronounce them husband and wife.

Against Rosalie’s will.

He drops to his knees, and as he begins to sign the cross, I press the barrel of my gun to his head. “Please,” he begs.

“I’m a sinner, Father. You’ll find no mercy with me.” I pull the trigger and watch as his head snaps back before he slumps down.

Glaring at Parisi, I mutter, “Now I’m satisfied.”

As I walk to Rosalie, I shove my guns into the waistband of my pants.

Her lips are parted as breaths rush over them, her eyes locked on me with an expression I’ve never seen. Inches from her, I lift my hands and tenderly frame her face. Staring deep into her eyes, there’s finally peace in my heart.

“Take me home,” she whispers.

Slipping my arms beneath her knees and behind her back, I pick her up bridal style and carry her out of the fucking church to the SUV.

The skirt of the dress is all over the place, but I bundle her into the backseat and slide in beside her.

Luca climbs in behind the steering wheel while Nikolas takes the passenger side. Gabriel and Liam get into the other SUV, and when everyone is ready, we leave the church behind.

“You know that’s not the end of it, right?” Luca mutters.

“It can wait,” I grumble as I wrap my arms around Rosalie. The second I pull her against me, she lets out a whimper and

flinches.

I pause, moving my hands to her shoulders. “Where do you hurt?”

It’s only then I notice she’s cradling her right arm.

“I think I sprained it when I climbed out of the window,” she explains.

Chuckling, I shake my head. “You and windows.”

She tries to smile but stops because of her split lip. Lifting my hand, I try to wipe some of the blood from her chin.

My eyes burn on every bruise, and it makes me wish I could kill Greco all over again.

“Jesus, *moya Malen’kaya Roza.*”

“I’m okay,” she whispers, gingerly leaning her swollen jaw against my palm. “How did you find out?”

“Luca’s father told us your family was banned from New York. Had I known, I never would’ve let you go.”

Her chin starts to tremble. “They said my family dealt in sex trafficking.” Her voice grows hoarse, her eyes pleading with mine. “Is it true?”

Fuck. I wanted to spare her the pain, but I can’t lie to her.

When I nod, her face distorts with heartache. I gently pull her to my chest and press kisses to her hair. “I’m sorry you had to find out.”

“Your apartment or the airfield?” Luca asks.

“The apartment. I want her out of this fucking dress,” I mutter.

“She’ll need clothes,” Nikolas mentions.

Rosalie pulls a little back. “I had to leave most at the studio apartment I rented. I don’t know what Mr. Parisi did with my luggage and handbag. All my documents are with him.”

“We’ll get everything,” I assure her. Then I catch Luca’s eyes in the rearview mirror.

“I’ll make the call,” he says.

“Thank you,” Rosalie whispers, looking exhausted.

“When did they take you?” I ask.

“Four days ago. They were going to kill me until Greco said he’d pay my family’s debt in exchange that I married him.” She looks up at me, pleading with me to believe her. “I never said yes, Viktor. I promise. I fought as hard as I could.”

Lifting a hand to her head, I brush her hair back. “I know, *moya Malen’kaya Roza.*”

A tear spirals down her face. “I was so scared.”

There’s a fresh burst of anger in my chest. I clench my jaw as I press a kiss to her forehead. “I promised you I’d kill any man I catch you with.”

I feel her lips brush against my neck as she says, “I’m so glad you made that promise.”

When we reach the apartment building, I help Rosalie out of the SUV and lift her into my arms again.

“Do I need to call a doctor?” Luca asks as we step into the elevator.

“Please,” I murmur before kissing her hair again.

When the elevator doors open, I walk to the living room and place her gently on a couch.

I hear Luca making the call to a doctor on our payroll before he calls Parisi.

“Put him on speaker,” I order, wanting to hear every word.

“What do you want,” Parisi snaps.

“You have Rosalie’s luggage and documents. Have someone deliver everything to us.”

“I’ll do that when you pay us the ten million she owes us.”

My temper flares, but before I can tell Parisi to go to hell, Nikolas says, “I’ll pay the debt.”

“What the fuck?” I snap.

He locks eyes with me. “I took everything when I killed Antonio and Ricco. I’ll pay it.”

“Today,” Parisi demands.

“As soon as you deliver Rosalie’s belongings,” Nikolas counters him.

“And if you try to ambush us, I’ll fucking come to your house and wipe out your family,” I threaten him.

Gabriel hands Rosalie a glass of water while Liam stands to the side.

“When we attack, you’ll know it,” Parisi hisses. “My man will be there within the hour. You’ll make the payment and get out of my city before sunset.”

“It’s a deal,” Luca agrees.

With burning rage, I get the first aid kit, and taking a seat next to Rosalie, I start to wipe the blood from her face. Every time she flinches, I press a kiss on her forehead.

When the doctor arrives, he informs us Rosalie's arm might be broken, but she needs to go to a hospital so they can take an X-ray.

"We have to leave before sunset," Luca reminds us. "We don't have time for a hospital."

"I can go to one in LA," Rosalie says. "I'm kinda getting used to the pain."

"I'll give you something to help until you can get the medical care you need," the doctor says. "I'll also secure her arm in a sling."

"Can you wait until I've changed out of the dress? Please?" Rosalie asks.

"Of course." The doctor gives her a comforting smile, earning himself a bonus.

Rosalie keeps stealing glances at me with the different expression in her eyes. I can't place it, though, and wish we were alone so I could ask her what it means.

"Parisi's man is here," Luca announces.

Pulling my Heckler & Kochs from behind my back, I check the clips as I climb into the elevator with Luca.

"Don't kill the man," he says drily.

"I can't promise anything," I joke.

When the elevators open, we see the SUV parked by the entrance to the underground parking. There's a man behind the

steering wheel, and another stands in front of the vehicle with the luggage.

“Mr. Parisi wants the proof of payment,” the fucker calls out.

I’m on guard, my gaze checking every shadow and possible hiding place for a surprise attack.

Luca makes the call to Nikolas, and we have to wait until he sends the proof of payment that Luca forwards to Parisi.

Parisi’s man gets a call, then he starts to walk to the passenger side of the SUV.

“Hold up,” I call out. “Open the bags.”

“What?” He shakes his head at me.

“If one of them is going to blow up, I’d much rather have you die.”

Reluctantly the man walks back to the luggage and opens them. Then the fucker kicks the bags, so Rosalie’s clothes spill onto the ground.

Not thinking twice, I fire a shot at his foot. The instant the driver darts out of the SUV, Luca trains the barrel of his gun on him. “Ah-ah-ah. I wouldn’t. Get back into the car.”

The other guy limps to the passenger side and climbs in.

Once they drive off, Luca mutters, “You just couldn’t resist shooting him, could you?”

I walk to the luggage and throw the clothes back into the bags. “The fucker disrespected me.”

Luca grabs a bag while I take the other, and we head back up to the penthouse.

“Let’s get this over with so we can go home,” he says, sounding exhausted from dealing with all my shit.

While the elevator climbs the floors, I place an arm around his shoulder. “Thanks, brother. I wouldn’t have survived without you.”

A grin tugs at the corner of his mouth. “Through thick and thin.”

“Always.”

Chapter 28

Rosalie

Viktor carries me to the main bedroom and kicks the door shut behind us.

My heart is beating out of my chest with nerves.

Today I saw a whole different side to him. Watching him fight and kill –really drove it home that he’s the head of the bratva.

Honestly, it’s intimidating but also one hell of a turn-on.

There’s so much I have to process, as well.

Nikolas paying my debt. All the men of the Priesthood coming to my rescue. Watching Viktor break a man’s neck. What my family did.

God, I don’t know if I can process it all.

I feel the strength in his arms as he sets me down on the bed.

When I glance at the covers, Viktor gently takes hold of my jaw and nudges my face up. His eyes touch on the bruises before he captures my gaze.

He stares for a moment, then asks, “What’s that look for?”

I squirm from the intensity building between us. “What look?”

“I can’t place it. You look at me differently than before.”

Under his penetrating gaze, my heartbeat speeds up until it flutters wildly in my chest.

It’s because I’m stunned out of my ever-loving mind by seeing firsthand how powerful he is.

It’s because I’ve never seen anything hotter than Viktor in action.

It’s because I’m free to love him.

Viktor brushes the pad of his thumb over my bottom lip, then leans closer, pressing such a gentle kiss to my mouth. Warmth bursts in my heart, filling every inch.

He only pulls back a little. “Do you have any idea how much I fucking missed you?”

I sound breathless when I whisper, “I wasn’t even gone for two weeks.”

His eyes lock on mine, making my stomach do somersaults. “I know I promised to let you go, but...” he shakes his head, “I can’t.”

My left hand trembles as I lift it to his face. I cup his jaw, loving the feel of the bristles against my skin. “I don’t want you to let me go.”

His eyes sharpen on my face. “Does that mean you’ve forgiven me?”

I shake my head, and worry instantly darkens his eyes.

“There’s nothing to forgive, Viktor. I now understand why my family had to die.”

I can't believe what they did. Trading in sex slavery? Stealing from the Cosa Nostra? Because of them, all these bad things have happened to me.

Air bursts from Viktor, relief washing over his features. "Christ," he whispers before he pulls me to his chest. He peppers the side of my head and neck with kisses. "You have no idea how happy I am to hear that."

"You should've told me sooner what my family did." The raw heartache and disappointment are in every word.

He pulls back again, shaking his head. "You wouldn't have believed me, and I wanted to spare you the pain."

There's a knock at the door, then Luca calls out, "We have to leave soon."

"I know," Viktor replies. "We'll be out in ten minutes." He turns his attention back to me. "Let's get you out of this ugly as fuck dress." He looks at the chiffon with disgust. "Jesus, *how* do I get you out of this?"

Laughter bursts from me as I stand up. "There's a zipper at the back."

When his knuckles brush against my skin as he pulls the zipper down, goosebumps erupt all over my body, and tingles explode in my stomach.

The chiffon bunches at my feet, and I'm standing in my underwear.

The memory of Alessandro touching me hits hard, making tears jump to my eyes. I rush to my luggage and struggle with my left hand to unzip the bag.

Viktor comes to crouch next to me and takes over, opening the bag. He pulls a pair of leggings and an oversized shirt out.

“Underwear too, please,” I whisper, my cheeks flaming up.

I watch as he rummages for a bra and panties. When we straighten up, I try to reach for the clothing, but he shakes his head. “Let me help you, so you don’t use your right arm.”

Oh, Jesus.

Feeling incredibly self-aware, I stand rooted to the spot as Viktor sets the clothes on the bed. He comes to stand in front of me, so close, his aftershave and manly scent fill my lungs. He unclasps the bra at the front and pushes a strap down my left arm before focusing on my right arm, making sure not to jar it.

He doesn’t even try to hide that he looks at my breasts, and I watch as heat ignites in his dark brown eyes.

There’s a weird mixture of panic and anticipation in my chest. On the one hand, I know Viktor won’t hurt me. I’ve had sex with him already. But... A repulsed shiver races down my spine when Alessandro pops into my mind again.

Then it spirals – my family did the same thing to so many people. They took away their rights and dehumanized them by forcing them into hideous situations.

I can’t deal.

Don’t think about it.

Viktor takes hold of my panties, and as he slides them down my legs, he crouches in front of me. My breaths are

coming faster as a feeling of distress skirts around the edges of my heart.

This is Viktor. He won't hurt you.

You love him. His touch is safe.

I place my left hand on his shoulder to keep my balance as I step out of my underwear.

While Viktor is crouching at my feet, he locks eyes with me right before he presses a kiss to my hip.

He makes me feel loved. He's safe.

A breath quivers over my lips, and I quickly look away. I have to swallow hard on the tears threatening to escape from the phantom feel of Alessandro's fingers touching me, still lingering between my legs.

Oh God, make it go away.

Viktor straightens to his full height, then takes hold of my chin and tilts his head to catch my eyes. "What's wrong?"

I quickly shake my head.

"Rosalie," he pushes. "Tell me."

I pull my chin from his hold and duck my head low, squeezing my eyes shut.

Breathe. Just breathe.

Now that I'm safe, all the memories and emotions are spiraling out of control.

The pain and terror.

The absolute cruelty and abuse.

My breath hitches.

“Hey,” Viktor murmurs tenderly, his tone so caring and filled with worry it makes the gates burst open.

A sob sputters from me, and my voice is hoarse from how vulnerable and violated I feel. “The p-past four d-days were j-just really h-hard.”

He pulls me into a hug, wrapping me up in the safety of his strong arms. “I’m sorry I didn’t get to you sooner.”

I place my left hand over his chest and rest my cheek against him. “I r-regret leaving you. More than I’ve r-regretted anything in my life.”

I feel his mouth brush against my hair. “Did you at least find some of the answers you were looking for?”

In the most horrible way.

I nod, my cheek brushing against his shirt. “I found all of them.”

“That’s good.” Viktor pushes me back. “Let’s get you dressed. Seeing you naked is pushing my self-restraint to the limits.”

While Viktor helps me put on the clothes, my eyes stay glued to him. I drink in every line on his face, once again thinking he’s really the most attractive man I’ve ever seen.

Especially after seeing him in action.

*God, who thought I’d ever be thankful that the head of the
bratva kidnapped me?*

When he has me dressed and it looks like he’s going to pick me up, I say, “I can walk. Will you bring the luggage?”

“Of course.” He quickly closes the bag, then takes hold of my left hand. Weaving his fingers through mine, he leads me out of the bedroom.

When we join the other members of the Priesthood downstairs, I glance at each of the men before my gaze settles on Nikolas Stathoulis.

He catches me staring at him and offers me a reassuring smile.

I have to summon all my courage to say, “Thank you for paying my debt.”

He shakes his head. “It was the least I could do for you.”

I inch closer to Viktor, and he gives my hand a squeeze.

A grateful smile forms on my face as I tell the group of men, “Thank you for coming to help me.”

They all smile at me.

God. I'm surrounded by so many powerful men it's actually scary.

“Let’s get out of this city,” Luca says as he grabs one of my bags.

When we all bundle into the elevator, I’m practically glued to Viktor’s side. He lets go of my hand and places his arm around my shoulder, allowing me to press even closer.

“And so the last of us fall,” Gabriel mutters.

“I still win,” Viktor chuckles. “You all fell long before I did.”

I glance up at Viktor. “Fall?”

“For a woman,” he explains. “They’re all married already.”

Oh.

Ohhh.

Viktor fell for me.

Chapter 29

Viktor

When we walk into the house, Rosalie lets out a deep sigh of relief. She glances around as if she hasn't seen the place for years.

Jesus, it's good to see her in my space again.

"How does it feel to be home?" I ask.

The corner of her mouth lifts. "So, *so* good. You have no idea."

Her reply lets my chest swell with satisfaction.

I've become her home.

When we reach the top of the stairs, I turn left, and it has Rosalie asking, "Where are you taking my luggage?"

I keep walking. "To our bedroom."

"What?" she gasps behind me.

"Did you really think I'd let you stay in the guest room, *moya Malen'kaya Roza?*" I place the bags in the walk-in closet. "We'll just have to make space for your clothes. We can do it tomorrow."

"You're moving me into your bedroom?"

I shake my head, and wrapping my arms around her, I smile down at her. “*Our* bedroom.” I press a kiss to her forehead, then add, “Besides, Luna already moved in.”

There’s a flicker of excitement on her face. “Where is she?”

“She’s at my parents’ place. I’ll go get her tomorrow.”

My eyes drift over her, and even with the swelling and bruises, she’s still fucking exquisite. I also notice she’s lost weight.

“Time to feed my woman.”

A blush creeps up her neck as I take hold of her hand and pull her out of the bedroom. When we reach the kitchen, I lift her onto a stool at the island, then open the fridge. “What are you in the mood for?”

“Anything that’s quick.” She gives me a sheepish grin. “I’m starving.”

“I can see that,” I grumble. “Didn’t they feed you?”

Rosalie’s quiet for a moment before whispering, “I couldn’t stomach food.” She brushes a hand over the back of her head. “And I had a concussion that made it hard to keep anything down.”

My body freezes, and there’s an instant burst of rage. “A fucking concussion?”

Looking uncomfortable, she waves her hand as if it doesn’t matter, then adds, “From all the punches and slaps.”

My eyebrow lifts dangerously high as I shut the fridge. “You can eat after we’ve visited the hospital.”

“What? No. We can go tomorrow,” she tries to argue.

I shake my head, grab hold of her waist, and lift her off the chair. Taking her hand, I drag her out of the house and bundle her into the SUV.

Glancing at Joseph, I say, “We’re going to the hospital.”

“Yes, boss,” he replies, signaling to his team that we’re leaving.

Uncle Alexei had an entire hospital built after Aunt Isabella got injured. It’s state-of-the-art, and I don’t have to worry about unnecessary questions.

It’s only a ten-minute drive, and when we walk inside, the nurse quickly stands up. “Mr. Vetrov.” Her eyes go to Rosalie, then she says, “Dr. West is in surgery. Can I get Dr. Stern for you?”

“Please.”

She quickly calls Dr. Stern, then leads us to the private suite that’s reserved for our family.

A minute later, Dr. Stern comes rushing in. “Mr. Vetrov. What can I do for you, sir?”

I nod to Rosalie. “She has a concussion and might have a broken arm. Give her a full medical.”

“*Had* a concussion,” Rosalie mutters, looking very uncomfortable.

“What’s the patient’s name?” The nurse asks.

“Rosalie Manno,” I answer.

Dr. Stern looks at the nurse. “Get Mr. Vetrov whatever he wants to drink while I take care of Miss Manno.”

“I’m not letting her out of my sight.”

“Of course,” Dr. Stern says. “This way.”

We follow him to the radiology department, where Rosalie is asked to change into a gown.

I step into a room with her and quickly help her out of her shirt and leggings. When I pull the hospital gown over her shoulders, I grin, “I can get used to dressing you.”

The corner of her mouth lifts in a shy smile, making her look fucking adorable.

I’ve caught onto the fact that she’s self-conscious around me. I’m unsure if it’s because I killed people in front of her today or something else.

My gaze sharpens on her face. “We’re good, right?”

Confusion fills her eyes. “Yes. Why?”

I shake my head. “Just checking.”

We leave the room, and while they’re taking the X-ray and a bunch of other tests, my eyes remain glued to her.

I start to pick up on small things – how she flinches when a man comes near her, how she keeps fidgeting and glancing around her as if she’s constantly on guard, but mostly, how the traumatizing emotions keep hitting her in waves.

It’s clear the ordeal Rosalie suffered the past four days took one hell of a toll on her, and more than ever, I regret not getting to her sooner.

It takes a couple of hours before Dr. Stern is done with Rosalie, and we're escorted back to the private suite, where he says, "She's broken her wrist, and there's a hairline fracture in her forearm. I'm going to set it in a cast that she'll wear for six to eight weeks."

Rosalie's shoulders slump, and she looks miserable from the news.

"There isn't any swelling on her brain, which is good news." Dr. Stern locks eyes with her. "No more bumps to the head. Take it easy for two weeks." Then he smiles at me. "Other than that, the bruises just have to heal. I'll let you know if her bloodwork shows any abnormalities."

"Thank you."

I take a seat in the armchair while Dr. Stern sets Rosalie's right arm in a cast.

Pulling my phone out of my pocket, I shoot Luca a text.

Rosalie's wrist is broken, and she has a hairline fracture in her forearm. She also has a concussion.

He replies within minutes.

I'm sorry to hear that. Also, you already killed Greco. Don't get any ideas. Things are volatile with the Cosa Nostra. Get some fucking sleep. It's four in the morning, in case you haven't noticed.

"All done," Dr. Stern says, pulling my attention back to them. "Try to keep the cast dry."

"Okay," Rosalie murmurs as she slides off the bed.

My eyes lock on the cast covering her wrist and forearm, and it only causes my anger to flare back up.

Christ, I really fucking wish I could kill Greco again.

The fucker deserves a million deaths.

“Thank you, Dr. Stern.” I shake the man’s hand, then wrap my arm around Rosalie’s shoulder and steer her out of the hospital.

When we get back home, I order, “Lie down on the couch while I make the food.”

“I want to sit here,” she argues while taking a seat on a stool.

Because it’s already so fucking late, or early for that matter, I fix us a couple of sandwiches. Setting the plate down in front of Rosalie, I mutter, “Eat everything, so I can get you to bed. You must be fucking tired.”

“Yes, Mr. Vetrov,” she sasses me.

My cock instantly hardens, and I give her a look of warning, “Don’t start something you can’t finish.”

Frowning at me, she asks, “What do you mean?”

I wait for her to swallow the bite she took, then answer, “You calling me Mr. Vetrov makes me hard as fuck, but you’re in no condition for sex.”

Her face flushes, and she tries to hide behind her sandwich.

Tilting my head, my eyes narrow on her. “Why are you uncomfortable around me?”

Rosalie quickly shakes her head, her eyes widening. “I’m not.”

I give her a pointed look. “Bullshit. You look nervous. What’s going on?” When she starts to shake her head again, I ask, “Is it because you saw me kill?”

Her tongue darts out to wet her lips. “I understand why you did it.”

“But?”

Her features tighten with nerves. “You’re intimidating.”

“I intimidate you?” I ask, not liking the sound of that at all.

“It’s weird to explain.” She sets the sandwich down. “I know you won’t hurt me, but after seeing how good you are at fighting... and killing, it’s hard not to be intimidated.” Her shoulders slump, then she mutters, “It doesn’t help that I’m so damn weak.”

I move closer and gently cup her cheek. When she looks up at me, I say, “I can train you. With the right exercise, you can get stronger.”

There’s a flicker of hope in her soft brown eyes. “Really? You’d do that?”

I point to her cast. “Once that’s off.”

The corner of her mouth lifts. “Okay.”

I nudge her plate closer. “Eat.”

It’s quiet while we finish our food, and once we’re done, I place the plates in the dishwasher, then make sure everything is locked. Taking hold of Rosalie’s hand, I switch off all the lights and pull her up the stairs.

When we walk into the bedroom, I ask, “Do you want to bathe or shower?”

She looks down at the cast on her arm. “That’s going to be difficult.”

A wide grin spreads over my face. “Not if I help.”

She scowls at me. “You’re not bathing me.”

Taking a step closer to her, I wrap my fingers around the back of her neck and lean down until my mouth brushes against her ear. I feel a tremble ripple through her body, then drop my voice low as I say, “I’m bathing you, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*. I won’t take no for an answer.”

Her breaths speed up while her left hand grips hold of my shirt. “Okay.”

Pulling back, I wink at her. “I love it when you obey me.”

She narrows her eyes. “You play dirty, Mr. Vetrov.”

Chuckling, I shake my head. “So do you, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*.”

Rosalie tilts her head. “I like it when you call me ‘Little Rose’ in Russian.” A cute expression settles on her face. “Can you say something else?”

“*Ya lyublyu tebya*,” I tell Rosalie I love her for the first time.

“What does that mean?” she asks.

I shake my head, then give her a playful grin. “I’ll tell you another day.”

Her bottom lip pushes out as she pouts, and God, if it's not the cutest fucking thing I've ever seen. "Don't do that," I demand.

"What?" She pouts again.

Pulling her to my chest, I grind my teeth from the effort it's taking to not squash her against me.

Fuck, I love her so much, and I'm so goddamn thankful she's back in my arms.

Willingly.

Chapter 30

Rosalie

It's hard not to fidget while Viktor undresses me for the third time in the space of ten hours.

This time when he pulls my panties down, his palms brush all the way down my legs before coming back up to settle on my hips.

His fingers dig into my skin, and a growl rumbles from his chest. "This is the sweetest fucking torture."

My gaze goes to the bathtub. "I can really do it myself."

"Fuck no. I'm not missing out on the opportunity to bathe you."

Viktor takes hold of my left hand. "Get in, *moya Malen'kaya Roza.*"

Holding onto him, I climb into the balmy water and sit down. Viktor rolls his shirt's sleeves up to his elbows, exposing the veins snaking beneath his skin.

Why is that so damn attractive?

Viktor crouches next to the tub, and grabbing a loofah, he squirts body wash onto it. He starts to wash my back and shoulders while I focus on keeping the cast braced on the side of the tub so it won't get wet.

It feels nice having his attention on me until the loofah slides down my abdomen to between my legs. My body immediately tenses, and I divert my gaze to the cast.

From the corner of my eye, I see Viktor tilting his head, his movements growing slower. “Why did you tense up?”

My mind races to think of an acceptable lie. My tongue darts out to wet my lips. “Ah... I’m just tired.”

I can feel his eyes burning on me. His hand with the loofah stills between my legs, then he orders, “Look at me.”

Destructive emotions spiral into my chest as I shake my head.

“Hey, talk to me,” his tone is too gentle for me to handle right now.

Not caring about my right arm, I climb to my feet and scramble out of the bath. Sharp pains shoot through my arm, and I bite my bottom lip to suppress the groan.

Grabbing a towel, I wrap it around me and leave a trail of wet footprints all the way to the walk-in closet.

“Rosalie,” Viktor snaps, his voice filled with brutality and tension. “What the fuck happened while you were with the Cosa Nostra?”

I do a poor job of drying my body, and when I try to step into my underwear, I fall to my side. Before my right arm can slam into a set of drawers, Viktor grabs hold of me, yanking me back onto my feet. He forces me to turn to him, then pins me with a stare that’s filled with rage.

“What the fuck happened?”

My voice is shaky as I say, “I already told you.”

The expression on his face darkens until he looks like death itself. “You’re lying to me.”

Pulling free from his hands, I step back. I close my eyes and whisper, “You’re scaring me.”

I hear him suck in a couple of deep breaths, then he gently pulls me to his chest. There’s so much worry in his voice when he says, “Please tell me.”

The humiliation is too fresh, and I don’t know how Viktor will react. He’s no longer the only man who’s touched me.

“I’m just tired,” I groan. “Let me get dressed so I can sleep. Please.”

He lets out a deep sigh, then grabs my underwear and crouches by my feet. “Left leg.” I place my trembling hand on his shoulder and step into the panties.

While Viktor dresses me, exhaustion sinks into my bones. Everything inside me feels black and blue, and with every passing minute, the trauma sinks its claws into me.

While I had to fight for my life, there was no time to process anything, but now that I’m safe, it’s all flooding me like a tsunami, hell-bent on drowning me.

When I’m dressed, Viktor frames my face and leans down to capture my eyes. “We’ll talk once you’ve had some sleep.”

I nod, thankful that he won’t push the subject right now.

He presses a kiss to my forehead. “Get in bed, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*. I’m just going to shower, then I’ll join you.”

He tugs me to the bed and throws the covers back. When I lie down, he gently tucks me in and presses another kiss to my temple.

“Night,” I whisper.

“G’night, baby.”

I quickly close my eyes, the term of endearment threatening to make the tears come.

I listen as Viktor moves around the room and the water running in the shower. When he comes out of the bathroom, the bed dips under his weight. He pushes an arm beneath my head and pulls me back until I’m cradled against his body.

I keep my eyes tightly shut and my breaths as even as possible, hoping he’ll think I’m already asleep.

“*Ya lyublyu tebya, moya Malen’kaya Roza,*” he murmurs, pressing a kiss to my hair.

I think I know what the words mean and focus on how safe they make me feel.

No one can hurt you anymore.

You’re safe in Viktor’s arms.

Walking through a field, I’m surrounded by giant buildings that reach into the clouds.

Suddenly a tornado warning fills the air, the sound sending a wave of alarm through me. Shadows start to form from the

clouds, then they take the shape of the five heads of the Cosa Nostra.

“Die,” Mr. Messina hisses.

“Die,” Mr. Amato echoes him.

The tornado warning grows louder, and I frantically glance around for a place to take shelter. A door opens in one of the buildings, and I run to it. When I dart inside, lights flicker on, showing a great hall. There’s a stage where my grandfather, father, and uncle are seated.

Uncle Ricco’s eyes rove over me. “She’ll go for a good price.”

“No!” I cry, my heart splintering into a million pieces. “Why did you do this to me?”

“I’ll pay ten million,” Mr. Greco’s voice booms through the hall.

I open my mouth to scream, but nothing comes out.

“She’s a child, only seventeen,” my grandfather roars.

“Nonno,” I sob. “Help me.”

“She has to pay our debt,” my father demands.

Mr. Greco’s fist comes flying at me, then I’m grabbed by Alessandro. I start to fight with all my strength, screaming and sobbing for them to let me go.

Shooting upright, arms lock around me. My body is inundated with panic and fear, and I slap at a solid chest as I struggle to get free.

“Rosalie!” Viktor’s voice yanks me back to reality so fast that my body jerks.

Desperately, I gasp for air as the remnants of the nightmare shudder through me.

Another gasp, then I crumble like a house of cards.

“Christ,” Viktor snaps harshly. His arms tighten around me, and he engulfs me. “I’ve got you. You’re safe.”

Broken cries spill from me, my tears falling between my cheek and his chest.

It felt so real.

“Viktor,” I whimper, unable to carry the trauma by myself.

My family were sex traffickers. Because of them, I’ve been through hell. I’ve been beaten and violated, and I can’t handle it.

“I’m here, baby. Talk to me.”

In the safety of his arms, I force my humiliation over my lips, “T-the one g-guard t-t-touched me.”

There’s a dangerous tone to Viktor’s voice as he asks, “What do you mean he touched you?”

I hunch my shoulders and cower against his solid chest, then whisper, “Between my legs.”

The air shifts as Viktor tenses, then it starts to feel as if every particle in the room is vibrating from the rage coming off him.

“Which guard?” he grits the words out through clenched teeth.

I shake my head. “You already killed him.”

“*Blyad*,” he curses.

I swallow hard and attempt to squash the emotions deep down, but I can’t, and they spill from me in the form of sobs.

“Shh...” He presses a kiss to my temple. “I’m so fucking sorry I didn’t get to you sooner.”

My voice is broken and hoarse as I whisper, “I’m sorry you’re not the only man who’s touched me.”

“Jesus, Rosalie. Don’t fucking apologize, baby.” He pushes me back and frames my face. Leaning down, he locks eyes with me. “None of this was your fault. Do you understand me?”

I nod in his hold, tears still spilling down my cheeks. My voice is small as I ask, “You’re not disgusted with me?”

It looks like he’s in physical pain, his eyebrows drawing together. “Why would you think that?”

“B-because...” I shake my head and try to pull away.

Viktor tightens his hold on me. “Why?”

I lower my eyes to his chest. “I’m disgusted with myself.” Intense shame threatens to overpower me. “And I’m disgusted with my family.”

Although rage still burns in his eyes, his features soften. “*Moya Malen’kaya Roza*, you’re not your family. What they did bears no reflection on you.” His gaze bores into mine. “And what that fucker did to you...” He has to take a calming breath, a shudder raking through his body, “Jesus, I wish I

didn't give him such a quick death. If I had known, he'd be choking on his fucking dick."

God.

Viktor's thumbs brush over my cheeks, and the longer he stares at me, the softer his gaze becomes until I see the love in his eyes.

"As for me, yes, I'm angry as fuck, but not at you." He shakes his head. "I can never be disgusted with you, *moya Malen'kaya Roza*. If you knew..." The corner of his mouth lifts slightly, "I love you, Rosalie. I love every-fucking-thing about you. How petite you are. How gentle and pure your nature is. How fucking exquisite every inch of you is." He leans closer, pressing his forehead to mine. "I love you so fucking fiercely and will never let you go. It's you and me for life."

My eyebrows draw together, and my face crumbles as my love for him grows so much it feels like it will burst from me. With a sob sputtering from me, I say, "I'm so glad you kidnapped me."

Viktor lets out a chuckle. "There's something I never thought I'd hear."

A tear spirals down my cheek, which he captures on his thumb. When he licks it off, it looks freaking hot and no longer sinister.

"Why do you do that?"

The corner of his mouth lifts. "Because I want to possess every part of you, *moya Malen'kaya Roza*. Even your tears."

Holy shit.

I feel his breaths on my lips as I whisper, “Do you want to hear the truth?”

He nods, his eyes locked on mine. “No more lies.”

With my entire heart, I say, “I love you, Viktor.”

Chapter 31

Viktor

I didn't know how much I needed to hear the words from Rosalie, but the moment she says them, the tension that's been building in my chest for the past three years eases.

With absolute awe, I stare at the woman who's got me wrapped around her little finger. "Do you have any idea how powerful you are?"

Rosalie shakes her head.

Jesus, the way she looks at me.

Taking her hand, I pull her off the bed. When she's standing in front of me, I gesture at the stars tattooed on my shoulders. "I have them tattooed right above my knees as well. It means, as the head of the bratva, I don't kneel before anyone."

"Okay," she murmurs, looking a little confused.

Then I drop down to my knees in front of her. It takes a moment for Rosalie to realize what I'm trying to say.

"I'll only kneel before you, *moya Malen'kaya Roza*. You have the power of the bratva and the Priesthood behind you. Never hesitate to use it if you find yourself in trouble."

Her chin starts to quiver as she nods. Bringing her hand to my jaw, she says, “Have I told you how glad I am that you kidnapped me?”

I let out a chuckle as I climb to my feet. “Yes, but it never gets old.”

Her fingers brush from my jaw, down my neck, then outline the star on my right shoulder.

“You’re so strong,” she murmurs.

“You’re strong too, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*. You’ve gone through so much, and you’re still standing.”

“Because of you.” Her eyes lock with mine. “Will you do one more thing for me?”

I answer without any hesitation, “Whatever you need.”

“Touch me.” When I lift my hand to her cheek, she shakes her head. “Touch me between my legs. I need you to be the last man who touched me there.”

Christ.

The fact that the fucker touched my woman makes me want to burn the Cosa Nostra to the ground.

But this moment is not about my rage. It’s about Rosalie and what she needs.

Pushing my hand beneath the fabric of her leggings and lace panties, I cup her pussy. I take a step closer until our chests touch, never breaking eye contact with her, then I push my middle finger inside her heat.

I wipe out the fucker’s touch and replace it with my own because I need my woman to only think of me.

“You’re mine, Rosalie,” I say with every ounce of possessiveness she makes me feel. “Your body belongs to me.”

Relief trickles into her eyes as she wraps her left arm around my neck. With her mouth close to mine, she whispers, “My heart and soul too. I’m yours.”

Never breaking eye contact, I pull my finger out before thrusting back inside her. Where she was dry a second ago, her desire starts to coat my finger. I press my thumb to her clit and rub circles around the nerves.

“How does that feel, *moya Malen’kaya Roza?*”

Her chin quivers, but desire lights up her eyes. “So much better.”

I pull my hand from her leggings, and bringing my finger to my mouth, my lips close around the digit, and I suck her arousal off. “So fucking sweet.”

Rosalie’s expression turns pleading. “I need you.”

The caveman in me wants to pound my chest and roar to the world that this woman is mine, then fuck her senseless and brand her with my cock. But Rosalie doesn’t need an arrogant dick right now.

Taking hold of her chin, I press a tender kiss to her lips, then say, “Take control, baby. I know you need it.”

The corner of her mouth lifts. “You’ll let me boss you around?”

I pretend to look at the time. “Only for the next hour. So you better—”

“Undress, Mr. Vetrov,” she orders, a playful smile on her beautiful face. Then she pretends to frown. “Before I lose my temper.”

Lifting an eyebrow at her, I shove my sweatpants down my legs and step out of them. “You’re hot when you’re bossy,” I encourage her, my cock already rock hard for her.

She points to the bed. “Lie down.”

“Yes, ma’am,” I tease her as I obey her command.

If any of my men saw me now, they’d piss themselves laughing, but I couldn’t give two fucks. I’ll do just about anything to help her heal.

Lying down on my back, the head of my cock bounces, the precum already dripping from it.

Rosalie climbs onto the bed and straddles my thighs, then she gives me a nervous look before she lowers her head and presses a kiss to my cock.

“*Blyad’*,” I hiss.

“Do you like that?” she asks, her breath caressing the sensitive head.

“Baby, I like your mouth anywhere near my cock.”

Her lips curve into a smile, then her tongue darts out to capture the bead of precum.

My cock jerks, desperate for more attention.

“That’s right, baby,” I praise her.

She has to keep herself up with her left arm, so she can’t wrap her fingers around me.

Reaching down, I take hold of my cock and pump it once. Rosalie's eyes widen, then she admits, "That's freaking hot."

I pump my cock again, and when her lips part and close around the head, I brush my thumb over her lips that are stretched around my girth.

"Jesus, *moya Malen'kaya Roza*. Your mouth is heaven," I praise her.

When she sucks hard, my ass lifts off the bed, thrusting deeper into her mouth. I itch to grab her hair so I can keep her in place and fuck her mouth, but conscious of the concussion she's recovering from, I fist the covers instead.

Rosalie sucks harder, earning more praise from me as I growl, "That's it, baby. It feels so fucking good."

All my praise gives her the confidence boost she needs as her head starts to bob up and down, and she sucks me as if her life depends on it.

"Christ," I groan. "*Blyad'*, *moya Malen'kaya Roza*. You suck me so good."

Pleasure starts to sizzle down my spine, and my ass lifts off the bed. My balls tighten a second before my body jerks, then intense ecstasy explodes through me. My breaths rush as I keep my eyes on Rosalie, watching as she swallows my release down.

"Rosalie," I groan, still jerking in her mouth while the pleasure stripping me of my strength. "You own me."

When I slump back and slip from her mouth, she crawls up my body and lies down in the crook of my arm, resting her cast on my chest.

“That felt good,” she admits. “Kind of like a power trip.”

“Well, you had the head of the bratva literally by the balls,” I joke while still trying to catch my breath.

She lets out a chuckle. “Yeah, I did.”

I push my arm beneath her, then gently roll her onto her back, covering her body with mine. Taking hold of the cast, I carefully position her arm next to her head so it’s out of the way.

“Are you done being in control?” I ask her.

She nods, her eyes softening with love. “Yeah. I like it better when you’re in charge.”

“Thank, fuck,” I mutter before pressing a kiss beneath her ear. “How do you feel?”

I lock eyes with her so I can see if she lies to me, but there’s only love softening her brown irises as she says, “Better.” A playful smile ghosts around her lips. “But do you know what would make me feel even better?”

I shake my head.

“You inside me, Mr. Vetrov.”

My fingers caress her hair away from her face, and I stare at her for a moment. “The moment I laid eyes on you, I knew you were mine. That’s why I took you.”

She scrunches her nose in a cute way. “And to think I was terrified of you. If I knew back then, what I know now, I would’ve walked out of that house with you.”

A flash of heartache tightens her features, then she asks, “Is it wrong that I can’t hate my family?”

I shake my head. “They were good to you, Rosalie. Yes, what they did was fucked up, but they loved you.”

She nods, her chin starting to quiver. “You’re right.”

I tilt my head. “So... am I still the villain in your story?”

She stares up at me with awe. “Yes.” When I narrow my eyes, she explains, “Only a villain would’ve done what you did. You killed to save me.” She lifts her head and presses a kiss to my mouth. “And I love you for it.”

Chapter 32

Rosalie

With Viktor's body covering mine, I feel so much better.

Because he's home to me.

I regret wasting three years fighting with him.

The man who killed so easily yesterday stares at me with so much tenderness. "I'm sorry you didn't get to live on your own for longer."

I shrug. "It's overrated. Turns out no one wants to hire someone who doesn't have experience."

He brushes his fingers over the curve of my jaw. "I can talk to Aunt Isabella."

A frown starts to form on my forehead. "About a job?"

Viktor nods. "When you're ready, of course. There's no rush. And if you don't want to work, that's fine with me too."

Now that he's mentioned it, I start to feel excited. "Do you think she'll let me help her with saving sex slaves?"

His eyebrow darts up. "Hell no, I'm not letting you near any action. Let the experts deal with the sex traffickers. But you can help her find new homes for the girls and get them settled. She used to have someone who helped her, but Ana got married to her bodyguard and moved to Russia with him.

Since then, my mom tries to help, but she has her own charity work to take care of.”

“I can help both of them,” I say, really starting to get excited. It will be a way to pay penance for all the evil my family has done.

He lowers his head, feathering kisses over my bruises. “I’ll support whatever you want to do, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*, as long as it doesn’t put you in danger.”

“Thank you.”

I bring my left hand to his jaw and brush my fingers lightly over the stubble. “I never asked, but when’s your birthday?”

“January fourth,” he answers.

“How old are you?”

“Twenty-eight.”

My eyebrows bunch together. “How old were you when you took over the *bratva*?”

“Twenty-four-ish.” He smiles. “But I started training when I turned seven.”

“Dear God,” I gasp. “So you never got to be just a normal kid?”

“I got the best of both worlds, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*. I grew up in a loving home, but my father and uncle also taught me everything I needed to know.”

“So you weren’t unhappy?”

Viktor shakes his head. “No. I can’t complain about my life.” He kisses the tip of my nose. “Except for when you left

me. Now, *that* sucked ass.”

I tilt my head, my eyes caressing his attractive face. “It did.” My fingers trail down the side of his neck and over his shoulder. Nerves and anticipation start to spin in my stomach as I whisper, “Will you make love to me?”

Viktor looks deep into my eyes. “Every day of our lives together, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*.” He pushes his body off me and starts to undress me.

When he has me naked, his hands brush up my sides. His eyes drift over my body with so much amazement.

“You make me feel precious,” I admit.

“You are precious,” he murmurs as he pushes my legs open and looks at the valley between my thighs. “And so fucking beautiful.”

Viktor hooks an arm beneath my left leg and positions it over his shoulder, then his tongue swipes through my folds.

My breathing hitches as I reach down to brush my fingers through his hair. His eyes lock with mine, then he sucks on my clit until I’m breathless and unable to keep from rubbing myself hard on his face.

My fingers tighten in his hair, and I push his face as hard as I can against me, whimpers and cries spilling from me as my pleasure remains out of my reach.

“Viktor,” I gasp. “Please.”

His teeth nip at my sensitive flesh before he sucks me so hard, I see stars. My body starts to convulse, and as my release finally hits, I can only let out soft moans.

When I start to come down, he crawls up my body and starts to kiss me with so much passion it brings tears to my eyes.

He doesn't enter me immediately but continues to kiss me as if it's all he wants to do for the rest of our lives.

This is one of the reasons I love Viktor. Even though he can be brutal, he has such a tender side when it comes to me.

After seeing what he's capable of, I realized just how patient and caring he was with me even though I kept pushing him away.

No, he didn't kidnap me. He saved me and captured my heart.

I break the kiss, and breathless, I say, "I love you so much."

Viktor's mouth curves up into a hot smile. "*Slava ne mogut apisat' mayu u lyubof' k tebe, moya Malen'kaya Roza.*"

"What does that mean?"

"Words can't describe my love for you, my Little Rose."

My eyes fill with tears, but Viktor stops them from falling with a kiss that curls my toes. I feel his hard length between my legs, and lifting my hips, I start to rub myself against him.

"Jesus," he mutters into my mouth, his hands moving to my breasts and tweaking my nipples into hard peaks. He peppers hungry kisses down my throat while thrusting against me.

I love the friction of his hardness rubbing against me. My hips jerk faster and faster, but then he suddenly pulls away.

Pushing his hand down between us, he takes hold of himself and presses his cock against my opening.

Bracing himself on his left arm, he looks down at where he's entering me, but it's barely an inch before he pulls out and rubs over my clit again.

"Viktor," I complain, which only earns me a dark chuckle.

He starts to torture me by only giving me an inch, then rubbing my clit. It drives me wild until my left hand claws at the back of his neck.

"Please," I beg. "Please."

Suddenly, Viktor slams into me. Although it hurts, the pain is nothing compared to the first time.

He buries himself to the hilt, his eyes drifting shut with pleasure. "Christ, *moya Malen'kaya Roza*. Your pussy takes me so well."

Heat flushes through me, and I clench around his hard length.

Slowly, he pulls out before plunging back into me with a hard thrust that moves my body up, making pleasure light up in my core.

His eyes burn on my face as his right hand grips my hip. "I love how tight you are. You fit me like a glove."

I only manage to take half a breath when he thrusts inside me again. His fingers dig into my skin to hold me in place, then he starts to pick up his pace until he's hammering so hard into me, I can only gasp.

My hips start to move on their own, trying to meet his desperate thrusts as the sound of our love-making fills the room.

Viktor pushes his left hand beneath my butt, and he grips the cheeks so tight I can't move my hips. His right hand wraps around my throat and he fucks me so hard I can't think straight.

I can only gasp and moan as he owns every inch of me.

His eyes burn into mine, his features drawn tight with brutal possessiveness.

All the friction of his pelvis rubbing against my clit and his cock filling me roughly sends me tumbling over the cliff. A scream is torn from me, and my vision goes black as my body practically has a seizure from the consuming pleasure ravaging me.

“That’s it, baby. You clamp so fucking hard around me when you come,” he grumbles near my parted lips.

The waves of ecstasy keep hitting until Viktor enters me so hard, the slap of skin echoes through the room. With him buried deep inside me, his body jerks, and he lets out the sexiest groan.

Just as I start to come down, Viktor thrusts again, and it sends residual spasms through my body, making me twitch like a live wire.

His lips brush against mine as he praises me, “Such a good girl.”

When he slams into me for the last time, he presses his forehead to mine. “Feel that, *moya Malen'kaya Roza*. We’re

one.”

My lips curve up. “I love that.”

With the pleasure fading and our breaths returning to normal, Viktor pulls out of me. We both freeze at the same time.

My eyes widen when I feel something warm trickle out of me.

Viktor’s head snaps down, then he curses, “*Blyad*’, I took you bare.”

“Oh shit,” I gasp, also looking down. The sight of Viktor’s hard length glistening with a mixture of my arousal and blood distracts me for a moment.

“I’m all for us having kids one day, but not now. I’ll get you a morning-after pill today.”

I nod. “Please.”

Viktor moves back until he’s resting on his knees, and it’s only then I really notice the tattooed star above each of his knees.

Before my thoughts can drift to when he kneeled in front of me, he swipes a finger through my slit.

My eyebrows fly up as he looks at the blood-tainted mixture. His eyes flick to mine, then he asks, “Did I take your virginity?”

“Yes.”

“Why did you lie?”

“I was self-conscious,” I answer honestly.

“Which other firsts do I own?”

A smile tugs at my lips. “Pretty much all of them except for kissing.”

Satisfaction darkens his eyes. “Good. So only I will know what your pussy tastes like and how you moan when you come.”

Using my left hand, I push myself up into a sitting position. “You’re also my first love.”

I’ve been infatuated before, but Viktor is the first man I’ve fallen irrevocably in love with.

“And I’ll be your last,” he says with a low tone, clearly stating he’ll never let me go.

Chapter 33

Viktor

I hand Rosalie the morning-after pill, then say, “You don’t have to take it. The choice is yours.”

“I’m so taking it,” she mutters, quickly swallowing it down with some water. “I’d like to actually live a little before having a baby.”

Right. She hasn’t had time to be happy. I want that for her.

I take hold of her hand, and weaving our fingers together, I ask, “Do you want to come with me to get Luna?”

“At your parents’ place?” Worry creases her brow. “Do you think they’ll be okay with me after I snubbed them for three years?”

“Of course, they’ll be okay,” I assure her. “They understand.”

Her features tighten with nerves, and her tongue darts out to wet her lips. “I’m nervous.”

“I can see that,” I chuckle. “You trust me, right?”

She inhales deeply, then nods. “Yes.”

“I won’t let anything happen to you.”

“I know.”

“Then why are you nervous?” I ask so I can understand where she’s coming from.

“I’m about to go to my boyfriend’s parents. What if they disapprove? I’m not exactly a mafia princess like Mariya.”

A dark frown forms on my forehead as I tilt my head. “You think you’re not good enough for me?”

“Ah... it’s just... you’re the head of the *bratva*, and I’m the girl who got kidnapped twice.”

“Where’s this coming from?” I ask, actually blown away.

Her shoulders sag, and she looks vulnerable as she admits, “I come from a family of sex traffickers, and I have nothing to offer you. I’m just... me.”

Letting go of her hand, I step closer and frame her face. “You’re not just you. You’re *moya Malen’kaya Roza*. You’re the woman I love, the woman I killed for.” I lean closer, making sure I have her attention. “Rosalie, I’m not worthy of you.”

“Yes, you are,” she whispers, her eyes starting to shine. “You changed my life in so many good ways. If it weren’t for you...” she shakes her head, “I’d either be dead or married to Greco. You’re the only one who gives me choices. You’ve always done what’s best for me, even when it broke your heart. Don’t you see it, Viktor? You’re everything to me.”

I press my forehead to hers. “That right there is why my parents will accept you with open arms, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*. You love me, and that’s enough.”

“Okay,” she whispers. “But if you let go of my hand, I’m making a run for it.”

A smile spreads over my face as I hold my hand out to her. When she places her palm against mine, I say, “It’s you and me, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*. Forever.”

“Forever,” she agrees.

“Now, let’s go tell my parents the good news.” I pull her out of the house and follow the path to my parents’ place. I don’t bother knocking as we enter through a side door. “Where are you?” I call out.

“The kitchen,” Mom answers, then we hear excited barking.

As we cross the entrance hall, Luna comes running out of the kitchen, her paws slipping on the polished tiles. Her tail wags, her butt wiggles, then she’s making happy whining noises as she reaches Rosalie, who crouches down.

“Aww, Mommy missed you so much,” Rosalie coos, wrapping her arms around her dog.

“And I’m chopped liver again,” I mutter. Patting Luna’s head, I smile at their happy reunion.

Mom comes out of the kitchen with a wide smile, then pauses when she notices Rosalie.

Rosalie quickly straightens up and grabs hold of my hand. She gives my mom an awkward wave. “Hi, Mrs. Vetrov. I’m sorry, ab—”

“Na-a-a,” Mom silences her. “There’s nothing to apologize for.” She walks closer, her eyes drifting over the bruises on Rosalie’s face and the cast on her arm. “What happened?”

“The Cosa Nostra,” I mutter.

Dad comes down the stairs and takes one look at Rosalie, then mutters, “Christ. I heard shit went down. I’m glad you’re both okay, though.”

Mom glares at Dad. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Ah... because I just heard about it five minutes ago.”

“Oh,” Mom deflates, and it saves Dad from being in trouble. She turns her attention back to Rosalie, then rushes forward and pulls her into a hug. “Oh, sweetheart,” Mom coos as if she’s talking to a baby. “Everything will be better soon. I’m so sorry they hurt you.”

With Rosalie’s fingers squeezing the life out of mine, I say, “Let her breathe, Mom.”

Mom quickly lets go, giving Rosalie a smile. “Sorry, I’m a hugger.”

“It’s okay,” Rosalie tries to reassure her while stepping closer to me.

I glance at Dad, who has a pleased smile on my face. “Good job yesterday. I’m proud of you.”

“Thanks, Dad.” I gesture at Luna, who’s sitting next to Rosalie’s leg. “We just came to get our baby. Thanks for taking care of her.”

“You’re not staying for dinner?” Mom asks. “I made pot roast.”

Looking down at Rosalie, I ask, “Do you want to stay?”

Still a little nervous, she nods. “Sure. That will be nice.”

Just then, we hear Uncle Alexei’s laughter and Aunt Isabella snapping, “Wipe that smile off your face. I swear,

your farts stink so bad, you'd swear you're already dead and decomposing."

"Eau De Koslov," he chuckles.

"You've got the eww part right."

They come around the corner, then see us all watching them.

"You're back," Uncle Alexei says, his eyes snapping to Rosalie. "And now I understand why you killed four men."

"Sweet Jesus," Aunt Isabella murmurs as she rushes forward. "What the hell did they do to you?"

"Real subtle," I mutter. Letting go of Rosalie's hand, I wrap my arm around her. "Can we talk about anything but the trauma she suffered, please?"

Uncle Alexei grins at me. "I heard you used the move I taught you to break Greco's neck?"

When I nod, he comes to pat me on my shoulder. "Badass." He stops in front of Rosalie. "Are you going to stay with us?"

Squeezing right against my side, Rosalie nods.

Uncle Alexei's gaze flicks between us, then he says, "Didn't I call it?"

"We all called it," Dad mutters.

"Yeah, but I called it first."

We watch them argue as they walk to the dining room. Leaning down, I whisper. "They're talking about us getting together."

“I figured as much,” Rosalie whispers. “They’re super intense. I see where you get it from.”

When we head to the dining room, Luna follows us and lies down next to Rosalie’s chair.

“She’s not going to let you out of her sight,” I chuckle as I sit down at the head of the table, with Rosalie to my right.

Rosalie leans down to pet Luna’s head. “Mommy’s good girl.”

When she straightens up, I lock eyes with her and murmur so only she will hear, “Daddy’s good girl.”

Rosalie’s cheeks light up, and she quickly checks to see if Dad or Uncle Alexei heard, but they’re too busy talking about the vacation they’re planning.

“Where are you going this year?” I ask.

“Bali,” Uncle Alexei answers. “It’s the women’s turn to pick.”

To my surprise, Rosalie says, “The pictures I saw of Bali are beautiful.”

Just then, Mom and Aunt Isabella carry in the food.

Mom smiles at us, “You could come with?” Her eyes settle on me. “You haven’t taken a vacation since you took over the bratva.”

I glance at Rosalie. “What do you think?”

“Me?” she gasps. “Why me?”

I tilt my head, the corner of my mouth lifting. “Because we’ll be going on vacation. You have a say too.”

Her eyes widen. “To Bali? Us? This year?”

Everyone starts to laugh, which makes Rosalie blush harder.

Lifting my hand, I brush my knuckles over her cheek. “Do you want to go on vacation with my parents?”

“Ah...” Rosalie glances around the table before looking at me again. “You can decide.”

Turning my attention to my parents, I say, “Give us some time to think about it.”

When everyone’s seated and we’ve helped ourselves to Mom’s pot roast, the conversation flows easily, and Rosalie seems to relax.

It’s the first time we’re doing something together as a couple.

I love it.

Chapter 34

Rosalie

Waking up with my back pressed to Viktor's solid chest and his arms wrapped around me is still surreal.

It's been two weeks since the ordeal with the Cosa Nostra. The bruises on my face have healed, but I'm still working on the ones in my heart.

One big thing that's changed is I'm allowed to go out as long as I take Joseph and his team to guard me. Not that I've been out much, but knowing I can makes all the difference.

I've resumed playing with Luna and reading my collection of books during the day, but I've also started helping around the house.

I can't cook, though, so that's still Viktor's baby, and at night we cuddle in front of the TV. We never finish a movie because we always end up making out, which leads to steamy moments.

"Morning," Viktor grumbles into my hair.

"Morning." I turn around to face him, giving him a sleepy grin.

"No nightmares for the third night in a row," he mumbles, half asleep.

“Another win.” Lifting my left hand, I brush my fingers through his messy hair. “It’s unfair that you look hot first thing in the morning.”

“Says the sleeping beauty in my arms.” He leans in, pressing a gentle kiss to my mouth, then complains, “I don’t want to get up. Call Luca and tell him you’re holding me captive, and you plan on having your wicked way with me all day long.”

“Like he’d believe me,” I chuckle.

Viktor gives me a pleading expression. “Please.”

Shaking my head, I indulge him for the fun of it. “Okay. Give me your phone.”

He hands it over with a mischievous grin on his face. I press dial and wait for it to ring as Viktor presses a kiss to my shoulder.

“You better be on your way,” Luca answers with a threatening tone.

Viktor yanks the covers from my body and pulls my shorts down.

“Ah... it’s Rosalie.” I frown at Viktor, shaking my head. “I’m holding Viktor captive for today.”

The man plants his face between my thighs and starts to suck me so hard, I almost squeak.

Oh, Jesus.

Luca lets out an amused chuckle, and his tone is much gentler when he says, “Tell him, nice try, but hell no. I’ll come drag his ass out of that house.”

“Uh-huh,” I mutter, my body quickly going up in flames as Viktor’s tongue works magic on my clit.

Oh, God.

“Bye.” I almost moan the damn word, then struggle to end the call, dropping the phone on the bed and grabbing hold of Viktor’s messy hair. “Shit. Shit. Shit. Viktor,” I gasp and moan, my hips bucking wildly to rub myself against his scrapping teeth and velvety tongue.

I pinch my eyes shut, and my toes start to curl, and when my body tenses, desperate for release, Viktor pushes two fingers inside me and thrusts hard and fast. My back arches, every muscle in my body straining, then the orgasm hits freaking hard, ripping cries of ecstasy from me.

My hips start bucking again as I ride out my pleasure on Viktor’s tongue until I slump down, gasping for air.

As the pleasure fades and I relax into the mattress, Viktor crawls up my body, grinning from ear to ear. “Thanks for breakfast, *moya Malen’kaya Roza.*”

“Uh...” I let out a burst of laughter. “I’m pretty sure I should be thanking you.”

“Oh, you will,” his voice rumbles as he straddles my chest. He braces his hand against the wall at the head of the bed while shoving his sweatpants down to free his hard cock. “Open for me.”

My lips part, and as he pushes into my mouth, the salty taste of his precum hits my tongue. I suck him so hard, my cheeks hollow out.

Viktor drops his head back, letting out a groan, then he starts to thrust deeper. “Jesus. That’s right, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*. Relax your throat and breathe through your nose.”

I do as he says, and as his large length forces its way down my throat, I gag but manage to take him. His eyes burn on my face with such passion, it makes me feel like I’m the one holding all the power.

“*Blyad’*,” he grumbles. “Don’t suppress the gag. It feels fucking amazing when your throat tries to force me out.”

Viktor picks up his pace, and the gagging has tears trickling from my eyes. I blink fast so my sight won’t blur because I don’t want to miss a second of his face caught in pure ecstasy.

I push my left hand up, and my palm soaks in the feel of his abs contracting with every thrust.

“Fuck, Rosalie,” he groans. “Keep taking me, baby. Fuck.” He buries himself as deep as my throat can take him, then comes hard.

I try to focus on breathing through my nose while swallowing, but when I start to struggle, Viktor quickly pulls out and fists his cock, his release shooting over my chin and neck.

“*Blyad’*,” he hisses, the ecstasy on his face making him look brutally attractive. His eyes lock on my chin, then a slow grin curves his mouth. “You look so fucking hot with my cum on your face.”

To please him, I slowly swipe my finger over my chin and pop it into my mouth, sucking his release off it.

“Work can fucking wait,” he says, his voice low and deep, promising me a day of pleasure between the sheets.

Viktor only left after eleven, and with the feel of him still inside me, I walk to the fountain with Luna.

Throwing her ball toward the patio, I say, “Catch.”

She runs after the ball, and when she bites it, it squeaks. She quickly brings it back, dropping it in my hand and wagging her tail proudly.

“Such a good girl,” I praise her while giving her a treat as reward.

We play catch for ten minutes before I see Isabella walk toward me.

“Morning,” she calls out.

“Morning.”

“Luna has so much energy.” She smiles at my dog and stops to pet her, then comes to me. “Your face looks so much better.”

“Yeah, I feel better too.”

“That’s good.”

She watches me throw the ball again, then says, “Viktor said you’re interested in working with me.”

“I am.” Feeling awkward, I add, “That’s if it’s okay with you. I don’t want to overstep.”

Isabella gestures to the patio, and once we're seated, she mentions, "I'm worried whether you can handle it. It's not pretty."

"I know." I only got a taste of it, and it still haunts me. "But I'd like to try."

She thinks for a moment, then says, "I can show you some of the admin work. We can take it slow."

Excitement bubbles in my chest. "Okay. That would be great." I give her an apologetic smile. "It's just... I don't have any experience."

"Then I'll teach you."

I'm so freaking happy to hear that, I have to resist the urge to hug her.

Isabella glances over the garden. "I don't want you to think I didn't fight for you."

The sudden change of topic throws me for a loop.

When I keep quiet, she turns her attention back to me. "I didn't rescue you because you didn't need rescuing from Viktor. I knew you'd be safe with him."

I nod, feeling a little awkward. "Viktor has always been good to me."

A smile curves her lips, and I stare for a moment because she's really a beautiful woman.

"My mother was a sex trafficker," she admits. "I watched Alexei kill her."

Holy shit.

She gives me a look of understanding. “So if you ever need to talk about what happened, I’m here. I’d like to think I can help.”

With my attention one hundred percent focused on her, I ask, “How did you deal with it?”

“I tried to save every person she sold into slavery. It was my way of rebelling and trying to put some good back into the world.” A chuckle escapes her, but it quickly dies away. “There was never any love between my mother and me, unlike with you and your family. Ariana will be able to help you with that. Her brother betrayed her, so I think she’ll be able to connect with you there.”

Wow. It’s actually humbling to hear Isabella and Ariana have their own painful pasts. They’re such powerful women, I never would’ve guessed it. It gives me hope that I can heal from everything that’s happened and make a difference in the world like they do.

“Thank you.” My smile comes easier this time. “I think there’s a lot I can learn from both of you.”

“Are you gossiping without me?” Ariana suddenly says, startling me.

“It’s not gossiping if it’s the truth,” Isabella teases her.

When Ariana sits down, I ask, “Would you like some coffee?”

“Please,” they both answer.

I quickly dart into the house to prepare the beverages. Glancing over my shoulder at the two women on the patio, a happy smile stretches over my face.

This is nice.

They're really trying to make me feel at home, and I appreciate it so much.

When the coffee is ready, I carry the cups to the table and set them down. I take my seat, the smile still playing around my lips.

"Thank you for making me feel welcome here," I say before I lose the nerve. "I really appreciate it."

"You're welcome, sweetheart." Ariana gives my hand a squeeze. "After all. You're a part of the family now."

My heart bursts with warmth. "It's nice to have a family again."

Especially one who looks out for my wellbeing.

"Oh, my heart," Viktor's mom coos, then I'm tugged into a hug. "Don't you just want to hug and love on her every time you see her?" she asks Isabella.

"That's your thing. I want to put some muscle on her body and train her how to knee a man so he'll crawl for a week."

I let out a burst of laughter, loving all the attention and soaking it up like a dry sponge.

While we sip our coffee, I mostly listen to the women discussing their vacation plans.

"Have you and Viktor decided whether you're going to join us?" Isabella asks.

I shake my head. "We actually haven't spoken about it."

Ariana waves her hand in the air. “There’s no pressure. Don’t worry about it.”

Honestly, we’ve been absorbed with each other, and I forgot.

I make a mental note to ask Viktor when he gets home, then focus on the conversation about all the views they want to see. I’m able to talk with them because of all the research I did for my own trip before Viktor kidnapped me.

With a grin never leaving my face, I spent the afternoon with Ariana and Isabella. I’m so grateful that things are going so well. It feels like I’m finally allowed to be happy.

All because of Viktor.

The man has become my everything, and I don’t know what I’d do without him.

Chapter 35

Viktor

It's taken two months for Luca and Parisi to agree to a meeting between the Priesthood and the Cosa Nostra.

Things have been volatile. More from my side than anyone else's because I'm still fucking enraged about what the fuckers did to Rosalie.

Her cast only came off two weeks ago.

If it were up to me, I'd vote for a bloodbath and slaughter the whole lot of them.

"Stop looking like you're about to kill them all," Luca mutters as we walk down the hallway to the hotel room.

We're meeting in Nebraska because the city doesn't belong to either party, and it's the halfway mark between LA and New York.

"Hard to pretend I'm happy to see the fuckers," I grumble, my body tense for action.

Nikolas pats my shoulder. "Just warn us if you're going to start shooting up the place."

"Don't give him any ideas," Liam chuckles.

Gabriel has always been on the quiet side, so it doesn't surprise me when he just grunts.

Reaching the door, Luca glances at us. “Ready?”

We all nod.

He gives me a look of warning. “I’ve worked my ass off for this meeting. Please, don’t screw it up for me.”

Using my pointer finger, I circle a halo above my head.

Luca rolls his eyes, then swipes the keycard through the lock.

We all file into the suite where the five members of the Cosa Nostra are waiting with drinks in their hands.

Greco’s son took over after I killed his father, so this should be fun.

Greco junior’s eyes lock on me, but there’s more curiosity than vengeance in his gaze.

Interesting. I bet there’s a story there. Pity I don’t care enough to find out what it is.

“Gentlemen,” Luca greets with a nod.

I don’t bother shaking their hands, and finding a wall to lean my shoulder against, I cross my arms over my chest.

Parisi glances at me, and when our eyes lock, the tension quickly builds in the room.

“It doesn’t look like Mr. Vetrov wants to sign a peace treaty,” he mentions before taking a sip of his drink.

“I want an apology,” I say.

“We let you kill Salvatore.”

“That was for me. You have to apologize to Rosalie.”

I'm only doing it to humiliate them. I think it will also give Rosalie more of her confidence back to have the five men grovel for her forgiveness.

Which she won't give.

Before any of the Cosa Nostra can say something, I continue, "She had a concussion and a broken wrist, and one of your fucking guards sexually assaulted her. I want a verbal fucking apology for all the shit you put her through. Only then will I agree to a peace treaty."

"And if we don't apologize?" Greco junior asks.

I shrug. "I'll make the streets of New York flow with Sicilian blood. A death for every tear my woman cried at your hands."

"Jesus," Messina mutters. "Just get the woman on the line so we can get this over with."

"We have our own condition," Parisi says as I pull my phone out of my pocket. "None of you set foot in New York, and we'll stay out of your territories."

"Works for me," Nikolas agrees.

"Me too," Liam seconds him.

Gabriel lets out a bored sigh which I feel in my soul.

Stepping away from the group, so they won't hear what I say to Rosalie, I dial her number.

"Hi," she answers after the second ring. "Did the meeting go okay?"

"We're still busy," I say. "The Cosa Nostra is going to apologize to you. You don't have to say anything to them,

though.”

She pauses for a moment, then mutters, “I don’t want their apology. They can shove it where the sun don’t shine.”

“I know. But this is about humiliating them and giving you the power. You always make the enemy grovel.”

“Oh. I didn’t think about it that way.” She lets out a sigh. “Okay. I’ll listen to them grovel.”

I walk back to the other men, then say, “She’s listening.”

“Rosalie,” Parisi clears his throat, not liking this one bit, “We apologize for how things turned out.” I shake my head, and it has him adding, “and for the abuse you suffered at our hands.”

“Oh shit,” Rosalie shrieks. “No, Luna, drop the poop!”

Nikolas bursts out laughing, and to my surprise, Greco junior joins him.

“Gotta go,” Rosalie’s voice comes over the line. “Love you, Viktor. Oh, bring dog food.”

The line cuts out, and I turn my attention back to the men. “Where do I sign so I can go buy dog food?”

We all gather by a table where the peace treaty is waiting for a drop of blood from us all.

I lock eyes with Parisi, then nod for him to go first. He pricks his thumb, then presses it to the document.

Luca goes next, followed by Greco junior. I step forward and let a drop of blood fall next to Luca’s, then lick the tiny wound on my thumb as I step away.

While the others give their blood vow, Greco junior comes to stand next to me, crossing his arms over his chest. “For what it’s worth. Thank you for taking out the bastard.”

My eyebrow pops up. “No love lost?”

“None whatsoever,” he mutters.

“In that case, you’re welcome.”

He turns and holds his hand out to me. “For the peace treaty.”

I stare at the man, and when he keeps his eyes locked on mine, I take his hand and shake it. “Do better than your father.”

“I plan to change a lot in New York.”

We let go, and as soon as Luca picks up the document, I say, “Let’s not do this again anytime soon.”

“Agreed,” Parisi mutters.

I’m the first to leave the hotel room with my friends right behind me.

New York owes me a huge fucking thank you for staying calm when all I wanted to do was rip their throats out.

Except for Greco junior. He has potential and will hopefully lead the Cosa Nostra into a new era.

“What did Greco say to you?” Luca asks as we step into the elevator.

“We bonded over our mutual hate for his father.”

“Look at you being all civilized and making friends,” Nikolas taunts me.

“Why do dogs eat their own shit?” Gabriel suddenly asks. “Ours does it too, and then he comes to fucking breathe right in my face.”

Laughing, I mutter, “Fuck if I know.”

With the flames doused between the Cosa Nostra and the Priesthood, I can now focus on the shipment of arms coming in, and then I’m taking a vacation with my woman.

She doesn’t know we’re going to Bali with my family. Whenever she tries to talk about it, I distract her because I want it to be a surprise.

I still have the list of destinations she made. It’s been safely tucked in my drawer for the past three and a half years, and I plan to take her to every country she wrote down.

I’m going to do everything in my power to make sure my woman only knows happiness from now on.

Jesus, she deserves it more than anyone after the hell she’s been through.

Walking out of the hotel with the rest of the Priesthood, I let out a sigh. It might not be the outcome I wanted, but it’s best for everyone if the two powerful groups don’t clash.

Too much blood will be spilled, so it’s better to keep the peace.

I need to fucking sell my properties in New York. I can use the money to invest in new properties in Rosalie’s favorite destinations.

That’s a good fucking idea. I’ll put them all in her name, and when we get married, it will make the perfect gift, and

she'll have assets.

My mind starts to work overtime, making plans to pad her bank account with a healthy amount and to draw up a new last will so she'll be my beneficiary. I want to know she'll always be taken care of by me, even when I'm gone.

Not that I'm planning to die any time soon. Fuck no. Rosalie is going to be stuck with my ass for a long while.

When we climb into the SUVs, I pull out my phone and call her.

"Hey," her beautiful voice comes over the line. "Are you done?"

"Yeah. We're driving to the airport."

"Good. Before I forget, I'm almost out of treats for Luna. Get some of the bone marrow ones. She really likes those."

"You know you can go to the store as well, right?" I remind her.

"Yeah, but that means I would have to put on a bra," she mumbles.

The image of Rosalie's nipples clearly outlined beneath her shirt flashes through my mind, making my cock twitch. "I'll be home in three hours and will swing by the store, *moya Malen'kaya Roza.*"

"Thank you." Hearing the happiness in her voice makes satisfaction pour into my chest, then she owns my heart when she says, "I love you, Viktor. Have a safe flight."

"Love you too, *moya Malen'kaya Roza.*"

When I end the call, Nikolas asks, "When's the wedding?"

I give him a grin. “You’ll find out soon.”

Chapter 36

Rosalie

Dressed in a pair of tight shorts and a tank top, I'm standing in my old bedroom, that has been converted into a gym for training.

For the past two weeks, I've been doing weights and cardio to build some muscle. But facing off with Viktor, I feel weaker than a bug. No amount of training will help me take down a man like him.

"Why does it look like you've given up before you've even tried," Viktor asks.

I scrunch my nose. "Because you're so much stronger than me. I'll never be able to fight you off."

An arrogant smile curves his mouth into a hot grin. "That's a given, *moya Malen'kaya Roza*. The point is to train you so you can fight other fuckers off."

"Yeah, I don't see that happening, either. I'm too freaking short and skinny."

Viktor comes to stand right in front of me, and for a moment, I drool at the sight of his bare chest and carved abs. The 'V' disappearing into his sweatpants quickly wins my attention.

Lifting a hand, I trail my finger along his waistband and follow the prominent line from his hip, dipping my finger beneath the fabric.

Glancing up at Viktor, I try to be seductive so I can get out of the training session. I lower my voice as I admit, “This V erases all brain activity for me.”

I slip my hand beneath his sweatpants, and when I feel how hard he is, my mouth starts to water. Wrapping my fingers around him, I slowly massage his cock from the base to the head. “I can think of better things to do.”

“Can you,” he murmurs, his tone dark and low, making my core clench with hunger for him.

I lift myself on my tiptoes and wrap my other arm around his neck. Brushing my lips along his jaw, I breathe, “Yeah.”

When I move my hand faster over his hardness, Viktor places his hand over mine to stop me. “Not yet, baby.”

Pouting, I let go and step back, then Viktor’s arm wraps around my neck, and my feet are swept from under me. I let out a squeak as I drop to the sparring mat, and the moment he’s on top of me, his fingers wrap around my throat.

“Remember that first day in your bedroom when I had you in a similar position?”

“Yeah. I didn’t appreciate the gun to my head, though,” I mutter, my hands grabbing hold of his wrist.

Viktor leans closer, then his tongue swipes over my bottom lip. “I wanted to fuck you. You looked so hot, dressed in your tight as fuck shorts. Just like you do now.”

His hand moves over my bare stomach until he cups me between the legs.

My eyes lock on his, and I admit, “I thought you were the most attractive man I ever laid eyes on.”

“Yeah,” he murmurs with a seductive tone. He begins to massage me through my shorts until my hips swivel with need. “And now?”

Letting go of his wrist, I drag my hands over his muscled chest. “I know you’re the most attractive.”

His teeth tug at my bottom lip, then he orders, “Fight me, *moya Malen’kaya Roza.*”

That’s the last thing I want to do. I’d much rather push him onto his back and sink down on his cock.

The thought has my eyebrow lifting, then I buck my hips up, trying to use my body to overturn him, but he’s too heavy.

When he pulls his hand away from the needy valley between my legs, I let out a frustrated groan.

Climbing to his feet, he easily pulls me up. “Come on, baby. Fight me.”

“I don’t know how,” I mutter, scowling at him.

“A man has a few vulnerable spots. The balls, the throat, eyes, and ears.” He comes to wrap his fingers around my neck again. “When someone grabs hold of you like this, take hold of his thumb and bend it back until you hear it crack, but he’ll probably let go before that.”

“Okay.”

Viktor raises his other hand as if he's going to hit me. "Prepare for a punch. The fucker will want to teach you a lesson for hurting him."

"How do I stop that from happening?" I ask, getting into the training.

Viktor lets go of me and steps back. "Punch me."

I let out a burst of laughter. "Be serious."

"I am." He holds his arms open on either side of him. "Punch me, Rosalie."

The only thing I've punched is my pillow. Here goes nothing. I dart forward and throw a punch, but Viktor blocks it with his forearm before swatting my fist away. "That's how you block. Now you do it."

"Okay." When he throws a punch that won't even hurt a fly, I easily block it. "It doesn't help you take it easy on me," I complain.

"I'm not going to take an actual swing at you, knowing I'll hurt you," he replies. "Just get used to blocking the action of punching."

I nod, and when he repeats the action, I bring my arm up. We keep practicing, and slowly the motions grow faster until I'm sweating and breathless.

"Drink some water, *moya Malen'kaya Roza*," Viktor instructs.

While I'm swallowing the cool liquid down, he says, "Because you're smaller, you have to be faster. That will be your weapon, so work on your speed."

“Okay.”

I’ve just put the water down when Viktor lunges for me. His chest slams into my back, and his arm wraps around my waist, lifting me off my feet.

“Elbow me,” he instructs. I don’t hesitate, slamming my elbow into his side. “Good girl.”

Jesus.

He doesn’t let go but pushes me forward until I’m shoved against the wall.

“Remember when you stomped on my foot?” he asks.

“Yes,” I breathe against the plaster.

“That was a good move. You caught me off guard,” he praises me, making heat flush through my core and dampening my shorts.

I brace my hands on the wall and rub my butt against his hardness. “Viktor,” I moan.

His breaths skim over my ear. “You wet for me, *moya Malen’kaya Roza?*”

I nod quickly. “Drenched.”

Viktor lets go of me, then orders, “Get naked, baby.”

I turn around as I pull my tank top over my head. When I push my shorts down, Viktor kicks his sweatpants to the side.

Instead of grabbing me so we can fuck, he gives me a mischievous grin as he steps back onto the sparring mat.

“Training isn’t over.”

“I’m not going to learn shit with you all naked and hard,” I mutter as I walk closer.

“Do you know what’s a turn-on for me?” he asks. When I shake my head, he says, “When you struggle against me.”

Considering what I’ve been through, I never thought it would be a fantasy I’d like, but I know I’m safe with Viktor. He’ll never do anything to hurt me.

And it might be cathartic because I know the outcome will leave me boneless from pleasure and not broken and defeated.

Viktor watches me while I process what he said, then asks, “Will you be okay with it?”

My eyes lower to his impressive length. “Yes, as long as it ends with you fucking me.”

His eyes fill with dark heat, and he slowly stalks around me in a circle.

Waiting for him to make his move, my eyes follow his every step.

“Give me a safe word.”

“For?”

“When you reach your limit and need to stop,” he explains.

“Ah...” I try to think of a word I won’t accidentally use. “Mercy?”

“Works for me,” he murmurs, his voice low and deep as he keeps prowling around me.

My eyes rake over his body, drinking in the sight of his hard cock and the veins snaking beneath his skin.

There's no way I'm going to take this seriously. All I want to do is jump him and ride him until I'm screaming with pleasure.

Suddenly, Viktor lunges at me. His arm wraps around my neck, and my feet are swept from under me. I'm taken down to the sparring mat, then his body presses hard against mine.

Knowing it will be a turn-on for Viktor, I strain against his hold. It's useless, but I feel his cock jerk against my butt, which means he likes it. It encourages me to fight harder, and I even manage to squirm out from under him.

Just as I push up on my hands and knees, he grabs hold of my hips, and I'm yanked back against his body. Our skin meets with a hard slap, our breaths rushing over our lips.

"God, this is hot," I groan, unable to stay in my role of damsel in distress.

Then Viktor's hand connects with my buttcheek. "Focus."

Holy shit.

Intense heat floods me, coating the insides of my thighs. My abdomen tightens so hard, a moan escapes me.

Viktor shoves his hand between my legs, then he groans, "Christ, *moya Malen'kaya Roza* loves being spanked."

"If I had known sooner, I would've disobeyed you whenever you threatened to spank me," I admit.

His palm connects with my skin, sending another tsunami of heat through me. I push my butt out, my back arching. "Viktor," I groan, desperate for release. "Fuck me."

I'm spanked again, then his fingers slide through my wet heat, sinking inside me. "Christ, you're soaked for me, baby."

"I need you," I whimper as he starts to thrust his fingers inside me. "So, sooo badly."

"Spread your knees," he orders, the role-play a thing of the past as our burning desire for each other scorches the air.

I obey, the air on my clit only driving me wilder for friction.

Viktor grips my hips, and holding me in place, he fills me with a brutal thrust. If it weren't for his hands on me, I'd face plant from the force.

Not giving me time to adjust to his large girth, Viktor pounds into me as if he's trying to tear me in two.

Gasps and whimpers spill from me, mixing with the sound of our slapping skin.

My nails claw at the mat, and every time he fills me, his palm connects with the side of my butt cheek.

"Shit, Viktor," I pant. "Yes. Please." Random words fall over my lips as he fucks me so hard, it's impossible to catch my breath.

With another slap to my butt, the orgasm hits me so hard, my arms buckle, and my cheek slams against the carpet. With my butt in the air and Viktor hammering into me, intense pleasure seizes my body. It keeps hitting me in relentless waves, making one orgasm blend into another, and another until it feels as if I might pass out.

My vision goes spotty as Viktor makes my body jerk with a final hard thrust before he buries himself deep, letting out a throaty groan from his own orgasm.

He empties himself inside me with three short thrusts, grinding his pelvis against my butt, then he releases my hips.

I slump to my side, desperately gasping for air, my body so numb, I don't think I'll be able to move for a while.

Viktor drops onto his back next to me, sucking in deep breaths of air. "Jesus Christ, Rosalie."

"You paralyzed me," I mutter.

He turns onto his side and caresses my butt. "Fuck, I left a handprint on your ass. Are you okay?"

His touch makes residual pleasure spasm through me. "So good," I mumble. "Don't stop."

His fingers keep kneading my heated skin, and before I know it, I drift off to sleep.

I'm pulled out of my nap when Viktor picks me up. He carries me to our bed and gently lays me down. I hear water running, then feel a warm cloth between my legs as he cleans me. His lips brush over the curls between my legs while sleep flirts around the edges of my mind.

Viktor presses a kiss to my hip, then to my abdomen. He sucks a nipple into his mouth, his teeth nipping it into a hard bud.

When he licks and kisses his way up to my neck, my mouth curves into a smile. "Sleepy," I groan.

“Do you have a problem with me fucking you while you’re asleep?” he asks, his voice hoarse with the passion he feels for me.

“Not at all,” I mumble sleepily. “Have at it.”

“Then sleep, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*, while I have my wicked way with your tight pussy.”

Jesus. So much for a nap.

I stretch out beneath him, opening my legs wide. “Enjoy yourself.” I pretend to sleep as Viktor’s hands knead my breasts, his teeth feasting on my nipples.

God, this is actually one hell of a turn-on.

I keep my body limp and my breaths as even as possible.

“Fuck,” Viktor’s voice grumbles. “I love this role-play a hell of a lot more than the struggling one. You unconscious and at my complete mercy is hot as fuck, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*.”

I keep quiet, my abdomen buzzing with need as his hands rove over my body, his touch growing harder and harder with desperation.

My heart is beating out of my chest, the entrance between my legs dripping with arousal.

There’s not an inch of my skin Viktor doesn’t touch. His mouth latches onto the swells of my breasts, and he groans with satisfaction as he sucks my skin hard.

He moves down to my stomach, and when he reaches the stretch of skin above my curls, he bites my flesh as more groans spill from him.

His hands massage their way up and down my thighs, and I almost lift my hips in desperation but catch myself in time.

My body trembles from the intense attention and unbearable need building in my core.

“Don’t fucking move,” he orders. “Keep pretending you’re asleep.”

God, it’s hard, but I obey.

Viktor shoves my legs open as wide as they’ll go. I feel his breath on my clit and anticipate his tongue, but instead, he bites the inside of my thighs.

I’m going to die.

It feels as if my entire body is fluttering like a hummingbird’s wings.

Finally, he pushes his fingers inside me, only to pull them out. A moment later, he coats my lips with my arousal, and when he starts to lick and suck at my mouth, it’s especially hard not to kiss him back. He forces his tongue inside, and it takes all my strength to swallow the moan as he brushes hard strokes over mine.

He frees my mouth, then his breaths skim over my ear. “I’m going to fuck you, and if you make a sound or move, I’ll keep fucking you until you’re really unconscious.”

Yes. Please.

Chapter 37

Viktor

With Rosalie's body spread out beneath me, my cock is aching so much, it feels as if it's going to tear off to get to her soaked pussy.

Even though she's trembling, she doesn't move a muscle and manages to keep her breaths even.

And fuck, if it's not making my balls contract from how erotic this fantasy is – her unconscious for me to do whatever I want.

Christ, it's downright kinky, feeding my depraved side and making me greedy for more.

I trail my knuckles over her toned stomach as I kneel between her legs. My eyes feast on the steady rise and fall over her breasts, the hickeys I gave her, tainting her skin pink. Her nipples are stiff peaks, her pussy glistening as her arousal trickles down her ass, dampening the sheets.

So fucking beautiful.

For some relief, I fist my left hand around my aching cock while I drag my other hand's fingers over her abdomen. I swipe my thumb over her clit and circle it in her wetness.

Precum beads on the head of my cock, and capturing it, I smear it around her entrance.

Rosalie's thighs tighten for a second before she forces herself to relax again.

Good girl, moya Malen'kaya Roza.

Pushing my finger inside her, her inner walls clamp desperately around me. I pump my cock before positioning myself at her opening.

Wanting to see how long she'll keep up the act, I only push the head inside before pulling out and rubbing my cock over her clit. I keep repeating the action, my eyes roving greedily over her unresponsive body.

Christ. This is so fucking erotic I'm going to lose my mind.

Bracing my hands on either side of her waist, I spread my knees wide, forcing her legs to open even more until the crack of her ass is pressed against my balls.

With the perfect view of her dripping arousal, I slowly enter her, relishing every inch I stretch her entrance with my thick girth.

Watching her greedy pussy take every inch of me in a painstakingly slow thrust has every muscle in my body wound so fucking tight it feels like I'm going to snap.

I pull out just as slowly, my hard-on jerking with intense desperation to pound into her. When I push back inside her, I grind my pelvis against her sensitive bundle of nerves, and my tight as fuck balls against her ass.

"Blyad'," I hiss, my body shaking from the effort it's taking to hold back.

Rosalie's breaths sped up while I was focused on torturing myself. Her body is trembling so badly, her fingers gripping the sheets until her knuckles turn white.

"Don't move," I remind her.

Torturously slowly, I thrust back inside her and keep myself buried as I grind against her.

This time a whimper escapes her, her inner muscles strangling the fuck out of my cock.

My sight blurs as my breath explodes from me, and then all is lost as my hips start to pound my aching cock into her.

Rosalie's hands fist the covers tighter, her back arching and her lips parting on a silent scream.

I slam so fucking hard into her, my pace relentless until she finally loses the fight. Her orgasm tears through her, making her convulse as whimpers spill from her.

Rosalie's pleasure is so intense that she blacks out, her body slumping against the mattress.

Christ. Fuck. Shit.

Grabbing hold of her hips to keep her limp body in place, I pound into her. With it no longer role-playing but the real deal, the most intense orgasm rips the air from my lungs. Again, my vision blurs as the muscles in my body strain. My balls tighten painfully, then I jerk inside her with short hard thrusts, my release exploding through me and filling her.

Rosalie regains consciousness as I keep thrusting, my pleasure so fucking intense, it rips a roar from me.

The orgasm lasts so long that I can't handle all the pleasure. I fall over Rosalie, and jerking against her body, I struggle to breathe through the ecstasy.

She wraps her arms and legs around me, locking my body to hers.

I manage to push my arms beneath her and hold her as tight as I can with the little strength I have left.

We lie still for close to thirty minutes before I lift my head to look at her. A smile spreads over my face, and satisfaction pours through my veins when I see she's fallen asleep.

With me still buried deep inside her.

Not giving a fuck about cleaning up, I relax on top of her and close my eyes. With our naked bodies one, I let sleep take me.

After the intense afternoon we had, Rosalie and I have zero strength to do anything.

I feed Luna and fix us grilled cheese sandwiches. Sitting on the couch, we watch reruns of CSI.

When we're done eating, I place the plates on the coffee table, and lying down on the couch, I position Rosalie, so she's lying on top of me.

"I'll probably fall asleep again," she mumbles against my chest. "There might be drool."

“Go for it, *moya Malen’kaya Roza.*” I brush my fingers up and down her back as I watch some dumb fuck trying to cover up a murder.

“Viktor,” Rosalie whispers.

“Yeah?”

“Thank you for today.”

I tilt my head, so I can glance down at her. “I enjoyed it too.”

A fuck ton. We’ll definitely do that again.

She turns her head and rests her chin on my chest. “Is it weird that I loved it after what I’ve been through?”

“No.” I move my hand to her cheek, caressing her soft skin. “Not at all. I showed you that even if you’re unconscious, you’re safe with me. I think that helped in some way. Right?”

She nods, then stretches her body to press a kiss to my jaw. “It was healing.”

“Good.” Taking hold of her chin, I bring her mouth to mine and kiss her tenderly. When I let her go, I add, “What fantasies do you have?”

“Hell,” she murmurs as she thinks. “You’re a living, breathing fantasy for me.”

“You don’t mind that mine are twisted?”

She shakes her head, a smile curving her lips. “I love it.” Curiosity creeps into her eyes. “What else are you into?”

“Bondage.” I continue to brush my fingers up and down her back. “I’d like to tie you up and do whatever I want to you.”

“Okay.” There’s zero fear in her eyes. “What else?”

“Role-play does it for me. Living out a depraved fantasy where I have all the power, and you’re at my mercy or the other way around. You can pretend to take advantage of me.”

“So you’ll like it if we pretended you’re asleep while I have my wicked way with you?”

“Definitely,” I answer. “Fucking you while you’re unconscious is a top favorite. I didn’t even think of that one until the opportunity arose.”

She lets out a chuckle. “You have no idea how hard it was to keep still.”

“You did a good job, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*,” I praise her. With my eyes locked on hers, I ask, “Which fantasies are a no-go for you?”

“I can’t think of any.”

“Kidnapping?”

She scrunches her nose, then she chuckles. “As long as you’re the one doing the kidnapping.”

I push harder with my next suggestion. “Sexual harassment by your captor?”

“Again, as long as you’re the one harassing me, I’m good with it.”

With a serious expression on my face, I ask, “Rape?”

A frown forms on her forehead, making my heart stop in my chest, then she says, “But it’s not rape if it’s with you.”

“Role-play, baby,” I remind her. “Acting out the fantasy that you don’t know me and I’m just a depraved fucker taking what he wants. How would you feel about that scenario?”

Rosalie pushes herself up into a sitting position and really thinks about my question.

I sit up as well, and taking hold of her hand, I say, “Of course, I won’t hurt you. Keep that in mind.”

“So we’ll just pretend not to know each other?” she asks.

“I’ll catch you off guard when you least expect it,” I add, so she knows what will happen. “It will be dark, and I’ll restrain you.”

Heat flares in her eyes. “So far, I like it.”

Letting go of her hand, I wrap my fingers around her throat. “I’d like to reenact our first meeting, only this time I’ll take what I want instead of waiting three years.” Leaning closer, my lips brush against her parted ones. “I want to hear you scream no. I want you to beg me to stop.”

Her voice quivers with need as she whispers, “I can do that. It will be hot if you threaten me with what you plan to do to me.”

Jesus, she’s really into it.

I lick at her lips. “I’ll tell you, if you don’t keep quiet, I’ll choke you with my cock.”

“Yes,” she breathes, her eyes lighting up from the desire building between us.

“I’ll tear your clothes off.”

Rosalie’s tongue darts out, swiping over my jaw.

Christ, we’re going to fuck each other to death today.

“I’ll pinch your tits and force myself into your tight wet heat.”

She climbs onto my lap and grinds down on me, breathlessly murmuring, “What then?”

“You’ll struggle beneath me, screaming for me to stop.”

Her hips begin to swivel as she rubs herself against my hard cock.

“Rip my panties off,” she orders me, her tone bossy as fuck.

Gripping hold of the lace, I tear them from her body.

“Are you taking over, baby?” I ask, loving the idea.

“Yes.” Rosalie shoves my sweatpants out of the way, and locking her seductive gaze with mine, she says, “I’m going to fuck you, Mr. Vetrov, and you’re going to keep telling me filthy things.”

When she sinks down on my cock, we both groan.

“I’ll force you onto your stomach,” I growl. She starts to ride me slowly. “And I’ll fuck your tight ass.”

Rosalie leans forward and wraps her arms around my neck. “Spank me every time I take you deep.”

Christ. This is turning out to be a day straight out of my wet dreams.

While I tell her in detail how I'll take her against her will, she bounces faster and faster on my lap, my palm tanning her sexy ass red until we end up in a boneless heap of ragged breaths.

Chapter 38

Rosalie

Startled, I'm ripped from sleep when I'm hauled off the bed and thrown over Viktor's shoulder.

It takes a moment for my mind to clear as he stalks out of the bedroom.

"It's too early," I complain, my body slumping. I hang like a ragdoll, not bothering to put up a fight.

"Come, Luna. We're kidnapping your mother," Viktor says, patting his thigh so she'll follow.

Luna tries to lick my face as she comes after us, making laughter burst from me. "Stop. Your breath stinks."

I'm carried out of the house and tossed into the passenger side of the SUV. Luna jumps into the back, her tongue hanging out with excitement.

When Viktor slides behind the steering wheel, I scowl at him. "I didn't even have coffee."

"You can have some on the private jet." He winks at me, a playful glint in his eyes.

Hearing we're flying somewhere, I sit up straight and pull on my safety belt. "Where are we going?"

"You'll see."

“And Luna’s coming with?”

“Yes. We’ll be gone two weeks.”

I let out an excited shriek, practically bouncing in the seat.
“We’re going to Bali!”

A wide smile spreads over Viktor’s face as he steers the SUV through the gates, with Joseph and his team following behind us.

So much excitement fills my chest, I’m unable to sit still, my smile so wide, I swear if I didn’t have ears, it would wrap right around my head.

“I can’t believe you kept this from me,” I exclaim. “Every time I brought up Bali, you changed the subject. I thought you didn’t want to go.”

“I let you believe I didn’t want to go so I could surprise you,” he chuckles.

“It worked.”

Oh my God. I’m going to one of my dream destinations.

With my dog and the man I love.

Life can’t get any better. I’m so happy, I don’t know what to do with the overwhelming emotion.

Suddenly tears burst from me, and I cover my face.

“What the fuck, baby?” Viktor quickly steers the car to the side of the road. “Why are you crying?”

He pulls me into his arms, peppering my hair with kisses.

“B-because I’m so h-happy,” I sob.

“Oh,” he sighs with relief. Pushing me back, he tilts his head to capture my eyes. “Then you can cry all you want.”

I let out a burst of laughter, but it quickly fades away when Viktor licks a tear from my cheek.

My eyes lock on his. “I can’t believe how much everything has changed.”

“For the better, I hope.” He leans in to steal a kiss, then looks at me again.

“So much better. I’ve never been this happy before. It feels like I’m going to burst.”

With a dark chuckle, he settles into his seat again and steers the SUV back onto the road. “As long as you’re bursting on my tongue, we’re good.”

I playfully swat his shoulder. “Such a dirty talker.”

“You love it,” he teases me, not attempting to hide his arrogance.

“Yeah, I do.”

The flight to Bali takes so freaking long that I’m tired eight hours into it. We spend the time watching movies and stuffing our faces while Luna destroys a toy Viktor brought along for her.

When there are only two hours left, I climb out of bed and shower before changing into the light blue dress Viktor loves so much.

Walking back into the bedroom, Viktor's eyes drift over me. "I love you in that dress."

"I know."

He scoots up until his back is resting against the headboard. "I transferred money to your account. For the next two weeks, I want you to pay for everything."

"Why?"

"So you'll get accustomed to spending the money I give you."

Shaking my head, I let out a chuckle. "Why?"

He moves closer and wraps his arms around me. "Because I want to spoil you, *moya Malen'kaya Roza*. I know you're making your own money with the work you do for my mother and Aunt Bella, but I still want to take care of you."

"How much did you transfer?" I ask, bracing myself for a ridiculous amount.

"Only two-hundred-and-fifty."

"Oh, that's much better than the fifty million," I say.

"Two-hundred-and-fifty million," he corrects me.

My jaw drops. "Why would you transfer so much?!"

"Because you have to pay the hotel fees, the food, and everything else. A first-class vacation adds up quite fast."

Jesus.

I blink at Viktor, trying to process that kind of money. Sure, I grew up wealthy, but I never had access to such a large amount.

“What if there’s fraud on my account, and someone steals it?”

Viktor gives me a you-must-be-kidding look. “Then I’ll find the person and kill them.”

Right.

I keep forgetting who he is because, to me, he’s just the man I love.

Climbing off the bed, he pulls me to my feet. “Tell the flight attendant we’re ready for breakfast while I shower.”

“Okay.” I pat my leg for Luna to follow and first feed her and fill up her water bowl. I was worried she would freak out on the plane, but she’s been so good.

Stepping into the lounge cabin, I take a seat and press the button for the flight attendant. When she comes out of the kitchen area with a friendly smile, I say, “Morning. Can you please prepare breakfast and a lot of coffee?”

“Of course, Miss Manno.”

I pat on the seat next to me for Luna to jump up, and rubbing her head, I stare out of the small window. It’s still dark outside, so I can’t see anything.

Viktor takes the seat across from me, then pulls out his phone.

I stare at him as he types something, taking in his attractive features.

The man has pushed my boundaries and taught me so many things. With the training, I’m actually able to flip

someone twice my size. Viktor was so proud the first time I slammed him down on the sparring mat.

His eyes flick to mine, then he asks, “Why are you looking at me like that?”

“I’m just thinking how much stronger you’ve made me.”

The corner of his mouth lifts. “Next, I’m teaching you how to shoot.”

My eyebrows lift. “Really? That will be awesome.”

Viktor leans forward and pulls one of his guns from behind his back. He ejects the clip and checks the barrel, then hands it to me. “Just hold it and get used to the feel of the weapon.”

Damn, it’s heavier than it looks.

When the flight attendant comes out with a tray, I shove the gun beneath my butt, which makes Viktor laugh.

I wait for her to set everything down and go back to the kitchen before I pull the weapon out of its hiding place and set it down on my lap. “I don’t want to scare her.”

“She knows who I am,” he mutters as he picks up his coffee.

“Still.”

While we enjoy our breakfast, I keep glancing at the gun, knowing Viktor has fired it many times.

He’s killed with it.

My fingers brush over the dark metal, and no matter how deep I dig, there’s no fear to be found.

When the pilot announces we're landing, the excitement is back in full force.

Viktor's eyes are glued to my face, a loving smile around his mouth. "I love how excited you get."

"I've wanted to go to Bali for years," I admit.

"I know. I have the list you made."

My lips part in a gasp, my eyes widening. "You do?"

"I had Sacha clear out your bedroom remember?"

"I haven't seen Sacha again."

"He's mostly in Russia, helping me run things that side," Viktor explains. "But about the list, where would you like to go next?"

"After Bali?" I ask.

He nods as the plane starts its descent.

"Hell, I can't think about that now. I first want to experience Bali. Can we go look at the waterfalls?"

"Yes, I already have trips planned for you to see all five."

Surprised, I ask, "Is there anything about me you don't know?"

Slowly, he shakes his head.

To test him, I ask, "Who was my first boyfriend?"

"Some fucker named Matt."

Laughter escapes me. "Okay, I believe you."

When the plane touches down on the tarmac, my stomach explodes in a kaleidoscope of butterflies.

My heart is beating out of my chest as we get up and take the steps down to where a Mercedes and chauffeur wait to drive us to our hotel.

The air smells different and it's humid. During the drive, I stare at the beautiful scenery, emotions whirling in my chest because I'm getting to experience one of my dreams.

Turning in my seat, I throw my arms around Viktor's neck and hug him as tightly as possible. "Thank you so much."

"You're welcome, *moya Malen'kaya Roza.*"

"I love you," I whisper with all of my heart.

"*Ya lyublyu tebya,*" he murmurs before claiming my mouth in a toe-curling kiss.

When we reach the hotel, Viktor leads me through the luxurious building and out onto a stretch of white sand.

Seeing his family sitting beneath gazebos covered in white satin curtains, I wave excitedly.

"It's so beautiful here." My eyes drift over the vast ocean that's the perfect shade of blue.

When we reach his family, we take a moment to greet everyone.

I give Ariana and Bella playful scowls. "You knew we were coming and didn't tell me."

"Viktor swore us to secrecy," his mom explains.

They don't invite us to sit with them, and I'm surprised when Viktor takes my hand, pulling me further down the beach until there's no one in sight except for Luna, who keeps running in and out of the water.

Viktor lets go of my hand and falls back until he's behind me, stepping in every footprint I leave. Chuckling, I glance over my shoulder. "What are you doing?"

His eyes lock on mine as he comes to a standstill. "I'll always be behind you, *moya Malen'kaya Roza*. To protect you at all costs."

My heart.

Turning around to face him, my lips part as he kneels before me. Tears instantly jump to my eyes when he reaches into his pocket, removing a small black velvet box. He flips it open, exposing a gorgeous diamond ring.

"Rosalie, since the moment I saw you, you've held my heart in the palm of your hand. You're the only person I'll kneel before, and right now, I'm begging you on my knees, please marry me."

Sinking to my knees in the soft sand, I nod like a crazy person. "A million times, yes."

An emotional expression tightens his features until it looks like he's going to cry. "*Ya lyublyu tebya, moya Malen'kaya Roza.*"

When he slips the diamond onto my ring finger, my chin starts to quiver. "I love you too."

"Never take the ring off," he orders, his voice hoarse.

“I promise I won’t.”

Viktor frames my face, and looking at me with all the love in the world, while we’re both kneeling on a white beach in Bali, he says, “It will always be me and you, *moya Malen’kaya Roza*. Forever.”

“Forever,” I whisper against his lips right before he claims my mouth.

Epilogue

Viktor

Eleven years later...

We're hosting a small gathering for the baptism of our baby boy.

Okay, so maybe it's not as small as I thought it would be. With my entire family and the Priesthood at the house, the place is packed.

The women can't get enough of Roman's chubby cheeks and blood-red lips.

"You better hold on tight to your son," Nikolas chuckles, where we're standing on the lawn, grilling steaks. "One of them might try to steal him."

"Where are the kids?" Luca asks.

I gesture to my house. "In the living room. They're taking turns playing games."

Lily, Liam's daughter, comes out onto the patio and makes a beeline straight for Roman. "Can I play with him, Aunt Rosalie?"

"Fuck," Liam mutters.

"She's only twelve," Nikolas chuckles. "Wait until she discovers hormones. Theresa just brought a boy home. I

almost killed the poor fucker.”

Everyone bursts out with laughter.

Out of the Priesthood, only Gabriel, Liam and Nikolas have daughters. That might change in the future, though. I’d love to have a little girl who’s the spitting image of her mother.

We watch as Lily holds Roman’s hand, slowly walking him around the fountain. She stops and patiently waits every time he sees something interesting.

“She’s good with him,” I mention.

“She takes after her mother,” Liam murmurs, his voice full of love for his daughter.

Alya, Gabriel’s daughter walks closer to them and takes hold of Lily’s other hand, shyly smiling up at the older girl.

“Do your hearts also do this weird squeezing thing as if it’s being strangled, whenever your kids do something amazing?” Liam asks.

“All the fucking time,” Gabriel mutters, rubbing a hand over his chest as he watches his daughter warm up to Lily.

“What are you talking about?” Rosalie asks as she comes to take a seat on one of the chairs. The other women soon join her.

“The kids,” Nikolas answers as he wraps his arm around Tessa.

“I want a daughter,” I announce while flipping a steak.

“You’ll have to wait until everyone leaves and pray Roman takes a nap,” Rosalie teases me.

“Yes, please wait until we’re gone,” Luca chuckles, making the rest of the group laugh.

When the steaks are ready, and Mom comes out of the house with a large bowl of potato salad, Rosalie jumps up. “You should’ve called me, Mom. Let me take the bowl. Sit down and relax a little.”

“You spoil me,” Mom grins at her daughter-in-law. “Will you bring my glass of wine? It’s on the kitchen island.”

“Okay.” Rosalie sets the bowl down on the table, and when she goes into the house, I hand the grilling duties over to Luca and go after my wife.

I catch her as she turns around and wrap my arms around her. “So, what do you think?”

“About?” she asks, confusion fluttering over her face.

“Us having a girl.”

A soft smile curves her lips. “We can try, but I can’t guarantee you a little girl. You have to take whatever my womb gives you, Mr. Vetrov.”

“Then we’ll have to keep trying until we have one.”

She lets out a burst of laughter. “And what if it takes ten boys before we have a little girl?”

“I’m fine with that.”

She shakes her head at me. “I know I said I’ll give you as many kids as you want, but eleven is pushing the limit for me.”

I press a kiss to her mouth. “Okay, we’ll stop at five.”

“I can handle that.”

I give my wife another kiss, then suddenly, Roman’s cry registers. I let go of Rosalie and run outside. Lily’s rubbing sand off his knee, saying, “I’m sorry you fell.”

I crouch next to my son, and my entire hand covers his back. “Are you okay, little man?”

He sniffs and leans his head on my shoulder. “Thanks for watching him, Lily,” I say as I pick him up. I hug my son to my chest and press a kiss on his head. “Daddy’s got you.”

“Owie,” he sniffles, then he spots his mother, and he throws his body toward hers. “Ma!”

Rosalie comes to take him from me, pressing a kiss to his scraped knee. “All better?” she asks him.

He shakes his head so she’ll kiss his knee again.

“Yep, that’s my boy. Taking as much love as he can get from you.”

“I have endless supplies of love for my two men,” she says, her eyes soft.

“And your men love you endlessly,” I murmur.

I glance around, taking in how happy my family is, bursts of laughter constantly filling the air.

If anyone ever had to ask me what the mafia is about, my answer would be this moment. Family and friends. People who have your back through thick and thin, who will bleed with you to protect the empires we’ve built over the years.

My gaze turns back to Rosalie and my Roman – the loves of my life – the woman I’ll grow old with, and my son, who

will one day take over the bratva.

The End.

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Acknowledgments

The love I received for The Saints series inspired The Sinners series. I never thought my niche would be Mafia Romance, but I'll write what my readers want. Thank you so much for all your support.

To my alpha and beta readers – Leeann, Sheena, Brittney, Sherrie, and Kelly thank you for being the godparents of my paper-baby.

Candi Kane PR - Thank you for being patient with me and my bad habit of missing deadlines.

Yoly, Cormar Covers – Thank you for giving my paper-babies the perfect look.

My street team, thank you for promoting my books. It means the world to me!

A special thank you to every blogger and reader who took the time to participate in the cover reveal and release day.

Love ya all tons ;)