

A muscular man with dark hair, looking down, wearing a watch on his left wrist. He has extensive tattoos on his chest and arms. The background is dark.

The New  
Mafia Lords

**Dirty  
Rich**  
*Monsters*

**Nevah Stone**

# **Dirty Rich Monsters**

**Nevah Stone**

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## TOC

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Chapter Ten](#)

[Chapter Eleven](#)

[Chapter Twelve](#)

[Chapter Thirteen](#)

[Chapter Fourteen](#)

[Chapter Fifteen](#)

[Chapter Sixteen](#)

[Chapter Seventeen](#)

[Chapter Eighteen](#)

[Chapter Nineteen](#)

[Chapter Twenty](#)

[Chapter Twenty-one](#)

[Chapter Twenty-two](#)

[Chapter Twenty-three](#)

[Chapter Twenty-four](#)

[Chapter Twenty-five](#)

[Chapter Twenty-six](#)

[Chapter Twenty-seven](#)

[Chapter Twenty-eight](#)

[Chapter Twenty-nine](#)

[Chapter Thirty.](#)

[Chapter Thirty-one](#)

[Sadistic Beasts](#)

[Chapter One](#)



# Chapter One

## *Venom*

I was going to fucking kill them!

If I lived that long. Right now, I doubted I'd see another sunrise. Dirk's fist slammed into my face. My head whipped to the side as my pulse sped up and pain spread across my jawline. The coppery taste of blood filled my mouth. I strained against the ropes binding my wrists, but they only cut deeper.

"We're taking over San Antonio," Enzo growled as he leaned down.

I spit in his face. Blood and saliva slapped him right in the eyes.

"Mother fucker!" His fist slammed into my face.

Pain exploded inside my head. Fuck! Probably shouldn't have done that, but I was going to die anyway, so why the hell not?

The office door creaked open. "The warehouse is emptied out, boss."

That was Romeo speaking. He was the Contis' right-hand man. First in charge after the old man and his two sons. A real son of a bitch and as ugly as sin. He was the one who knocked me out. I should've been ready for something. We'd been hearing rumblings that the Contis were getting cocky. My brothers and I didn't pay much attention to the rumors. No one would dare challenge us.

We should have heeded the warning signs.

My brothers were going to be pissed when my body turned up. And it would turn up somewhere. The Contis would want to send a message they were taking over.

Yeah, Ghost and Reaper would be out for blood. They would have their revenge. At least I would have that thought before I died. That's when the bloodbath would begin. My brothers could be sick bastards. We were a lot alike.

“What're we going to do with him?” Dirk asked. “Kill him? Put his head on a pole out front?”

Enzo shook his head, an evil glint in his eyes. “No, too quick. I want them to know he suffered. Leave him here and burn the warehouse down. The chair is metal, so it won't burn. All they'll find sitting in it is their brother fried to a crisp.”

They both roared with laughter.

Yeah, they were fucking hilarious.

“Let's get out of here,” Dirk said. “I hate the stench of burnt meat.”

As soon as the door closed behind them, I began to pull against the ropes in earnest, the chair rocking back and forth. I didn't much care for the smell of burnt meat either, especially when it would be me on the grill. The chair tipped over. I landed on my right side with a hard jolt.

Something hissed and popped, and there was a crash not far from the office. Smoke crept under the door. I began to cough. Fuck, I didn't want to die like this. Twenty-six years on Earth wasn't nearly long enough. Growing up in a Mafia



family meant you grew up fast and hard, but it still hadn't been long enough.

That's why I didn't plan on dying now. One of my wrists scraped past the strands of scratchy rope, rubbing the skin raw with each fraction of an inch. I was slowly gaining a little bit of my freedom. But would it be too little too late?

Something wet dripped down my hand and I knew it was more of my blood. They'd been working me over for hours. Angelo, their father, liked to cut. He thought carving someone up was fun as hell. He'd been called back out front, though. That's when Enzo and Dirk took over. They liked to punch.

The room was starting to fill with thick, gray smoke. I struggled to take in a clean breath, but that wasn't happening.

I pulled harder against the ropes.

The office door window began slowly cracking, one long line from corner to corner. I knew what was about to happen. I quickly turned my head away just as the window shattered, and an explosion of glass flew into the room. I sucked in a breath of smoke-filled air when shards embedded in my arms and back. I closed my eyes tight against the sharp pain and tried to slow my panicked heartbeat.

Dense smoke and intense heat billowed into the room. My eyes watered, burning, and every breath I took scorched my lungs. I began to cough. Fuck, this wasn't good. I figured I had three or four minutes to get free, five tops, before flames engulfed the warehouse. I struggled harder against the ropes.

My mother used to say everyone has a guardian angel. When I was young, I believed her. I'd definitely survived a hell of a lot not to have one. My brothers and I didn't believe in backing off. We always jumped in with both feet, showing no fear. We always survived somehow. But that was back then.

Fuck, I hated leaving them.

I really needed that guardian angel about now.

My hand slipped out of the rope. I hadn't expected to get loose, so I didn't move at first, but I got over my surprise quickly enough as the flames began to crackle, spit, and pop like demons racing toward me.

The one thing the Contis didn't know was that we always had an escape route built into our places of business. This one happened to be in this office. I stayed low on the floor and crawled to the hatch, trying not to breathe more than I had to, but it was taking what little strength I had left.

I kept seeing my brothers' faces in front of me, urging me not to give up.

Reaper was pissed. *"You'd better not quit!"*

He was the oldest and could be a real pain in the ass. But I never questioned him.

I made it to the rug and pushed it off, but damn, I didn't realize it would be so hard to open the metal door. I began to choke and cough as I inhaled more smoke. Ah, damn, this wasn't good. Maybe if I just rested for a minute...

*"Pussy!"* My middle brother would yell in my ear if he were here. Ghost wasn't about to let me die in the warehouse. *"Open the damned hatch!"*

“Shut the fuck up,” I told the voice in my head. “I’m doing the best I can.”

*“No, you’re not. You’re a Barone, and we never fucking give up!”*

“Okay!”

I dragged the hatch open. There was a ladder that led down. I figured that wasn’t happening. I tumbled through the opening, crashing onto the dirt floor as the hatch slammed closed behind me. For a moment, I lay there, the cold earth pressing against my face.

Better. My face felt hot, and this was nice.

Just a minute more.

*“You’ve got to get farther away!”*

“Okay, fine,” I mumbled and began to crawl. There wasn’t as much smoke in the tunnel, but that didn’t mean it wouldn’t worsen.

I closed my eyes. I just needed a moment.

*“Keep moving!”*

“Okay, okay, I’m going!” I yelled back. I think it came out more like a whisper.

I wasn’t sure who was yelling in my ear now or inside my head, but the closer I got to the end, the easier it was to breathe. The hidden door loomed in front of me, but I decided to take another break and closed my eyes. I would just catch my breath for a minute, then go the rest of the way.

“Venom! Are you still with us?” Reaper yelled as he shook my shoulder.

“It’s not time to get up,” I mumbled.

“He’s still alive,” Ghost said. “Let’s get him to the hospital.”

It was apparent they weren’t going to let me sleep as they dragged me to my feet. They looped one arm over their shoulders and pulled me forward. I tried to walk, but my feet didn’t want to cooperate, so they ended up dragging me.

Then I was in the backseat. Reaper drove like a maniac. Nothing new there. He would be pissed when he saw the blood I was getting all over his car. The car was his baby. No one, absolutely no one, drove it except him.

Tires screeched.

The car stopped moving.

There were so many fucking lights and people talking. Someone dragged one of my eyelids open and then shined another light at me. I fought against him. I wasn’t going to die! I would escape! Something sharp pricked my skin, then there was blessed darkness again.

I lay on a cloud. It was soft, gently swaying in the breeze that lightly washed over me. I’d died then. But no, I doubted I would’ve gone up. Heaven wouldn’t let me get close to their pure white clouds. So where was...

I moved a fraction and moaned as pain wracked my body. No, definitely not Heaven. I opened my eyes, but only one opened. My vision blurred. I blinked until it cleared. Reaper was stretched out on a recliner asleep. He had more than a day’s growth of beard. Ghost was in the other chair, looking just as rough.

Everything that happened hurtled back through my brain like a runaway train. The fucking Contis tying me up, torturing, then burning down the warehouse.

Reaper opened his eyes, and our gazes met.

“I want to destroy all of them,” I managed to croak.

Ghost came to his feet, looking relieved I was awake.

“We will,” Reaper said. “We’ll make them regret they ever crossed our paths.”

“One at a time until we get to the last one,” Ghost said.

“Yeah, one at a time.”

I wanted them to be in a perpetual state of fear. I wanted them to taste fear. I wanted them to know we were coming for them, and they would fucking pay.

## Chapter Two

*Mia*

I hate my fucking family.

I was surrounded by them as we all sat at the dining room table eating dinner. There was my father, Angelo Conti—the head of the family. Everything went through him. He was a real bastard. When I was six years old, he threw me into the deep end of the pool and then laughed. He said swim or drown. I don't think he would've cared if I'd drowned. He'd told me more than once girls were worthless.

But I swam, and I'd been swimming against a swift current for as long as I could remember. I hated him, and he knew it. I think that was why he arranged for me to marry his friend's son. Luca was almost forty, as mean as a pissed-off rattlesnake. He'd already told me what was going to happen on our wedding night.

Yeah, not if I could help it. I planned to run away, get as far away from Houston as I could, but they were all watching me closely, making sure I didn't do anything to upset their plans. I didn't care if I only had the clothes on my back. I would run as soon as the opportunity presented itself.

Then there were my brothers. Dirk and Enzo were actually my half-brothers. They took after their father. I was the youngest. We had different mothers. They'd been picking on me for as long as I could remember.

I'm not talking about what most siblings do—teasing, putting a dead frog in your bed, stuff like that. No, they were more physical: hitting, kicking, punching, locking me in a closet all day and all night until a maid would let me out. Getting even wasn't easy until I got older. I learned quick to fight back and not take any of their shit.

“Are you looking forward to your upcoming wedding, little sister?” Dirk snickered.

I looked at him and smiled sweetly. “I think living with anyone would be better than living under this roof.”

His eyes narrowed. “I've heard Luca likes to beat his women when they get out of line. You'll have to be careful he doesn't mess up that pretty face of yours.”

Enzo laughed at his brother's wit.

Angelo pointed his fork at me, jabbing it in the air to make his point. “You better be good to him. We're going to do big things now that our families are joining forces.”

“Yeah, like when we took care of the Barones. I never did like those bastards. They always thought they were so damned high and mighty, but we showed them.”

I looked between the three of them. “What did you do?” The Barones were someone you didn't want to mess with. Their family was over the San Antonio area. I'd never met them, but I'd heard of their reputation. They would make my brothers look like choir boys.

“Raided their warehouse a few weeks ago,” Angelo said. “They'd just got in a big shipment. We took their men out, tortured their little brother, emptied the warehouse, then

burned it to the ground—with their brother still inside, tied to a chair.” He started to laugh, then choked. He grabbed his beer, took a long drink, and slammed the bottle back on the table. “We’ll make a nice profit on the product we took.”

And they didn’t think they would retaliate? They were idiots. All three of them. “I’m going to my room.”

They were still talking and laughing as I went up the winding staircase. As soon as I walked inside my room, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. Something was wrong. I’d left the bedside lamp on, but the dim light didn’t reach all the corners.

Always trust your gut. I turned to leave, but someone stepped from behind the door and placed a cloth over my face. I fought against the noxious odor and the muscled arms holding me, but seconds later, I began slipping into a deep, dark hole. I didn’t have time to be afraid. I had a feeling that would come soon enough.

“Your family fucked with the wrong family,” he whispered in my ear.

Those words were the last thing I heard.

Until the darkness began to fade.

My head pounded, and my mouth was so dry I could barely swallow.

Then I heard them. I kept my eyes closed, listening, assessing the situation. My family might be assholes, but they didn’t get to be one of the top Mafia families by being soft, and I hadn’t survived this long by not learning a thing or two.



And I wasn't stupid. I peeked from lowered lids, keeping my breathing even so they would think I was still unconscious. I was in a living room, sitting on a cushioned chair, and I wasn't restrained. That was their first mistake.

I scanned the room as much as I could through mostly lowered lids. Dark, heavy furniture, dark walls. Two of them were within my range of vision. Damn, they were big and muscled—ink down both their tanned arms. One had dark blond hair streaked with golden highlights, and the other had coal-black hair.

One looked like he was recovering from a horrific beating, but even with the bruises, he was fucking gorgeous.

Another one began speaking behind me. “Do we kill her? Cut her up and send her back to her family piece by piece?” He walked around to stand with them.

Yeah, all three were gorgeous monsters.

A shiver ran down my spine. I could fight, but I'd never have a chance against three men. The Barones. It had to be them. Apparently, my family hadn't killed one of them as they'd thought. I figured it was the one who looked like he'd tangled with an alligator and lost—except he won. Now they were taking their revenge because my family raided their warehouse. Dumb bastards! I was going to pay for their stupidity.

Maybe I could make a run for it. I turned my head just slightly, looking for a door. From my limited line of vision, it wasn't easy, but I was pretty sure the door was behind the two men.

“I think our little flower is awake.”

I opened my eyes. Why pretend?

But I could act. I cowered away from them. Let them think I was scared shitless. Okay, I *was* scared shitless, but I’d be damned if I went down without a fight.

“Where am I?” I whispered but loud enough for them to hear my trembling words.

You see, I look like a delicate. What had he called me? A little flower? Yeah, that sounded accurate. I look like a delicate flower. My looks always fool people.

I’m average height, five feet, five inches, and have long blonde hair. I took after my mother, thank goodness. I know I look fragile, and my big blue eyes always fool people. I only have to bat my lashes, and men immediately feel protective toward me.

It works every time, and I have a feeling this time would be no different. Two of the men look confused about what exactly they should do. I wasn’t so sure about the third one. He was the one who suggested they cut me into little pieces. Just as hot as the other two but with a harder edge. I guessed him to be the older brother.

Our gazes met and held for a long moment. It felt as if something passed between us. Not something good. Fear and panic washed over me. I tamped down the panic, but the fear was still there.

“Nope, she’s acting,” he finally said, then smiled, but there was no warmth in his words or the smile.

It was time to shoot for plan B. “I need some air,” I mumbled as I came to my feet, wobbling just a little—fake, of course. The door wasn’t that far away. Running was one of my passions. I was pretty sure my size and speed could win over their raw power. I just needed to get a little closer.

But one of the brother’s stepped into my path. His light blue eyes glittered dangerously. “Do you think you’re going somewhere? Sit back down.”

“Please,” I whimpered. “Just let me go. I won’t say a word.”

He faltered for a half second. I probably had the only chance I would ever get. I’d noticed the knife at his waist. I grabbed it, clasped the handle tightly, then raised it in front of me.

“Get out of my way,” I ordered, my words deadly quiet and brooking no argument.

He cocked an eyebrow, grinning, as I started around him. Then he made his next mistake. He attempted to grab me around the waist. I acted instinctively and stabbed his hand.

“Mother fucker!”

The other two started to laugh.

“It isn’t fucking funny!” he growled.

I ran to the door, fumbling with the damned doorknob. He grabbed me but with a firmer hold. I turned, ready to cut him again, but he must’ve anticipated my move because he caught my wrist and squeezed. Pain shot up my arm. I grunted, dropping the knife.

Nope, wasn't giving up yet. I kicked him in the shin. He cursed. The other two were still laughing. I fucking didn't care. If I could get the door open, I could outrun them.

He grabbed my other wrist. "Be still!"

I bit him.

His fist shot out and clipped me on the chin. The room began to spin around and around. I blinked as I tried to clear my vision. I could almost turn the doorknob.

Except the room was getting darker.

Right before the darkness closed in around me, I knew I was screwed.

## Chapter Three

### *Reaper*

“What the fuck?” Ghost examined his hand where Mia stabbed him, then glared at us, eyes narrowing. “Nothing about this is funny. She’s dangerous.”

I immediately sobered. “You’re right.” I sauntered over to her, then bumped her with my foot until she was lying on her back. She was still out cold. Ghost had clipped her good—an automatic reaction. I don’t think I’ve ever seen him hit a girl. She’d probably have a bruise tomorrow.

I stared at her. Mia’s father was maybe five feet, ten inches, and his face so pot-marked it reminded me of a backwoods country road. His two sons were just as ugly.

Yeah, I’d expected her to look rough. She wasn’t. Even if she’d been ugly as sin, I wasn’t sold on the idea of killing a woman, but Venom wanted the whole family to suffer. Not that I could blame him. They’d beat him, then left him to burn alive.

Now that we had her, I wasn’t so sure. Her father—yes. Two brothers—definitely, but we’d never outright killed a female.

This was different somehow. It didn’t help that Mia was beautiful with long blonde hair and big blue eyes. Her eyelashes were long and thick—dark against the paleness of her face. She was tiny, too. Petite, like a beautiful porcelain

doll but with lips made for kissing...or sucking cock, which wasn't a bad idea now that I thought about it.

I looked at my two brothers as I straightened to my feet. "I don't want to kill her just yet."

"That wasn't the plan," Venom growled, but even he didn't sound as positive about this as he had been.

Yeah, I knew he'd still be out for blood. Not that I blamed him. The Contis would pay with their lives for what they did to Venom, but I wanted them to fucking suffer before they did.

I shook my head. "Too quick."

Ghost nodded, knowing I would have something better up my sleeve. "What are you thinking? They're not going to care if we don't send them a piece of her."

I grinned. "I want to play with her a little first. Have some fun. We owe her for attacking you." But it still wasn't my call, even though I was the oldest. Venom was the one they'd tortured and tried to burn alive. "Only if you agree, Venom. You were the one they attacked, so we'll go with whatever you decide."

Venom squatted beside her, then ran his hand over her breasts, down her ribs, and cupped her waist. "Might be interesting. Okay, I'm in as long as we're still planning on getting rid of her. She's a Conti."

"Play first it is, then when we get tired of her, we'll kill her." I walked over and scooped her in my arms. "Grab some rope," I told them.

I guessed her to weigh about one-fifteen. Her body felt damned nice pressed against mine—curvy and soft. Killing her was going to be a shame.

When I reached the top of the staircase, I went down to the last room on the left, bent enough to turn the knob, and went inside. For a moment, I stared down into her face. Damned beautiful. I itched to bury my cock between her legs and fuck her senseless. Instead, I laid her on top of the bed. Yeah, she was definitely something to look at.

Venom and Ghost came in with the rope. “Not too tight,” I told them. “I have an idea how we can have a little fun.” We loosely tied her hands. Then we tied her ankles to the bedpost.

“She looks damned good spread-eagled like that,” Venom said. “You were right about not killing her too soon.”

I stepped back just as her eyes fluttered open. She frowned as if trying to figure something out, then tried to move her hand. Her head immediately jerked toward the rope on her wrist, then the other one. She tried to move her feet. When that didn’t work, something close to a growl erupted from her.

“Untie me!” she spat.

I ran my hand down the side of her face, and she immediately tried to bite me. I laughed. “Our flower has thorns.” My hand moved lower, cupping her breast. She stilled. “That’s better.”

Venom and Ghost stood at the end of the bed. Her gaze darted to them, then back to me. I smiled, but I knew it was

insincere as fuck. Yeah, she knew it, too. I could see the fear she tried to mask.

“Let me go,” she said, calming down a little.

We laughed.

“Your father and brothers emptied one of our warehouses, then tortured Venom. They set our warehouse on fire with him tied to a chair inside. They wanted him to burn alive.”

“But I got loose,” Venom growled.

“What are you going to do to me?” As much as she tried, she couldn’t keep the tremble out of her voice.

“Venom wants to kill you for what your family did.”

“So you kidnapped *me*? My father and half-brothers are the idiots. Kill them. I don’t care, but I had nothing to do with any of this. You won’t gain anything by killing me. They won’t care what you do to me.”

Ghost moved to sit beside her on the other side of the bed. “You’re engaged to Luca Castorini. When you marry, it will join two families and make them very powerful. I think they’ll care.” He lightly ran his hand down her ribs and over her hips.”

“Venom wants to cut off a piece of you and send it to your family, then kill each of them one by one.” I watched her face. Damn, I liked that she was trying not to show any fear. She would be fun to break, and break her we would.

“Then kill me now and get it over with,” she said, her anger rising to the surface. “Just promise me one thing, when



you kill the rest of my family, make them suffer.”

I chuckled.

She glared at me.

“Too quick. We have another idea. We’ll give you half an hour to get away. If you make it to the end of the driveway, you’ll be free.”

She stilled. “And if I don’t?”

I shrugged. “We’re giving everything. You have nothing—except the clothes on your back.” I fingered the hem of her shirt, my fingers grazing her bare flesh. She trembled beneath my touch. “Maybe you can think of something.”

“You’re bastards,” she spat.

We laughed.

“I don’t think we ever claimed to be anything else. Take it or leave it.”

“What are your terms?” she demanded.

“If you don’t make it to the end of the driveway, one article of clothing. I don’t think that’s too much to ask.”

“And if I don’t agree to your terms?”

Venom leaned closer. “Then we’ll cut off your fingers and send them to your family. You’ll be returned to them one piece at a time.”

Her eyes narrowed. “It doesn’t look as if I have much of a choice.”

I smiled. “Thirty minutes starting now.” I glanced at my watch as I came to my feet. We walked to the door, but

before I went out, I turned back to her. “Better hurry, little flower.” I closed the door behind me.

“Now what?” Venom asked.

“I’m going to pour myself a drink, then we wait.”

“And if she gets loose?” Ghost asked.

“We catch her and bring her back.” I walked down the hallway, then the curving staircase. The estate had been in our family for generations. It sat on over one hundred acres of prime real estate. Only one of our many properties, but I loved this one the best.

“But how do we know if she escapes?”

“Have you forgotten?”

Ghost began to chuckle. “The cameras in the guestroom.”

“And everywhere else. We should be able to keep up with her every move.”

I went straight to the bottle of bourbon in our private living room, poured two fingers into a glass, and then walked to a hidden drawer behind the bar. I opened it, brought out the remote, and then clicked it toward the TV above the fireplace. When it came on, I pushed another button. The screen went from black to showing Mia on the bed. She’d gotten one wrist free and was working on the other one.

“She’s faster than I thought she would be,” I casually commented as I strolled over to the black leather sofa and took a seat. Venom sat on the other end after he poured himself a drink. Ghost sat on the armchair.

“She’s sexy as hell. I never would’ve expected that,” Ghost said. “I’m going to enjoy seeing her naked.”

“I know, right? It’s not going to be easy killing her, though.” I might as well warn them now.

“Yeah, wait until she stabs you,” Ghost reminded me.

Venom finally grinned for the first time. “It’s more fun when they fight. She’s a fighter. We should be able to have a lot of fun with her before we kill her.” He met my gaze, his eyes turning hard. “She’s just like the rest of her family, though. She has no compassion for anyone except herself. She’ll kill any one of us if she gets half a chance. I don’t plan on letting her hurt anyone else in our family.”

“She got her other arm loose,” Ghost casually commented.

Our attention was drawn back to the TV. She sat up in the bed and began to untie the ropes at her ankles. As soon as she was free, she started toward the door, changed her mind, and moved to the balcony.

“It’s a long drop. If she jumps, we might not have to worry about killing her. She’ll do it for us.” I watched as she stepped out to the balcony. After only a moment, she changed her mind and came back inside. Good, I didn’t like the idea of having to scrape up her blood and brains off the concrete patio. Bloodstains were hard to get out. Yes, I knew from experience.

“What do you think she’s going to do now?” Ghost asked.

“I think she will try to go out the front door.” Venom swallowed the rest of his drink.

“Ballsy move.” But I had a better idea. “Keep talking and making noise in here like we’re all three together.”

“Where are you going?” Venom asked.

“To surprise her.”

I left out the side door and moved around to the front of the house. I didn’t have long to wait before the door began to ease open. It was dark on the landing, and she was looking over her shoulder toward where all the noise was coming from as she began to back out the door. She very quietly pulled the door closed behind her. She had the nerve to laugh lightly as if she had gotten the best of us.

Then she turned.

“Going somewhere, little flower?”

She slammed both her fists against my chest and then tried to go around me. I laughed and pressed tight against her with only clothes between us. Her chest heaved from anger. “That’s right, baby girl. I like it when you’re pissed off. I can feel the fire inside you.” I nuzzled her neck, breathing in the sweet scent of her fury. I slowly ran my tongue up the side of her face and felt a sudden change in her. I wondered how far she would let me take this. My hand snaked between our bodies and pressed between her legs, massaging her pussy through her jeans.

She grabbed my wrist, hand shaking. “Please, stop.”

For the first time, I heard something else in her voice that went beyond fear and anger. Uncertainty? I leaned back and looked down into her face. She turned away. I was pretty sure I had my answer.

This made everything more interesting. I smiled, knowing my vindictiveness knew no bounds. I clasped her by the waist, then tossed her over my shoulder. There was a moment of shock when she didn't move, then she began to beat against my back.

“I hate you! I hate you!”

And our wild kitten was back. I chuckled and slapped her on the ass. My hand lingered. Damn, she had a nice ass. “Be still.”

Ghost and Venom had turned off the TV before we arrived, so she had no clue that we had watched her escape from the ropes.

“Be still or I might drop you,” I told her. She stopped fighting. I moved her off my shoulder, but let her body slowly slide down mine. Yeah, she felt damned nice against me. When she was standing on her own two feet, she pushed against my chest, putting distance between us.

Ghost was sitting on the arm of the chair, grinning. Venom walked over and poured himself another drink.

“Nice try,” Venom said as he turned back around. “Now it's time to pay up.” He walked closer to her.

“You cheated!” She backed away from us, but there was nowhere to run.

“How?”

“I don't know how. I just know you did.”

“It's time to pay up,” Ghost reminded her of the wager.

Her lips compressed into a tight line. “Okay, fine.” She unbuttoned her shirt and threw it at him. “Are you satisfied?”

The front of my jeans grew tighter. There wasn’t a whole hell of a lot to her bra. It was pale blue and lacy. The kind that pushed her tits up. Hell, they were practically spilling out of the bra. It didn’t help when she crossed her arms in front of her. It was all I could do to keep from groaning.

“Now what?” she demanded.

I slowly walked around behind her, then stopped in front of her again. “You’re not in a very good position to demand anything from us. You do realize that, don’t you?”

She raised her chin. Damn, she reminded me of a wild kitten I once cornered. The damned thing had scratched me and caused my hand to get infected. Just like that little kitten, Mia was scratching back. We still needed to break her.

“Are you ready to try again?”

“Are you going to tie me up this time?”

I slowly shook my head. “No, I have a better idea.”

“I want to change the rules,” she said.

“I don’t think you’re in any position to change the rules,” Venom told her.

“I know you were already waiting for me. You knew what I would do. Give me thirty minutes where you can’t touch me.”

I stepped closer to her. “Ten minutes,” I said, then lightly traced my fingers across the top of her breasts.

She jumped back, fiercely rubbing where my fingers had been. “Twenty.”

My gaze scraped over her. “Fifteen.”

She drew in a deep breath. Her breasts rose and I could almost see the dusky areolas. Fuck! I wanted to release her breasts and draw each tight nipple into my mouth one at a time. My gaze rose to meet hers. “Okay.”

She smiled and started to the door. As she walked past me, I grabbed her around the waist. “Oh no, little flower. Not so fast.” I practically carried her down the hall and into the bathroom. I didn’t stop there as I backed her against the wall, pressing my body tightly against hers. I nuzzled her neck, then licked up to her earlobe. “You taste damned sweet.” She began to tremble as I stepped away from her. Her eyes had glazed over and she looked confused. I cupped her breast, scraping my thumb over the already tight nipple. Soon, I would either have to fuck her or kill her.

I walked out of the bathroom, closing the door behind me. Let the games begin. I took a key from my pocket. It was a master key and worked on every door on our estate. I put it in the lock and turned it. There was a clicking noise. Just in case, I tested the knob. It would be interesting to see if she got out of there.

“This is cheating!”

I laughed. She would soon realize none of us played fair. It just wasn’t in our nature.

I returned to the living room, joining my brothers. They already had the television on. Unfortunately, we didn’t

have a camera inside the bathroom, but we could see if she happened to escape out the door or the window. It was doubtful she could get the window open. We made sure it was securely locked and difficult to raise.

“You were right about this being fun,” Ghost said. “I’ve been bored as fuck lately. All the women seem the same. They fall over themselves once they recognize me.”

I laughed. “Maybe don’t go to your usual club and don’t drive that hot little sports car. You scream money.”

“Maybe, but I do like the car.”

I was pretty sure he liked the women fawning all over him, too. He was probably right about being bored, though. I think we’d all been feeling that way. We were antsy, waiting for Venom to heal enough so we could pay the Contis back for what they did. Maybe I could make this more interesting for them.

“I figured out something tonight about our little captive.”

Venom’s eyebrows rose. “What?”

“She’s a virgin.”

“You fucked her?” Ghost stopped halfway to pouring another drink. “Nah, you couldn’t have. You weren’t outside that long.”

“You’re right. I didn’t, but all the signs are there. Think about it, I bet her father and brothers guarded her like vultures. They wanted to marry her to anyone who would do them the most good.”



“Luca Castorini,” Venom said.

“Exactly.” I continued. “I think this has just gotten a lot more interesting.”

## Chapter Four

*Mia*

I tried the door, even after hearing the click. And, of course, it was locked. Bastards!

Did they really think that would stop me? I smiled because I knew I wasn't beaten yet. My half-brothers locked me in closets when I was young. As I got older, I decided I couldn't wait around for a servant to let me out. What if they gave them the week off? Yes, they were that evil. Once, they kept me in a closet for three days. I still didn't do well in dark spaces, so I always came prepared.

Angelo had reluctantly supplied me with a computer so I could take some of my classes online. It was cheaper than a full-time, private tutor. I discovered I could learn a lot online—like how to pick locks.

I reached into my back pocket for the pretty blue ink pen I always carried. No one ever thought anything about it. I'd ordered the tools online and no one thought anything about the package that arrived in Angelo's name. Why would they? The pen was light blue and had little butterflies scattered over it. It was something a girl would carry.

Except I wasn't just any girl.

I was my mother's daughter, and she was the strongest woman I've ever known—until she wasn't. She was forced into marrying my father. She hated him as much as I did. He used her as a punching bag and constantly belittled her. His

sons were no better to her. They were ten years older than me—evil bastards.

Too many bad memories. A shiver ran down my spine as I pushed them to the far recesses of my mind, then opened the pen and removed a small tool. I glanced at my watch before I inserted it. I had twelve and a half minutes. It took me another two minutes to pick the lock. I would have to practice more often. I was getting rusty.

I put the pen back in my pocket, then eased open the door. I knew I only had a few minutes to get to the end of the driveway. *If they kept their word.* I was used to people lying to me, so I wouldn't put it past these three men to do the same.

Rather than go to the front door, I went toward the back of the house. They would expect me to go through the front door again. It took me another few minutes to find the back door. Fuck, this place was huge. Even though I didn't let my gaze linger on the furnishings or paintings, it didn't take much of a brain to know these men had money—lots of money.

I slipped outside, then made my way toward the driveway, keeping to the shadows. My heart sank when I saw the length of the lighted drive. I couldn't even see the front gate.

But I was a good runner. A quick look at my watch and my heart skipped a beat. I had four minutes to get to the end before I would be free. I couldn't afford to stay in the shadows and take a chance of twisting my ankle. I moved to the concrete driveway and took off. I'd been running for about three minutes when I heard the dogs barking. I stumbled and

fell. Pain shot down my leg as I hit on my knee. My pulse began to race.

I looked over my shoulder. “What the hell?” They’d turned their fucking guard dogs loose?

And they were getting closer.

“Don’t look back,” I told myself. “Just keep going forward.” I pushed to my feet, but it took a few seconds to regain momentum.

It was getting harder to draw in a deep breath. I could hear the dogs panting and expected one of them to chomp down on my leg at any second. How the hell had my half-brothers and father expected to beat these men? Even separating one from the group had gotten them nothing. Sure, they would make money off the drugs and weapons they took. It wasn’t going to be worth it.

The dogs were getting closer. I stumbled but quickly righted myself.

I glanced at my watch. I only had fifteen seconds to make it to the end. I could feel the sweat rolling down my face, sliding between my breasts.

Almost there!

Only a few more feet.

Seven seconds left.

I was going to make it.

The dogs began to bark and growl. They were too fucking close.

Breathe. Just breathe.

Don't stop.

Three seconds.

Two seconds.

One second.

I was...

Ghost stepped from the shadows, blocking me from stepping over and into freedom. I was still moving forward and slammed into his rock-hard body. It didn't faze him.

"No! No! No!"

"Did you think you would escape this time?"

His words were angry, as if I was the one who beat his brother and left him to die in the burning warehouse. My energy drained from me as I sobbed my frustration. I pushed away from him.

"Fine! Sic your damned attack dogs on me. I don't give a fuck!"

"The dogs are pinned," he said. "You lose again."

"Okay, so you won. I lost. I've been losing all my life so I guess this doesn't matter. You want an article of clothing? Fine." I pulled off a shoe and threw it at him. He dodged, and it landed in the shadows somewhere. I pulled off my other shoe and threw it at him. Next, I unfastened my jeans and pushed them down, then kicked out of them. "There, are you satisfied? You want to kill me? Go ahead. I don't fucking care anymore!"

He started walking toward me. I was sobbing hysterically, but I couldn't seem to stop myself. This was it.

He was probably going to choke me to death. Except he surprised me and picked me up in his arms, cradling me against his chest as he started walking back toward the house.

“I hate them, too,” I murmured. “You’re not the only one they’ve hurt.” I was so fucking tired of everything that I didn’t care what they did to me anymore.

As we approached the house, the door opened.

“Is she still alive?”

“If you’re asking if I killed her, then the answer is no. I think we wore her out. She’s cold. Get a blanket.”

He was right. I was shivering, but I think it was more from everything that had happened. I guess I wasn’t as strong as I thought I was. I’d had very little sleep the last four days. I’d been trying different ways to escape before my impending marriage to Luca. I even managed to get out of the house one night, but Dirk caught me and forced me to go back inside. Everything had finally caught up with me.

Ghost carried me into the living room and wrapped me in the blanket that Reaper handed him before he set me in one of the side chairs. I sank into the comfy leather but knew not to get too comfortable. Yeah, like what the fuck was I going to do? Run?

I glanced up, locking gazes with Venom. His anger and hate so intense I looked away. I could see the indecision in Ghost’s eyes before he turned to the others.

“We shouldn’t have taken her. Our war isn’t with women and children.”

Was this a new game they were playing? Another kind of torture?

“It’s your call. What do you want to do?” Reaper asked, looking at Venom.

Venom scraped his fingers through his thick hair, thinking. He blew out an exasperated breath. “I don’t know. Take the bitch home.”

My exhaustion quickly evaporated as a burst of new energy flowed through my body. “No, I would rather you just kill me. I won’t go back.”

Reaper laughed. “We don’t want you, little flower, and you can’t stay here. We don’t provide safehouses for runaways.”

“I didn’t run away. You kidnapped me. If I go back, I’ll still be joining two powerful families. Do you want me to marry Luca? You were right when you said it would make my half-brothers and father more powerful.”

“She’s right about that,” Ghost said. His gaze landed on me and a shiver of fear rippled over my body. “We can’t let that happen. Maybe we should just kill her. She’s becoming more trouble than she’s worth.”

I knew he meant what he said. I had to give them a reason to keep me here and not kill me. “I have information that will help you take down my family.”

Venom had started pacing but stopped and moved to stand in front of me. He squatted so that we were eye to eye. “And why would you do that?”

“Dirk and Enzo are my half-brothers. They hated it when their father was forced to marry my mother. It was an arranged marriage. My father and mother despised each other. He’s a cruel bastard. If my mother hadn’t gotten pregnant with me, I think he might’ve killed her. But you know as well as I do that children are a commodity in our world. The men run the family business and provide muscle. The women are used to join and strengthen families.”

“What’s your point?”

“My mother couldn’t have any more children after I was born. She became a liability. She did the best she could by me, but she finally couldn’t stand up to their torture anymore. I was ten years old when she blew her brains out. My protector was gone, and if anything went wrong, I was blamed. I hate them just as much as you do.”

“We keep her for now,” Reaper said.

Venom came to his feet and walked over to a small bar in the corner. “I don’t like it. I don’t trust her.”

“I didn’t say we had to trust her,” Reaper said. “But she’s right about one thing. She can’t marry Luca if she’s with us.”

He worried me more than the others, including Venom. I wasn’t sure why. Gut instinct, maybe?

“Stand up.”

My legs trembled as I came to my feet, but I raised my chin and met his gaze. I would cower to no man.

He jerked the blanket away, leaving me standing in my panties and bra. My first instinct was to cover myself, but I



forced my arms to stay at my side.

His gaze raked over me, then raised to meet the anger in mine. “Nice. If we keep you with us, we’ll require payment.”

He was a son of a bitch!

He fingered the lacy edge of my bra, running the tip of his finger along the edge.

“Fine!” If it would keep me away from my family, then I’d give him my bra. I ignored the heat that flowed over me. No man had ever looked at me the way Reaper looked at me right now. Or touched me the way he did. I reached around to my back and unhooked my bra, then let it fall to the floor.

Embarrassment was the heat that now flooded my body. Reaper stepped back, his gaze on my breasts. He reached forward, cupping one in his palm, lightly brushing his thumb over the nipple, which quickly stiffened. The heat moved to my pussy, creating an ache so intense I gasped.

“See how she responds,” he said.

He acted as if I couldn’t hear him.

“Your ring, too.”

Now, he just confused me. It was the Conti family crest. I hated it anyway. I removed the ring and laid it on the end table.

“Now, take off the panties.”

I moved back until my legs bumped into the chair.

“Take them off,” he repeated, “That’s the price of staying here. We have to make sure you’ll be worth our time.”

“I still think we should send her back a piece at a time.” Venom sat on the arm of the sofa, casually drinking a whiskey.

“You heard what he wants to do,” Reaper said. “Take them off, or Ghost and I will walk away and let Venom finish this. It’s your choice.”

If looks could kill, Reaper would be dead right now, but they couldn’t, and that was the only weapon I had. Someday, I would make him pay. They all would.

I shoved my panties down, then kicked them away from me. I continued to glare at him. I tried to tamp down my emotions and not feel anything, but I couldn’t help seeing the appreciation in his eyes. In all their eyes. Or feel the heat of desire warming my blood. I had to get out of here. I didn’t know what was happening to me, what I was feeling. That probably scared me more than anything.

“Can I go now?” I hated that my words trembled.

Reaper let his gaze wander down, then lightly ran his fingers through the curls between my legs. “Or you can stay.”

I wasn’t stupid. I knew what he was implying. I shook my head.

“Then walk away, little flower, before I change my mind. Don’t try to run or there will be consequences.”

I wanted to tell him to go fuck himself, but I was afraid I was pushing my luck. I ran from the room and hurried up the stairs. Once there, I crawled beneath the cover and pulled it up to my chin. My whole body shook.

What was happening to me? Why had my body responded to his touch? I closed my eyes tight. I'd been kidnapped from one prison only to end up in another, but I feared this one would be much worse.

I had to escape. Somehow, someway, even if I had no place to go.

## Chapter Five

### *Reaper*

“She’s got spirit,” I said.

“She has a fucking hot body,” Ghost said.

“Fucking is all you ever think about.” Venom frowned at his brother, who was only a few years older.

Ghost shrugged. “Yeah, pretty much, and killing the Contis.”

They looked at me. I knew they wanted to know my plans. Dammit, I was the one who led the family. Truth be told, I wasn’t exactly sure what to do with her either. “I didn’t know she was going to be a virgin.” I voiced my thoughts out loud.

“That’s two strikes against her. I don’t care for virgins,” Venom said. “I damn sure don’t fuck virgins. I’ll take experience over popping a cherry any day. Like Nikki Benton.” He grinned. “Man, she can suck a golf ball through a water hose.” He frowned. “Ask a virgin to suck your cock and they practically throw up, but they damn sure don’t mind you sucking their pussy.”

He looked up from the sofa. We were both staring at him.

“What? I like having my cock sucked. So sue me.”

Ghost started laughing, and I joined in. Damn, I loved my brothers.

“What *are* we going to do?” Ghost flopped down on the chair.

I casually walked over and picked up the ring Mia laid on the table. I ran my thumb over the Conti family crest.  
“We’re going to send the Contis a present.”

Ghost frowned. “What kind of present?”

“Mia’s finger with her ring still on it.”

“Ouch!” Ghost grimaced.

“Don’t worry, brother, I’ll cut off her finger,” Venom offered.

“We are not cutting off her finger. You two are going to the morgue while I guard her.” I opened my hand with the ring on my palm. “Find someone who can wear the ring and take their finger.”

Ghost came to his feet. “I hate the morgue.”

“Why do you get so damned squeamish at the mere mention of going there? I’m the youngest. I should be the one who doesn’t like that sort of thing.”

“I don’t know. Remember Jeffry? The guy who thought he could get in good with the feds and get his charges dropped by ratting us out? I think it started when I cut off his balls.” He reached down and grabbed his balls. “Man, he bled a lot, and I didn’t think he would ever stop screaming. When he finally died, his damn eyes wouldn’t stay closed. The sheet slid off him at the morgue and he stared up at me with cold, vacant eyes. Haven’t liked that place since.”

“You sure some girl didn’t give you the clap?” I asked.

“No, definitely not.” He frowned. “At least, I don’t think so.”

“How many women have you been with in the last week?” I asked.

Ghost shrugged. “I don’t know. Maybe fifteen or so. Not that many.”

“Not that many?” Venom laughed. “Come on, let’s go.”

“I used a fucking condom,” he grumbled.

I was still smiling as they walked out the door. It wouldn’t be hard for them to get a finger off an already dead woman. We’d slipped more average joes into the morgue than we cared to count. We paid the attendants very well to look the other way. It beats having to get rid of the body. Practically all the ground in the San Antonio area was rock after the first two layers of dirt. Trying to dig a grave in rock with just a shovel was not fun.

When we met up with our Louisiana cousins, it was much simpler. Just dump the body in the swamp and let the gators take care of the rest. I hated alligators, though. Ugly fucking prehistoric-looking beasts. Our cousins loved them. One of our distant relatives, by marriage, even made a fucking pet out of one of the creatures. I was pretty sure he wasn’t quite right in the head.

Our cousins were...different, but we always had a good time when we all got together. Maybe when this was over, we might head down to the bayou and meet up with them. Or maybe go to Dallas. Scorpion and his cousins, Undertaker and Lynx, ran the North end of Texas and were

good about transporting the product we got in from Galveston and El Paso. They were a little more civilized. Maybe I would make that happen—after we took care of the Contis.

I turned on the TV and leaned against the back of the sofa. Mia huddled beneath the cover. I knew it was her and not pillows because I could see the gentle rise of the cover. Was she asleep? Maybe she'd like some company. The thought of crawling into bed with her made my cock hard.

I heard Ghost and Venom take off in one of the cars and ran a weary hand across my forehead. When they returned, I was going to get some much needed sleep.

Mia flung the covers away, sitting straight up in bed. The thought of sleep flew out the window. Damn, she had a sweet pair of tits. Just the right size. She jumped out of bed and hurried to the window. My gaze lowered. Nice ass, too. She slowly turned. I reached down and rubbed the front of my jeans as the ache to fuck her began to build inside me.

She looked from side to side, then slipped out of the room bare-assed naked and hurried down the hall. She hesitated in front of my bedroom door, then slipped inside. What the fuck was she doing? Searching for a gun? She wouldn't find it.

A moment later, she came out wearing one of my T-shirts. A shame. She looked better naked.

I smiled because she thought we were as dumb as her family and left her here alone. She was planning on escaping. This should be fun.

She hurried down the staircase and slipped out the front door.

I slowly came to my feet and walked down the hall into the kitchen. The door off the kitchen went into the garage. I nodded to the cook. Her name was Mary, and she was the wife of one of the men who patrolled the grounds.

She smiled back. I whistled under my breath as I pulled my keys out of my pocket, slipped the ring over my finger, and swung the keys lightly against each other. Damn, I hadn't had this much fun in a long time. I twirled the keys around my finger.

I loved my car. It was a cherry red Porsche 911. I slid into the beige leather seat on the driver's side. I closed my eyes for a moment and enjoyed how it cupped my ass. That was the great thing about being filthy rich. I could buy any damned thing I wanted.

I inserted the key and then turned it. The engine purred to life like a satisfied cat. The car was my pride and joy. I pulled out of the garage and stopped.

"She went straight down the drive," Paco said.

"Thanks." I'd already told the staff not to try to stop her. They never questioned me. We had several men who patrolled the grounds and servants who came in daily to clean. They were very discreet, but then, we made sure they were also paid very well. Enough so they were extremely loyal, and maybe, just a little afraid of what we would do if they betrayed our trust.



I started down the driveway, not in any hurry. I knew Mia wouldn't get far. When I didn't see her, I frowned. Her jeans weren't in the middle of the driveway either, so she'd taken time to pull them on. Okay, she was faster than I'd thought. She still wouldn't be able to get away.

The thing about this property was that it didn't end at the driveway. It was still several miles farther before you got to the main gate. It was always kept closed, and there was a twelve-foot fence around the main part of our property. Plus, Mia would have to get past the guard. That wouldn't happen. I topped the next low hill and spotted her.

She heard the car and stopped, whirled around, and backed up a couple of steps. She looked from one side to the other, trying to decide which way to run. When she started toward a thick stand of trees, I hit a switch, and dogs began to growl and bark. She backed up.

Not that we had any dogs. But we did have speakers placed strategically around the property. I stopped the car a few feet away from her, then rose up on the back of the seat, casually crossing my arms in front of me.

"You said I would be free if I could get to the end of the drive."

"Did we not mention you're still on our property, and this is still our drive?"

Something similar to a growl came out of her. She stomped her foot. "I hate you!"

She looked around on the ground, then picked up a rock and threw it at me. It hit the car.

Oh no, she didn't just do that. Anger began to build inside me as I got out of the car and started slowly walking toward her. She looked around on the ground and picked up another rock, throwing it at me. I dodged it. She picked up another rock and threw it. This one hit me in the chest. Son of a bitch, she had a good arm.

As if suddenly realizing her mistake, she whirled around to run, but it was too late. I grabbed her around the waist and hauled her backside against me. I almost groaned when her ass brushed across my cock. I was already as hard as the rocks she'd been throwing.

“You hit my car with one of the rocks. I love my car almost as much as my brothers. You really shouldn't piss me off.”

“I hate you! I hate all three of you! The first chance I get, I'll kill all of you!”

She kicked backward with her foot hitting my shin. Mother fucker! I dodged her teeth when she tried to bite my arm and she almost got away.

“Dammit, be still!”

“Let me go and I will!” she spat.

“Not going to happen, little flower.”

“I'm not your fucking little flower!”

She kicked out at me again. Okay, I'd had enough. She was pissing me off. I stopped at the end of my car and sat on the hood, then bent her across my legs. My hand came down hard on her ass. She stilled. My hand came down again, but this time it lingered.

“You hit me!” she threw the angry words at me.

“Then learn to behave.”

She bit my thigh.

I grabbed a fistful of hair and jerked her head up.

“Ow! That fucking hurts!” She came to her feet again, but I didn’t let go. Her eyes were blazing fury. She looked ready to fight it out with me.

“Really? You want to go up against me?”

“Any day, any time.” She swung at me.

I grabbed her arm, and she fell against me. I couldn’t stop my laughter, which only made her more furious. When she tried to squirm away, I wrapped my legs around her so that she was pinned against me and couldn’t move.

Still, she raised her free arm and reared it back, about to come at me again. I grabbed it. Her body flattened against mine. She was breathing hard, her breasts rising up and down against my chest. My cock began to ache. She took one look into my eyes and stilled.

“Don’t even think about it,” she warned.

“Think about what? This?” I slid one hand under the T-shirt, cupping her bare breast, brushing my thumb across her tight nipple. She drew in a quick breath and tried to squirm away. Her pupils dilated. I watched her as I brought my other hand under the T-shirt and fondled her breasts. I saw the confusion in her eyes.

“Stop,” she mumbled. There was no conviction in the word.

In one swift motion, I pulled the shirt over her head and tossed it to the side. “Stop what? This?” I lowered my head to one breast and sucked the nipple inside my mouth, teasing with my tongue, scraping across it. A shudder swept over her as her hands moved to my hair.

“Please, don’t do this,” she begged.

She might have meant to try to pull my head away. But instead, her fingers tangled in my hair. I massaged her other breast. Dammit, it fit right in my palm, firm but soft. I brushed my thumb across the tight nipple and pinched it lightly.

She moaned. She wasn’t pushing me away any longer. I moved my hands down to the button of her jeans and pushed it through the buttonhole, then tugged the zipper down. I shoved my hands inside the jeans and cupped her ass, bringing her closer to my erection.

Ahh, fuck, she felt good. I shoved her jeans down and moved my hand around to her pussy. She grasped my shoulders, her breathing already ragged, as I began to fondle and stroke between her legs. I lowered my head to her lips, licking across hers before I plunged my tongue inside her mouth. She tasted hot and sweet and a little like cinnamon.

She ran her hands down my back, caressing, then cupping my ass. She might not be experienced, but she had good instinctive moves.

“Please,” she begged.

“Not yet, sweetheart.” I flipped her around so she was lying on top of my car. It was just the right temperature. Not too hot, not too cold. I looked down at her, then cupped her

breasts, pinching the nipples as I moved between her legs. She squirmed her ass on top of the car. “What do you want?”

Her eyes were only partially closed. “Fuck me.” Her words were breathy, and she was already raising her hips up and down just a little.

But I wasn't ready yet. I wanted to taste her. I lowered my head between her legs and breathed in her scent. Fucking sweet. Then I licked up her slit. She tasted just as good.

She cried out. “Oh fuck! Son of a bitch!”

I sucked her inside my mouth, teasing with my tongue.

“Oh God, don't stop,” she cried.

She squirmed her pussy against my face. I knew she was getting close. I slid my hands under her ass, bringing her closer to my mouth. She cried out, her body quivering as she came. Now she was ready for me to pop her cherry.

I unfastened my pants and shoved them down. I couldn't wait any longer. I had to feel myself buried deep inside her. I slid my fingers down my cock, smearing the cum on the tip, making it slick before I positioned my cock. Before her last quiver died, I moved inside her.

Her eyes opened wide. “That hurts,” she whimpered.

“Only for a moment, baby.” I met slight resistance and shoved a little harder, breaking past the barrier. I could feel her blood coating the end of my cock. Venom might not like to fuck virgins, but I fucking loved it.

I shoved my hand between our bodies and began to massage her clit. Her eyes drifted closed, and when she started

to relax, I slowly moved in, then out almost all the way. I kept my movements slow, even though my cock burned with the need to fuck her hard, but that would come later.

Fuck, she was sweet the way the walls of her pussy closed around my cock, massaging me. It was all I could do to hold back. When I knew I wasn't hurting her any longer, I moved a little faster. "Wrap your legs around my waist," I commanded.

She didn't hesitate, but brought her legs up, closing around my waist. I looked down into her face. She stared back at me, angry as a wet yellow jacket. There was more, though. I saw the passion and the fire that had been denied her for so long.

I sank deeper inside the heat of her body. She was slick from coming a moment ago. It was like plunging inside liquid fire. Son of a bitch, she was tight. I drove in a little harder, faster. She grabbed my ass and held on.

Then she began to meet my thrusts. Her pelvis slamming into mine.

Our ragged breathing echoed over the quietness of the night.

Fuck, I was getting close, but I held back. I wanted her to come again. I wanted her to know that she belonged to us now and we could do whatever the fuck we wanted to her.

When her body tightened, I finally let go. Damn, she was the sweetest fuck I'd ever had. I sank down to her, our bodies crushing together.

“I fucking hate you,” she said. “I’ll never stop hating you.”

I began to laugh. Fuck, she had a great sense of humor.

“Liar,” I said.

## Chapter Six

*Mia*

I hated them all! Especially Reaper.

He picked me up and deposited me in his car on the passenger side, then tossed my clothes at me. When I glared at him, he only grinned. I yanked his shirt over my head but didn't bother putting on the jeans.

I needed a shower. I could feel him on me, his musky scent, his brand. Every time I moved, his cum leaked out of me, reminding me of what we had just done. It had nothing to do with the fact he'd taken my virginity. I'd wanted to lose it for a long time now. I just never expected it to happen this way. I was furious!

He started the car and turned around in the middle of the road. I looked out my side of the vehicle. With the top down, a welcome breeze blew across me, cooling my still heated skin.

I knew why I was pissed. My anger wasn't just at him, but was directed at myself. Every part of me still tingled from his touch. The way his mouth felt on my pussy, his tongue slowly licking up my slit before sucking me inside his mouth and teasing me with his tongue.

Then the thrust of his massive cock inside me, massaging the inner walls of my pussy and igniting a fire deep inside me, making me want him to take me, to make me his. A shudder rippled over me.



I closed my eyes and tried not to think about having sex with Reaper, but it wasn't easy. I admitted to myself that I enjoyed every moment of it. I never thought fucking could be so incredible. No, it was more than that. He'd taken me to the top of the mountain. High enough that I could almost touch the stars. He had me soaring across the night sky.

I'd always heard it would be extremely painful the first time, and it had hurt, but not as bad as I'd expected. My thighs clenched. I'd never lost control like that, even when I masturbated late at night. That was pretty good, but nothing like this.

Once, my nanny caught me fingering myself. She made me dip my hands in hot sauce. After that, if I touched myself, it burned like a son of a bitch. I'd gotten even, though. I'd stolen Enzo's wallet and hidden it in the nanny's dresser. No one, not even the maids, were allowed in his room unless he was right there with them.

Enzo and Dirk had been in the living room, and Enzo was pacing, his face creased with worry. They'd stopped talking when I entered, but I'd heard enough to know he couldn't find his wallet. I would've let him stew any other time, but I didn't want my plan to go awry. I casually asked why the nanny had gone into his room earlier that morning.

He found his wallet.

I didn't even feel bad when she was told to pack her bags after Enzo slapped her. I probably should've felt a little guilty, but I didn't. I had one motto: don't ever fucking cross me. I *will* get even. Nanny had been a bitch. She took great

pleasure in punishing me. It was almost as if it was her way of getting back at me because my family had money.

She always said I should be more grateful for what I had, and of course, I had so much. Well, I wasn't going to pretend when I hated every minute of my life. I would've gladly traded places with her.

Now, Reaper and his brothers had crossed me. Then I let Reaper fuck me, take my virginity. What was wrong with me? I'd given in to my baser instincts and became nothing better than what they were—rutting animals, fucking out in the open.

We'd fucked on top of his car, no less! I'd been completely naked with my legs locked around his waist. I closed my eyes as images filled my mind. My thighs suddenly clenched as heat washed over me.

I couldn't want to have sex again so soon, could I? What did that make me?

But I already knew the answer. I was a slut.

I needed to find a way to get out of here as soon as possible. I'd steal some money first. If I could make it into town, I could catch a bus. I didn't even care where I went, just so I could get the hell out of here.

My situation was every kind of fucked up. I didn't want Reaper to fuck me again! I didn't!

Reaper pulled inside the garage. I was already starting to get out before he shut off the engine. I hugged my jeans close to my chest as I hurried inside the house. A woman in the kitchen looked up as I came in. I froze.

She was probably in her mid-forties with just a few streaks of gray in her brown hair, slim figure, and she wore a pretty blue apron tied around her waist as she brought a pie out of the oven. The warm aroma of apples and cinnamon wafted through the kitchen, reminding me I hadn't eaten much the last few days.

The heat of embarrassment rose up my face. Did she know what happened to me?

She cast a warm smile in my direction.

Something about her smile eased some of the anger inside me. I quickly shook off the unexpected feeling. Who the fuck cared what she thought?

The door opened behind me. I didn't look to see who had come in. I already knew.

I ignored the woman and hurried through the house, making my way to the staircase. I didn't know what else to do but return to the room they had put me in. I felt somewhat safe there. At least it had its own bathroom. I tore up the staircase, then down the hall. I could feel his eyes watching me, but I didn't turn around.

I slammed the door shut, then tossed my jeans on the bed, pulling off the T-shirt, as I went straight to the bathroom. I opened the shower door and turned the water on, but I didn't wait for it to get warm before I stepped beneath the spray.

As soon as the cold water hit my naked skin, I sucked in a breath. It didn't take long for it to warm, though. I closed my eyes as tears streamed down my face. It wasn't supposed to be this way. I was supposed to fall in love someday, and the

man I married would love and cherish me and take care of me, and he wouldn't let anyone ever hurt me again.

That was never going to happen because of my half-brothers and my father. They'd put me in this situation. I was the prisoner, and these three brothers could do whatever they wanted with me until I escaped. I hated them. I hated all of them. I squirted soap on a washcloth and slid it over my body. When I washed between my legs, I gasped. My pussy was sore, but the minute the cloth touched my bare skin, I felt tingles of awareness.

I closed my eyes and continued to touch myself. I could almost feel his mouth on me again, his tongue licking up my slit, then sucking me into his hot mouth. My nipples tightened.

No, I wasn't going there. I immediately pulled my thoughts back to the present.

When I turned around in the shower to rinse my back, Reaper stood in the open doorway. I froze. I hadn't even heard him open the door. Couldn't I even take a shower alone? I still had the sobby cloth in my hand as I stepped out of the shower.

I wanted to wash the smirk off his face. Instead, I threw the wet cloth at him. It landed against his chest with a soggy plop, then dropped to the floor with a wet splat.

"That wasn't very nice."

I swallowed past the lump in my throat. "Get out."

He shook his head. "Why should I? My brothers and I own this house. This is our bathroom. We can come in anytime we want."

I raised my chin. “You don’t own me.”

He laughed. “Don’t we? Your family tried to kill Venom. They beat him, tortured him for hours, then left him tied up in a burning warehouse. It’s a miracle he made it out alive.”

“I don’t care,” my words wobbled and lacked real conviction. I wouldn’t wish that on my worst enemy, except my half-brothers and father. Right now, a slow and painful torture wouldn’t be enough payment for everything they’d done to me and my mother.

“You would’ve cared if he’d died.” His expression turned hard. “If he had, you’d be dead right now. We would’ve sent you back in little pieces before we went after them.”

“But he didn’t die,” I whispered.

“Your family still has to pay.”

“Then make *them* pay. Not me.” I hated that tears were filling my eyes.

He walked closer until there were only inches between us. I couldn’t look at him. He put one finger beneath my chin and forced me to look up. I hated everything about him. I hated that he was so fucking hot. I hated how he looked at me with eyes burning from the passion flaring inside him. I especially hated that I wanted him to fuck me again.

“Little flower,” he said.

I reached deep inside me for the anger I knew was still there. “Deflowered, you mean.”

He laughed, his warm breath washing over my chilled skin. “You’re funny.”

“Are you going to kill me?” I knew it was a dangerous question for me to ask.

“Maybe when we tire of you. When you stop amusing us.”

He cupped my breast, squeezing the nipple between his thumb and forefinger. I hated the rush of heat that spiraled downward, but I couldn’t move. This was all too new to me, and it felt too good.

He suddenly released me and walked to the door. He turned before he stepped into the bedroom. “Rest tonight. Tomorrow will be different. Try to run, and I might decide you aren’t worth the trouble and go ahead and kill you.”

My body still tingled with the need for more of his touch, so it took a moment for his words to sink in. Before I could scream my anger at him, he’d turned and left the bedroom, closing the door behind him.

A shiver rippled over me. I turned off the water in the shower, then reached for the towel on the counter and began to dry off, but my thoughts were still on Reaper. His dark blue eyes had raked down my body, bringing it to life once again. I closed my eyes against the strange feelings washing over me. I couldn’t want him. He was the enemy. My body betrayed me, though.

I tossed that towel on the counter and went into the bedroom. I was immediately immersed in the aroma of apple

pie. I closed my eyes for a moment and inhaled before opening them again.

A slice of pie was sitting on a pretty saucer trimmed in tiny blue flowers with a silver dessert fork next to it. Had Reaper brought the pie up? Or the woman in the kitchen? Did it matter? I was starving.

Maybe they drugged the pie? What did it matter? They were probably going to kill me anyway. I might as well die happy. I closed my eyes on the first bite and let the flavors fill my senses. I'd never tasted anything so delicious.

The cook at home didn't know how to cook. Everything was Italian, with lots and lots and *lots* of garlic. So much that it drowned out all the flavors of the food. I mean, I love garlic, but enough already.

My father and half-brothers didn't have a sweet tooth. They like chocolate pudding, and that was all they ever requested. When my mother was alive, she ran the kitchen and made sure there was a variety of dishes.

Of course, my father and half-brothers always complained about what was set on the table. I was around seven or eight when she gave up trying. She let the cook run the kitchen after that. It went downhill from there.

My mother would've loved this pie. The crust was flaky, with just enough flavor to make it as delicious as the apple filling. I smiled at the thought of my mother. She was a beautiful person. I loved crawling up on her lap and her arms going around me. She loved to read me stories.

When I asked her to read me a fairytale once, she said they were only make-believe and that we lived in the real world. Instead, she read from travel books, but in such a way that she made the faraway lands sound beautiful, so I was content with that.

She wasn't perfect, but I missed her. It just got to be too much. She was strong, but they broke her down. They destroyed something beautiful and would've done the same thing to me. I swore no one would ever break me. Yes, I hated them and wanted them to suffer like they made her suffer. I would never forgive them for the abuse heaped upon her, for the tears she shed after a beating, or later, the blank stare in her eyes, as if she'd already gone before she put the gun to her head and pulled the trigger.

I swiped at the tear that escaped. The Barone men thought they were the only ones wanting revenge, but I did, too. My family had been going to force me to marry Luca. He was a son of a bitch. The only people more cruel than him were my half-brothers and my father.

They knew he would make me suffer on our wedding night, and there would be nothing gentle about him taking my virginity. They didn't care. He would've made me suffer for the rest of my life. It didn't bother them as long as they got what they wanted. Women meant nothing to them. I would've ended up doing what my mother did and killing myself.

But that wasn't going to happen. I was going to get away.

I crawled beneath the cover and pulled it up to my chin, suddenly feeling cold. I couldn't live with the Barones



any more than I could live with my own family. As soon as the house was quiet, I would try to escape again. I would never quit trying.

But as I waited, my eyelids grew heavier and heavier. I finally let them stay closed. I would only sleep for a little while, and then I would be ready.

The dreams came as I drifted into a deep sleep. Reaper pulling me closer to his naked body, lips nuzzling my neck as his hand cupped my breast. I moaned, trying to press closer...

## Chapter Seven

### *Reaper*

“Did you get it?” I asked as my brothers came into the family room.

Ghost cocked an eyebrow. “Do you really need to ask? Yes, we got it. There was a dead hooker in the morgue. Her pimp went a little crazy and beat her to death. Gruesome as fuck. I told you I hated that place. At least he didn’t fuck up her finger.”

“I had to be the one to cut it off, though,” Venom supplied. “Ghost was being a pussy.”

Ghost glared at him. “Do you want a fucking trophy or something?”

I decided I’d better stop the argument before it got out of hand. Usually, they got along very well, but they also loved to fight, and I didn’t really feel like breaking up one tonight. I was tired and wanted to go to bed.

“We’ll send the finger to her family tomorrow morning. They probably don’t even realize she’s gone yet. It’ll be a nice surprise for them.”

“Did she try to escape after we left?” Ghost asked.

I smiled as I thought about earlier tonight. “She did.”

Venom frowned. “So spill. What happened?”

“I caught her, and you will be happy to know she is no longer a virgin.”

“And? Do you want to elaborate a little more?” Ghost asked as he went over and poured himself a drink.

“Fuck, she was passionate as hell. I never expected that from her. When she got into the rhythm, she gave as good as she got. And man, was she tight. Her pussy grabbed my cock, and it was so fucking good.” I laughed. “Then she got mad as hell. She definitely has a temper, and I guarantee she’ll try to run again. We’ll have to watch her closely.”

“So, what *are* we going to do with her?” Ghost swirled the liquid around in the glass as he stared down into it.

“Keep her for a while. After that, I’m not sure. After we send the finger, we’ll have to keep Mia close. Her family has to believe we’re torturing her.”

“You’re right,” Venom said. “I want them shaking in their shoes, waiting for us to strike again. Send a note with the finger. Just say, you’re next. Let them wonder which one.” He downed his drink in one gulp and slammed the glass on the counter. His gaze moved toward the staircase. “But since she’s not a virgin anymore, I may pay her a visit tonight.”

“Why is the middle child always last,” Ghost complained. “My cock is so hard now if I bump into anything, it’ll break off.”

“They owe me.” Venom met his gaze.

“You’re right,” Ghost said. He hesitated a moment. “You might want to go easy with her. It hasn’t been that long ago that she *was* a virgin. She’ll probably be sore as hell.”

I smiled. Ghost was more of a lover than a fighter. He treated women like they were priceless jewels. At least, until

he got tired of them and walked away. Then, he didn't want anything to do with that particular woman. Then another beautiful woman would come along—the next shiny object would catch his attention and wouldn't let him look away until he had his fill of her. I was sure it would be the same way when he had Mia. He would soon tire of her, too.

It didn't bother any of us that we were sharing her. It wouldn't be the first time we'd shared a woman, if they were any good. We were like that growing up. We always shared our toys. Right now, that's all she was to us—a toy. But a damned fun one. By the time we finished with her family, we'd probably just let her go. Ghost was right. We usually didn't hurt women or children.

Just thinking about her again gave me an erection. I wanted to crawl into bed with her and fuck her again, but Venom had the right-of-way for now.

Venom set his glass down and started toward the stairs. “You can watch if you want,” he said, referring to the cameras in the bedroom.

“No thanks. I'm going to hit the sack.”

I'm not sure if he heard me or not. He was already pulling his shirt over his head and dropping it to the floor. I loved my brother, but he was a bit of a slob. Not that it mattered. We had enough servants to take care of our needs. They did so silently and efficiently. Most of the time, we didn't realize they were even around.

“Do you think he'll be gentle?” Ghost sounded worried.

I slowly shook my head. “I doubt it. He likes it rough.”

“That’s what I was afraid of.”

“Don’t worry. He won’t hurt her too badly.”

“I hope not. I’d still like to fuck her. Damn, she makes my cock hard just thinking about her. Was she really that good?”

“Better than good. Imagine the best fuck you’ve ever had, then multiply it by ten.”

He groaned. “Fuck, I shouldn’t have asked. I hate going to sleep with an erection. I think I’ll go take a shower and jack off.”

“I really didn’t need that image in my head.”

He chuckled. “Then you shouldn’t have given me the image of you fucking Mia.”

“I’m out of here. See you in the morning.” I set my glass down and started toward the stairs. Venom’s clothes were scattered where he’d dropped them. A shoe on the step, another one halfway up. His jeans at the top, briefs a little farther down the hall.

I glanced up from the trail of clothes. Venom was naked as he opened the door and entered Mia’s room. I couldn’t help but worry just a little. Mia had been tight as hell, and Venom was hung like a bull. But then, the women seemed to flock to him, so he must be doing something right. I went down to my room. Once there, I put in my earbuds. The last thing I wanted to hear was my brother fucking.

Maybe Ghost had the right idea. I thought about it for a minute, then headed toward the shower.

## Chapter Eight

### *Venom*

I stood at the end of the bed. Apparently, she was hot-natured. She'd left the light on in the bathroom so that enough spilled into the room for me to see almost every inch of her.

She was lying on her back with one hand curled near her face and the other down to her side. I began to slowly pull the cover down until she was completely exposed. She shifted slightly, opening her legs just a little. I reached down and rubbed my throbbing cock. Fuck, she was beautiful.

But she was still a Conti.

I should just take what I want. Fuck her brains out, then walk away. Her family had tried to kill me. She was just like them, no matter what she said. Hell, she'd stabbed Ghost. She wasn't to be trusted.

As if a sudden chill washed over her, she shivered, pulled her arm across her chest and under her breasts, pushing them out and toward me as if she silently begged me to taste. At the same time, she shifted her position again, and her legs opened just a little more showing me that delectable pussy. Damn, I loved pussy. It was the sweetest nectar on earth.

She might be a Conti, but she was damned sexy.

I nudged her legs open a little more. Sweet enough to eat. There was no footboard stopping me, so I began the slow crawl of a predator as I made my way between her legs. I suddenly realized I wanted her to enjoy herself as much as I

was going to. I ran my fingers through her curls and up her slit, pressing my thumb against her clit and slowly massaging.

She frowned, still asleep. Then her ass wiggled against the bed and she moaned. That's right, baby. Feel my touch. I slipped a finger inside her. Damn, Reaper was right. She was fucking tight. I began to move slowly, in and then out. Her breathing grew ragged as she clutched the sheets.

“You like that?”

Her eyes fluttered open. She glared at me. “I fucking hate you!”

“Want me to stop?” I knew I wouldn't, and I knew she wouldn't ask me to.

She hesitated briefly.

I paused.

Her gaze narrowed.

“Say it. Beg for it, or I'll walk away.”

“I hate you!”

I chuckled. “I think we've already determined that.”

“Don't stop,” she finally said.

I knew how much it cost her to say the words. I began to move my fingers slowly in and out of her tight pussy, watching her face. I knew exactly when she was getting close to reaching an orgasm.

I stopped.

She cried out. “No!”



She reached down with her hands to finish what I had started, but I pulled them away from her and moved from between her legs. I wasn't through punishing. I moved closer to her face.

"Suck my cock," I told her.

She met my gaze. Her lips pursed, then she moved to her knees almost defiantly.

"Bite me and I'll rip your fucking head off," I warned.

"Would you really?" she asked, looking innocent.

I frowned, hesitating for a moment, then realized she was playing me. My smile was wicked. "Bite me and find out."

As if realizing I *wasn't* playing, she concentrated on my cock. For a moment, she just stared at it. "It's so big," she said almost to herself. She reached a hand forward, shyly, and ran her fingernails up it before grasping it in her hand.

I closed my eyes as the erotic sensations filled me. She wasn't experienced, but what she was doing was arousing me more than any woman ever had. When I opened my eyes, her head was tilted as if she studied my cock. She leaned forward and licked across the tip, then moved back to a sitting position on her knees. She ran her tongue across her lips, as if tasting me again.

"It's kind of salty. Not unpleasant at all."

I groaned. Somehow, she'd turned the tables on me. I'd wanted to punish her, but in her innocence, she was killing me.

She leaned closer, taking me inside her mouth, running her tongue across the tip as she sucked on my cock. I grabbed the headboard with one hand. Fuck, this was good. She grasped my balls in one hand and began to fondle them as she sucked more of me inside her mouth.

“Oh yeah, just like that, baby.”

It was getting harder and harder for me to take a breath as she sucked more of me inside her mouth. How the fuck was she doing this. No one had been able to take all of my cock. They usually choked on it, but she was taking me inside her mouth inch by slow fucking inch. I closed my eyes and let the heat wash down my body.

I began to thrust my hips forward, and it didn't even slow her down. When I thought I would explode, I moved her head away from my cock. I had more that I wanted to do. Later, she could swallow all my cum, but not this time.

“I wasn't through sucking your cock,” she said, looking disappointed.

She surprised me at every corner. Virgins didn't like to suck cock, and I still considered her a virgin. I liked women a little more seasoned. Apparently, Mia wasn't like most virgins. As much as I'd like to spew my cum all over her beautiful face, I had other plans. I scooted until my back was against the headboard then I fisted my cock.

“Straddle me,” I ordered. For a moment, I wondered if she would, but I shouldn't have worried. She liked sex. I was pretty sure I knew what my brothers and I would be doing with her. I had a feeling it would be a while before we tired of

her. She was too surprising. I liked that. Reaper had been right about her.

She straddled my thighs, but rather than impaling her, I pulled her pussy right against my cock. She drew in a sharp breath, closing her eyes. Even her pussy was hot against my cock. It felt damned good. For a moment, we didn't move.

“Rub your pussy against my cock,” I ordered.

Some of her defiance returned, and she glared at me. The lady didn't like taking orders. I would store that information away. I slapped her on the ass. Her eyes widened with surprise, but something else, too. I saw a flare of passion dilate her pupils. That was interesting. She liked pain. I slapped her ass again, and she grabbed my shoulders, moaning. I slapped again and then again. She was starting to breathe hard.

Reaper was right about this going to be fun. I brought my hands around to the front, pinching her nipples. She jerked forward against my cock and I groaned. I took one in my mouth, teasing the tight nipple and rolling the other one between my thumb and forefinger. She tangled her fingers in my hair and then pulled sharply. Yeah, just like that. I fucking loved it.

I lifted her in one motion and impaled her on my cock, then swung my legs over the side of the bed and came to my feet. “Wrap your legs around my waist and hold on, baby, because I'm fixing to take you for a ride.”

Any moment, I expected her to cry out in pain. But she didn't. She licked up the side of my neck and bit my ear, not enough to cause it to bleed, just enough that her action sent

shivers down my spine. I slammed her against the wall and plunged deeper inside her. My lips met hers in a fierce kiss, our tongues sparring, fighting for dominance. I thrust inside her again and again. She was so damned tight.

“More,” she breathed heavily into my ear.

I slapped her on the ass.

“Fuck, yes,” she said. “More.”

We’d created a monster, but what a delectable one she was. Her pussy stretched around my cock. Most women were terrified when they saw how hung I was, but Mia took every fucking inch and still begged for more.

I moved faster and harder, grabbing her ass tight against me and planting my other hand on the wall. Heat flooded my body.

In and out.

Fuck, yes!

In and out.

I bumped against the chest of drawers and whatever was on it crashed to the floor.

In and out.

Deeper strokes.

Wet heat surrounded my cock. God, the friction was fantastic.

In and out.

In and out.

Harder, faster.

She arched her back, screaming as she came. There was nothing like fucking a screamer. I plunged inside her one more time and then yelled as I came. She rested her head against my chest, breathing hard. I felt her tear as it trailed down her cheek. Had I hurt her? For some reason, that didn't sit well with me. I didn't like hurting women. I'd kill the son of a bitch who did.

I raised her enough until she was off my cock, and then cradled her gently in my arms. As I looked down at her face, her eyes fluttered open and she sighed deeply.

“I still fucking hate you, even if I like having sex with you.”

A deep rumble of laughter escaped me as I carried her to the shower, then set her on the counter before turning the water on. When it was warm, I picked her up and stepped inside. For a moment, I just cradled her like that. She felt good against me, but I set her on her feet anyway and grabbed a washcloth. I squirted on a dollop of gel and began to wash us. She flinched when I washed between her legs.

“Sore?” I asked.

She nodded.

“It won't hurt nearly as much when you get used to it.” I sprayed her body, rinsing off the soap. I couldn't resist cupping one breast and playing with the nipple. She grabbed my arm, but not to push it away. Yeah, she was definitely passionate. I stopped because I didn't want her to hurt and she would if we fucked again.

I turned off the water, and we stepped out of the shower. I grabbed a white fluffy towel and began to dry her body. I immediately got an erection. Who the fuck wouldn't? She was sexy as hell. Perfect breasts, slightly rounded hips, and even though she wasn't very tall, she had the longest damned legs. A dancer's legs. When I straightened from drying them, she tentatively reached out and ran her fingers down my cock.

“Is it always like that?”

“You mean hard?”

She nodded, then looked up at me. Her cheeks had taken on a rosy hue. I knew what it cost her to ask, but she was just curious enough that she wanted to know.

I shook my head. “No, only when a beautiful, desirable woman is around.”

She tilted her head and looked at me. “Is that what I am?”

“Very much so. Hasn't anyone ever told you how beautiful you are?”

“Only my mother, but she died when I was ten.”

I frowned. “What about your father?”

She shook her head. “I don't think he even likes me.” She suddenly yawned.

Was she lying? Or telling the truth? I scooped her into my arms again, marveling at how little she weighed, and carried her to bed. “Go to sleep, little flower.” I pulled the cover to her neck and tucked her in.

My hesitation was brief. I had an incredible urge to crawl into bed with her and snuggle close. I rarely slept with a woman, especially if I was sober. There was something different about this one. I wasn't about to let her get under my skin, though. I turned and left the room, closing the door quietly behind me.

As I started down to my room, Ghost opened his door. He studied me for a moment, looking worried.

“I heard her scream.”

I was wondering what was bothering him. I laughed. “Most women do scream when I fuck them. She was no exception. You're going to be in for a treat.” I frowned. “I'd wait until tomorrow. She's going to be sore. Be prepared, though. She loves sex.” I opened the door to my room and went inside, crawling beneath the cover, not bothering to pull it up.

She was a Conti, I reminded myself.

Yeah, that didn't seem to work as much as it had before. I had a feeling all of us would be in trouble with this one.

## Chapter Nine

*Mia*

I rolled over in bed and gasped, reaching down between my legs. Fuck, I was sore. I whimpered as I came to a sitting position, then eased out of bed and made my way to the bathroom. Even walking, I practically tiptoed. It didn't help that I had to pee so damn bad.

*Please don't pee all over yourself*, I silently prayed as I hobbled into the bathroom.

With a grateful sigh, I eased down onto the toilet. Much better. I gasped when I wiped.

What the hell had I done last night? Duh! I knew damn well what I'd done. I just didn't want to think too long and hard about it.

Except memories flooded my mind. First Reaper, then Venom. My cheeks grew warm. I'd been kidnapped, stripped in front of three men, lost my virginity, and been fucked by two men. Reaper had been forceful, but gave me so much pleasure, especially with his tongue.

Venom's fucking was more painful but in an enjoyable, freakish way. I'd never thought I would like pain during sex, but heat spread over me as I thought about how both men had spanked me—and I'd enjoyed it.

I drew in my bottom lip as my hand slipped downward, remembering just how much pleasure they'd given me. My



pussy throbbed. But as soon as I touched it, I whimpered again.

“Ow.” So much for having a little fun this morning.

I stood and noticed a tube of cream on the counter that hadn't been there before. Who came into my room while I slept? That was creepy.

There was a note with it. I picked it up and began to read.

*This will ease the soreness.*

Hmm, I twisted off the cap and sniffed. It didn't smell bad. What if it burned? I'd once smeared mentholated cream in Enzo and Dirk's briefs, then made sure it dried before I folded and returned them to their dressers.

It was the best day of my life. I smiled when I thought back to the day they'd worn them. It had been hot and muggy outside, and as soon as they began to sweat, the cream activated. Talk about setting their balls on fire. They'd been jumping around and screaming bloody murder.

I only did it in retaliation for them using me as a punching bag the week before, all because they thought I'd been in their rooms when they weren't around. I hadn't. Our father had gone into their rooms searching for something. He'd thought it was hilarious that they thought it was me. If I was going to get punished for a crime I didn't commit, I might as well do what they accused me of. The mentholated cream was from a TikTok video I'd seen.

I tentatively applied just a smidgeon of the white cream to my pussy. It had an immediate numbing and cooling effect

and wasn't at all unpleasant. I applied more. I breathed a sigh of relief when the ache began to ease. I owed one to whoever left the cream.

But then again, it was their fault I was sore. I went to the other room, still naked. I'd dropped the T-shirt on the chair, along with the jeans, before crawling under the cover last night. I supposed they would have to do. I couldn't very well stay in this room all day. I needed to make a plan, though. I wasn't about to stay here and be their plaything.

I dropped to the edge of the bed, resting my chin in my hands. Losing my virginity had not been that bad. Hell, I enjoyed it if I was being truthful with myself. I closed my eyes, clamping my legs together as I remembered Reaper's mouth on my pussy again. He had a fantastic tongue.

The door suddenly swung open. I jerked straight up, my arms dropping to my sides. It was Ghost. The only one who hadn't fucked me. I wondered if that was what he was planning to do now. Ghost, thinking he could do what he wanted with me, should piss me off, but unfortunately, it wasn't anger that I was feeling.

He sauntered into the room like he owned it. I frowned. He did own it. I studied him. Out of the three men, he was probably the sexiest. He hadn't quite nailed down the tough exterior like the other two.

There was just something about him that drew me. His hair wasn't just blond. It was different shades—some light, some dark. His eyes were pale blue and seemed to look right into me at times. As though he could see my deepest, darkest secrets.

I guessed him to be about six feet tall, towering over my five feet, five inches. He seemed less serious, more carefree. I had a feeling he was more deadly than the other two put together. Probably because you wouldn't see him coming.

“Get out,” I growled. From his expression, I had a feeling he was more amused than anything.

He walked closer, not stopping until he was right in front of me. He took my arms and pulled me to my feet. I felt his power and knew resisting would do me no good.

He surprised me by lowering his mouth to mine. His kiss was gentle at first, but it ignited a fire within me. I found myself pressing closer to his body as his hand snaked between us, and he massaged my breast, his hand lightly grazing my nipple until it was a hard nub. His other hand came around and cupped my ass, bringing me closer to his erection.

I was breathing hard when he ended the kiss. My legs felt so weak, I leaned against him. After a moment, he moved away, and it was all I could do to stand on my own two feet. I tried to act as if I didn't want him to fuck me, but I was pretty sure I wasn't doing a very good job hiding my emotions.

His gaze roamed over me. “Damn, you look sexy as hell, even dressed in jeans and one of Reaper's T-shirts. Come downstairs.”

I blinked past my confusion. So, we weren't going to fuck?

“Excuse me?” Had I misunderstood?

He smiled as his gaze roamed over me again before our eyes met. “Come downstairs.”

He was deliberately teasing me. I raised my chin. “And if I don’t?” Some of my defiance returned.

He smiled and then ran a finger down the side of my face. “I wouldn’t push your luck if I were you. You have ten minutes.” He turned on his heel and left the room.

My legs trembled, so I sat down on the side of the bed with a hard thump. That had been a threat with a smile. He seemed to take all the energy out of the room with him. For a moment, I couldn’t move.

What just happened? My forehead creased. Maybe he was gay? No, I didn’t think so. He’d definitely had an erection. I was certain men only got them when they wanted to fuck something.

Why hadn’t he? Was this some kind of new way to torture me? Probably.

I glanced at the clock on the bedside table. Now I had seven minutes. What would they do if I didn’t come downstairs in the allotted time? Would all three of them come up and fuck me. The thought of them doing that should have terrified me, but for some strange reason, it didn’t. Even thinking it might be fun probably scared me more than anything.

Maybe that was how they were going to torture me. Make me beg for sex. Yeah, that wouldn’t happen. Not while there was breath left in my body.

I started to laugh. I was a fool. If they fucked me to death, I would probably die happy. I shook my head and came to my feet again. I couldn’t help wondering what their plan

was for me today. My stomach growled. I hoped it involved food because I was starving.

As I walked down the stairs, I looked around. They definitely had money. Lots of money. I stopped and studied one of the paintings on the wall. A Monet. I wondered if it was a print but then decided it probably was the real thing.

Even the wood on the banister was a rich mahogany, shined to a high gloss. It gracefully curved at the bottom. The floor was creamy white marble with inlay in the shape of deep brown diamonds. The whole effect was stunning. I went through the foyer and grimaced. The same foyer I thought I could sneak through, and ended up running right into Reaper.

I was only guessing this was the right direction. I was actually following my nose and the wonderful aromas. That, and I knew the kitchen was this way.

I stumbled to a stop when I reached the dining room. All three of them were sitting at the table. They looked up when I walked inside and surprised me by coming to their feet as if I were their guest rather than their prisoner.

“Please, take a seat and join us for breakfast,” Reaper said, waving to one of the empty chairs.

I took one a little farther away, and he laughed.

I was so glad I could be a source of amusement to him. I pulled out the chair and took a seat. The woman from last night came into the room with a cup of coffee and set it in front of me.

“If you would rather have something else, I can get it for you,” she said softly.

“No, coffee is fine.” I felt terrible for last night and thinking she was part of this family, but even if she was, I couldn’t help but like her. She seemed nice. If my mother had lived, they would have been about the same age. It had been a long time since I’d had a mother figure in my life. I was surprised by the sudden tears that brought. I quickly blinked them away. It wouldn’t do to show weakness around the Barones.

Ghost slid the cream and sugar toward me. I added generous amounts of both, then stirred my coffee and took a drink. I closed my eyes as I savored the taste of the rich coffee. When I opened my eyes, the woman was still there.

“It’s delicious. Thank you so much.”

“You’re welcome, Miss. She rattled off a menu of breakfast items I might like. I selected eggs, bacon, toast, jelly, and orange juice. I felt as if I was dining in a five-star restaurant, not that I ever had. That wasn’t allowed. At least, not for me.

But the coffee was delicious and much better than the brand my father bought. He was a cheapskate and kept a tight rein on the purse strings.

I knew he had money. At least enough to go drinking and gambling all the time. Even as ugly as he was, he had a string of women falling all over themselves to do his bidding. It was the same with my brothers. On the other hand, I had to practically beg for new clothes. I only did that when everything I had became threadbare, or I outgrew them. I hated asking him for anything.

I should've been the one running the household. If I had been, I would've made sure we had better food in the house. But my father wasn't about to let that happen. No, he was stingy. I used to call him Scrooge under my breath. Even Scrooge had redeemed himself in the end. I doubted my father ever would.

Whatever the Barones did to him and my half-brothers, they deserved everything they got. Which brought my thoughts back to my present situation. I quickly glanced up, then lowered my eyes again. They were watching me. Finally, I could take no more.

“What are you planning to do with me? Besides fucking me.”

Venom watched me. “You were right. She's feisty for such a little thing.” He turned back to me with an evil grin. “Maybe we'll strip off your clothes, tie you to the bed, and have our way with you.”

His idea had merit since I'd thought the same thing earlier, but I wasn't about to let him see how much I might enjoy that. “You can let me go. Wow, what a brilliant idea.” I was probably going to get into trouble for my sarcasm, but right now, I didn't really care. I took another drink of my coffee, hating that my hand trembled just a little.

“Or we could just kill her now and be done with it,” Reaper said, his words harsh.

Stupid mouth. It was always getting me into trouble. I'd taken more beatings from my father and half-brothers because of what I said rather than what I did. They had a way

of pushing me to the edge and then kicking me over. Just like Reaper was doing now.

I cocked an eyebrow. “I guess letting me go is out of the question.”

All conversation stopped as the woman came into the room again, carrying a plate of food. She didn’t say anything as she set it in front of me, along with silverware.

“Thank you, Mary. That will be all,” Ghost said.

At least now I knew her name. Mary—I liked that. I took a bite of the fluffiest eggs I’d ever eaten and sighed with pleasure. Mary was an amazing cook. If it weren’t for the other three people at the table, I wouldn’t want to leave. But I did, and the first chance I got, I was out of here.

Even though I focused on my meal, I paid attention to the conversation around me. I had done the same thing with my father and half-brothers. Most of the time, my family ignored me. It was as if I wasn’t even at the table. Because of that, I picked up a lot of information. The location of their warehouses where they kept their product, what shipments were coming in, and their distributors. I knew it might be useful someday, and I had a good memory. If I needed to, I would use it against them. As far as I was concerned, they could go to hell.

Right now, the brothers weren’t saying anything important. Just talk about rebuilding the warehouse my family burned down. Political stuff, like who was running for what office. My mind started to wander when I heard my name, and my ears perked up. Ghost was talking.



“I’m going to take Mia shopping today,” he said.

Excitement skittered through me. I tried to keep my expression neutral, but this could be my chance to escape. I didn’t care that I only had the clothes on my back. I’d make it work.

“Do you think that’s a good idea?” Venom asked. “I don’t trust her.”

I looked up and met his gaze, keeping my expression as innocent as possible. I only hoped I pulled it off. I don’t think he bought it because he was shaking his head.

“She’ll try to run,” Venom warned.

Ghost smiled in my direction. He did have a nice smile. Sexy as hell. It was boyish at times. “You won’t try to run, will you?”

I cocked an eyebrow. “Where would I go? Especially with only the clothes on my back. I definitely won’t go back to my family. I hate them. So no, I won’t run.”

“Promise?” This was from Reaper.

“Like I said, I have no place to go.” Except maybe to Florida. My mother had read me a story about it once. Florida sounded like a beautiful place, with the ocean waves rolling onto the beach. I’d never been to the ocean, even though it was in Houston, where I’d grown up. I’d seen it a couple of times, but that was as close as I’d ever gotten. My mother and I had been prisoners in our own home.

Then, after she died, my father and half-brothers kept me on an even shorter leash. Only because they wanted to

keep me a virgin so they could make a better marriage contract.

The joke was on them since I was no longer a virgin. I doubted Luca would want me now. I was more than okay with that.

“Shopping it is,” Ghost said. “We’ll leave right after breakfast.”

I could almost taste freedom. Damn, I’d love to see their faces when they meet again to discuss how I got away. My looks worked on people every time. They always underestimated me.

It was all I could do to contain my excitement when I climbed in on the passenger side of his car. Man, he had a sweet ride. When I asked, he told me it was a Lamborghini. I’d never ridden in a sports car until Reaper came after me last night. I liked Ghost’s car, too. It was a dark, smoky gray with black seats. And when he turned the key, it roared to life.

The leather seat cupped my ass in luxurious comfort. As he pulled out of the garage, I leaned back, deciding to relax and enjoy the ride. There was nothing I could do about running away right now. I would have to wait until we actually went inside a store.

Ghost didn’t talk much on the ride. That was fine with me. I didn’t have anything to say to any of the Barones. I didn’t start to feel anxious until he parked in front of an exclusive boutique. It was easy to see that the store catered to only the wealthiest people. The manikins in the store window looked richer than I was, which wasn’t saying much.

Sadly, I wasn't feeling quite as brave as I looked at what I wore. I was sure most people didn't go inside wearing only a pair of jeans and a T-shirt several sizes too big.

Ghost must've suspected how I was feeling. "Don't worry. I spend a lot of money here and they won't say anything out of the way to you."

That made me wonder exactly what he was purchasing since it was a women's store. Maybe he was gay. No, I don't think I misjudged him. I had a feeling he was more of a player. When he opened the door to get out, I followed suit. I wished we could've stopped and found my shoes, but there was no telling where they were now.

I could do this. I'd put on a brave front all of my life. I would walk inside the store as if I owned it. But as soon as I walked inside, I knew they would see through my act in a heartbeat. I drew in a deep breath, and the light aroma of lavender filled my space.

The shop was done in light colors. Shades of pink, peach, beige, and pale blue. If I had been dressed better, I might have relaxed. But I wasn't. Still, I raised my chin and cocked an eyebrow as if I always went shopping all the time wearing jeans and a too big T-shirt.

A smiling saleswoman walked up to us. "Mr. Barone, it's been a while since you've been in, welcome." Her gaze drifted to me, the smile still on her face. "And welcome to your friend as well."

She looked as if she saw people dressed like me come inside the store every day. Some of my nervousness dissipated.

“What can I help you with?” she continued.

“She needs a complete wardrobe,” he said without explanation.

“I’m sure we can find something she’ll like.”

When his phone rang, Ghost walked to the side to answer it, and the saleslady turned to me.

“I’m Giselle,” she warmly introduced herself.

“I’m Mia.”

“Do you have anything in mind, Mia?” she asked.

No, I needed to get out of here. I turned slightly and caught my reflection in the mirror. I cringed. I needed something to wear other than what I had on. If I escaped, no one would help me dressed like this. I would be forced to sleep under bridges. That really didn’t appeal to me. But I didn’t have a clue what I would need. Most of the time, my father ordered online, so I’d never really been shopping.

“Not really.” I wandered over to a group of dresses artfully displayed and casually looked at the price tag on one. My eyes widened. Good Lord, it was nine hundred dollars. That was way more than my father spent on me in a year. Surely Ghost didn’t want to spend that kind of money on me. I started to turn and walk over to another group of clothes but then stopped and smiled. It would serve him right if I spent a fortune. I just wasn’t sure what to spend it on.

“Maybe I can be of assistance,” Giselle said. “With your blonde hair and blue eyes, you would look great in something like this.” She held up a pale blue sundress with yellow flowers scattered over it.

I couldn't help feeling a little giddy, even though I knew I wouldn't get to keep everything. Besides, I was supposed to be thinking about running away. I was about to ask if there was a back door when Ghost came up. Dammit, I'd lost my chance. At least this time.

"That's pretty. Why don't you try it on."

I smiled sweetly at him. "Of course."

Giselle gathered underclothes that I could take with me. As soon as I had the dress on, I turned and looked in the full-length mirror. For a moment, I didn't recognize myself. I'd worn pretty clothes before when my father wanted to show me off to prospective suitors. This was different somehow. I slipped my feet into the white sandals before nervously leaving the dressing room. I wondered what Ghost would think. Not that I really cared.

I wish I could've tamped down my pleasure when he looked at me appreciatively, but that wasn't happening. No one had ever looked at me like the Barones. They made me feel beautiful. I had to keep telling myself none of this was real. I was living in the make-believe world that my mother had talked about. The one that didn't exist.

The rest of the morning, I tried on clothes. Everything from casual to semi-elegant to elegant. How long did they expect me to stay with them anyway? This was probably all just a joke to him. I doubted he would spend any money on me, but before we left the store, I was wearing one of the casual outfits, and Ghost was having the rest of them sent to the estate. He hadn't even blinked an eye at the amount of money he'd spent.

It had to be some new way of torture.

# Chapter Ten

*Angelo Conti*

“The wedding will be next week.” I smirked. “Soon, no one will be able to touch us. Even now, the Barones are afraid of what we can do or they would have retaliated. Everyone will soon bow down to me. I spoke with Luca and as soon as he marries Mia, we’ll start talks about taking over the San Antonio area.”

Dirk’s eyes narrowed. “Then we move on to Dallas. I hate those bastards, too. They flaunt their money and parade around like they’re better than everyone else. What kind of names are Scorpion, Undertaker, and Lynx anyway? They don’t fucking scare me.”

“I don’t know,” Enzo said as he straightened in his chair. “I’ve heard they’re pretty badass.”

“You getting cold feet?” I asked. I’ve spoiled my boys. I know that now, but they’ll do anything I ask. Sometimes I just had to remind them I was in charge, and if they wanted to keep their fancy sports cars and the women they liked to fuck, then they’d do as they were told.

Enzo frowned. “No, I’m not. I want to take them all down as much as you do. We need more cash flow. The only way to get it is by adding to our territory.”

Yeah, he’d better not be getting soft. I didn’t raise no pussies. He’d fight alongside me and Dirk or suffer the

consequences. Not that I really thought he would back down. I raised this kid right.

When one of the servants came into the room, we looked toward him.

My eyes narrowed. “I thought I said we didn’t want to be disturbed.” No one went against my orders.

The man shuffled closer. “A box was delivered, sir. The messenger said it was urgent that you got it as soon as possible.”

A box? I wasn’t expecting anything. “Well, where is it. Bring it here and get the hell out.”

The man hurried over and set the small box on the table before he scurried out like the scared little mouse he was. I needed to get rid of all our servants and hire new ones. These were getting lazy.

I reached for the small pink box tied with a pink ribbon. Maybe someone had gotten the wrong address. I pulled on the ribbon until it fell away, then lifted the lid. It took a moment for what was inside to register.

“What is it?” Dirk asked.

I recognized the ring immediately. I looked around the dining room table. “Where’s your sister?”

Enzo shrugged. “How the hell should we know?”

I shoved the box toward him. “Maybe you should start knowing,” I growled. “If I’m not mistaken, that’s her finger.”

“Fuck me! How the hell did they get to her? She’s always guarded.” Dirk jumped to his feet and hurried toward



the staircase. He took the steps two at a time. A few minutes later, he returned. “She’s not in her room, and it doesn’t look like she slept in her bed last night. How the fuck did they get in?”

“There’s a piece of paper under the finger,” Enzo said, reaching for the box. He dumped the finger on the table. It rolled closer to Dirk. Dirk backed up a step as Enzo pulled the piece of paper out.

“What does it say?” I asked.

The color drained from his face.

“Well?” I prodded.

He shook his head. “It just says, *you’re next*. It doesn’t say who exactly.” He glanced at the finger on the table. “Fuck, they cut off her finger. How the hell did they know we were the ones who raided their warehouse and killed their brother?”

“Mia probably told them,” I snarled. “I couldn’t trust her mother either.”

“Now what are we going to do?” Dirk grabbed the back of the chair, knuckles turning white as he waited for me to tell them what we would do.

Sometimes I wondered if my youngest son had even one working brain cell. He never could think for himself. Someone always had to tell him what to do. But he was still my son.

“We don’t know that Mia didn’t contact them somehow, and she’s helping the Barones,” I told him.

“I bet she’s not a virgin anymore, either. Luca might not want her now. Especially since she’s missing a finger.” Dirk frowned. “If she was working with them, why would they cut off her finger?”

“Because you can’t trust them, dumbass,” I spat. “She probably thought they would give her everything she wanted. I should’ve pushed her head under when I threw her in the pool that day. Girls are useless except to trade. Now, she’s less than useless. No one will want her now.”

I reached into my pocket and pulled out my phone when it began to ring. Unknown. Unknown, my ass. I knew exactly who was calling. I answered and began to talk. “You have my daughter.”

Laughter. “So, you got the package. We’re going to send you a present every day. A little piece of her at a time.”

“I don’t give a damn about that. Keep her for all I care. She’s worthless to me now.”

Silence for just a moment.

I laughed. They thought they had me. “Don’t even try to come after us. We killed one brother. We don’t mind killing the rest of you and taking over your territory.”

“You mean the brother I’m sitting beside right now?”

It took a moment for his words to register. “You’re lying.”

Another brief silence.

“Hello, Angelo.”

“Venom?”

“I remember everything about that night, you son of a bitch. One of your sons wanted to put my head on the stake outside the warehouse. You thought I would die a slow and painful death when you left me alive, tied to a chair in the burning warehouse. That didn’t happen. Now we’re coming after you and your boys. Mia was just the start of our war with you.”

“Then bring it on.” I slammed my fist down on the table. It trembled beneath the force.

“You’re brave now, but you’ll never see us coming.”

The phone went dead. I slammed mine down on the table, cracking the screen.

“If they want a fucking war, I’ll give them a fucking war.”

# Chapter Eleven

## *Ghost*

Venom said not to trust Mia. He didn't have to worry about that because I didn't. Her expressions of innocence didn't fool me for a minute. She might be in league with her family, and she might not. I knew this because I'd perfected that game over the years. People always underestimated me. That was their first mistake.

Reaper was the smart one. The planner. The one who always found the backdoor. Venom was pure muscle. The fighter. Thank God he didn't know the meaning of giving up. It just wasn't in his vocabulary. I was the negotiator. I could finesse a deal so they thought they were getting the best of us, but yeah, that would never happen. Most of the time, it was a good deal for both parties.

But what I wanted right now was for Mia to open up. I was just curious enough that I wanted to know more about her. The only way I could do that was to get her talking. She was still young and inexperienced so I could guide her in the right direction.

“Have you ever been to San Antonio?” I casually asked.

“I've never been out of Houston.”

I couldn't tell if she was lying or not. I doubted her words, though. “Ever?”

She shook her head.

I didn't like Mia's family. The few times we'd done business together, I sensed they would cheat their own mother at the first opportunity. I nor my brothers ever trusted them. Apparently, with good reason.

I had a feeling Mia wasn't like the rest of her family, but I needed to know for sure. That's why I'd brought her away from the estate today. I was doing what I did best—finding her true character. I glanced across the seat of the car. She seemed curious about where we were going, but not curious enough that she wanted to question me. She was stubborn.

“Where did you go to school?” I finally asked.

“I was homeschooled.” She suddenly frowned. “But I'm not stupid. I had a very good education.”

“Like what?”

“I'm not sure I understand what you're asking,” she said.

“Tell me about your studies.”

She shrugged. “Just the usual, I suppose. Reading, writing, and some math. Most of my classes were in decorum.”

I chuckled, which earned me a glare. Yeah, she hadn't excelled in that area. I cleared my throat. “Tell me more.”

“I took dance lessons some ballet, but I wasn't very good at ballet. Piano lessons. How to run a household, although my father didn't let me put any of it into practice. He was very tightfisted when it came to money and didn't want

me to spend any of his. He liked how his manager ran things and didn't want me messing everything up."

I immediately knew what her father was training her for – to be the perfect wife for Luca or whoever was willing to pay the right price for his daughter. Unfortunately, this wasn't the first time I'd seen this happen. Mafia families were notorious for marrying their daughters off to influential men so they could increase their stronghold. My parents hadn't been like that. They married for love.

"What about your brothers?"

"Half-brothers," she corrected. "What about them?"

"How was your relationship with them?"

Her eyebrows drew together. "Why should you care? I'm your prisoner, not your best friend."

Stubborn and feisty. "Maybe I just want to get to know you better."

She leaned back against the passenger door and crossed her arms. "So you'll know what to put on my tombstone after you kill me?"

I laughed. Reaper was right when he said she was funny. "Humor me."

"I hate them. They were mean and cruel. Do what you want to them. I don't care."

"And your father? You're not daddy's little girl?" For just a moment, I thought I saw a deep sadness enter her eyes, but just as quickly, it was gone.

“No, I’m definitely not daddy’s little girl. Can we stop with the twenty questions? Let’s just get to the nut-cutting. I hate my family. Kill them, don’t kill them. I don’t fucking care.”

And she had a mouth on her. She’d probably picked up the language from her brothers, correction, half-brothers. I couldn’t blame her for not liking them. I didn’t like them either. The few times we were at the same function, I could see the cruelty in them. It was hard for them to disguise. It made me wonder what her life was like growing up in that household.

Then we came along and kidnapped her. I shouldn’t have felt guilty, but I did. Not that I trusted Mia any more than I did.

“You know, I was telling the truth when I said I could help you take them down.”

Now she had me curious. “How so?”

“They always talked business at the dinner table. I know the location of their warehouses. I know when their shipments come in. I’ll tell you if you promise to let me go.”

“Are we negotiating?”

“Yes, we are.”

“I’ll need more from you than the location of warehouses or times of shipments for my promise to let you go.” I watched as her cheeks took on a rosy hue. Reaper and Venom said she was a passionate woman. It didn’t matter. She was still innocent in a lot of ways.

“You’ll take it anyway,” she whispered, turning and looking out the window.

I pulled into a garage and kept driving until I came to our private parking spot and pulled in. After I shut off the engine, I came around to the passenger side and opened her door, then held out my hand. She hesitated before she took it. Her hand felt small in mine.

She glanced around as she got out. “Where are we?”

“We’re going up to our penthouse.”

She grimaced. “Are we going to fuck?”

“Maybe.” I brushed strands of her blonde hair behind her ear. “You’ll enjoy it. I promise. But I won’t touch until you ask me to.”

Her grimace turned into a frown. “You just did.”

I laughed outright. “That was definitely not how I plan to touch you.” I leaned in closer, and saw the tremble that ran over her, but I didn’t touch her. I caressed her with my words. “When I touch you, I’ll make your body come alive. You will feel things you’ve never felt before. I’m a very generous lover.”

Her breath hitched, and her pupils dilated just a little before some of her stubbornness returned. “Because you bought me some clothes? You call that being generous? I’m still your prisoner.”

“That wasn’t the kind of generous I was talking about.” My warm breath fanned her cheek.



I knew she was thinking over my words. As soon as she caught the meaning, she blushed.

“Don’t think about anything right now,” I told her. “It’ll happen when it happens.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of,” she mumbled.

I had a feeling she was more afraid of her own reaction to me. She’d lost herself when she made love with Reaper, then again with Venom. Mia was desperately trying to find herself again, and I wasn’t making it easy. Not that I planned to let up.

After inserting my key, we rode the elevator to the penthouse. We owned the building and were the only ones living on the top floor. I watched as she stepped off the elevator. I saw everything through her eyes as she took in her new surroundings.

The far wall was dominated by floor-to-ceiling windows. Texas had brutal summers, often reaching triple digits and then staying there. With the touch of a button, we could create muted light so the sun’s heat didn’t come inside, but it was a beautiful fall day, so the light was welcome.

Beyond the windows was an expansive terrace that overlooked downtown San Antonio. At night, the lights would come on and the city would be awash with color without all the noise.

Our decorator had done an excellent job choosing from a color palette of cool blues with touches of muted yellow. The pictures on the walls depicted downtown San Antonio. The ones we purchased supported some of the best local artists.

“It’s impressive,” she finally said.

As much as she tried to pretend that she saw homes like this all the time, I knew she’d never been around wealth like ours. It had taken years and years to gain as much as our family had. Our ancestors were wise in their business transactions. Their knowledge was passed down through the generations.

She stopped in front of one painting, staring at it for a long time.

“That’s the River Walk.”

“It’s beautiful.”

One moment, she showed a tough exterior and damn the man who tried to hurt her, but then as sudden as the blink of an eye, she seemed amazed by the world around her. I wanted to see more of her reactions. It was a risk, but one I could handle.

“Let’s get out of here.” I nodded toward the painting. “I’ll show you the River Walk.”

Her eyes widened in surprise. “Aren’t you afraid I’ll try to escape?”

I shook my head. “Not at all. If you attempt to run, I’ll put a bullet in your brain and pay ten witnesses to say you pulled a gun and I tried to stop you from killing innocent bystanders. I’ll be a hero, and you’ll be dead.”

She studied me for a moment, her brow furrowing. “You’re a bastard.”

I laughed. “So I’ve been told.”

Mia didn't disappoint as we arrived at the River Walk. Her blue eyes sparkled with excitement even though she tried not to show it. I paid for the boat ride, and we got in. I remembered coming here with my family when I was a child.

As the boat operator began to tell us about the River Walk, I leaned back and watched her. I barely glanced at the colorful umbrellas outside the restaurants that dotted the sidewalk along the way. Before the ride was over, I realized I hadn't been this relaxed in a long time.

When the ride ended, we walked down to one of the restaurants.

"Do you like Mexican food?"

"Yes, I had it once."

I cocked an eyebrow. "Only once?"

She shrugged. "When our regular cook was sick, Miguel took over. My father and half-brothers complained so much that we never had it again."

"That's almost a sin in San Antonio." The waiter brought menus after we were seated. I watched as she studied hers, looking confused. "Would you like me to order for both of us?"

She nodded.

I motioned for the waiter to come back. "We'll have two number threes and two margaritas."

The waiter wrote down the order and then looked up with a smile. "I just need to see some ID for the drinks."

I reached into my pocket, peeled off two one-hundred-dollar bills, and handed them to the waiter. “Will that work?” I knew Mia wasn’t quite twenty-one. Her father had been holding out for the highest bidder and one who would strengthen his strongholds.

The waiter grinned. “Absolutely, I can see you’re both over twenty-one.”

“Do you always get what you want?” Mia asked after the waiter left.

“Always. You might do well to remember that.” I watched as the rosy hue returned to her cheeks.

“Someday, someone might just fool you and you won’t get what you want.”

I leaned back in my chair and studied her. “Do you think you’re going to be the one who accomplishes that?”

She raised her chin defiantly. “Maybe.”

Our drinks were brought out, saving me from commenting. If Mia thought she could win against me and my brothers, she would be in for a huge disappointment. We never lost. Her family had gotten the drop on us once because we’d grown complacent. That would never happen again.

I knew when the tequila began to work its magic on Mia. I was used to hard liquor. She wasn’t. I ordered another round after we finished our meal.

“Are you trying to get me drunk?” she asked when our drinks arrived.

“Yes, is it working?”

She giggled. “Maybe.”

“Why don’t you tell me about your family’s warehouses.”

She shook her head, then had to grab the table to keep from falling over. “I might be tipsy, but I’m not stupid. Give me my freedom, and I’ll tell you whatever you want.”

She was going to be harder to break than I imagined. The alcohol should’ve been enough to loosen her tongue. I admired her for sticking to her guns.

“What are you going to do to my family?” She countered. “Not that I care about them. I’m just curious.”

She was either very smart or foolish to ask that question. “We’ll make them suffer before we kill them. Does that bother you?”

She took a drink, then slowly shook her head. “Not really. I want them to suffer.”

Was she telling the truth or trying to play me? “Family members usually say that but then when it comes right down to it, they crack and beg for the lives of those they love. You’ve been sheltered all your life. You don’t realize what we’re going to do.”

She didn’t meet my gaze, but looked across the river that ran beside the restaurant. “One time, my father and half-brothers brought a man to the kitchen. I couldn’t sleep and had gone downstairs to get something to drink. I heard the man crying and begging for his life. When I started to turn and hurry back upstairs, Dirk ran after me and dragged me back into the kitchen. They made me watch as they tortured him all

because he had stolen ten dollars from Enzo. He'd only wanted to buy some food for his family."

"Did they kill him?" I asked. She closed her eyes as if she was remembering back.

"They broke both of his hands with a hammer, one finger at a time. I didn't want to watch, but they forced me. By the time they put a bullet in his brain, I was frozen where I stood. I remember Dirk telling me this was what happened to traitors, so I'd better toe the line. They left the room, and Romeo cleaned up the mess. When he told me to go to my room, I didn't hesitate." She raised her gaze to mine. "They'll deserve whatever you do to them. They were selling me to Luca so that they could become more powerful and richer. Do your worst. I don't care." Her hand trembled as she raised her glass for another drink.

She was either a damned good actress, or she'd had a horrible home life. No wonder she didn't want to go back.

It didn't change the fact she was still a Conti and couldn't be trusted. But she was also very beautiful, and I wanted her. Before the night was over, I would have her. There was only one difference: I would make her beg for it.

## Chapter Twelve

*Mia*

Ghost didn't lie when he said he wouldn't touch me. He didn't have to. The musky scent of his cologne wrapped me in a sensual cocoon of erotic fantasies. When we went to a museum, he leaned in close to point out a particular statue, his breath brushing across my cheek, and it was all I could do to breathe.

Every gesture, every movement he made was meant to draw a fantasy of the two of us making love. He seduced me with his smile, the glitter of awareness in his eyes when he looked at me like he wanted to fuck me right here in the middle of the museum with people milling around.

I decided to call him on his game. "It won't work."

He met my gaze. He was doing it again. Looking at me like he was slowly removing each article of clothing. A shudder of need rippled over me. I quickly looked at a sculpture of a cowboy riding a bucking horse.

"What won't work?"

His words were like a caress, and my nipples immediately responded and tightened. I wondered at all these strange reactions my body had to these three men. It took me a moment to remember I'd started this conversation.

"You're attempting to seduce me." I raised my chin and glared at him. "It won't work."

"Are you sure?"

He came closer. I took a step back. He didn't get into a hurry. Stalking me. Predator and prey. I backed up until I was pressed against the wall. It became harder to breathe even though he still didn't touch me.

"You're a beautiful, sensual woman. Why wouldn't I want to fuck you? I want to unbutton your blouse and let it fall to the floor."

"Stop," I whispered.

"I want to remove your bra and take each tight nipple, one at a time in my mouth and pull on it with my teeth, scraping across it with my tongue."

Heat shot over me. My body began to tingle. I wanted him to stop talking, but yet, I didn't. What was wrong with me?

"I want to pull your pants down, then slowly peel off your panties. I'll only look at first, but I'll be able to draw in your scent. You'll be damp with need. Are you damp now?"

One of the maids had left a romance book lying around. I'd been twelve at the time. It looked much more interesting than my school books, so I took it. For the next few days, I devoured the author's words.

The book was about a man who kidnapped this woman and forced her to do his bidding, but she loved every minute of it. The book spelled everything out in delicious detail. How the woman hated the man, but her pussy ached and dripped for him. At the time, I wondered if she might secretly have a disease. I didn't know a pussy could drip.

I was wrong.



I passed the damp stage a long time ago, but I wasn't about to admit that to Ghost. I was saved from answering when a group of schoolkids came inside the room. My gaze locked with Ghost's before he took my hand and pulled me to the next room. It was a good thing he did because I was in a total state of confusion right now. It didn't help that I was still feeling woozy from the margaritas.

I followed blindly beside him. I didn't question as we left the museum and got back inside his car. I leaned against the passenger door as he started the engine. It rumbled to life. I could feel the energy flowing from it. I swallowed past the lump in my throat as my gaze moved over him. Some of his hair had fallen forward—shades of dark and light blond. I studied his features. They weren't perfect, but they were perfect for him. The whole package exuded sexiness.

I didn't think he was much older than me. I was pretty sure they were all in their twenties. Three wealthy men who thought they owned the world. Hell, right now, they did own the world as far as I was concerned, and I was their captive. Just like the heroine in the romance book I'd stolen. They could do whatever they wanted to me. That should have scared the fuck out of me, but it only made me hotter.

He suddenly glanced across the seat. "What are you thinking?"

I could feel the heat rising up my face. I raised my chin. "That I want you to fuck me."

Honesty would probably get me killed, but right now, I didn't care. When he didn't say anything, I wondered what he was thinking. That I was a slut? A whore? Maybe I was. It was

as if I'd been chained up all my life, and suddenly, I had broken free. When he smiled, my pussy clenched.

“Are you begging me to fuck you?”

I started to lie and tell him no, but that's not what I wanted. “Yes, what are you going to do about it?”

“Is your pussy wet?”

A deep ache began to grow inside me. “Practically dripping. You know it is.”

I hadn't been watching where we were going, but as soon as we pulled inside the garage at the apartment building, I knew we were about to go up to the penthouse again, and as soon as we got there, Ghost would fuck me. My anxiety level was through the roof. I wasn't sure if it was from wanting him so much or fear that he wouldn't want me, and this was only a game he played.

He parked the car, then came around to my side and helped me out. Always the gentleman. As soon as we were in the elevator, he pushed me into the corner and slammed his mouth down on mine. My arms automatically came up around his neck, pulling him closer. His tongue sparred with mine. He stroked, he teased with his tongue.

Fuck, he tasted hot and spicy. A little like the margarita we'd had for lunch. Like the drinks, he was just as intoxicating.

When the kiss ended, I was gasping for air. I was glad to see he wasn't completely unaffected, either. His own breathing was ragged.

When the elevator stopped, I noticed he'd been unbuttoning my blouse on the ride up. As we stepped into the penthouse, I shrugged out of it. When I reached for my pants, he stopped my hands, shaking his head. Oh fuck, had he changed his mind? Would he care if I started masturbating because I was dying on the inside? Maybe he'd watch. That brought a moan from me.

"I want to take it slow and savor every moment," he said.

"Fast is good, too," I breathlessly told him.

His laughter was more of a deep rumble. "Trust me on this."

He reached behind me, and with one snap of his fingers, my bra came undone. He slid first one strap, then the other, off my shoulders and down my arms, letting it fall to the floor. He sucked in air.

"Fucking beautiful," he breathed.

He took my breasts in his hands, brushing his thumbs across the tight nipples. I almost came right then. And I did have a little orgasm when he covered one with his mouth. He sucked on the nipple, grazing his tongue across it while his hand squeezed my other one, then ran the nipple between his thumb and forefinger, squeezing just a little. I gasped as erotic pleasure threatened to consume me.

He suddenly released me and I stumbled just a little. I wanted to beg him, please don't stop.

"There are so many things that can create sensations throughout the body." He led me toward the kitchen.

“I think I’m ready now. Please, fuck me,” I begged. Yes, literally begging this time.

“In time,” was all he said.

Once we were in the middle of the kitchen, he unfastened my pants and slowly slid them down my legs. He lifted one foot out of my pants and then the other before he pushed them out of the way. He moved to his knees, his face only inches from my pussy. I wondered if he would taste me. Trembles ran over my body at the thought.

Ghost slowly peeled my panties down, revealing everything to his eyes. “Absolutely beautiful.” He spread open my lips, then ran his tongue up my slit.

I gasped, my legs starting to shake. I wondered how much longer they would hold me up. I didn’t have to worry about it. He suddenly straightened and lifted me onto the center island. When I would’ve put my legs together, he spread them open, shaking his head.

“Don’t ever hide from me. If I want to see all of you, you *will* show me everything. Do you understand?”

I nodded. His words should make me furious. He was ordering me, not suggesting. But there was something sensual about it that I didn’t even think to argue with him.

He turned and went to the refrigerator, pulling out a bottle of beer. He twisted the cap off, then took a long drink before sauntering back to me. “The coldness of a bottle can stir all kinds of emotions. Your breasts are very sensitive to hot and cold.” As if to prove his point, he ran the cold bottle against my nipples.

I grabbed the counter's edge, closing my eyes and drawing in a quick breath.

“Not too cold, is it?”

I nibbled my bottom lip and shook my head. “No, not too cold.”

“What if I move it lower.” He nestled the bottle between my legs.

I whimpered, scooting closer to it. I automatically leaned back on my elbows and moved my pussy against the bottle. Ghost pressed it tighter against me. The cold glass massaged against my lips.

“Do you like that?”

I nodded.

He moved it away,

My eyes flew open. I didn't want it to stop. But then, he tilted the bottle and began pouring the beer between my legs. I gasped as the cold liquid washed my pussy. He set the bottle to the side and, in one swift move, pulled my ass closer to the edge.

“There's nothing better than pussy and beer,” he said before he lowered his head and began to suck on my pussy.

I cried out, pulling at his hair, pulling his head closer. When he stopped, I whimpered. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone.

“Beg me to fuck you,” he ordered.

My eyes narrowed. I hated him. He ran his fingers down my slit, then stuck a finger inside me, slowly pumping in

and out. I gasped. Yes, right there! He pulled out, and then made sure my legs were open wide.

“Beg me to fuck you,” he ordered again. “I won’t ask again.” He began recording with his phone as he brushed his fingers through my curls, spreading my pussy lips.

I gasped, raising my hips. I knew he spoke the truth. He would leave me here, spraddled out, completely naked, and walk away. “Fuck me, please,” I said.

He smiled and slipped his phone back into his pocket. He stood between my legs at the end of the center island. My legs dangled over the side. He took one leg and planted my foot on the granite countertop, then the other one.

“Scoot to the edge.”

I didn’t hesitate. I was so turned on right now I only wanted him to fuck me. My pussy ached for his cock. I didn’t care that I was completely naked, my legs open, nothing hidden from his view. I wanted him to look at me.

He slid his zipper down, then pulled out his cock, lightly stroking it. Fuck, he was big—long and thick. I was afraid he would ram inside my pussy, but he took it slow and easy, letting me get use to his size.

Oh, damn, it felt good to have him inside me. I closed my eyes and let my tangled emotions drift away. I only wanted to feel Ghost inside me, giving me pleasure.

“Open your eyes,” he ordered.

I frowned but opened them.

“You were in your own little world. I want you to know who’s fucking you. Besides, how will I know what you like if you don’t tell me.”

“I like this.”

“Me fucking you?”

I nodded.

“What about when I touch your breasts? Tug on the nipples?” He massaged my tits, then took the tight nipples between his thumb and forefinger.

Tingles immediately spread to my pussy. I gasped.  
“Yes, that’s good, too.”

“Do you like when I touch your pussy?”

“Oh, damn, yes.”

“Like this?”

Since he still stood, he had easy access to my body. When he began to massage my clit with his thumb, I groaned.

“Yes, I love that.”

“Love what? Tell me.”

“I love when you touch my pussy. When you rub it like that. Oh, fuck it feels fantastic. Please don’t stop.”

“And this?”

He thrust inside, filling me, stroking as I tightened around him. He moaned when I automatically clenched my inner muscles around his cock. I squeezed, then released. He thrust harder, faster, before slowing again.

He took my leg and put it over his shoulder, then put the other one over his other shoulder. I grabbed the edge of the counter so I stayed in place as he sank deeper inside me. I didn't want to lose one second of what I was feeling. Where Ghost was taking me.

Slow at first. I felt every inch of his cock sliding inside me. In, then out. Caressing, stroking. Taking me higher. I began to moan.

“Yes, like that. More,” my words rambled out, almost incoherent as the heat built inside me.

He thrust harder, faster.

“Oh, fuck, yes!” I screamed.

In and out.

Wetter and hotter.

Faster, harder.

In and out.

The pressure built inside me.

I cried out as I came. My pussy clenched around his cock. He growled a moment later as he came. We were both breathing hard. He brought my legs down, then leaned his head on my stomach. I absently ran my fingers through his hair as my world came back into focus.

I knew what they were doing. They were destroying me one fuck at a time. I supposed it could be worse.



# Chapter Thirteen

## *Reaper*

The next morning, I rolled over in bed and reached for my phone, checking for messages. Ghost had gone into San Antonio with Mia yesterday and texted they would stay the night. I stopped scrolling when I came to his next text and clicked on the video.

Mia was on the island's countertop at our penthouse, completely naked with absolutely nothing hidden from my view as Ghost spread open her pussy lips. I blinked twice and sat on the side of the bed.

"Son of a bitch," I muttered. Yeah, I was wide awake now and had a killer erection.

I turned up the volume and played the video again.

*"Fuck me, please," Mia said.*

Dammit, I was going to kill my brother. He knew that he would torment me with the video. He'd probably laughed his damned head off. I went to the bathroom, propped my phone on the shower soap dish, and turned the water on. When it was warm, I stepped under the spray and pushed play on the video, then paused it.

I was looking right at Mia's wet pussy and her breasts. I began to stroke my cock as I licked my lips. Fuck, I wanted to bury my head between her legs, taste her, then plunge my cock inside her wet heat.

I pumped my fist harder, imagining sinking inside her. Thrusting in, then out, until I was spraying the shower with my cum. Groaning, I rested my forehead on the shower tiles, letting the water run over me as I caught my breath. I was definitely going to kill Ghost. He had a wicked sense of humor. I quickly came out of the video and finished my shower. I knew I wouldn't be deleting it, though.

After I dressed, I jogged downstairs. Venom was already in the dining room drinking coffee.

“Did Ghost send you a text with a video?” I asked him.

“I haven't looked. You know it's always coffee first for me.”

He pulled his phone out of his pocket and scrolled through his messages, stopping on the one from Ghost as I fixed my coffee. He clicked on the video, and I heard Mia's words again. Venom frowned.

“What kind of sick bastard does this. My cock is hard enough to drive a nail into a brick wall. I'll kill him.”

I laughed. “I know what you mean. He said he'd have her begging. We should've trusted he would do exactly that. Now we owe him a grand each. At least they're coming back this morning.”

Venom glanced at the video again and grinned. “It might be worth paying up to have the video of her. I'm definitely keeping it.”

“I doubt any of us will delete it.”

“Does he know the Contis increased their muscle?” he asked, changing the subject.

I shook my head. “Not yet. I thought I would tell him everything that’s happened when he gets here.”

Venom nodded. “Probably not a bad thing. It’ll give us time to put a plan in place.”

“I thought about that, too.” Our sources had said Dirk would be at the racetrack Friday night. But with extra men, the last thing we wanted to do was become their victim again. Or it could be a trap. I’d make damn sure that didn’t happen. I wanted the Contis to feel safe with the extra men they hired. “It’ll make everything a little trickier, but more exciting, too. I want them to know we can get past their defenses. I want them to feel vulnerable.”

“Do you think Dirk will be at the racetrack Friday night?”

“That’s what my sources tell me. We won’t take any chances, though.”

We discussed everything for the better part of the morning. We went through everything that might or might not happen. I didn’t want to take any chances. Sometimes, our business was all about the chances we took. That’s how we got ahead.

When we heard the front door open, we both looked up. I wondered if Venom’s pulse sped up as much as mine. I tried to tell myself I was glad my brother was home, but I knew the real reason as soon as they entered the dining room.

Damn, she was beautiful. The new clothes suited her. Ghost spent a small fortune. The rest of the packages arrived here late yesterday. Not that we couldn’t easily afford it. The

white slacks and yellow printed crop top looked great on her and showed just enough bare midriff that it tempted me to reach out and touch her skin to see if it felt as soft as it looked, but I already knew it did.

“Did you have a good time?” I directed my question to Mia. I watched as her cheeks took on a rosy hue and wondered how she could be embarrassed since she had fucked all three of us. Even with pink staining her cheeks, she tilted her head and gave me a saucy grin.

“I had a very good time. Thank you for asking.” She looked around the table, meeting each one of our gazes. “I’ll be in my room.” She turned on her heel and left without asking permission.

I began to laugh. Damn, I didn’t realize how much fun it would be having her around. I turned back to Ghost. “It looks like you’ve kept her in line. By the way, the clothes look good on her.”

“I have a feeling no one can really keep her in line.” He pulled out a chair and sat down, eyes twinkling. “Did you get the video?”

“Yes, and I’m not deleting it,” Venom growled.

Ghost smiled. “I didn’t think you would. I’m thinking about putting it as my screensaver.”

“If you do, you’ll be checking your phone constantly,” I told him.

“Yeah, you’re probably right.”

I turned serious. “The Contis have added more men. I don’t think I want to take any chances when it comes to what

we're about to do. I let Angelo know we were coming after them.”

“I take it they got the finger we sent with Mia’s ring?”

I frowned. “He doesn’t care what we do with her or to her. He said she was worthless to him now.”

“His own daughter? Fuck, that’s cold.”

Venom snorted. “I think Mia was right about them not caring anything about her. Can you imagine what it was like for her growing up there?”

“It could still be all an act,” I warned them.

“Maybe,” Ghost began. “I’m not so sure she isn’t telling the truth. We’ve all met them, and we know they’re bastards. Why would they treat one of their own, especially a female, like they were anything special? No, everything’s about how they can cheat and steal their way to the top.”

I didn’t want to feel any sympathy for her, but I was starting to lean that way, and I had a feeling my brothers felt the same way. Hell, we’d probably given her a real chance at life by kidnapping her. Not that I thought she was grateful.”

Venom straightened in his chair. “It could still be an act. We can’t trust her.”

I looked at him. “I know, and I don’t.”

The afternoon progressed with us discussing our plan to get Dirk. It was simple enough, but still, anything could go wrong. We brought Paco and some other men to discuss where we would take Dirk and what we planned to do with him. We wanted to make them pay for attacking our family, and they

would pay with their lives. We were also sending a message to other families not to fuck with the Barones.

Luca thought he could join forces with the Contis by marrying Mia and take us down. We wanted him scared that we'd come after him, and maybe we would. We had to have a show of force so others would think twice.

The whole time we finalized our plans, I was aware of Mia upstairs. I tried not to think about her too much because I always got an erection. It was funny. No other woman had ever affected me like she did. Even knowing she might betray us, I wanted to fuck her. I remembered the feel of her skin, the way she tasted, and how it felt to plunge inside her body and have hers close around mine.

I cleared my throat and brought my attention back to the business at hand. "So, it's settled. We'll take him on Friday night at the racetrack." I looked up and saw Mia standing in the doorway. For a moment, my brain quit functioning as I stared at her. She was beautiful. She'd changed into a dress that clung to her body, showing every curve, every indentation. I didn't think she was wearing a bra because her nipples tightened.

"I thought it was dinner time. Should I come back?"

I shook my head. "No, we were just finishing up, and I think Mary has dinner ready. Please, have a seat."

Paco and the rest of the men left.

"You look beautiful tonight." Ghost sauntered over and kissed her lightly on the cheek.

She blushed. "Thank you."

I had a feeling she didn't get very many compliments. At least, not from her sorry-ass family.

"Did I hear you talking about Dirk going to the racetrack as I came in?" she asked as Ghost pulled out a chair and she took a seat.

"There's nothing you can do to stop us from taking him." I didn't want her getting any notions that she could help her family just in case she'd been lying about her relationship with them.

"It's a setup," she casually told us as she laid her napkin across her lap.

Venom's eyes narrowed. "Why would we believe you?"

She shrugged. "Don't believe me. It doesn't matter to me either way. I'm just telling you it's a setup."

Now she had me curious. "Why do you think they're setting a trap for us? I'm assuming that's what you mean." Not that we weren't expecting one and planned to be ready.

She leaned forward in her chair, pressing her elbows on the table. "Because Dirk never goes to the horse races."

"Maybe he changed his mind and decided to go this time," Ghost said.

She smiled sweetly, but it didn't reach her eyes. "Doubtful. He's allergic to horses."

## Chapter Fourteen

*Mia*

I could see it on their faces. They didn't believe me. I shouldn't care if they got themselves killed. They were just like all Mafia families—hardcore. They cared about nothing except making more money and taking more territory. Power and wealth turned them on.

Why I even wanted to help them was beyond me. I guess I hated my family more than I hated the Barones. No, it was more than that. Something strange was happening to me. Yes, they kidnapped me, but it was almost as if they seemed to care about me, too. That was so sick when I thought about it. It was probably all an act on their part. These people didn't care about anyone but themselves.

My heart fluttered. Even if it was only make-believe, it had been a long time since anyone had made me feel special.

Fuck, I was probably losing my mind. I couldn't trust them. But, if they walked into a trap and one of them got hurt, they would probably come back and take it out on me. I damn sure didn't want that to happen. I raised my gaze. All three men were watching me.

"I'm not lying," I said. "Dirk hates horseracing. Because of his allergies, he would never go to the racetrack unless Angelo forced him to go. If that's the case, then they're setting a trap. I'd still almost guarantee that he won't be there."



Reaper leaned back in his chair, studying me. I fidgeted in my seat. It was almost as if he looked into my very soul. Finally, he began to talk.

“Our sources tell us that’s where he’ll be. They wouldn’t lie. We pay them very well to be our eyes and ears.”

“Your sources are wrong.”

“Are you saying they’re double-crossing us?”

“No. Your sources were given the wrong information. Probably on purpose.”

“How can you be sure Dirk *won’t* go to the racetrack?”  
This from Venom.

“That’s it, I’m not sure. I just know he’s allergic to horses. He breaks out in a rash, and his face swells up.” I was thoughtful for a moment. “When is he supposed to be at the racetrack?”

Venom leaned back in his chair. “Friday night.”

“That’s when he goes to see his mistress. I heard him and Enzo talking about her one time. Dirk thinks he’s in love, but I doubt any woman could love him for anything except his money. He’s been seeing her for about a year and a half. He bought her a house on Prospect Street.” They still didn’t look convinced. “Believe me, don’t believe me. I don’t care. I’m just telling you that you’ll be walking into a trap if you go to the racetrack.”

Mary and her assistant brought out the first course. I could still feel their eyes on me as I took a bite of my salad. Not that I cared.

Oh damn, the salad was good. I know it was strange, but we rarely had salad with meals. My father always said it was like pulling grass and eating it. If for no other reason, I didn't want to see the Barones hurt because the food here was a lot better than at my house. Well, and the sex wasn't bad either.

“Just in case she's telling the truth,” Ghost started. “We can station men at the racetrack and on Prospect Street.”

I was giving them important information. They could at least act a little grateful. My anger rose to the surface. “No, I think you should all go to the racetrack. Let them blow your fucking heads off.” I stabbed a tomato and put it in my mouth. I glared at each one of them. They were looking at me as if I'd lost my mind. Maybe I had. Then they surprised me by laughing.

“I see your temper is still intact,” Reaper said, then he had the audacity to smile.

I almost picked up a small tomato from my salad bowl and threw it at him, but they were delicious, and I love tomatoes. “Don't push your luck with me. I'm still your prisoner. I just happen to hate my family more than I do you three.”

“Aren't you afraid they'll figure out what you're doing and retaliate?” Reaper asked.

I snorted. “They've been retaliating for years. My half-brothers hated that our father married my mother. They made her life a living hell, along with my father's encouragement. Then I came along. They probably hated me more. I'm not worried they'll do something they haven't already done.”

“And if you’re wrong?” Venom asked. “Do you want to take your brother’s place?”

I knew exactly what he meant, and it included torture. A cold chill ran down my spine. What if I was wrong? I wasn’t into torture.

I raised my chin. “Maybe I am wrong. I’m not one hundred percent sure that’s where he’ll be. I don’t think he’ll be going to the racetrack, though. Enzo is the one who likes to take chances, and he’ll want to be in the midst of the action. He’s a sick mother fucker.”

“Dirk’s not?” Ghost asked.

I shook my head. “Dirk’s a pussy and only strikes when he knows he won’t get hurt. The only other logical place Dirk would be is with his mistress. He’ll probably slip away and go to her.” I grimaced, thinking carefully about my next words. “I know one thing about my family. They don’t think they can be beaten. They’re cocky and not quite as stupid as they look. If they get the chance, they’ll kill you. They fight dirty.”

Reaper smiled. “So do we.”

Cold chills washed over me. Yes, I think I already knew that.

They didn’t say anything for the rest of the meal. If they did talk, it wasn’t about my family. I knew they still didn’t trust me. Why should they? My family lied, cheated, and destroyed anything they touched. Why would they think I was any different?

At least dinner was superbly cooked, and it wasn't Italian. Bless Mary's southern heart. After I finished, I quietly excused myself and left the dining room. There was just too much testosterone. And if I was honest, they made me feel things I probably shouldn't be feeling as their prisoner. But as soon as I got to my room, I found that I was still restless. I hated being inside.

I made a quick decision and went to the closet, opening the doors wide. I still couldn't believe all of the clothes hanging up. There was every imaginable outfit, including casual. Besides the underclothes—which leaned toward sexy as fuck. There was even a pair of crotchless panties. I tried not to think about them, but I could see myself wearing them for Ghost. I grimaced. That was probably his intention for buying them.

I quickly shrugged out of the dress and hung it back up, then pulled on a pair of white shorts over the pale pink bikini panties and grabbed a dark blue T-shirt. I didn't bother with a bra. I slipped my feet into a pair of loafers and left the bedroom.

I could still hear them talking in the dining room, but I didn't go that way. I went to the French doors at the back of the house. I didn't breathe easy until I stepped outside. Then I drew in a long, deep breath and exhaled.

It smelled fresh and clean outside, as if the Barones wouldn't have it any other way. I inhaled the scent of freshly mown grass, the earth, and the sweet scent of flowers. From my balcony, I'd seen a walking trail through the gardens. I chose that path.

I didn't get in a hurry as I strolled past the flowers still in bloom, leaning down occasionally and bringing one to my nose before continuing. The aromas coming from them were intoxicating. I began to relax.

My mother would've loved it here. She'd attempted to keep the gardens on my father's estate alive, but it was a lost cause. He only paid the gardener to keep the grass mowed. He said the rest was a waste of money. She'd only managed to keep a few flowering bushes going. I'd enjoyed my walks with her, though. I'd always felt closer to her there than anywhere else.

Damn, I missed her. I still couldn't understand why she would take her own life. Not that she had much to live for, but still, sometimes, I couldn't help but feel as if she had deserted me. Had she only been telling me lies when she said never give up or give in? She said if I ever showed weakness, they would win. But that was what she did. She let them beat her.

I was so lost in thought that, at first, I didn't hear the crunch of shoes on gravel behind me. A moment of fear washed over me. Had my family discovered my whereabouts and were going to take me back? I glanced over my shoulder, then relaxed when I saw it was only Reaper. Funny, but I wasn't scared of him.

“Are you running away again?”

I shook my head. “Where would I go?”

“True. We're not close enough for you to get to a main road and hitch a ride.”

He did bring up a good point. “What happens after you kill my family? I assume you will kill them.”

“What do you mean?”

I had a feeling he knew exactly what I was talking about. I stopped and turned to face him. “What happens to me? Will you kill me, too?”

His eyes narrowed. “We haven’t decided yet.” His gaze slowly slid down my body: touching, caressing. “How far will you go to save yourself? Will you become our pet? Our toy to play with as we see fit? To fuck whenever the urge strikes us?”

I didn’t want to die. Then I remembered my mother’s words about never giving up or giving in. I raised my chin and stepped closer. “I don’t want to die.”

“What would you do to live?” His words were raspy, filled with passion.

I knew what he wanted.

I met his gaze, then pulled my shirt over my head. He drew in a sharp breath as he stared at my naked breasts. I should be pissed as hell right now, but I think I was more turned on than anything. It was as if these three men had unleashed something inside me that had been dormant way too long. I kicked off my shoes, then unfastened my shorts and pushed them over my hips, but I didn’t remove my panties.

Instead, I stepped closer to him. He wore a white button-down shirt. I pushed each button through the hole, then shoved it off his shoulders. The moon was full so I could see each ripple of tanned muscle, each tattoo that marked his body, his washboard abs. I ran my tongue up the middle of his chest

and felt the shiver that washed over him. I liked that he wasn't unaffected by my touch.

I swirled my tongue around one nipple and it hardened. I scraped my teeth across it, then moved to the other side and did the same. He was letting me set the pace, allowing me to be in charge. I liked that. I liked knowing that, just for a moment, I controlled him.

My hand slipped downward, pushing the button of his jeans through the hole, then sliding the zipper down. He still hadn't touched me. I wondered what that cost him. I know what it was costing me. My breasts tingled, aching for his touch, for his mouth to cover first one, then the other. I couldn't resist brushing my tits across his naked skin. He drew in a sharp breath.

But I wanted so much more. I shoved his jeans over his hips. He kicked out of his shoes, then his jeans. The only thing shielding him from my view were his briefs. They stretched tight across his erection. I licked my lips, and he groaned. I almost chuckled but didn't. My body felt as if it was on fire. I wanted his cock in my mouth. But I still wanted to play. Since he was letting me have my way, why not?

I picked up his jeans and arranged them on the trail.  
"Sit."

He cocked an eyebrow. Was he going to argue now?  
"Please," I said prettily.

I thought I heard him chuckle, but I wasn't sure. He sat on the jeans, though. I slipped one finger into the waistband of my panties and rocked my hips from side to side as I slowly

brought them down, putting on a mini-show for him. I knew I was teasing him. Right now, I felt powerful. I liked the feeling.

“Come closer,” he practically growled.

I smiled, then bit my lower lip. “Not yet,” I said.

With one shove, my panties dropped to the ground. I kicked them away from me, then reached down and picked up my shorts. I motioned for him to open his legs, and when he did, I dropped my shorts between them. I couldn't resist reaching down and rubbing between my legs. Damn, that felt good. I almost had an orgasm touching myself. Not yet. Only a little longer. I still wanted to taste him.

I moved to my knees, rested against the shorts, then leaned forward. I swirled my tongue around the tip of his cock, tasting Reaper. Sweet and salty. When I sucked him down into my mouth deeper, a shiver swept over him. I closed my eyes, losing myself in the motions my mouth made. I dug my fingers into his ass cheeks. When I swallowed, I took even more of him inside my mouth.

“Ahh, fuck.” He tangled his fingers in my hair, keeping me in position.

He didn't have to worry. I wasn't going anywhere. I massaged his cock with my mouth, my tongue caressed, my teeth scraped. His breathing grew ragged, and then he pulled under my arms, lifting me away. I licked my lips as he set me on top of his cock. I lowered my body downward, impaling myself.

“Yes, just like that,” he moaned.



After a moment, I began to move up, then down, squeezing my inner muscles. He found my breasts and squeezed, massaging, tugging on my sensitive nipples. Heat spread over my body like wildfire. I raised my arms, reaching for the stars as I increased my movements. And when I came, I curled my fingers around one and held on tight as his cum spewed inside. I relished in the heat, the fire that licked every inch of my body.

As I slowly floated back down to earth, I lay against his chest, hearing his heartbeat slow to a more regular rhythm. I didn't want to move from this position. It felt too good, like I was supposed to be here.

“I guess I know how far you'll go to save your skin,” he said.

I cringed. If he'd meant his words to hurt, then he accomplished his goal. “I guess you do.” I eased away from him and slipped on my shorts and T-shirt before I started back toward the house. I could hear him dressing behind me, but I didn't wait around for him.

By the time I reached the back door, I was dressed. Minus my panties, but I didn't care about them. I only wanted to shower and wash Reaper off my skin. I could still smell his musky scent on me.

I wouldn't let myself think about anything until I was standing beneath the spray. That's when the tears came. For just a little while, I'd talked myself into thinking it wouldn't be so bad being their prisoner.

Yeah, right. Damn, I was a stupid fool. I was nothing to them. A Conti was even less than nothing. Someone to be

despised. Someone to fuck. Until they grew tired of me. Was I so unlovable? As soon as the thought came, I pushed it away. Fuck them. I didn't need anyone—especially a Barone. I turned off the water, stepped out of the shower, and dried.

I would use them for as long as I could, then when they least expected it, I would escape. I would never let another man get the best of me.

## Chapter Fifteen

*Venom*

“What the hell did you say to her?” I glared at Reaper. Yeah, Ghost and I watched them fucking in the garden. Erotic as hell. Mia was meant to sin, and she did it very well. But we’d seen how she hurried away afterward and knew damn well our brother said something to her that she didn’t like.

“I guess you saw us in the garden.”

“Ya think?” Ghost frowned.

“And everything looked fine right up until you finished. What the fuck did you say to her?” I demanded again.

Reaper fisted his hands. “Why should you care? Her family tortured and almost killed you.”

He was right. They had, but the more I was around Mia, I wasn’t sure exactly what to think. “She’s not like them,” I finally said.

“I thought you didn’t trust her,” Reaper threw back at me.

“I *don’t* trust her, but until we know for sure, I think we should treat her better.”

Reaper’s eyes narrowed. “Are you going soft?”

“I agree with him,” Ghost stepped up and agreed with Venom.

Reaper threw his hands into the air. “You’re both going soft!”

I released a frustrated breath. “We’re not going soft. I still want to kill the rest of her family. There’s something different about her, though. Don’t tell me you can’t see that.”

Reaper raked his fingers through his hair. “I know, I know.” He turned and looked out the window, as if gathering his thoughts. “I asked her how far she would go to save her life.”

“Then you fucked her,” Ghost supplied.

Reaper glanced over his shoulder and gave us a sideways grin. “I think it was the other way around. I think she fucked me. When we finished, I said something stupid, like, I guess now I knew how far she would go.”

“Why the hell would you say something like that? Women are more sensitive, more delicate than we are.” Sometimes, my brother could be so stupid.

Reaper looked between us like we’d grown two heads. “Are you forgetting the first night she was here? She stabbed you, Ghost. There’s nothing delicate about Mia. I wouldn’t leave any loaded guns lying around if I were you. She might surprise you.”

“Okay, maybe she’s not like most women, but you’ve got to admit, there’s something different about her.”

“But do we trust her?” He looked first at Ghost, then at me.

“I don’t know.” It was the truth. I didn’t know whether we could trust her. I went to the small bar in the living room.

We discussed most of our business here after dinner. I poured a stiff drink, then threw it back. The whiskey burned my throat. “If we split the men, send most of them to the racetrack and the rest to his mistress’ house, then we might cut ourselves too short. I don’t like the idea of us separating, either. It would make us too vulnerable.”

“And we might miss a good opportunity to take Dirk.”

“We have until Friday to decide.”

Maybe by then, we’d know what we were going to do. Since we weren’t accomplishing anything tonight, we went our separate ways. I went upstairs, stripped, and crawled into bed, but falling asleep wasn’t easy. I wanted to go to Mia, tell her Reaper could be an ass sometimes, but I didn’t. I had a feeling she’d want to be alone.

But when Friday morning came, I still didn’t have a clue as I sat outside at the patio table drinking a cup of coffee. It was peaceful this time of the morning. Sometimes, I saw a small deer herd grazing near the woods. I sighed, wishing I knew what we needed to do. I didn’t want us walking into a trap.

Everything pointed to the fact that Mia might be telling the truth about where Dirk would probably be. I’d had Hugo check out the place on Prospect Street. Dirk’s name was on the deed, and a woman lived there. That might be the real trap, though.

It had almost been too easy breaking into the Contis’ house and taking Mia. They could’ve planned the whole thing—wanting us to kidnap her. Take her and let her lead us down

the path they wanted, then take out all three of us at one time, leaving nothing to chance.

No, I didn't believe that. She was supposed to marry Luca and join the two families. I didn't think they would sacrifice her. I knew Luca, a real bastard. He had a bad rep with women. They had a lot of ER visits when they hooked up with him. There was no way he would agree to marry our leftovers.

Mia stepped through the French doors onto the patio, then noticed I was there and started to go back inside. We'd left her alone the last few days.

"No, stay. It's nice out here. Have a seat."

Her hesitation was brief, but she joined me at the outside table, pulling out a chair and taking a seat.

"I love being outside," I told her. "There's something about nature that has a calming effect."

She began to relax. "I used to love to walk on our estate. Yours is much more beautiful. You're right, though. There's something special about nature, especially early in the morning. I've always loved being outside."

"Both our parents designed the outside. My mother wanted lots of flowers, and since my father adored her, he gave her whatever she asked. Not that she didn't have her own money. He still spoiled her."

"Are they still alive?"

"They are. They retired to Italy. They both missed our homeland. They gave us full rein to handle everything here.

Our father still consults occasionally, but he raised us to see to any problems that might come up.”

“Including my family.”

I nodded. “Including your half-brothers and father.”

“You didn’t include me with them. Why?”

“I don’t think you’re like them, but that doesn’t mean I trust you.”

“I wouldn’t expect you to.”

She took a deep breath, then expelled it. I couldn’t help watching the rise and fall of her breasts. I could barely make out some of the lace on her bra through her white shirt. She crossed her legs, and my gaze was drawn to them.

Intentional? Maybe. I wasn’t sure.

It didn’t stop me from remembering how her legs had wrapped around my waist, keeping me close when I fucked her. Or how her naked flesh felt against mine. The way I made her moan, had her begging for more, then screaming when she came. Fuck! I shifted in my seat and tried to focus on what she was saying.

“In some families, where there are three brothers, they’re each vying for the role of leader. I’ve noticed you three get along very well. Or so it seems.”

I smiled. Right now, she only seemed curious. “My parents’ fault. My father always said we were only as important as each spoke of the wheel. One couldn’t function without the other. We still look to Reaper as the one who calls

the final shots because he is the oldest, but he knows he needs us as much as we need him.”

“But you must fight. Most siblings do.”

“On occasion, but nothing we can’t iron out. Our parents always taught us to share our toys, and I guess it carried over into adulthood.”

She smoothed her hand over the hem of her shorts. “Does that go for me, too? Am I the toy you’re sharing right now?”

“Does it bother you that we’re sharing you?”

She met my gaze.

“Would you rather only one of us choose you? Who would you pick? Reaper, he’s the oldest. He’s the quiet, more sensible one. Or maybe Ghost? He’s the negotiator and keeps us all on an even keel with our business partners. He also loves the ladies, and the ladies love him. Or maybe you would choose me.” I leaned slightly forward, closer to her, and saw her breathing quicken. I knew she wasn’t unaffected. “Sometimes I get short-tempered and have difficulty controlling my anger.”

She blinked a few times as if she’d forgotten where she was and raised her gaze to mine, a smile tugging at her lips. “I think it would be hard to choose just one.”

Good answer.

“I think I’ll go back inside.”

I wanted to ask her if she was retreating. If it had suddenly gotten a little too warm outside, but I didn’t. Instead,



I leaned back in my chair and watched her. She had a gentle sway in her hips that I was pretty sure was natural. She turned at the door, frowning.

“No matter what you do tonight, just know that Dirk has a fondness for knives. He always has one close by, no matter what he’s doing. If he sees his mistress tonight, he’ll have one.”

“Is that how you got that scar on the inside of your thigh?” It was thin, and you would only notice it if you were looking. I had definitely been looking and noticed it—a very thin line, paler than the rest of her skin.

She automatically reached down and touched her leg. “Just be careful.” She hurried inside.

One more reason we needed to kill the Contis. Reaper came out a few minutes later with a cup of coffee. He’d just sat down when Ghost joined us.

“Mia okay?” Reaper casually asked.

I had a feeling my brother regretted his words from the other night. “She’s fine. She told me Dirk likes knives and that he always carried one or had one nearby.”

Ghost frowned. “Is that how she got the thin scar on the inside of her thigh?”

“Probably, but she didn’t say he was the one who put it there.”

“They’re bastards. But again, do we trust Mia or go with our source?” Reaper asked.

I made a sudden decision. “We go to the house of his mistress.”

“And if it’s a trap?”

I smiled. “Then we get the hell out of there.”

They laughed.

I wasn’t that worried. We were taking enough men. They shouldn’t get the jump on us. Let them wonder where we were when we didn’t show up at the racetrack.

But later that night, even I was beginning to wonder if Mia had lied. It was nearly nine, and Dirk had yet to show up. Our men were starting to get antsy, but I knew they would stay as long as we asked them to. They were loyal.

“It’s still early,” I told my brothers. It was crazy, but I didn’t want Mia to be wrong.

“He could’ve gone to the racetrack. Maybe when we don’t show up, he’ll come here,” Ghost supplied.

I was about to agree with him when Reaper held up a hand. I looked toward the house as a car pulled into the driveway. Another car pulled in behind him and four men got out. Bodyguards.

A woman opened the door wearing a thin, short nightgown and holding a drink. Dirk got out of the car and walked up the steps toward her. He took the glass and downed it, then grabbed her breast and squeezed it. She giggled before going back inside and pulling him with her. The door closed behind them. The bodyguards took their places. One at each corner of the house, one in front of the door, and one went around to the back.

Big, ugly bastards and heavily armed. We didn't want Dirk to know we were there, so we motioned for silence. Paco nodded, then turned to the men with him to let them know we were going dark.

I motioned that I would take the one on the right. Ghost did the same with the one on the left. Reaper would take the one at the door, and Paco motioned he would take the one in the back. His men would look for any strays we might have missed. If this was a trap, we were going to take out as many of Dirk's men as we could.

The adrenaline began pumping through my veins. This was the part of the job I loved. Especially when I'd get revenge on one of the bastards who tried to kill me. I stealthily crept closer, staying in the shadows.

My man was lighting a cigarette when I moved in and shoved a knife in his throat. His eyes widened, and he began to gurgle as blood spurted from the hole in his neck. I eased him to the ground and then wiped my bloody knife on his shirt before moving to the back of the house.

There was only one man at the back door. A cat screeched, and the man turned away from me, hand automatically going to his gun. I watched as Paco crept up behind him, the moonlight catching the blade of the knife he held, then brought his hand in front of the guard and sliced across his throat. Paco eased the man to the ground.

Ghost stepped out from the shadows. "Meow," he whispered.

I shook my head with a smile. I loved my brothers. Paco looked up and grinned.

Reaper joined us. “I was looking through the windows, and he’s already in the bedroom fucking her,” he said, keeping his words low.

“The men did a sweep. It was just the four. They must have pulled all the others to the racetrack so they could set a trap for us. They’re going to be surprised when we don’t show up.

“Then let’s pay Dirk a visit.”

We slipped inside the back door. Idiot, it wasn’t locked. Dirk probably felt safe with men stationed outside.

I still couldn’t believe I let these idiots get the best of me. In my defense, it was Enzo and Romeo who jumped me. Enzo had a few more working brain cells than his brother. As far as Angelo was concerned, their father was just greedy.

We heard voices as we got closer to the bedroom—mostly grunting and groaning.

“Oh, Dirk, your cock is so big. But I want you so bad. Please, baby, fuck me. Fuck me hard.”

“Yeah, baby, take it all for daddy.”

I looked at my brothers, and we smiled. It wasn’t hard to tell the woman was acting, and not very well. I wondered how much Dirk had to pay for her to stay here. Whatever it was, it wasn’t enough. I stepped inside the room and spun the silencer on the end of my gun.

“Yeah, give it to her, Dirk.”

The woman let out a yelp and shoved Dirk off her as she grabbed the sheet and scooted up in bed. Naked Dirk was

left floundering. His gaze met mine, and anger practically burst like fire out of his eyes.

He reached under the pillow, but I was ready for him. When he pulled the knife out, I put a bullet through his hand. He yelled and grabbed it to him. Blood covered his hand.

The woman's eyes widened, and her mouth dropped open. She pulled the sheet under her chin. This close, I could see she wasn't as young as I'd first thought. Probably closer to fifty than thirty. She was starting to show signs of wear and tear.

"Please don't hurt me," she begged.

"How invested are you in this relationship?" Ghost asked.

She curled her lip. "You're joking, right?" She must've realized we were serious because she hurried on. "I'm sick of this little pencil dick."

"Chrissy, sweetheart, I love you."

"You think love is getting me a few presents and expecting me to pleasure you. It was all about the money, honey."

"Then you won't be running to his family," I asked.

"They'll know anyway," Dirk spat.

"But it'll be too late," Reaper said with an evil grin. "You'll be dead by then."

Dirk jumped from the bed, but I anticipated what he was going to do and put a bullet in his foot. He screamed as he fell to the floor, then grabbed his bloody foot. I nodded to

Paco, and he hurried over with another one of his men. They quickly gagged and tied him up.

“I’ll take you to the bus station,” Ghost said. “You have ten minutes to be packed.”

“I’ll be ready in five.”

She jumped from the bed and began throwing on clothes, apparently not worried she was naked. By now, Dirk was sobbing. Chrissy opened up a suitcase and started throwing things inside.

“I’ll need some money to get started in a new town,” she pleaded.

“Your phone first.” Ghost held out his hand. “We can’t have you calling the Contis and trying to get money out of them, too.” When she handed it to him, he stuck it in his pocket.

“Are you kidding? I don’t trust them as far as I can throw them. I was planning on leaving anyway. A little extra money would help, though.”

“You’ll be taken care of, don’t worry. Now hurry up.” He turned to us. “Paco and I will see that she gets on the bus and then meet you at the estate.”

“I’m ready,” she said.

I was impressed. It took her less than five minutes to pack up her life. As Ghost herded her into one of the other cars, we threw Dirk into the trunk and climbed in the front. We didn’t talk much on the way home.

“Mia was right, you know,” I finally said. “If we’d gone to the racetrack, it would’ve been a trap. I’m not sure how Dirk slipped away, but it will be the last mistake he ever makes.”

“Yeah, I realize that,” he finally admitted.

I felt as if our lives were all back in sync once again. Well, except for the dirtbag in the trunk, but we’d take care of him soon enough. Maybe Mia’s finger didn’t upset Angelo or Enzo, but I had a feeling Dirk meant more to them. That is, if they could care about anything, and I wasn’t sure they had it in them.

## Chapter Sixteen

*Mia*

I nervously waited for them to return. It seemed as if they'd been gone forever. I hadn't moved from my spot at the window. What if I'd been wrong? Maybe sending them to the house on Prospect Street was a bad idea and they were walking into a more dangerous situation.

Oh damn, what if my family was waiting for them there? The Barones would think I did it on purpose. I closed my eyes and drew in a deep breath, reaching out a hand and holding on to the windowsill.

If they survived.

My hands began to shake. I had no idea why I should care about them. They kidnapped me. Then forced me to...

No, that was wrong. They hadn't forced me to do anything. I'd enjoyed having sex with them. They bought me clothes, told me I looked pretty and made me feel special. My mother was the last person to make me feel like that. God, I missed her so much.

Maybe it was wrong of me that I didn't want them to get hurt, and I didn't give a damn about my family, but that was how I felt.

I sniffed, blinking away the dampness in my eyes. I was still going to escape the first chance I got. I could run right now. It wasn't like there was anyone here other than Mary, and I didn't think she would try to stop me. Could I



leave not knowing if they were safe? Dammit, I hated them for making me feel like this. Like I...cared about them. I didn't. I hated them.

I saw the car lights in the distance, and my pulse sped up. I squinted but couldn't tell how many were in the car. My heart fell to my feet when they reached the light in front of the house. The only two men I saw were Reaper and Venom.

Where was Ghost?

Please don't let anything have happened to him, I prayed as I stumbled back and sat on the edge of my bed. I trembled from head to foot as images of him flashed before my eyes. The way his eyes crinkled at the corners when he smiled. The heated looks he sent my way when he didn't think I saw him. How he made my body react any time he was around—hell, any of them, for that matter. They had a way of making me feel as if I was coming unglued.

I had to know for sure. Maybe he'd only been injured. I hurried out of the bedroom and down the staircase. I looked anxiously at Mary when they didn't come inside. She gave me a reassuring smile. I couldn't stand it any longer and went into the garage. Except they weren't there. My forehead creased in thought. Where the hell did they go?

I flipped on the light, and that was when I saw the other door. I rushed over to it, then slowed as I opened it. I didn't want them to blow my head off thinking I was one of my half-brothers or my father. There was a staircase leading down. I could hear voices. I crept down the stairs, pressing against the wall. The closer I got to the bottom, the more light there was.

“It wasn’t my idea at all,” a man said. “Enzo and my father planned everything.”

I immediately recognized Dirk’s voice. He was such a pussy and never took the blame for anything. As soon as I stepped into the room, he looked up. His angry glare nailed me to the spot.

“You! You told them where I’d be tonight. Don’t try to deny it.”

They’d put him in a straight-backed chair, then secured his arms and feet with rope. He didn’t have a stitch of clothes on and looked pathetic as hell, but I wasn’t concerned about him.

I looked at Reaper, then Venom. “Where’s Ghost?” I dreaded their answer. I prayed they wouldn’t say he’d been killed.

“Are you worried?” Venom asked.

I sank to the step and pulled my knees close to my chest. “Please.”

He relented. “He’s taking Dirk’s mistress to the bus station.”

My head dropped down to my knees, and I drew in a ragged breath.

“Were you worried?” Reaper mocked.

“Go to hell,” I said without raising my head, but I couldn’t deny the relief that swept over me.

“Mia, I’m your brother. Help me,” Dirk whined.

I came to my feet and marched over to stand in front of him. He had blood on the palm of his hand where he'd been shot. I glanced at Venom. "He went for a knife, didn't he?"

"I was ready for it. Thanks to you."

"You're helping them?" Dirk spat.

"Why should I help you? You've never been a brother to me, and all of you treated my mother like shit. You deserve everything you're about to get. I have no sympathy for you whatsoever." A sudden idea came to me, and my eyes narrowed. "I owe you for the scars you gave me. Remember?"

"You don't have the guts to do anything to me."

I looked at Venom, then held out my hand. He hesitated a moment, then handed me a knife.

"Careful, it's sharp."

I'd rather have had a dull one. It would've hurt more. I pushed the button that opened the blade. I put it against Dirk's inner thigh, just like he did to me when I was eleven. "I still remember that day. Do you? It was the day you forced me to look at pictures of my mother after she killed herself. Then you cut me and said my blood looked just like hers. I've never forgotten." I slowly ran the knife down his thigh with enough pressure that he began to scream. "Funny, your blood looks like everyone else's. It's not different at all. But you have a black heart. Maybe I should carve it out."

"No, no! Mia, I was only a kid. It was Enzo and Angelo who killed your mother. I didn't have anything to do with it."

I straightened, stumbling back a step, dropping the knife. It clattered on the concrete floor. “What?”

“I didn’t have anything to do with it,” he pleaded. “Our father made us go with him and watch. He’d been giving your mother a lot of drugs, so she didn’t feel anything anyway when he put the gun to her head and pulled the trigger. I told them to leave her alone, but they wouldn’t listen.”

“You killed my mother?” Had I heard right?

“What’s going on?” Ghost asked as he came downstairs.

I looked at him, shaking my head, feeling dazed. “They killed my mother. She was the only thing I ever cared about, and they murdered her like she was nothing.”

“No!” Dirk screamed. “It was Angelo and Enzo who killed her. Dad, actually. He forced us to watch.”

I had no doubt he’d been a part of everything. “And you laughed when you showed me the pictures. Did it make you feel like a man?”

“I’m sorry, Mia.” Reaper took me in his arms and held me close. I didn’t even realize I was crying. Oh my God, all these years I thought she hadn’t cared enough to stay. Yes, I knew it was hard living with Angelo and his sons, but I always felt like she deserted me. Oh damn, my heart was breaking. I’d hated her for a little while for leaving me with them.

I swiped at the tears on my face, then turned back around and faced Dirk. I reached down and picked up the knife.

“Are you sure, Mia?” Ghost asked. “Once you cross that line, there’s no going back.”

I raised my chin. “I don’t plan on going back.”

I met all three men’s gazes. One by one, they nodded. I turned back to Dirk. I wanted him to scream as much as I had screamed in my nightmares. I wanted him to hurt as much as I had hurt. I wanted him to feel the pain I felt when he forced me to look at the pictures of my mother with her brains blown out. I wanted to kill him over and over again. I slashed at his chest. Left to right, then right to left. I sliced down both arms, then down both his legs. I inhaled the coppery scent of his blood as it poured from his wounds. I was breathing hard when I tore open his cheek.

His screams began to penetrate the fog that surrounded me. I gulped in air, feeling as if I hadn’t taken a breath in a very long time. Except he was still alive, just barely, but still breathing. Exhaustion washed over me, leaving my body trembling. I looked at Reaper, then Ghost, then Venom. I think they knew I couldn’t go any farther.

Venom stepped forward and took the knife. There wasn’t much left of Dirk. He drew it across Dirk’s throat, and Dirk’s head fell forward.

It was done. My knees began to buckle. Venom tossed the knife and caught me in his arms, holding me close as he carried me up the stairs. I didn’t speak as we went through the kitchen and up the staircase to his bedroom.

He took me to his room and into his bathroom before he sat me on the counter. I watched as he turned the water on, but I kept seeing my mother’s sparkling eyes, and I could

almost hear her soft laugh when we were alone. Those had been special times.

She'd taught me how to cook, but I wasn't very good at it, even though she praised my efforts. We would sit outside in the sunshine and sew. She taught me how to hem a handkerchief. Then she embroidered pretty pink and yellow flowers on it. I wondered what happened to it. One day, it was gone—like her.

I looked at Venom when he unbuttoned my top and then slipped it off my shoulders. I looked down at the blood splatters and realized it was probably ruined.

There had been blood everywhere in the pictures Dirk had forced me to look at. Even with the tears running down my face that day, I saw that her eyes were open, staring blankly into nothing, and I remembered asking why, and Dirk laughing as he said she didn't love me.

They wouldn't let me go to the funeral. Dad had said he didn't want to deal with my blubbering and I should get over it. She was dead, end of story.

But it hadn't been the end of the story.

I stood under the spray, not realizing Venom had removed the rest of my clothes and was now gently washing all traces of Dirk off my body. I looked down as the blood swirled around and around before washing down the drain.

I raised my hand and caressed Venom's cheek. He took my hand and brought it to his lips, pressing a kiss on it.

"We won't let anyone else hurt you," he said gruffly.

I nodded.

He turned off the water, and we stepped from the shower. He grabbed a fluffy white towel and dried us, then pulled a gown over my head and carried me to my bedroom. After he pulled the cover back, he laid me down, then crawled in beside me, holding me close after he tucked the cover around us.

“Sleep,” he said near my ear.

I rested my head against his chest and closed my eyes with a deep sigh. As soon as I did, my mother’s face swam before me. She was at peace now.

I would be as soon as Angelo and Enzo were dead.

## Chapter Seventeen

*Angelo*

My eyes narrowed as I looked around. “They’re not coming. Something must have spooked them. Let’s get the hell out of here.” I glanced over at Enzo. “Where’s Dirk?”

Enzo shrugged. “I don’t know. I thought he was with Romeo.”

Romeo was walking toward them.

“Where the hell is Dirk?”

Romeo grimaced. “I thought he was with you.”

“Just guessing, he probably went to see his whore. He can’t seem to stay away from her. He’s got pussy on the brain when it comes to Chrissy. Has her set up in a house so she’ll be there whenever he wants to fuck her. Hell, I told him he could get pussy anywhere. Just flash the cash and they come running.”

My youngest thought he was a fucking playboy while we did all the work. He was going to be in for a surprise. He was either a part of this family or he wasn’t. “I’ll have a little talk with him tomorrow. He was supposed to be here with us.” I was too wired to go home. Dammit! Tonight should’ve ended everything. The Barones would’ve walked into our trap and been dead by now. Except that hadn’t happened. I don’t know what the hell went wrong. Maybe someone betrayed us, or they figured out it was a trap. I wasn’t sure. We would get them, though.



“I think I’ll go to the club,” Enzo said.

“Take men with you. I don’t trust them bastards.” Hell, I didn’t want to go home either. “I’ll go with you. Maybe we can figure out what we’re going to do next. I want them dead.”

As soon as we walked inside the club, they took us to our special room. A large window looked down onto the activities so we could watch everything from our room, but it gave us plenty of privacy. The club catered to anything you might need. I should know, we supplied many of their drugs at a discount. In return, we were treated like fucking Gods.

I slowly scanned the club below me. The lights were muted but not so dim I couldn’t see what was happening. A couple of women were giving lap dances. A woman swung around on a stripper pole, tits bare. Nice, but kind of small. We ordered our usual drinks and then sat in the chairs.

Enzo pulled out a bag of coke and laid out a couple of lines. He rolled a hundred-dollar bill and drew it down one of the lines, snorting as he went. “Fuck! That’s good shit!”

He handed me the rolled-up bill, and I snorted the other line. I usually didn’t snort the profit, but I needed something to take the edge off. He was right. The buzz immediately went to my head. No wonder people got hooked on this shit. I felt fucking invincible.

My eyes narrowed as I scanned the area again, hunting, then locked on a curvy redhead. Her tits almost spilled out of her low-cut costume. They were big. When she turned and bent at the waist, I noticed she had a nice ass, too. Not skinny like most women these days. I liked women with meat on their

bones and a large enough mouth to suck my cock. Damn, I was already starting to get an erection.

Our drinks arrived. “The redhead. Send her in here.”

“And the blonde over there,” Enzo said, pointing toward a full-figured bleached blonde.

“Of course, sirs, will there be anything else?”

“We don’t want to be disturbed, and have them bring us two more drinks each.” I smiled at Enzo. He was my favorite child. A hell of a lot more like me than Dirk would ever be. Someday, he would take over all of this. But not until I was ready. I liked being in control. Having anything I wanted at my fingertips. Having my sons do my bidding so they could keep their fancy cars and fuck all the pussy they wanted.

There was a knock on the door, and the two women entered, setting our drinks down on the small table in front of us. I was staring right at the redhead’s tits. I rubbed my crotch.

“Strip. Both of you. We want to see tits and pussy.” I laughed. The redhead looked nervous, but she did as I ordered. If not, she would lose her job, and she knew it. The pay here was too damned good.

“Nice,” Enzo said. “I never could understand why Dirk would want to stay with one woman when he could have any woman he wanted.” He pulled the blonde toward him. She giggled and straddled him.

I patted my lap. “Come to Daddy.”

The redhead cautiously came forward. I opened my legs wider and grabbed my cock. “On your knees.”

She swallowed hard. Yeah, I'd have her swallowing a lot more than her own spit in a little while. She moved to her knees, taking my cock in her mouth. She gagged, but didn't stop sucking. "Yeah, just like that, bitch." I closed my eyes and lost myself in the sensations she aroused inside me.

It was the early morning hours when we stumbled inside the house. We never did make another plan. We would work on that tomorrow. Although now, I guess it was today. I laughed. It was funny what alcohol, coke, and a little pussy could do to revive your spirits.

"See you in the morning, Dad," Enzo said as he went inside his room.

I waved toward him and then went inside my bedroom and stripped out of my clothes. After I took a piss, I left the bathroom light on. I needed to shower, but it could wait until tomorrow. I was tired and still angry that the night didn't go as planned. With a deep sigh, I turned the cover back on the bed, and then froze.

I began to shake from head to foot as I grabbed my gun from the bedside drawer and quickly scanned the room for intruders. No, I didn't think the cowards would hang around.

"Enzo! Get your ass in here!"

I yanked on my pants just as the door flew open. Enzo was naked, gun in his hand.

"What is it?" He walked closer to the bed and looked down. His face drained of color. "What the fuck? Is that..."

"Your brother's head. The bastards killed him and cut off his fucking head. I'm going to get them for this. They're

going to regret the day they fucked with the Contis! I'll kill every fucking one of them!"

Romeo came running into the room but froze when he saw Dirk's head on the bed. "Son of a bitch!" He crossed himself. "What does the note say?"

I hadn't noticed it. I carefully reached across Dirk's blank stare and picked it up, reading out loud.

*One down, two to go.*

*Who will be next?*

*Angelo or Enzo?*

I threw the note down on the floor and turned to Romeo. "Get that thing out of my bed. I'll sleep in Dirk's room tonight. Tomorrow we'll make a new plan, and this time, it won't fail.

They'd been in our fucking home!

"And I want to tighten the security. More cameras, and check the ones we have," I threw over my shoulder. I passed Dirk's room and went downstairs to the mini-bar, pouring myself a stiff drink. Enzo joined me, doing the same. "This is your legacy. All this will be yours someday. Unless they take it away from you." I wanted to make damn sure he didn't get scared and run.

"Don't worry, Dad. They aren't stealing anything from us." His eyes narrowed before he tossed back the whiskey in his glass. "We'll kill them all. Every last Barone."

## Chapter Eighteen

### *Venom*

As soon as I entered the living room, Ghost and Reaper looked up. Their expressions worried. “How is she?” Reaper asked.

I went straight to the bar and fixed myself a drink, then took it back over to the sofa. It had been a long fucking night. “In shock, but she’s a survivor. She would have to be to live in that house.” I swallowed some of the whiskey in my glass. It burned all the way down my throat. “She’s asleep now. You know, all these years, she thought her mother had killed herself. She had to have felt like her mother deserted her. Then to find out that she didn’t commit suicide, but was murdered.” I shook my head. “It was a hell of a blow.”

“We need to rethink why we took her,” Reaper said.

“You’re right,” Ghost agreed.

“I wanted revenge for what they did to me. Man, I was so wrong about Mia. She was even more their victim than me. I can’t even imagine what she went through.”

“She got vengeance on one of them tonight. Damn, she made mincemeat of that son of a bitch, but she did it in a way he would suffer a hell of a lot. I was impressed.”

“He deserved it,” Ghost said.

“And more,” Reaper added. “But it doesn’t change what we did to Mia.”

“We didn’t know.”

“We should have done better research. I thought she was part of them, too.”

I studied Reaper. “What do you want to do about her?”

He grimaced. “There’s only one thing we can do.”

“Set her free,” I said as I stared down into what was left of my drink. I downed the last swallow, my hand tightening around the glass. “It’s the right thing to do.” That didn’t mean I wanted to do it. I didn’t want her to leave. When had she gotten under my skin? I looked at my brothers. They didn’t look any more enthused about the prospect of giving Mia her freedom than I did.

“We’ll tell her in the morning,” Ghost said. “We’ll have to put her somewhere safe for now. I don’t trust her family not to try something. It’s our responsibility to keep her safe.”

“Agreed.” There was no way I was going to let her family get near her again.

“We can give her the option of staying here,” Reaper suggested. “This is the safest place I know. At least for now. But we can’t touch her again. She doesn’t belong to us.”

My gut clenched at not being able to hold her close. It was the right thing to do. “Agreed.”

Ghost looked a little sick. “Agreed,” he mumbled.

“Then it’s settled.”

“What about the Contis that are left? What are we planning to do next?” I asked. I wasn’t sure what had been

going on while I was with Mia.

Reaper smiled. “We sent them another message.”

I cocked an eyebrow, and Ghost laughed.

“Paco put Dirk’s head in Angelo’s bed.”

I snickered as I shook my head. “Fuck, that’s sick. I told everyone that he’s been watching too many Godfather movies.”

“He’s a good man,” Ghost said, and we agreed.

“I’m exhausted. I think I’ll go on up to bed. See you in the morning.”

Before I crawled into bed, I checked on Mia one more time. Her breathing was even and regular. She’d pushed the cover down to her waist. Her skin was creamy pale in the light from the bathroom.

“Sleep, little flower. No one will hurt you ever again. We’ll make sure of that.”

## Chapter Nineteen

*Mia*

I yawned as I came awake. It took a moment for the events of last night to come back, with it, my anger returned, followed by a deep ache that seemed to go on forever.

“Oh, damn, Momma, I’m so sorry for thinking you killed yourself.” I pushed to a sitting position in bed and hugged my knees. A shudder trembled down my body. “I thought you didn’t love me enough to stay.”

For a brief moment, I thought I heard my mother’s whispered words, “*I’ve always loved you, sweetheart.*”

I stilled, and the silence of the room enveloped me. Just my imagination? Wishful thinking? Maybe, but I drew comfort from the words, even if they were only in my head.

They stole from me. Angelo, Enzo, and Dirk. They treated my mother horribly. Angelo used to beat her for any little infraction. I still remembered the bruises, the blood from a cut lip, or swelling nose that she tried to hide from me.

I flung the cover away and jumped out of bed. “No more!” They would pay for what they did to her, to me. The Barone brothers wanted revenge, well, so did I! I didn’t just want to kill them. No, I had other plans.

It only took me a few minutes to pull on underclothes, a pair of soft jeans, and a dark blue T-shirt. I glanced at the clock. They were probably already downstairs. I wanted to discuss my plans with them.



I sat on the side of the bed and put on my sneakers, but stopped when I thought of them. The best thing that had ever happened to me since Mom was murdered was them kidnapping me. I smiled. Yes, they'd probably planned to have their fun and then throw me out on the street. They definitely weren't the boys next door. But damn, I enjoyed being with them.

I rolled my eyes. They were still Mafia, and I needed to remember that. I couldn't put all my trust in them. It wouldn't be easy, though. I was thoughtful as I left the bedroom. They were sexy and charming as hell—two very dangerous combinations.

They were in the dining room drinking coffee and talking, but as soon as I walked in, all conversation stopped. I suddenly felt embarrassed and shy around them. I wasn't used to feeling like this. I was a fighter. I had to be if I wanted to survive in my father's household. These three men had a strange effect on me.

They came to their feet. Ghost hurried over and pulled out my chair. I took a seat, and he pushed it closer to the table. Something was different this morning. They didn't quite meet my gaze as they took their seats again. Were they disgusted by my actions last night? Maybe it would be best if they knew where I stood.

"I'm glad Dirk is dead," I told them. They raised their gazes to meet mine, and I looked at each individually. "It wasn't done in a moment of uncontrollable rage." I was thoughtful for a moment. "Maybe some of it was, but in the light of day, I would do it all again. I would make him suffer

again and again and again, and it still wouldn't be nearly as much as he made my mother suffer.”

The door opened, and Mary stepped in, bringing more coffee and setting a cup and saucer in front of me. She smiled warmly when our gazes met. There was something about her that I really liked. I returned her smile. After she poured my coffee, I thanked her, and she left. Once again, Ghost passed me the sugar and cream.

“If you're repulsed by what I did, I won't apologize. You'll just have to live with it.”

Reaper shook his head. “Not at all. In fact, we admired what you did. Dirk deserved everything he got.”

“But you didn't,” Venom said with sincerity. “We wanted revenge on all the Contis. We didn't realize how much pain they caused you and your mother. You're more of a victim than I ever thought about being.”

Ghost stirred his coffee, then set the spoon down. “What we did to you was wrong. We know an apology won't be enough. We are sorry, though.”

“From this day forward,” Reaper said. “You will be treated with the respect you deserve. We won't invade your space, and you won't have to worry about us...taking you. We will, however, kill Enzo and your father. Once that is done, we'll make sure you're taken care of.”

They were joking, right? They were going to take care of me? No more sex? Hell no!

I raised an eyebrow. “I don't think so. I enjoyed having sex with each of you. No way in hell is that going to stop.

Believe me, masturbation is no substitute. The night you kidnapped me, you gave me my life back. I'm not going to let you stick me in a corner." When Reaper opened his mouth, I held up my hand. I wasn't through talking. "As far as my family goes, I don't just want to kill them. I want to destroy them first. I want them on their fucking knees begging. I want revenge for what they did to my mother and tried to do to me. If that doesn't work for you, I'll leave now."

I wondered if they thought I'd lost my mind. Maybe I had. I was tired of being a victim. But I needed them, too. Something had changed in our relationship that I couldn't quite put my finger on. It sounded crazy, but I felt as if I was home. So, I held my breath as I waited for them to say something. Dammit, I really liked them, and I didn't want to leave.

"You really enjoyed having sex with us?" Venom finally asked.

That's what he got out of all this? I couldn't be angry at him. Instead, I smiled. "Yes, I did."

He and Ghost smiled, but it was Reaper I looked toward. He was the quiet, sensible one. They might rule as one, but when it came to major decisions, he was the man everyone turned to. Their unspoken leader. If he didn't go along with my plan against my family, then I would have to walk away and do it on my own.

"What did you have in mind?" he asked.

I took a drink of coffee, savoring the taste. Besides, it gave me a moment to gather my thoughts. I didn't have a concrete plan. Not yet, anyway. I did have ideas that I wanted

to brainstorm. “I know the location of all of their warehouses. I know the schedules when they have product arriving. I know most of their men because they’ve been in the house at one time or another. Romeo is the one man they trust to carry out their orders. I want to hit them where it hurts—in their wallets.”

“You do realize you’ll be destroying your inheritance. After they’re dead, everything they owned will be yours.” Ghost was being sensible.

“I know. I don’t care. I want to take them down. Losing income will hurt them more than anything. I want to steal their power and to do that, I have to kill their income source. When that’s done, I want them dead, and I want to be a part of that, too.”

“Mafia Princess.” Ghost winked at me.

I cocked an eyebrow. “Princess, hell, I’m a fucking queen, a warrior ready to fight.” I looked around the table again. “I want to be a part of everything. I’ve been in the shadows far too long.”

Reaper nodded. “You have the right to get revenge on them.” He looked at Ghost, who nodded. Then Venom. He also nodded. “Okay, we’ll do it your way. But they’ll be ready for us, so we’ll have to be cautious.”

“Do they know Dirk is dead?”

Venom picked up his coffee cup, then frowned when he realized it was empty. Ghost straightened the spoon beside his cup. Reaper was watching me.

“What do I not know?” I finally asked.

“They know he’s dead,” Reaper finally said.

“How exactly? Did you call Angelo?”

“We sent him a message.”

I leaned back in my chair, crossing my arms. “How *exactly* did you send him a message?”

He watched me closely as he continued. “Paco severed Dirk’s head and put it in your father’s bed.”

It took a moment for me to process what Reaper had just told me. I pictured my father pulling back the cover and seeing Dirk’s bloodied head. No wonder Ghost and Venom wouldn’t look me in the eye.

I met Reaper’s gaze without flinching. “Too many Godfather movies?” I laughed lightly.

Venom snorted. Ghost laughed outright.

Reaper grinned. “Yeah, maybe. He can be a sick bastard sometimes. I think that’s why we keep him around.”

“I wish I could’ve seen their expressions. I bet they crapped all over themselves, but yes, they’ll be careful they’re never alone from now on. So, what’s next?”

“We could hit their warehouses. That would hurt them.” Venom shifted in his chair.

“Or we could hijack their shipments, then they’ll have a bunch of empty warehouses.” Ghost looked at me to see what I thought.

I nodded. “Good idea. I like that even better than taking out their warehouses.”

“Do you know his supplier?” Reaper asked.

“I know some product is coming in through the shipyard. His supplies come in from Mexico and Colombia. From there, Angelo has buyers in Louisiana and Arkansas.”

Reaper nodded. “We have cousins in Louisiana.”

I raised an eyebrow. “Really? I thought you were Italian like my family. Your last name is Barone. That’s Italian. How’d you end up with relatives in Louisiana?” I didn’t think of it as being nosy. I was just curious.

“Those are our crazy relatives,” Venom said with a laugh. “You don’t want to mess with them. One of our cousins even had an alligator for a pet. Those things give me the creeps.”

“Our father did business with them, and once, his older sister went with him. She fell in love with the man my father was sent to do business with, and the rest is history.” Reaper frowned. “But it’s like Venom said, some of them are crazy bastards. But they are kin, so if they’re supplying Angelo, they’ll help us rather than him.”

“I’ll contact them,” Ghost said. He looked at me and smiled. “They trust me more than Reaper and Venom.”

“Because they think you’re too pretty to be as conniving as Reaper and me.” Venom laughed at his joke.

Funny, but I felt so damned close to these men. I’d never been around family members who teased each other in a friendly way, which was refreshing. I’d certainly never felt that with my own half-brothers or my father. These men made me feel as if I was a part of them.

We moved into the study, only stopping long enough for lunch, then dinner, as we made our plans. Paco joined us early on. He looked embarrassed every time our gazes met. I wondered if he was afraid I'd be mad about what he did with Dirk's head, and I decided to clear the air. I didn't want anyone feeling uncomfortable around me. It could throw them off their game and get them, or someone else, killed.

“So, I've been told you like the Godfather movies,” I casually asked as I looked down at the plans on the folding table one of the servants had brought in.

Paco was just getting a drink of his beer and choked. “Excuse me?” he asked when he could take a breath.

Venom snorted.

Reaper looked surprised I'd said anything.

Ghost frowned as if he didn't know where I was going with this.

“Uh, yeah,” Paco said.

“So do I. Next time, put up a camera so we can see their expressions. I bet it was funny as hell.”

Everyone relaxed.

Paco grinned. “For you, Mia, I'd do anything.”

Our gazes met, and he nodded at me. I knew we'd come to an understanding. Good, he needed to know I was in this all the way. We got back to our plans and the awkwardness was gone.

We would disrupt the shipping channels for the product coming in. One by one, we would take them down. By the

time we went to dinner, we had a good idea of what we would do. Paco excused himself and joined his men to fill them in on all the details.

After dinner, we moved into the living room for drinks and just to relax after Mary's wonderful meal. As soon as I saw the remote, I scooped it up and turned it on.

"Let's see if there's anything on the news," I said.

"No, it's not that kind of..."

I frowned when I looked at a bedroom. What show was this? It seemed vaguely familiar. My eyes widened, and my mouth dropped open. "You son of a bitches." I pushed more buttons and saw the rest of the house and the outside come up on the screen. "You spied on me. That's how you knew exactly where I was." I glared at each one of them. "That's cheating!" They would've never let me get to the end of the driveway.

"We didn't know you back then," Ghost hedged.

I slapped my hands on my hips and glared at him. "Really? That's your excuse?"

"We're sorry?"

I tossed the remote after turning it off. "Y'all are sick."

Reaper walked closer to me. "But that's what you like about as." He ran his thumb across my bottom lip, as if he was branding me. Maybe he was because his touch felt hot.

I raised my chin. "Maybe it is." I downed the rest of my wine and strolled to the bar, setting the glass down. When I turned back around, all three men were watching me. I'd changed for dinner into a short white dress that clung to my



curves and white stilettos. I'd left my hair hanging down my back. I knew I looked sexy because I'd caught them looking at me throughout the meal.

Reaper had taken a seat in the overstuffed brown leather chair. Ghost and Venom were on the sofa. Damn, they were hot. I could feel my pussy getting wet looking at each one of them and knowing I could fuck any one of them right now. Hell, I could fuck all three of them.

Hmm, now that was an idea.

"It's getting warm in here, don't you think?" I slowly licked my lips.

Venom groaned. Ghost shifted on the sofa. The way they looked at me now, they were already undressing me. I reached behind me and began bringing my zipper down. I didn't get in a hurry. I shifted my hands lower and brought it down the rest of the way. Leaving my heels on, I pushed it off my shoulders and over my hips. I wasn't wearing a bra.

"Are you sure it's not us you want to kill?" Venom rubbed his crotch.

"Not until I have my way with you," I purred. I walked behind the sofa and flicked my tongue across Ghost's ear, delving inside before sucking on the lobe. He drew in a breath. When he reached up behind him, I chuckled and moved to Venom.

I took his hands and put them on my breasts. When he squeezed, I drew in a sharp breath. Before we could get too comfortable, I moved to Reaper. He watched, but didn't make

a move toward me. I would just see about that. I straddled him, sitting on his lap.

“I want you to fuck me.” I hooked my fingers on both sides of his shirt and jerked it open. Our gazes met. The heat of passion flared inside him. He wasn’t quite as unaffected as he tried to pretend. I leaned forward, flicking my tongue across his already tight nipple. He drew in a ragged breath.

I glanced over my shoulder. “If we’re going to have fun, then you three have on way too many clothes.” I almost giggled when Ghost and Venom jumped off the sofa and began stripping.

I turned back to Reaper and came to my feet, lowering my panties and then kicking them away. He unfastened his jeans and shoved them down. His briefs followed. I left my shoes on and straddled him again, but this time I eased onto his cock, closing my eyes as each incredible inch of his cock filled me.

He grasped my hips, holding me in place as he slowly began to move. Venom came up behind me and reached around to massage my breasts. When Ghost came up beside me, I took his cock in my mouth and sucked him in deep. He groaned.

“Fuck, that feels fantastic. He held the back of my head, holding me in place, but he need not have worried that I would stop. I loved sucking cock. I rocked my hips against Reaper’s cock. He began to move faster. I tightened my inner muscles, then relaxed, only to tighten again. Venom rubbed his cock against my back. I reached my hand behind me, moving

between his legs and nudging him closer. When he stood beside me, I began to stroke his cock.

“Oh, damn,” Ghost moaned. He pulled out of my mouth and grabbed a shirt off the floor as he came.

I took Venom in my mouth and began to suck as Reaper quickened his movements. I closed my eyes, lost in the erotic sensations, the building heat that threatened to explode me into a thousand tiny pieces.

And then I did.

At least, that’s what it felt like.

Reaper filled me with his cum as Venom pulled out of my mouth and came on a shirt he’d grabbed off the floor. I collapsed against Reaper’s chest.

When I could talk normal, I began to speak. “You’re mine. All three of you. We’ve created an unbreakable bond tonight.” I looked at all three of them. “We might part ways in the future, but until that time, you own me, and I own you.” I couldn’t stand the thought of them fucking someone else. I was too vulnerable.

“And you belong to us,” Reaper said.

“The bond is set.”

“Until we all agree to break it,” Ghost said.

“Agreed,” we spoke in unison.

## Chapter Twenty

*Angelo*

“Of course, I give you my word that another shipment is on the way. Yes, of course. I personally guarantee it will be delivered. My word is good. Yes...”

There was a distinct click, and the call ended.

“Mother fucker!”

“Who was that on the phone?” Enzo asked as he came in from the other room.

“Claude Landry.”

He cocked an eyebrow. “What the fuck did he want?”

“His shipment, what else.” I ran my fingers through my hair. No one had ever dared hijack one of our shipments. I was going to kill the bastards. But how the hell had they found out when it was going to get here?

“Aren’t the Landrys related to the Barones?”

I frowned as I thought about his words. Hadn’t the Barones’ father had a sister who married into the family? I shook my head. “I don’t know, maybe. How the fuck should I know? What are you getting at?”

“Maybe they’re in league with each other. The Barones could have hijacked the shipment, then sold it to them at a discount. They would have kept quiet about it. They’re probably laughing their asses off at us right now. We’ve become a joke to them.”

I studied Enzo. He wore an expensive black suit—tailor-made. I knew how much he spent on his wardrobe because I got the bills every month: Clothes, jewelry, five-star restaurants. Most of the time, I didn't say anything, but last month, I'd put him on notice that I would be tightening the purse strings on how much he spent each month if he didn't slow down. I knew he hadn't liked it. Even told me he wasn't a child anymore. Maybe he wanted more.

My eyes narrowed. "How the hell would they know when our shipments are coming in? Unless you've been talking?"

Enzo's gaze flew to mine, anger rising fast in his. "Are you accusing me? What the hell would I have to gain? This will be mine someday. I would never betray you." He was so angry he began to shake.

I watched my son for just a moment. Finally, I sank into one of the chairs in the sitting room. He was right. I was losing my fucking mind. "I know you wouldn't. I'm sorry. The damn Barones have got me on edge. It's been three days since I found Dirk's head in my bed. It's like waiting for the other shoe to drop."

"Since they tortured Dirk, he might've been the one who talked."

"He never involved himself in the business, except to spend the money we brought in. He was too stupid to remember which shipment was coming from what place. No, it wasn't him, but someone has been talking."

"Mia?"

“Don’t be as stupid as your brother. Mia didn’t know anything about the business.”

He squared his shoulders. “It doesn’t matter. We’re smarter than them. We’ve added extra men. They can’t get to either of us. Maybe it’s time we started fighting back.”

I leaned back against the cushion, suddenly feeling old. We shouldn’t have taken Venom. I realized that now. I’d gotten too damned greedy. Now Dirk was dead. I wasn’t that concerned about Mia. All they’d done was cut off her finger. They cut off Dirk’s fucking head.

Everything was falling apart. Luca said he didn’t want Mia now, except as a mistress, but he would still pay, just not as much. That was fine with me. First, we had to get her back. Not that I was concerned about her right now. The idea of fighting back appealed to me, though. Show the Barones we weren’t a bunch of pussies.

“What did you have in mind?” I asked.

“How about an old-fashioned car bomb?” He began to laugh. “We haven’t planted one in a long time.”

I slowly nodded. “I like that idea. But what if Mia is with them?”

He laughed. “Would you miss her? I mean, really? She’s lost most of her value now.”

“You’re right. She has. It would be no great loss.” I glanced around. “Where’s Romeo? It seems I can never find him when I need him. I wonder if something is going on?”

“I thought the same thing.” Enzo reached into his pocket and brought out his phone. “You’re needed at the

house. Good.” He put it back inside his pocket. “Just in case, I’ve had someone following him. He was on his way over here with information.”

I studied Enzo. “Romeo’s been with us a long time. Do you really think he would turn against us?”

“We’re going through some things right now. Anyone would turn against us if they thought we were about to go down and if they were paid enough money. What better time? We’re looking on the outside of the organization, while someone on the inside could be the bad apple. Besides, it never hurts to check up on people.”

“Yeah, but Romeo. He’s like one of the family.”

The doorbell rang, and a moment later, a man I didn’t recognize was shown in. He was short with a paunch, hair thinning. His light brown suit was wrinkled. He was the kind of man you wouldn’t look at twice.

“And who are you?”

He nodded in my direction. “George Randolph, Mr. Conti. I’m a private detective.” He turned back to Enzo. “Here’s everything I’ve discovered.” He handed Enzo a manilla envelope, then continued, “He went into a bar on Fifth Street and sat down next to the man in the photo.”

Enzo pulled out the pictures inside, looked at them, and then handed them to me.

I didn’t recognize the man who was sitting next to Romeo. “And who is he. The man in the photo, that is?”

“He works for the DEA. This is the second time he’s met with your man.”

My blood ran cold. Romeo turned on us? No, it wasn't possible. "Get out!"

The PI looked at Enzo. "If you should require my services in the future, you know how to reach me."

As soon as he was gone, I turned to Enzo. "The fucking DEA? Maybe they were the ones who hijacked our shipment. Dammit, Romeo was the only one who knew when it would arrive."

"I guess someone did pay him more. Now we've got the Barones and the DEA breathing down our necks. What do you want to do?"

"We have to question him. If I find that he turned on us, we'll kill him." I drained the alcohol in my glass and threw it toward the fireplace. It hit the stone with a shattering crash, sending sharp splinters in every direction. Romeo had been like a brother to me. He was just like all the rest of them—greedy bastard. And just like the others who had turned against me, he would regret it.

"Have him taken down to the basement and tie him up. I'll be down shortly."

When I looked at Enzo, his eyes glittered with excitement. He liked torturing and killing, and he didn't give a fuck who was on the receiving end. He was a sick bastard. Maybe a little too much like me. I got to my feet as a young maid was hurrying past.

"Get me another drink. And hurry up," I ordered.

"We'll see you soon?"

"Start without me, but don't kill him."



He nodded and left the room.

The maid returned a few minutes later. I noticed the tray tremble. Not bad looking. Tits were small, and she was kind of skinny.

“How old are you?” Not that it really mattered. She was my employee, so I owned her.

“I just turned eighteen, sir.” She downed her head.

“Go to my bedroom. Take off your clothes and lay down on the bed. I’ll be up in a few minutes.” I only thought she was shaking before. “You do want to keep your job, don’t you? I can make sure you never get another one in my town.”

“Yes, sir.”

I reached out and squeezed her breast. She flinched, but she didn’t move away. I smiled. I needed to be more relaxed when I went down to take care of Romeo. I had a feeling she would do exactly that for me.

“Go,” I ordered.

I liked the position I was in. Power was a hell of an adrenaline rush. I didn’t plan to let anyone take it away from me. I’d kill anyone who tried.

## Chapter Twenty-one

### *Ghost*

“What did he say?” I stretched my legs in front of me, putting my phone on speaker and stretching my legs in front of me.

“He be so pissed off, but you be knowing he’s gonna tink it was you boys, den he be comin’ after you. Better be watching your backs.”

Sometimes, Claude was hard to understand. His Cajun accent could get thick when he was worried or mad about something.

“We always watch our backs, Uncle Claude.”

“Not what I be hearin’. Dey got your brother and beat him up pretty bad, they did. Dat not good.”

I gripped the pen I’d picked up a little tighter. “And we’re getting even with them for that. We’ve already killed Dirk. We want them to sweat, waiting to see what we will do next.”

He laughed. A deep, booming sound. “We have us a great big swamp if you ever want to get rid of a body, you know. We could just be tossing them coyons in and let de gators take care of dem.”

I already knew the gators got fat when someone wronged our cousins. I’d once watched them toss a man they’d trussed up into the swamp. Dressed him all in white. Said the gators would think he was a big egg. Gators liked nothing

better than eggs. Not many people had the nerve to cross the Landrys.

“How’s auntie?” It was time to change the subject.

“Dat woman be sexy as hell and still be giving me what for.”

I smiled. “That sounds about right. My aunt is tough.”

“I spoke to your father. Why you not tell your papa about the Contis?”

“They expect us to handle everything. That’s what we’re doing.”

There was a slight pause. “Good for you. You need some more muscle, count us in. Been slow around here some. We going on a gator hunt soon. If you finish with this business, always welcome. You know, laissez les bons temps rouler. We always let the good times roll here. We have us some fun, you know.”

Wrestling gators wasn’t really our thing, but I didn’t tell my uncle that. We talked a few more minutes, with me telling Uncle Claude we’d get down there as soon as everything calmed a little here. After we ended the call, a shiver swept over me. Yeah, our Louisiana cousins had some strange customs, along with a few swamp legends that still scared the hell out of me.

I looked up just as Mia walked past the study. “Mia, come in, and I’ll update you. I just got off the phone with my uncle.”

“The one in Louisiana?”

“Yes, and he spoke with your father about missing his shipment. He warned him that he better not miss another one.”

I liked the way she smiled. Her eyes always twinkled. My gaze slowly roamed over her. She looked hot as hell in dark blue short-shorts and a matching crop top that showed a smooth expanse of bare skin. I raised my gaze and caught her knowing look. Yeah, it might not have been a good idea to pick casual clothes for her. Which made me think about something.

“Did you wear the panties I bought for you?” She would know which ones I was talking about.

She sauntered around my desk, then slid her ass on it, crossing her legs. “You mean the crotchless panties that are good for only one thing?”

I grinned. “Yeah, those.”

She leaned slightly forward, displaying a fair amount of cleavage. I could feel myself getting hard.

“I have them on now.”

Ahh, damn. “You’re lying,” I practically croaked.

“Would you like me to prove it?” She said with a saucy grin.

“As a matter of fact...”

“Here you are,” Venom said as he came to the door.

Fuck! “You have the worst timing,” I growled.

Mia laughed. A light musical sound that sent shivers down my spine. It hadn’t taken her long to get under our skin.

I couldn't even imagine life without her. But right now, I wanted to kill my brother.

Venom smiled as he came up behind her and wrapped his arm around her waist then nuzzled her neck. "Damn, you smell good."

"Why exactly were you looking for us?" I steered him back on track as to why he was here.

"Our men hijacked another shipment."

Reaper came to the door. "We having a meeting?"

More was definitely not merrier. I sighed. It looked like we were going to work. "Let's go into the living room so we can all have a seat. As I came to my feet, Mia scooted off my desk. I couldn't help pressing my hand against her crotch. She bit her bottom lip, then glared at me before turning and sashaying away.

Once seated in the living room, I quickly filled them in about my call with our uncle. Venom began to talk next.

"Our crew just hijacked the train from El Paso that was taking the Contis their product from Mexico."

Mia propped herself on the arm of the sofa rather than actually taking a seat. Reaper brought her a glass of wine and took his drink to the armchair. She sipped the wine, then closed her eyes.

"This is so good," she said. "I love the aroma. It tastes fruity, but not too sweet."

"It comes from our vineyard in Italy," I told her.

"You have vineyards, too?"

“A few.”

“Well, it’s delicious.” She nibbled her bottom lip. A telltale sign she was thinking about something that worried her. “We still need to take care of Romeo. He’s smart, and he doesn’t trust anyone. He’s going to be hard to take down, and I’m not sure how we’ll be able to do it.”

“He’s being taken care of,” Reaper said and took a drink. “After the first shipment was taken, Enzo got paranoid to the point where he suspected everyone in their organization. One of our men said he was trying to hire a private investigator. When I found out who it was, I made sure he got pictures of Romeo going into a bar. I planted one of our DEA guys who’s on our payroll. He made sure the PI saw his badge when he went to the bathroom. It looked as if Romeo had met him there at the bar. Then I made sure it happened again.”

“We won’t have to touch Romeo,” Mia said. “My father and Enzo will do all the dirty work. Good, I didn’t like him. He always looked at me as if he wanted to catch me in a dark hallway. He lost interest as I got older. Apparently, he likes them very young. He deserves anything that happens to him.”

“Our bloodthirsty little vixen,” Venom said.

She turned serious. “They made me this way. It’s the only way I could survive.”

“I’m not complaining, sweetheart. I like a woman who knows what she wants.”

“Right now, I want dinner. I’m starved.”

“We’re going out tonight,” Reaper said.

She frowned. “You don’t think word will get back to my father and half-brother?”

“If they do find out, then think how angry it will make them to know you’re with us,” I told her.

“True.” She smiled. “I’ll go change.” She downed the rest of her wine, then set the glass down as she turned and left the room.

I turned to the others. “Venom interrupted us when Mia was about to show me something.” I came to my feet and started out of the room.

“What was that?” Venom asked with a puzzled look on his face.

“The crotchless panties I bought her. She’s wearing them.” As I left the room, I heard Reaper say something about dinner being late. It was definitely going to be late. I went up the stairs, unbuttoning my shirt. When I opened the door to her room, I stopped and stared.

Mia sat on the foot of the bed wearing only the dark blue crotchless panties. Her legs were spread open, displaying her pussy lips. Nothing was left to the imagination.

I stepped the rest of the way inside. Kicking the door closed behind me. “I knew I’d like that color of blue on you.”

“I hope you didn’t pay too much for them. They left out a piece.” She smiled.

“I can see that.” Man, could I see it. I stripped off my shirt and tossed it on the floor, kicked off my loafers, then unfastened my pants and shoved them and my briefs down. Her gaze fastened on my cock. She slowly ran her tongue

across her lips. I immediately knew what she was thinking. Later, maybe. I needed to breathe in her essence, to taste her, to make love to her.

I kicked my clothes out of the way and strolled toward her. “Fuck, you look sexy as hell.” I moved between her legs and dropped to my knees, pressing my face against her pussy.

She moaned, her body jerking.

Yeah, that’s what I wanted her to do. I slowly ran my tongue up her slit. She was already wet, and her juices sweet as nectar. Better than any wine we had ever produced, but just as intoxicating. I sucked her into my mouth, teasing with my tongue. When she began to squirm against my mouth, I inserted a finger inside her, moving slowly in and out.

“Oh, damn, yes! That feels so fucking good,” she cried. “More, give me more.”

I liked it when she was greedy. I inserted another finger inside her, pumping harder and faster. I didn’t stop tasting her. I knew she was getting close.

“Now, don’t stop. Fuck, that feels good. Oh damn, I’m coming.”

Her body stiffened. I pressed the palm of my hand against her pussy and removed my fingers as I stood. Her eyes had that sleepy, satisfied look, but I wasn’t finished with her yet. I slipped my cock inside her. Her hot juices flowed over me. It was like dipping my cock into a raging inferno. I closed my eyes and let myself be wrapped in erotic pleasure.

I waited until her body completely relaxed, then I began to move, slowly in and out. I reached forward, cupping



her breasts, massaging, squeezing. When I pinched her nipples, she wiggled her hips. I knew she was ready again.

I thrust inside her faster, pumping harder. She wrapped her legs around my waist, and I sank a little deeper. I moved my hands under her ass and brought her higher, closer.

“So fucking sweet,” I murmured as I lost myself in the sensations of her inner muscles stroking my cock. I drove in, then almost all the way out, before thrusting again. In and out, in and out. I could feel the heat building inside me, the flames licking my body.

“Fuck me hard, Ghost. Yeah, just like that. I want to feel your cock caressing me on the inside.”

I opened my eyes and looked down at her. Her eyes were glazed with passion. I growled, pumping harder, faster, thrusting inside her slick body. My balls began to ache. I didn't just cum. I exploded inside her, spewing my hot cum.

Her tight cunt closed around my cock. Fuck, this was good. No woman had ever made me feel like Mia did. I lost myself in the erotic emotions still swirling around me, then collapsed on top of her.

Our ragged breathing filled the room. Our naked bodies pressed against each other. She still wore the panties, but there wasn't a lot to them. She might as well be naked.

I rolled to my side and looked down into her face. Damn, she was beautiful. Nothing was more exquisite than looking into the face of a woman who'd just been sexually satisfied.

“What?” she asked, voice raspy.

I shook my head. “It’s hard to explain. There’s something different about you from other women.” Something had been bothering me, though. “Why all three of us? Why not just one? We would’ve accepted that, even though we wouldn’t have liked it.”

“How could I choose just one? You’re all separate, each special in his own way, but together, you form a whole person. Or maybe you just make *me* feel whole. It’s hard to explain. There’s no way I could’ve chosen just one. Is that wrong of me?”

“No, it’s perfect. Our father groomed us to work as one unit. Together, we’re unbeatable. He didn’t want three sons fighting for control, so he made sure we needed each other to be complete. It’s just natural that we would choose the same woman and be able to share her. Does that bother *you*?”

“No, it’s the first right thing that’s happened in my life in a long time.”

There was a pounding on the door. “Hurry up in there. We’re hungry,” Venom complained.

Mia laughed.

“The bottomless pit. Venom is always hungry. I guess we better clean up.”

“I suppose,” she said with a sigh.

I couldn’t stop myself from lowering my lips to hers. She tasted sweet. She tasted like Mia. I knew I would never be able to let her go. That might prove to be a problem. What if she didn’t want us when all this was over?

## Chapter Twenty-two

*Mia*

I chose a long black dress since Ghost said we'd be eating in a nice restaurant. It looked innocent enough, but it was slit up one side, stopping at the bottom of my panties—if I'd been wearing any. I wasn't wearing anything beneath the dress. There wasn't enough room, making me wonder if that was why Ghost bought it. Probably.

It was very low cut in front, forming a V almost to my belly button. The only other thing I had on was a pair of strappy black stilettos. I felt I needed something else, but I didn't have any jewelry to pair up with a dress like this. Not that I ever did.

My hair was pulled up on top of my head, with long blonde curls framing my face. It looked decent enough, but I definitely wasn't a stylist. When I studied my image in the mirror, I knew they would approve of how I looked.

They were waiting for me at the bottom of the staircase. I stopped before coming down. They hadn't noticed me yet. All three brothers wore dark suits. My mouth watered, just looking at them. Damn, they were handsome.

There was Venom, his hair a little lighter than the other two. He had the shortest temper of the three. He was like a snake, waiting to strike and inject his deadly venom. He didn't mind getting his hands dirty. He was definitely a force to be reckoned with.

Then there was Ghost, with his light blue eyes and dark blond hair. I thought of him as the negotiator. He might be a little more polished than Venom. The debonair one, and I would imagine a lady killer when he cast his attention in their direction.

My gaze moved to Reaper. He was quieter than the other two. Where Venom and Ghost were quicker to anger, Reaper had a sensible side but was just as deadly as the other two. He was the thinker. The one who knew exactly where to hit his enemies to cause the most damage.

As if they sensed my presence, all three looked up at the same time. I started down the stairs. When I reached the bottom, Reaper took my hand and kissed it.

“Beautiful. But there’s something else you need.”

Had I forgotten something? Confused, I looked at them. “What?”

Reaper pulled a black case from behind him and then opened it.

My eyes widened, and my mouth dropped open. The diamond drop earrings sparkled under the light above us. I looked at all three men, who were smiling. “Are those real?”

“That’s what the jeweler told us,” Ghost said.

“Try them on,” Venom urged.

I picked one up and slipped it into the lobe of my pierced ear, then did the same with the other. I like the feel of the weight of the diamonds. “I want to see them.”

“I thought you might.” Ghost picked up a mirror I hadn’t noticed on the small round table beside the staircase and handed it to me.

I turned my head, first one way, then the other.  
“They’re exquisite.”

“And they’re yours to keep no matter what happens.”

I knew what he was saying. I didn’t want to think about the future, especially one without them. I wanted to continue in my fantasy world, where everything was perfect as long as they were with me.

“Thank you,” I simply said. I couldn’t stop the tears that filled my eyes. It had been a very long time since anyone had given me a gift. My mother used to make me paper flowers and we’d pin them to my bedroom wall. We called it my garden of beauty. But they took her from me.

Angelo didn’t believe in holidays, but he always gave his sons gifts. Cars and enough money to spend on women. They enjoyed bragging about it at the dinner table while I had to beg for the clothes on my back. But those days were over.

“You still need one more thing,” Reaper said.

I cocked an eyebrow. “More gifts?” I was starting to feel a little overwhelmed, and it must’ve shown on my face because Ghost smiled.

“Just one more,” Ghost said. He went to the closet and brought out a black silk cape trimmed in black fur, then draped it across my shoulders. Venom tied it at the neck. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.

“I’m starting to feel very spoiled,” I said as I ran my cheek over the fur. It felt very luxurious.

“Now, we’re ready,” Reaper announced.

Before we got inside the limo, two men checked it over. I knew what they were looking for – car bombs. I was immediately brought back to the reality of my situation. I nibbled my bottom lip.

Ghost leaned closer to me. “We do this with any vehicle unless it’s in the garage.”

I nodded.

The drive to the restaurant didn’t take long. As soon as we pulled up, our door was opened by a uniformed man I assumed worked for the restaurant.

“Welcome, Mr. Barone,” he spoke to Reaper. “I hope you and your brothers and your guest have an enjoyable evening.”

“I’m sure we will, Mike, thank you.”

As we entered the restaurant, a female ushered us inside, leading us to our table. I could feel eyes staring at us. I began to tremble. I had plenty of bravado when it came to going up against my family, but I was a horrible introvert when it came to fancy dinners or restaurants. Maybe because I had been to so few of them.

Reaper motioned the waiter away when he started to pull out my chair and pulled it out himself. I took my seat, then whispered, “Everyone is staring.”

Reaper smiled. "Because you're the most beautiful woman in the room. You should get used to it."

I couldn't help blushing and smiling at his compliment. Before long, we were laughing and talking about what their childhood was like growing up on the estate, and I forgot about everyone else in the restaurant.

"Remember when we climbed the big oak tree out back?" Venom said.

"That tree is huge," I commented. I couldn't imagine young boys climbing it. "It's a wonder your mother allowed it."

Reaper grimaced. "We weren't supposed to, but it was too damn tempting."

"But then I fell out of it and broke my arm." Ghost wore a pained expression. "I tried to pretend I wasn't hurt, but my arm swelled."

"Mom nearly had a heart attack. Ghost has always been her baby even though I'm the youngest."

I didn't detect any jealousy over Venom's words. "What happened?"

"Our father talked to us. That's something we hated. We could get around Mom with a smile and a hug, but not Dad. He said if we ever climbed it again, he'd cut it down, then told us how upset Mom was. We felt so guilty we never climbed it again." Reaper looked quite contrite. "I was the oldest and should've watched out for my brothers."

"As if you could've stopped us." Venom laughed.

Our conversation continued in the same lighthearted manner as each delicious course was served. We finished the main dish, and our dessert had just arrived when I looked up. I was sure the color drained from my face as I met Luca's gaze as he approached our table.

Outward appearances could be deceiving. He wore a dark suit and tie, shoes polished. His dark brown hair was perfectly styled. He was a handsome man. Most women would've been thrilled to draw his attention.

Until one looked into his eyes. There was an icy cold cruelty in them. Luca was ruthless in everything he did. Rumor had it that he enjoyed torturing people, especially women. Right now, he looked as if he would like to kill me.

The brothers said they wanted my father to find out I was with them, but not as their captive. Who better to deliver the message than Luca? They must've sensed my immediate unease because all three men looked up to see what had changed.

"Mia, you're looking well," Luca said. "Quite different from the way your father expected you to look." He glanced down at my hands on the table. "And isn't it nice that you have all your fingers?"

"Castorini," Reaper said. "I see you've met our guest. You can report to her father that she is quite well, and there is no way we'll let anyone harm her."

Luca bristled. "Yes, I can see she's in perfect health. Amazing, and looking very beautiful. Did you know she's also my fiancé?" His words were sharp.



“I hope you mean that in the past tense because she no longer belongs to you, or anyone else.” Venom laid his napkin on the table, ready to battle if needed.

“I made a deal with her father,” Luca said.

I moved my hands to my lap, fisting them because they were trembling. I wasn't quite sure if it was from fear or anger. I decided to go with anger. “That was your first mistake,” I told him. “You never asked me what I wanted. I've never liked you. From everything I've heard, you're no different from my father and half-brothers. Why would I want to marry you? I'd be trading one hell for another, if not worse.”

He was visibly shaking and trying to hide his reaction to my words. “You betrayed your family.” He threw the words at me.

“Family? They were never my family.”

He raised his chin. “Did you know the Barones murdered your brother, Dirk?” He acted as if they weren't sitting right here.

“Are you accusing us of something?” Reaper spoke quietly.

Luca took a step back. “I'm just going by the rumors I heard.”

“Maybe you shouldn't listen to rumors.”

“I could be mistaken. My apologies. Enjoy the rest of your dinner.” He turned on his heel and stormed away.

I'd never really been around Luca. He'd seen me and immediately wanted me, so he negotiated with my father, but

he'd never really spoken to me. I overheard a couple of maids discussing everything they'd heard concerning Luca. It was enough to make me sick to my stomach. I knew I had to get away before the marriage happened.

I slumped in my chair. Everything about Luca drained me. The brothers looked at me with concern. I didn't want them to worry. "I'll be okay. I'm not about to let him intimidate me." Except he had. I just tried not to show it. That's what I had been doing all my life, hiding my true feelings. I immediately reverted back to those ways.

Reaper took my hand and squeezed it. "Don't worry about him. We won't ever let him come near you."

I know my smile was weak. "My protectors. My knights in shining armor."

"We're the four musketeers."

I think Venom liked that idea. Maybe I did, too. "Yes, the four musketeers." Except I couldn't help feeling like this might not end well. Luca had made me unsure about everything. What would happen to me when all this was over?

I drew in a breath, then expelled it. Where would I go? What would I do? How long would the Barones want me? Sometimes, it felt like we were one big happy family, but I was only pretending because I wanted one so badly. I wanted the same feelings I had when my mother was alive. I wanted to feel loved.

We left the restaurant shortly afterward. The mood on the ride home was somber. We were each lost in our own

thoughts. As soon as we walked inside the house, I turned toward them.

“Thank you for a lovely evening, for the earrings and cape. I’ll always cherish them. I think I’ll go up to bed and read for a while. I’ll see you all in the morning.”

Before they could say anything, I hurried up the stairs. Once inside my room, I changed into a nightgown and carefully put everything away. As I crawled beneath the cover, I picked up my book but couldn’t focus on the words. I kept seeing Luca in front of me. He’d been furious that I chose the Barones over him. Tonight, we’d made another enemy. I wondered how many more we would make.

I couldn’t fall asleep. I finally got out of bed and went to the balcony. The air was cooler as fall was being swept away by the winter that was right on its heels. That was the trouble with Texas, the spring and fall seasons lasted only a short time.

I knew what I had with the brothers wouldn’t last, even though we’d sort of made a pact. I smiled, just like the four musketeers. They would probably tire of me, or I’d tire of them. No, I didn’t really believe I would. They were extraordinary men.

The brothers would take all Angelo’s territories, as they should. It was their right as the conquerors. I didn’t really have a problem with that. I wouldn’t know the first thing about running the business, and I’d be fair game to anyone who wanted to take it away from me.

My father might or might not have money. He made a lot, but he and my half-brothers spent a lot. They threw money

around like it would last forever, and I doubted they ever saved for a rainy day. I could sell the house. If it didn't have a mortgage against it. I gripped the stone railing.

I certainly couldn't go to my mother's family. They were just like the Contis. They'd sold my mother so they could position themselves higher in life. I doubted they appreciated anything that might jeopardize their fortune, and I would be a liability. No, they wouldn't bother opening their door to me, even if I was starving.

A wave of exhaustion swept over me. I was tired of thinking about the future. I went back inside, closing and locking the balcony doors behind me. I crawled into bed and snuggled down. I wanted only good dreams tonight.

Dreams about three men. My knights in shining armor.

Even though there was blood on their hands, they were still my heroes—at least for now.

## Chapter Twenty-three

### *Reaper*

“Luca upset her.” I poured myself a stiff drink and then downed half of it. “Did you see how she stiffened when he walked toward the table? She tried not to show it, but I’m sure she’s afraid of him.”

“Let’s kill him,” Venom said.

“We have our hands full with the Contis right now. We don’t need more trouble.” Ghost made himself comfortable on the sofa.

“Then we wait until after we’ve dealt with the Contis, then we kill him. I never have liked the bastard.” Venom stretched his legs in front of him and leaned his head against the back of the chair with a deep sigh.

I had to admit, I liked Venom’s suggestion the best, but Ghost was right. We had enough on our plate without adding more to it. After we were done with Angelo and his son, that would be another story. I didn’t even want to think about what Luca would’ve done if he’d married Mia.

Yeah, I’d heard the rumors and seen the truth in them. He’d once cut a prostitute so badly that her face was scarred for life. When she’d come begging for a job, Venom had hired her to work in one of our other homes without asking too many questions. Damn, she’d been so fucking young. Barely eighteen. Carolyn turned out to be a good employee. We felt sorry for her having been with Luca.

We'd all heard the rumors. Luca enjoyed inflicting pain. I gripped my glass tighter. I wanted to kill him myself. But I was the oldest. I had to keep my head screwed on straight.

"We'll deal with the Contis first. That should be enough to warn Luca to back off." I downed the rest of my drink, then came to my feet as exhaustion swept over me. "Tomorrow, we'll go over what we're going to do next."

"Sounds good. I'm beat." Ghost stood.

"She did look beautiful tonight, though," Venom said as he came to his feet.

Ghost smiled. "Did you see the look on her face when you opened the box with the earrings in it? I don't think she's ever gotten very many gifts. I like that we made her happy."

We left the study and started up the staircase.

"She needs to be spoiled."

I glanced at Venom. "Don't tell me you're going soft. It wasn't that long ago you wanted to kill her." His expression reminded me of the time Ghost and I convinced him to bite into a lemon. He looked like that right now.

"That was before I knew her and what she'd been through. You two wanted to kill her, too."

"We were all wrong about her," I admitted. Man, were we wrong about her.

We parted ways and went into our respective bedrooms. It was all I could do not to walk down to Mia's room and crawl into bed beside her. How could one little slip

of a woman turn all three of us inside out like this? I smiled. Hell, I didn't mind it so much. I liked having her around. She made things a lot more interesting, at least for now. We would probably tire of her after the business with her family ended.

Not quite ready to crawl into bed, I opened the doors leading to the balcony and stepped outside. I thought about what life would be like after she was gone. There were only two words that came to mind. Cold and lonely.

I shook my head. That was crazy. I would go back to the business of running our businesses. Ghost would continue working on negotiations, and we would take over Angelo's territory. Venom would make sure everything was running smoothly when it came to our workers. And life would continue.

They'd been right about tonight, though. She looked sexy as hell in the dress, with her beautiful blonde hair pulled up with just a few tendrils curling beside her face. I wondered if she realized just how beautiful she was. I had a feeling she didn't. Every time we complimented her, she blushed.

No wonder Luca was angry tonight. He knew exactly what he'd lost. It was probably eating him up on the inside. If he came near her, I would personally rip his head off.

I glanced toward Mia's balcony. The light was off. I wondered if she was asleep already. Had she kicked off the cover? I drew in a deep breath, then went back inside and locked the balcony door.

We were all getting along right now. That didn't mean it would continue. She might get tired of us. We would have to set her free.

Or we could just keep her here as our prisoner, but one that we spoiled.

Yeah, and she'd probably slit our throats while we slept. Why that thought should make me laugh, I didn't know. She was something else.

The next morning, when I went to the dining room, I was surprised to see Mia drinking a cup of coffee. She looked up, her expression warm and still a little sleepy. I didn't think she'd been up long.

"You're up early." I took my seat as Mary brought in the coffee. "Good morning, Mary."

She smiled. "Good morning, sir." She poured coffee into the mug. "I have a full breakfast cooked when you're ready." Then she quietly left the room.

A few minutes later, Venom and Ghost came into the dining room. They also looked surprised to see Mia already there.

"I thought we could get an early start," she began. "We need to devise a plan to get Enzo away from everyone so we can kidnap him. I thought I could lure him away..."

"Whoa," I said. "You won't be luring anyone away. If you want to kill him, that's fine, but not until we have him bound so he can't hurt you."

Her forehead wrinkled. "But I have it all figured out. I'm sure by now Luca has told them I'm with you three and working against them. He'll be furious, as will Angelo and Enzo. When Enzo is mad, he doesn't think straight. All he can



see is reaching his goal, but he won't see the obstacles in his way, which will be you three and me.”

Venom shook his head. “Nope, I don't like it. It's too risky. What if he pulls out a gun and shoots you? You won't be able to stop a bullet.”

“I agree with Venom and Reaper. I don't want to put you in any danger.” Ghost looked just as concerned.

She leaned forward, planting her arms on the table, eyes narrowing. “I told you that I'm going to be a part of this. Dammit, they're my family. I should be able to capture, then torture, and kill them. It's my right.” Her expression softened. “With your help, of course,” she added sweetly.

“No,” I told her. “We're not going to do it that way.”

She pursed her lips. I thought any minute she might stomp her foot, but she didn't. Instead, she cocked a sassy eyebrow, and all I could think about was pulling her into my arms and kissing her senseless so maybe, just maybe, she would quit thinking like this.

“You have a better idea?” Her words dripped sarcasm.

“Not at the moment, but I'm sure we can come up with something that will work.” Damn, she was stubborn.

“Well, you haven't even heard my plan, so how can you dismiss it?”

I slowly counted to ten. “Okay, tell us your plan.” We could at least humor her.

She went into great detail, and I had to admit, the plan did sound solid, but that didn't mean I would go along with it.

When she finished, she smiled at us.

“It sounds good,” Venom said halfheartedly.

“You’re agreeing with her?” He was as crazy as she was. I looked at Ghost for confirmation that I was correct. He wouldn’t meet my gaze.

“Well, yeah. I didn’t say I liked it, though,” Venom continued.

Ghost, at least, had a little more sense than our younger brother. Except he still wouldn’t look up.

“It does sound like a good plan,” Ghost hesitantly began. “We could keep her safe. All she has to do is stay in the public areas. We can protect her.”

“I think you’re all crazy.”

Mia brightened. “I know we can pull it off. As soon as Enzo sees me, he’ll be furious. I know he’ll follow me, and I’ll lead him right to you three.”

My gaze narrowed on her. Dammit, they were making sense. I still didn’t want to involve Mia, but it looked like they were all against me. “If you don’t stick exactly with the plan, I’ll immediately pull the plug, throw you over my shoulder, and carry you back to my car. Is that understood?”

“Absolutely,” she purred, leaning closer to me.

So close I caught the scent of the peach shampoo that was in her bathroom. Damn, we should change it out for Brut or Old Spice. Yeah, as if that would help when she looked at me like this.

She sighed. “Has anyone ever told you how sexy you are when you give orders?”

Ghost and Venom burst out laughing.

I frowned. What the hell was I going to do with her? She needed a good spanking. Ah, fuck. I didn't even want to go there.

## Chapter Twenty-four

*Angelo*

“What did you tell the DEA?” I demanded.

Romeo hung by his wrists from the chains screwed into the basement ceiling. His toes barely touched the floor, and he was stripped naked. Enzo and I had been at it since yesterday afternoon, and he still wasn't talking. He'd been burned with a hot iron, cut, and whipped until his back looked like raw hamburger meat. He was still saying he hadn't betrayed us, but now he was only mumbling.

We'd been sleeping in shifts. This morning, I realized I was getting too old for this shit. It didn't seem like that long ago that I could stay up for days torturing someone and just letting the adrenaline flow through me to spur me on.

But Romeo was different. He'd always been more like a brother to me. Hell, we'd practically grown up together. His father worked for my father. Romeo and I used to go to some pretty sketchy places when we were younger. He always knew where we could find the younger girls. I got tired of them after a while. I liked them a little older with more meat on their bones. But Romeo was fun to hang with.

There was something wrong with all of this. I could feel it in my bones. I was starting to question Enzo and the PI's judgment. What would Romeo have to gain by betraying us? He was one of the few we paid enough money so he didn't cross us.

I pulled Enzo to the side so no one else could hear what I was going to say. We had two other men in the basement with us. I knew they didn't want any part of this from the moment they came down the stairs. Romeo was hard on them, but he'd always been fair—most of the time.

“Are you sure about this PI? Romeo would've broken by now if he'd gone to the DEA.”

“You're questioning my judgment?” Enzo bowed up.

“Yes, I am,” I growled. “I'm still the boss and your father. I have the right to question you.” Little bastard! He better remember I'm the reason he had money to spend and women to fuck.

When my phone rang, I pulled it out of my pocket. I recognized the number on the screen. Luca. What the hell did he want? He'd already told us he didn't want Mia now that she was missing a finger. The son of a bitch. We'd had a fucking agreement.

But he was still a major player, and I wanted to join with his family. I was pretty sure Luca had a sister. Enzo could marry her. I'd heard she was so ugly they had to keep her hidden, but I didn't care. I doubted Enzo would either. He could keep a whore on the side.

“I thought you'd already said everything you were going to say,” I told him.

“Except I saw something interesting last night that you and Enzo might want to know about.”

My eyes narrowed. I looked at Enzo, then put my phone on speaker. “He's here with me, and I have you on

speaker. Go ahead. What did you see?”

“Mia. She was at the same restaurant that I was at last night.”

“She escaped?”

“No, it seems she’s staying with the Barones. They were all laughing and talking. I don’t know what they sent you, but it wasn’t her finger. Everything was intact, except probably her virginity the way they were looking at each other. She played all of us. She’s under their protection. I just thought you might want to know.”

“Yeah, thanks.” I ended the call and looked at Enzo. “That bitch. My own daughter turning against me.” My head began to pound. “Fuck, she was probably the one who told them about Dirk’s mistress. Hell, he visited his whore like clockwork every Friday. That stupid bitch is the reason your brother is dead!”

“I knew she had bad blood. Her mother wasn’t good enough to be a part of this family.”

Romeo gurgled, blood and sputum running down the side of his mouth.

I looked in his direction. “We fucked up. They probably wanted us to think Romeo was ratting us out. We walked right into their trap. They knew if they got to him, it might be easier to get to us.”

Enzo looked a little green. “We can’t set Romeo free now. There’s no way he’s going to want to live like this. We fucking ripped the skin off his back. There’s hardly anything left. I’m surprised he’s still alive.”

I grabbed Enzo's shirt, pulling him close so he could see the fury in my eyes. I saw the panic in his. "He was like a damned brother to me. I didn't do this. You did. I should've known Romeo would never betray us. Now, even if he healed, we've made an enemy of him."

"I'm sorry," Enzo pleaded. "I was only trying to protect you."

I loosened my hold on his shirt and sighed. "I know, son. I'm going up to bed. Put Romeo out of his misery. Kill that fucking PI. It was his damned fault." As I climbed the stairs, the sound of the gunshot ricocheted around the room. I flinched. It was a damn shame. Romeo had been a good man.

I stopped halfway up the stairs and turned. "I want you to get Mia. Bring her back here. She's just as much to blame."

"Are you going to kill her?"

"Probably."

"Good! This is all her fault. I want to torture her first. I'll kill the PI, then we'll take care of her."

"She betrayed us, and now she needs to pay for what she did. Make sure you take men with you, and watch your back."

Mia was just like her mother. I should never have let her mother's looks sway me. Her family wasn't even close to being as important as mine. Even though my father had arranged the marriage, I'd married beneath me. I didn't have much say in who I married. As long as I could continue to fuck whoever I wanted, I didn't care.

That was the problem with Enzo and Dirk's mother. Ugly as sin. I only fucked her to get sons, but then she started complaining about everything. I had to put her down. It was the only way I could get her to shut the fuck up.

Mia's mother brought nothing to the marriage except that she was a virgin. Then what did she do? She gave me a girl, and the doctor said she couldn't have any more children. I'd wanted more sons. Women were worthless. Only good for fucking.

And now, Mia had betrayed her family. She would have to die for that.



## Chapter Twenty-five

*Mia*

To say I wasn't nervous would be a lie, but I felt something else, too. The rush of adrenaline, fear mixed with anticipation, the tingling of excitement.

"Are you ready?" Reaper asked, still looking unsure about letting me do this.

"I am, are you?" I loved it when he frowned. It made him look a little fierce and sexy as hell.

"Just follow the plan."

"I promise that I won't deviate from what we discussed. Do you think he's still having us followed?" If Enzo had given up following the brothers, my plan might not work.

"We're making sure that we're being followed. We just don't let him, or his men, get too close. I have a feeling it's frustrating the hell out of him."

I nodded. "Good, it'll make him less cautious if he thinks he has a chance to grab me. As I said, he runs off his emotions." I looked at Ghost, then Venom. "Are we ready to do this?"

Reaper still looked unhappy, but he finally nodded. "Let's go."

Reaper and I went to the garage and got inside his car. Ghost and Venom knew where we were going and would already be in place before we arrived. We drove into San

Antonio with the top down so that Enzo's men would be sure to see me. I knew Enzo wouldn't be with them, but they would alert him as soon as they spotted me.

We drove around for about an hour before Reaper stopped at a very exclusive store. There just happened to be a dark alleyway between this store and the next. It was perfect for what we'd planned.

All I had to do was get Enzo to follow me inside and then out the back door. Easy as baking a pie, well, except I couldn't cook worth a damn. My mother used to say it was as easy as baking a pie all the time. Funny how I would remember little things like that, but sometimes I couldn't remember what she looked like.

A sharp pain stabbed me in the heart. Damn, it hurt so fucking much. I curled my hands in my lap. The ache inside me grew, followed by burning anger. They'd taken her away from me, then made me believe she hadn't loved me enough to stick around. Damn them all to hell. I was going to make them pay.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" Reaper asked, and I jumped.

I looked across the seat, meeting his gaze. "Yes, no matter what happens, I want to make them pay for what they did to my mother and me." I reached for the door handle. At the last minute, he pulled me against him and lowered his mouth to mine in a fierce kiss. He tasted like cinnamon and spice, a little like coffee. I wanted it to go on forever, but we had a job to do. I pulled away and smiled. "Later? Tonight?"

“It’s a date,” he said, but I could still see concern in his eyes. “I’m not going to drive away until you’re inside. Ghost and Venom will already be waiting and ready. I’ll join them in a few minutes. I’ll see you in a bit.”

I only nodded. I was afraid if I talked, it would give away just how nervous I felt. I took a deep breath, then went inside the store. This was it. If they hadn’t seen me go in alone, they were idiots. I knew Enzo would follow me inside, but his men would station themselves around the building to make sure I didn’t escape.

I had no doubt that Reaper, his brothers, and their men would dispatch them quick enough. Everything had to be timed just right. Enzo had to be in the store long enough so they could take care of his men. That was my job. I had to keep him occupied. I couldn’t let my true emotions take control. It wouldn’t be easy.

Had he been the one who pulled the trigger that killed my mother? Dirk had said it had all been planned and carried out by Angelo and Enzo, but he would’ve said anything to save his own skin. I guessed it didn’t matter as long as they ended up dead. They’d taken her life, and I’d make damn sure they suffered before I sent them to hell.

I’d been in the store about five minutes when the bell rang over the door. I flinched, but it was just another customer coming inside. I took another deep breath and then exhaled. Calm down, I told myself. When the bell above the door rang again, my pulse sped up.

Enzo hadn’t spotted me yet, so I quickly looked down. I wanted him to think he was surprising me. I didn’t have to

worry about acting surprised. I jumped when he sauntered next to me and began to talk.

“Hello, sister. It’s been a while. I hope you’re well.”

I opened my eyes wide. “How did you know I was here?” I quickly glanced around.

“Your ex-fiancé mentioned he ran into you a few nights ago. It’s amazing, you have all your fingers. I thought you would be missing one of them.”

“It wasn’t my fault. They kidnapped me,” I stammered, continuing to play the game to lure him in.

He fingered the expensive, low-cut, yellow silk shirt I had on, running his knuckles across the top of my breasts. “It doesn’t look as if you’re hurting too badly.”

I pulled away from him. “They forced me to stay with them.”

“But yet, here you are, in the store all by yourself.” His eyes glittered dangerously.

“But Reaper will be returning in an hour or so. He might hurt me if I’m not here waiting for him.”

“May I help you, sir,” the saleslady asked.

Enzo gave her a cursory glance. “You would be better off going back behind the counter and not bothering us again.”

Still, she looked at me for confirmation.

“I’m fine,” I told her, then turned back to Enzo. “Is Daddy mad at me?”

“Furious.” He watched me closely, then ran his fingers through strands of my hair. “You clean up pretty good. You’ve grown even more beautiful over the years. If you’re nice to me, I can make sure our father doesn’t hurt you.”

I tried to mask the disgust I was feeling. Enzo was a sick bastard. I’d caught him looking at me in an odd way in the past. Once, he’d wandered into my room on the pretense of telling me dinner was ready—which he’d never done in the past. I’d just stepped out of my bathroom. I’d showered and only had a towel wrapped around me. I’d been about fourteen at the time.

Enzo had left my bedroom door open. Before I could tell him to get out, Angelo walked by and told him to leave my room, then reminded him that he had plans for me and to keep his distance. My personal maid had been fired, and a new one was hired. This one never let me out of her sight. I thought of her more as a guard.

Still, every chance he got, Enzo would *accidentally* brush too close to me or let his hand linger on my shoulder. It always creeped me out. It had just been a funny feeling he gave me. As I got older, I realized Enzo wanted to fuck me. I made sure I stayed away from him as much as possible. All the more reason to kill him, but I played his game.

“Of course I’ll be nice to you. You’re my brother. I’ve always wanted to feel closer to you.”

He laughed under his breath, then his eyes narrowed. “Did they fuck you?”

I downed my head. “They gave me no choice. They... They forced me to have sex with them.” I raised my gaze to

meet his. “Can you help me get away from them?”

“I’m not sure I can trust you.”

I grabbed his hand, brought it up to my breast, pressing it close, and looked him in the eyes. “You can trust me. I’m your sister.” I wanted to fucking puke! But I played my part.

His eyes flared with passion. “And you’ll be nice to me?” His gaze slipped over me again as he licked his lips. “You know, I’ve never thought of you as my sister. I mean, we had different mothers.” He brushed his other hand down my cheek. “You’re so fucking beautiful. I think you know what I want.” His words took on a hard edge.

“I’ll do anything, anything,” I stressed. “As long as you don’t hurt me.”

The fire of passion burned brighter in his eyes. “Yeah, and I’ll protect you from father. As long as you’re good to me.”

I dropped his hand and glanced around. “Reaper will be back any minute. I’ve been in this store before and there’s a back door that leads out into an alleyway. We can go that way.” My hand fluttered close to my breasts, drawing his gaze to my cleavage. The idiot was going off of his emotions again. A little different than I expected, though. I didn’t realize he was this much of a pervert. I should’ve guessed he hadn’t outgrown his obsession with me.

“Lead the way, baby.”

I felt like I had worms crawling all over me. I made my way past the racks of clothes toward the back door. Once in the alley, he pulled me against him and tried to kiss me. I

brought up my knee as hard as I could between his legs. He sucked in a breath and doubled over.

“Stupid, bitch, I’ll kill you for that. Right after I fuck you,” he choked out.

I turned around and started to run, but he recovered quicker than I thought and grabbed my arm. I tried to pull away from him, but his grip was too firm. I kicked again, but he blocked my knee this time and slapped me hard across the face. When he reared his arm back to hit me again, it was grabbed from behind. I looked up, glad to see Reaper, even if he was angry as hell.

“You were supposed to run, not stay and fight.” He had Enzo in handcuffs before he could react. When he realized what was happening, he tried to fight back, but Ghost tackled him to the ground just as Venom backed the car into the alley. Reaper popped the trunk, and they tossed him inside.

“What do you think I was trying to do?” I said, attempting to explain. “I kicked him in the nuts. That should’ve taken him out long enough for me to escape.”

“My men will kill you for this,” Enzo screamed.

Venom leaned down with a grin. “Your men are dead.”

I watched as the color drained from his face.

“Don’t fuck up my car or I’ll rip out your fingernails,” Reaper said before he slammed the trunk closed.

When we were driving away, Reaper turned and studied me. “Are you okay?”

I realized I was shaking. I finally nodded, leaning my head back against the seat. "I'm fine," I finally said.

"I don't think so. What did he say to you in the store?"

"That if I was nice to him, he wouldn't let our father kill me, and yes, it means exactly what you're thinking."

He gripped the steering wheel until his knuckles turned white.

I needed to be completely honest. "He never touched me while we were growing up. I think I always knew he wanted to, but Angelo would've killed him. Not because he cared about me. I was just worth more as a virgin."

He didn't say anything all the way back to the house. I knew from the way he continued to grip the steering wheel and the way his jaw twitched every once in a while, he was pissed. Not that I could blame him. I'd always known if anything happened to Angelo, Enzo would say fuck the money and force himself on me.

Reaper pulled the car straight into the garage. Before we got out of the vehicle, Paco, Ghost, and Venom were coming inside. Reaper popped open the trunk, and his brothers dragged Enzo out.

"My father will kill you all for this. Mia, you're our blood. Why are you doing this?"

I didn't answer him as they dragged him down to the basement. Reaper and I followed. Once there, Reaper nodded toward the ceiling.

"We'll use the chain." Reaper smiled, but it didn't meet his eyes. They were like shards of glass glittering with hate.



“Wasn’t that what you and Angelo used on Romeo?”

“How...how did you know about that?”

“We have our ways. You tortured and murdered an innocent man—well, he was innocent of not being an informant. He still had everything you did coming to him, but he was probably the only loyal man you had working for your family. How quickly you judged and pronounced sentence on him.”

“You set us up! Fucking bastards! All of you!”

“It wasn’t even hard to do. Just plant someone from the DEA in a bar Romeo was known to frequent. Have him strike up a casual conversation about the Dallas Cowboys and if they’ll make the Super Bowl this year. Everyone knows Romeo loved football. Make it look like they’re friends. We knew the first time might not mean much, but the second time, it would. Make sure the PI you hired would get a video of it and see the DEA’s badge and gun when he started to the men’s room. You and Angelo did the rest. Wasn’t Romeo like family? No wonder you treated Mia and her mother like you did. Family means nothing.”

Reaper looked at Ghost, then nodded. When Enzo tried to break away, they grabbed his arms, unfastening one cuff. They forced his arms in front of him, and Venom and Paco recuffed Enzo’s wrists.

Ghost walked over to the wall and pushed a button that lowered the chain. There was a large, black hook on the end of the chain. They looped the handcuffs over it, and then Ghost pushed the button again until Enzo was on his toes. Reaper dragged a chair over, then motioned for me to sit.

“If at any time you want to leave, then leave. No one will think less of you for not wanting to be here. If you want to participate, just say the word.”

“I’ll stay,” I said. “I want to hear him say it. I want to know what happened that day.”

“What day?” Enzo asked. “I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about.” He looked at the three men in the room. “She’s crazy. You can’t believe a word she tells you. Just let me go and we can make a deal. We can end this today.”

“It’s past time to bargain, puta madre,” Paco spat. “Now it’s time to pay for your sins. You can bargain with the devil.”

Reaper studied Enzo, chuckling at Paco’s words. “What about Dirk? Don’t you want revenge for your brother? Why would you want to bargain with us?”

Enzo shook his head. “He was the one who wanted to take Venom. He paid for it with his life. We’re even.”

Venom stepped closer. “If I’m not mistaken, you wanted to burn me alive in the warehouse.” He rubbed his jaw. “I haven’t forgotten how you hit me, then cut me.”

“Tell them why you followed Mia out of the store.” Reaper crossed his arms in front of him.

Enzo stopped squirming. “I don’t know what you mean. Whatever she told you was a lie.”

“You said you would protect her from us,” Reaper casually commented.

His gaze darted around the room. I could see real fear in his eyes. “Yes, I told her I’d protect her. She’s my sister. I would never do anything to hurt her. Tell them, Mia.”

Ghost frowned when he looked at me. “What did he say to you?”

Reaper spoke before I had to. I was grateful to him. “Enzo said he would protect her from Angelo—if she was *nice* to him.”

“Fuck, that’s sick. She’s your own sister,” Venom spat.

“She’s only my half-sister,” Enzo screamed.

“Strip him.”

Venom pulled the knife from his pocket, pushed a button, and the blade snapped out. He immediately began cutting off Enzo’s clothes. It didn’t seem to bother anyone except Enzo when the blade would nick Enzo’s skin. Enzo was crying in earnest, tears running down his cheeks by the time he was completely naked.

I came to my feet and walked nearer. “What happened that day? I want to know everything. You better tell the truth.”

“What day? I don’t know what fucking day you’re talking about.”

“The day you killed my mother.”

His face drained of color, and his mouth dropped open.

“Dirk told me everything.”

“It wasn’t me,” he cried. “It was Dirk and Angelo. I had nothing to do with it.”

“That’s not what Dirk told us.”

“He was lying.”

“What happened that day?” I took the knife from Venom and slowly drew it down Enzo’s chest, leaving a trail of blood in its wake. “And don’t leave anything out.”

He cried out, blubbing, “It was all Angelo...and Dirk. But Angelo was the one who drugged her. She was going to take you and run away. He couldn’t let her go... He loved her. “

I sliced down the other side of his chest. Quick and fast. He screamed. When he finished screaming, I began to talk again.

“Angelo never loved her. Lie again, and I’ll cut you deeper.”

“Okay, okay. Just stop with the fucking knife. He didn’t want her to leave because it would make him look bad. Besides, he knew he could use you to bargain for more territory when you got older.”

“Who pulled the trigger?”

“Angelo pulled the trigger.”

“Was she aware of what was happening?”

“I don’t think so. I don’t know. Maybe. He was laughing and playing Russian roulette with her.”

I stumbled back. My God, I knew they were sick, but I didn’t realize just how sick they were. What if she had known? I couldn’t imagine the fear she must’ve been feeling.

No, I had a feeling she would've been more worried about me. That was just the way she was. She never cared what happened to her as long as I was safe.

I handed the knife back to Venom. My legs shook so hard I could barely stand. Our gazes met. I nodded to him. Paco grabbed my elbow. I got as far as the chair, and then I sank down onto it.

“You don't have to stay, Mia,” he said with concern.

I was starting to think of him as a father figure. Even though he was loyal to the brothers, and they would always come first, there was kindness in his eyes when he looked at me. “Yes, I do have to stay. For my mother. I'll see this through until the end.” I met his gaze. “I want him to suffer.”

He nodded. “That won't be difficult for us to do.”

He walked back over.

“You wanted your sister to be *nice* to you,” Reaper said.

“Half-sister,” he whimpered.

Reaper nodded to Venom.

It only took two slices to castrate Enzo. Venom held up Enzo's balls. Enzo began to scream and squirm like a worm on the end of a hook. The sound echoed around the basement. Then he stuffed them in Enzo's mouth.

“You never treat your sister like that,” Venom said by way of explanation.

“Besides, you won't need them where you're going,” Reaper said.

I met Enzo's gaze. His eyes pleaded with me as tears ran down his cheeks. I wondered if my mother had pleaded with them. It had done her no good and wouldn't do him any good either.

It took four hours for Enzo to die. It ended when they cut off his cock.

Ghost walked over to me. "You okay?"

I looked up at him. "You know why I had to stay, don't you? Sometimes, I feel as if I'm no better than they are."

He slowly shook his head. "They're getting what they deserve for murdering your mother and treating you the way they did. They're monsters, and you're nothing like them. Come on, let's go upstairs. We're through here for now."

"Me and the men will take care of Enzo. I have something planned," Paco said. "A gift for Angelo."

"More Godfather movies?" I asked.

He grinned. "They're good movies. They give me ideas." He chuckled.

I was still smiling as we went through the kitchen and straight to the living room. Reaper poured me some whiskey. It burned as it slid down my throat, but I welcomed the taste. It made me feel a little less like a zombie.

They were watching me closely. I guess they were waiting to see if I would fall apart. I wasn't going to. I was stronger than that. "Angelo will be more watchful now, but I want him to know that Enzo suffered, and he's next. I want him shaking in his shoes. I want him jumping at every little noise. I want him to know we're coming for him. I want the

men he has left to be so scared that they leave him. I don't want Angelo to have anyone to turn to."

"We'll leave him a message he won't ever forget."

"Good." I took another drink, then wiped my hand across my mouth.

*For you, mamma. I'll get revenge in your name.*

## Chapter Twenty-six

*Angelo*

I woke up groggy as hell. Fuck, I needed coffee. It hit me again that Romeo was dead. Why the hell had I not believed him when he was trying to tell us that he would never betray the family. I shook my head.

Enzo and I would have to decide what we were going to do today. I hadn't seen him since I told him to end Romeo's suffering and then clean up his mess. I figured he was afraid to be around me, and so he should. I was still pissed at him. How could I have raised such idiot kids? It was their mother's fucking blood that ran through their veins.

I slipped my feet into house shoes, pulled on a robe, and padded downstairs. It was quiet. Too quiet. Where the hell was the staff. If they were on a break, I'd fire them all.

I went through the dining room and into the kitchen, the aroma of coffee pulling me forward. I felt the carafe. Still hot. Good. I poured a cup, added cream and sugar, then walked to the French doors.

It was too fucking quiet. My gut was starting to tell me something was wrong, but I relaxed when I saw Enzo sitting at the patio table. He had his back to me. I opened the doors and stepped out.

"I see you're home," I said. "Did you get everything done?"

He didn't answer.



I paused. “I guess you’re still angry about yesterday. You should’ve known Romeo wouldn’t betray us.”

Silence.

“You could at least talk to me.” Now I was getting mad. I was the head of the family and he was disrespecting me. I drained my coffee and marched over to stand in front of him.

I froze. The cup fell from my hand and shattered onto the patio.

They had propped Enzo in the chair, eyes open and staring. Soulless eyes. They’d cut off his fucking cock and stuck it in his mouth. He was holding his balls in his hands. Carved into his chest were the words, *You’re Next*.

Anger poured like a bucket of water over my head. “Joshua!”

The man who’d taken Romeo’s place hurried from around the side of the house. I couldn’t stand the man, but he did a decent job—until now. I’d never trusted the son of a bitch, though.

He came running now, stumbling to a stop when he saw Enzo. “Fucking hell! When did they get to him?” His eyes were wide.

I turned on him. “You tell me! You were supposed to be protecting him!”

Joshua looked scared as hell, and so he should be.

He shook his head. “No, I was to stay here and protect you, boss. Everyone was following your orders. We have men

watching the Barones. Enzo got word that Reaper and Mia had left the estate. Enzo left the house with plans to kidnap Mia. That was the last I heard from him.”

The man didn't have a working brain cell. “You didn't think it was odd when they didn't check back in?” Fuck, Romeo would've been on top of all this.

“You know Enzo, he doesn't like to be questioned,” Joshua stuttered. “I figured he'd taken her somewhere. Maybe tortured her or something.”

Fucking idiot. Dammit, I hated men who whined and blamed everyone but the person responsible—themselves. “And the rest of your men? Do they not like to be questioned either?”

He stood a little taller at my words. “I trust them to do their job.”

I grabbed him by his hair and shoved his face close to Enzo's. “Does it look as if they did their job?” I looked up as more men began to join us. They looked at each other nervously. A couple of them crossed themselves when they got a good look at Enzo. One man rubbed his crotch as if he thought it was about to be chopped off. “How many men do we have left?” If they could get to Enzo and Dirk, they could get to me. I scanned the area, but they could be lurking anywhere.

“Maybe half dozen,” Joshua said.

I pushed him away from me. He stumbled back a couple of steps. “You've failed me and my family.”

I turned and stormed back inside the house, going straight to my study. My hands were still shaking as I opened the top drawer of my desk and pulled out my nine mm. I checked to make sure it was loaded.

Fuck, I was next. I could understand them getting to Dirk. He was an idiot. Enzo was smarter than that. Emotional sometimes, but he would have been more cautious. He only had one weakness that I knew of. I paused as it hit me.

Enzo always had a weakness for women, but one in particular—the forbidden fruit. The one female he was banned from touching. Enzo knew if he took Mia’s virginity, she would have no value to me. I might be so angry that I’d disinherit him and leave everything to Dirk.

They’d tempted him with Mia. She’d been the lamb and Enzo the lion, stalking his prey. She was probably laughing her ass off.

If they could get to him, they could get to me. Romeo would’ve protected me. With his life, if necessary, except he was gone. I should never have listened to Enzo and trusted my instincts. I went to the other side of the desk and sat in the chair.

My life began to crumble in front of me. The men I had left were idiots, and there wasn’t a loyal bone in their body. I wouldn’t put it past them to leave me here all alone. Cold chills ran down my spine.

They might already be gone. The Barones could be in the house right now, watching and laughing at my fear. Dammit! I wouldn’t let them get me. I’d kill every last one before I let them cut anything off of my body.

“Hey, boss.”

The blood drained from my face. They were here! I raised the gun and fired.

“I got one of them!” I yelled. Mother fuckers thought they could come into my house and take me, but I showed them. I’d shoot them all. Men came running toward the study.

“You killed Joshua!”

I blinked past the fog surrounding me. Two of my men were staring at me as if I’d lost my mind. Were they really my men? Or were they the Barones men. I raised my gun, and they ran away. I fired, then fired again. I stormed out of my study. I’d kill all the sons of bitches. I fired toward the staircase when I heard a noise in that direction, then the kitchen. I ran through the house, firing at anything that moved.

“Teach them to mess with me.” I was the head of the Conti family. I didn’t get here by being stupid. It didn’t matter that my sons were dead. I could marry again and have more sons. I’d make sure they didn’t have their mother’s blood next time.

I fired again and again as I walked through the house, looking in every corner. The gun clicked, then clicked again. Empty. I turned to go get more ammunition, but stopped dead in my tracks.

“Venom,” I breathed. I looked around. Where were my men?

“They’re all gone,” he said, guessing my thoughts.  
“They left when you started shooting at them.”

“You killed my sons,” I accused him.

“We did.”

I opened my mouth, but his fist clipped me on the chin. I stumbled forward. He stepped out of the way. My face crashed onto the floor. Darkness began to envelop me.

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I could hear people talking. Were Enzo and Dirk awake? No, they were dead. The Barones had killed them. I tried to move my arms, but my wrists were tied behind my back, and I was sitting on a hardback chair. I tried to move my feet, but they were tied to the chair legs.

“So, you’re waking up.”

I opened my eyes, blinking. “Angelina?” No, it couldn’t be her. I killed her. I blinked again, and Mia’s face came into focus. I’d never realized how much she looked like her mother.

Except she was smarter.

I suddenly realized that she probably had more of my blood running through her than my sons. I began to laugh. How ironic was that? I’d chosen the wrong child to carry on my dynasty.

“I don’t think you’re in any position to laugh,” she said.

“Does it matter? You’re going to kill me anyway.” My lip curled.

“You’re right. I am.”

Her words startled me. Fuck, she was so damned calm. Why had I never noticed her strength until now?

“I was laughing because I chose the wrong child. I can see now that you’re stronger than either Enzo or Dirk. Release me and together, we’ll be an unbeatable force. No one would dare touch us.” My words angered her. Did it matter? No, not really. I had a feeling she hated me.

“And Luca? What about your plans to marry me to him?”

“Marry whoever you want. It wouldn’t matter if you’re by my side.”

She shook her head. “I don’t think so. You’re not the type of man I’d want to do business with.”

“Of course you wouldn’t. You’ve already crawled in bed with the Barones?” I looked around, not recognizing the basement I was in and realizing Venom brought me to their estate. “Where are they?”

“They’re upstairs.”

“And you’ve joined forces with them. The enemies,” I spat.

She shook her head as she pulled up a chair in front of me, turning it around backward and straddling the seat. She made herself comfortable, then sighed. “They’ve been more of a family to me than you ever thought about being.” She folded her hands on the top rung of the ladder back chair and rested her chin on them as she stared at me. “I never could understand why you hated me so much. I was your daughter.”

“But you weren’t a son.”

“That was it?”

I shrugged. “Pretty much until I figured out you would be worth more when I could marry you off to someone important. Luca would have added more territory and given me more power.”

“It didn’t matter to you that he enjoys beating women?”

I laughed. “What do you want me to say, Mia? Do you want me to beg for my life?” I tried to keep myself from shaking. I wasn’t quite as brave as I pretended. I was still trying to work my hands free while we talked. “I won’t beg. I don’t love you, and I didn’t love your mother. I married her because I was forced to marry her, not that it really mattered to me one way or the other.”

Her eyes narrowed. “You killed my mother. You fed her drugs, then you played Russian roulette. Did you think it was funny torturing her? Was she scared?”

Now she was pissing me off. This little snip of a woman, my daughter, thought she could get the best of me. I leaned forward in the chair as much as possible and stared straight into her eyes. “She was begging me not to kill her. Then she started begging me not to hurt you. I told her exactly what my plans were for her daughter.”

I could barely see through the red haze of my fury, but I saw Mia pick up the gun and aim it toward me. I could barely swallow past the bile that rose from the back of my throat. I kept telling myself it was better to die fast than to be tortured like Dirk and Enzo.

“You don’t have the guts to pull the trigger,” I taunted.

She fired.

The gun clicked.

I slumped in the chair. So this was her game. Russian roulette. I began to laugh again. When I looked up, she pointed the gun at me again. I stiffened.

She pulled the trigger.

It clicked.

“Just fucking shoot me!” I screamed.

“I’m assuming you don’t like the game very much anymore.” She began to chuckle. She pointed and pulled the trigger again. Once more, the gun clicked on an empty chamber.

I had begun to sweat and could feel it running down my face. Fuck, I didn’t want to die.

“I should’ve let Enzo fuck you.” I threw the words at her and had the satisfaction of watching her shrink away from me. “You didn’t think I knew about that, did you?” I growled. “I knew he was obsessed with you. I’d catch him staring at you. I could tell by the look in his eyes that he wanted to pop that cherry. If I’d let him take you, none of this would’ve happened. No man wants used goods, but so what? I could’ve made something off you. Maybe put you in one of my brothels, advertise you as almost a virgin.” I began to laugh.

She fired again and again.

I started to laugh harder. “I knew you didn’t have the balls to kill me. The gun isn’t even loaded.”



She met my gaze, pulled a bullet from her pocket, and inserted it into the gun. “Do you feel better now? It’s loaded. And you don’t know what I have inside me. I just didn’t want to kill you too soon. I want you to suffer like you made my mother suffer, like you made me suffer every day of my life living under your fucking roof. You want to know what I’m capable of doing? Well, I’ll tell you. I’m the one who killed Dirk. I carved him up like a pumpkin. He was screaming and crying like a little bitch before he died.”

She pointed the gun at my face and pulled the trigger.

Click.

I flinched.

“I knew Enzo wanted me. You stupid bastard. That was his downfall. He told me he would protect me from you if I was nice. I played my part well. He was like putty in my hands. He followed me into the alleyway thinking I would let him fuck me. Instead, I kicked him in the balls. The Barones put him in the trunk of the car, and we brought him here. I watched as Venom sliced his balls off and stuffed them into his mouth. It took four hours for him to die. I think it was when they cut off his cock. Were you surprised when you saw him this morning?”

“You stupid bitch...”

Point.

Fire.

Click.

“Just wait a fucking minute. You don’t have to do this. You’ve got your revenge.”

“We could have been happy. You couldn’t bring yourself to treat my mother with any decency. You murdered her. You’re a cruel bastard. I wish I could kill you more than once.”

She pointed the gun.

Then pulled the trigger.

Boom!

## Chapter Twenty-seven

*Mia*

I stretched as I came awake. It had been a few days since Angelo had died. Reaper, Ghost, and Venom had taken care of everything. As far as anyone was concerned, they'd been in a fatal car crash and died. The car had caught fire, and there were only enough fragments left to identify the bodies. A sizable amount of money had greased enough hands to make sure that it was just a tragic accident.

I was finally free. Or was I?

I felt as though I was in limbo. I had no real direction and needed to figure out what I was supposed to do now. I moved to sit on the side of the bed, running my fingers through my tangled hair. I had no family to dictate to me or throw out orders.

The three brothers had given me space. I couldn't help but wonder if they were tired of me now that the business with my family was over. My stomach knotted up just thinking they might ask me to leave.

There was only one way to find out – ask them. I just wasn't sure if I wanted to know the answer.

Coffee sounded good right now. I needed a lot. Maybe it would wake me up so I could think straight. I came to my feet and made my way to the bathroom, and when I finished, I washed my hands and face. That helped a little. I ran a brush through my hair and tied it back in a ponytail.

I pulled on underclothes, closing my eyes when the silky yellow panties brushed over my thighs. I swallowed past the lump in my throat. Not one of them had come to my room since I killed Angelo.

They treated me as if I had the plague. Were they worried I would come after them next because they kidnapped me? I immediately dismissed that idea. I really doubted they were afraid of anything I might try. They would only laugh if I did. Not that I was ever going to.

I dressed in a pair of soft, faded jeans and a yellow T-shirt, slipped my feet into a pair of sneakers, and then went downstairs. As was their habit, they were all three in the dining room drinking coffee. As soon as I entered, they came to their feet. Ghost pulled out my chair, and I sat down. This had become our routine.

Mary came in a moment later, bringing my coffee. I murmured my thanks as Ghost pushed the cream and sugar toward me. I didn't say anything until after I took my first drink. They had the best coffee here. I closed my eyes and savored the taste. I didn't open them until Ghost cleared his throat.

“I checked with Angelo's lawyer on your behalf.”

Here it comes. They would tell me I was deep in debt and would need to get a job. I wouldn't even know where to begin. I wasn't qualified to do anything. I frowned, except kill family members, but I had a feeling that wouldn't earn me any points on a resume.

“And?” I finally asked. It didn't bother me that he'd checked. I knew he was only looking out for my best interests.

“You’re very wealthy in your own right. Angelo wasn’t as stupid as we thought. He made some sound investments over the years, and they paid off. There’s also the estate, mortgage-free, that is now yours, plus all the furnishings.”

I was shocked. The son of a bitch had made me beg for new clothes. I hadn’t expected to have any money, maybe the estate, but I figured it was probably mortgaged to the hilt.

“The estate is worth a few million by itself.”

I had money. At least I didn’t have to worry about getting a job.

“We have a proposition for you,” Reaper said.

“Okay,” I spoke hesitantly. “Exactly what kind of proposition?”

“We’ll take over your father’s businesses and give you a portion of the profits. I assure you, the arrangement will be fair. You should be able to live very comfortably for the rest of your life.”

I thought about their offer, then raised my chin and looked at them. “What if I want to run the business myself?”

Reaper frowned. Damn, he was sexy when he frowned.

“You could, but it would be dangerous. You should know that from your family and what they were into. I don’t think you want that. People will come out of the woodwork to take advantage of you because you’re a woman. It’ll put you in harm’s way.”

“That’s nothing new for me.” Now, all three of them were frowning. I wanted them to explain why they were so

concerned about my well-being. Was it because they cared about me, or the business?

Reaper finally sighed. “Just think about it. We only want what’s best for you.”

Well, that wasn’t an answer. At least, not one I wanted. Maybe we just needed a break from each other. I couldn’t think here. Not when I would constantly be running into them. “I’d like to go back to my estate. There are things I want to go through, and then I’ll probably put it up for sale. There’s no way I want to live there. Besides, it’ll give me time to think over everything and come to a decision.”

“You don’t have to go,” Venom blurted.

Reaper and Ghost glared at him.

“That’s not what we discussed,” Reaper reminded him.

Venom’s words sent a thrill through me until I caught the other two looking at him like they wanted to strangle him for saying anything. I was about to break down and confess I didn’t want to leave, but Ghost spoke up.

“Maybe that would be for the best. We’ll draw up a contract for you to look over. Anything you don’t like, we can negotiate, I’m sure. It will give you time to think about everything.”

So that was it. Venom might want me, but the other two didn’t. I was afraid they were a package deal as far as I was concerned.

“You can take one of our cars,” Reaper offered.

I nibbled my bottom lip. “I actually don’t know how to drive. I was never taught. I always had a chauffeur to take me wherever I needed to go.”

“She shouldn’t go alone anyway,” Venom said.

“Venom is right. Paco can drive you. He can stay there with you until you hire your own staff.” Reaper took a drink of coffee as if this meant nothing to him.

I could do this. Even though I felt my heart was breaking into a million tiny pieces, I knew I could get through it. I learned very well how to hide my emotions over the years. “I’ll leave later this morning if that’s okay.”

Reaper set his cup back on the saucer. “I’ll let Paco know. He’ll be ready whenever you are.”

I finished my coffee. “I don’t believe I want breakfast this morning. I’ll be ready to leave within the hour.” I almost thanked them for giving me a place to stay, then remembered they’d kidnapped me. It was funny how our relationship had changed over the last few weeks. At least for me. It was obvious they wanted me to go. Venom was just being nice.

It took me less than an hour to pack. One of the maids brought me a suitcase and said I could use it. That was a broad hint as far as I was concerned. I would take the clothes, then repay them for what they’d cost. I needed to hold everything together until I was away from their estate.

What did that say about me that I felt like crying? I didn’t want to leave them. They were the only family I had. The only family I felt like I had since my mother was murdered. Thankfully, they were nowhere around when I went

downstairs. I'm not sure I could've walked out the front door. Begging wasn't a good look to have.

Dammit! They didn't even say goodbye. I held my head high as I walked out the front door.

Paco was leaning against the car, waiting for me. I smiled at him, and he returned it as he straightened. Another servant had already taken my suitcase and put it in the car.

"I appreciate you driving me back to Houston," I told him.

"No problem, Mia. I think they're idiots for letting you go, if you want my opinion."

I wanted to agree with him, but I didn't. "They have their lives to get on with, Paco. I was just someone they helped out."

He held the door open for me. "I think you're wrong there. They care a lot about you." His lips compressed into a fine line.

But not enough to want me to stay. I didn't say what I was thinking. I didn't want Paco to be in an awkward position of being loyal to the Barones and kind to me. I could see he was upset. That was enough to tell me he cared. Paco was a good man.

I settled myself in the backseat and tried not to look at the estate as we were leaving. I didn't know I could ever hurt this much. I felt as if I was losing someone I loved very much. That was crazy. They'd kidnapped me.

But that had been a mistake. They thought I was just like my father and half-brothers. I still couldn't believe I



stabbed Ghost in the hand. That had been reckless as hell. It was a wonder they didn't kill me right then. I closed my eyes and remembered Reaper pulling me against him. A shiver of need ran down my spine. How the hell was I ever going to live without them?

No, I could do this. I was strong. My mother made sure of that. I'd just taken out my whole family—with the brothers' help. I was wealthy. I didn't need anyone.

Then why did I feel so empty on the inside?

I leaned back and closed my eyes, trying not to think about anything. Especially not the Barones. Instead, I tried to decide what I needed to do at home. I still wasn't sure of my plans when Paco pulled up in front of the estate.

He opened the door, and I got out. I handed him the key when he opened his hand, and he unlocked the door. It felt strange when I walked inside.

"Wait here, Mia," he said and pulled his gun.

I looked at him, wondering if I should be worried.

"Just a precaution. Let me check the house before you go any farther."

I nodded.

He checked the ground floor and then headed up the stairs. A few minutes later, he started back down. "All clear. I'm going to check the grounds to make sure no one is hanging around that shouldn't be here," Paco said.

I breathed a sigh of relief, glad I didn't have to deal with any of Angelo's men. "I might be upstairs when you

return. I have things I want to go through.”

“If you need me, just call my name and I’ll come running.” He nodded toward my suitcase. “I’ll bring that up for you later.”

“Thank you.” He was a good man. They were lucky to have him. For a moment, I wondered if I could steal him away. Just as quickly, I dismissed that idea. I didn’t think he would be nearly as happy working for me. I doubted I would have enough excitement in my life, and his kind needed that adrenaline rush.

Besides, I’d probably sell this property and move. Maybe to Europe. Buy something in the country. Just a tiny cottage with a few acres. Raise a few—sheep? I smiled, and be bored as hell.

I wasn’t in a hurry to go upstairs. I realized I was only putting off the inevitable. It just felt too damned creepy being back here. I expected Angelo to come around the corner, or worse, one of my half-brothers. Goosebumps popped up on my arms. I quickly rubbed them away.

My half-brothers’ ghosts wouldn’t jump out and grab me. That was ridiculous. I started up the stairs. I’d never realized how gloomy it was in the house. I should brighten it up a little before I put it on the market. The walls were covered in a dreary, dark, faded brown wallpaper with tiny yellow dots in a diamond pattern.

The stairs were covered in thin brown carpet. I could have it ripped out and polish the wood and railing. My nose wrinkled. There was a musty smell, too. I’d definitely open some windows and let it air out.

And the gardens. I'd hire a gardener to plant lots of flowers in memory of my mother. Maybe he could create a walking path, too. Maybe I wouldn't put it on the market after all. There would be some kind of justice changing everything to my taste.

The thought brought a smile to my face.

I went to my room first. As soon as I stepped inside, I realized how sparsely furnished it was. Angelo thought decorating my bedroom was a waste of money, so he hadn't bothered. You would've thought I was his stepdaughter rather than his own blood.

I'd had the same bedroom furniture for as long as I could remember. The white paint on the twin bed was chipped, and the mattress was thin and lumpy. One of the knobs had come off a dresser drawer. No one thought to fix it. I'd tried, but the screw was stripped.

The floor was hardwood without rugs to warm my feet in the winter. Angelo always complained about the high cost of utilities on the estate, so it was cold in the winter and hot in the summer. I shook my head. He'd been a tight son of a bitch. I smiled, but I was glad of it now. He'd made his daughter a wealthy woman. I hoped he was turning over in his fucking grave.

Except he didn't have a grave. Or a funeral, for that matter. Nor had my half-brothers. Paco had told me they'd put them in a car and set it on fire. The police said it was a car accident. Their ashes were given to me in an urn. I threw it in the trash. Their burial ground was the city landfill, which was exactly where they belonged.

I realized the Conti estate was such a change from the Barones' estate. Their home had been warm and comfortable, inviting. The staff all seemed happy. There was one word that described Angelo's estate – cold.

I walked to the closet and opened the door. Just as quickly, I closed it. I wanted nothing in there other than a shoebox with a few things that had belonged to my mother. Nothing worth anything except to me.

I left my bedroom and walked down to Angelo's. I wanted no mementos of him, but I hoped to find something that might've belonged to my mother. I'd gone through her things a long time ago. I'd already taken what few items she'd owned.

I took a deep breath, then opened the door. I'd never really been inside his bedroom. My mouth dropped open as I stared. What the fuck! My laughter was bitter. His room was luxurious, bordering on distasteful. One of his whore's must've had a hand in decorating. It was over-the-top lavish with a red velvet bedspread and curtains. The walls were a deep brown. What was it about brown that he loved so much? I felt as if I was inside a fucking coffin.

His bed was a massive four-poster of ornately carved dark wood. There was a fireplace with a loveseat, red no less, in front of it, a table beside it, and a reading lamp. I walked past everything and went to the closet, opening the door wide. Of course, he would have a huge walk-in closet. I smiled as I thought about donating all of the suits to charity.

He'd spent plenty of money on himself and his sons. I liked the idea of homeless people wearing their expensive

suits. I opened the drawers and went through them. I wasn't really expecting to find anything of my mother's. Just hoping. It didn't take me long to give up on the dresser in the middle of the closet.

I looked at the shelves above my head. They were filled with hatboxes. Except one looked out of place. It was a deep mauve color. My pulse sped up. I looked around and found a step stool. I was barely tall enough when I stood on the top step to reach the box. Careful not to drop it, I slowly lowered it as I came down the steps. My hands trembled as I set it on top of the dresser. I said a silent prayer and lifted off the lid.

My eyes filled with tears when I saw the handkerchief. I knew it was my mother's because it was the one I'd hemmed and thought I'd lost. She used to carry it all the time. It was pale blue with flowers embroidered in one corner.

There was the birthday card I'd made for her. She told me it was the best present she'd ever gotten. I knew it was the only one. A flower was pressed between two pieces of waxed paper, now faded, and one of the flowers we'd made for my bedroom wall. Tears filled my eyes when I lifted a picture of her from the bottom of the box. She'd been young, but even though I guessed her around twenty-one or two, I saw the sadness in her eyes.

"Momma," I whispered. As I studied the photograph, I realized how much I looked like my mother. I hadn't lost her after all. Every time I looked in the mirror, I would see her.

I slowly replaced the lid and held it close as I carried my box of treasures back to my room. Why did he hide this

from me? He could've given it to me a long time ago. I wondered why he had even kept it. He probably didn't even know it was there or he would've destroyed it. I knew it wasn't much, but it was a connection with my mother. I set the box on my dresser. I wouldn't be staying here long. At least, not until I made a lot of changes, and maybe not even then.

I didn't want any of the furniture. I would have a company come in and take anything they thought they could sell and donate the rest. I wasn't even sure if I could stay the night here. I could get a hotel room for me and Paco.

“Run, Mia!” Paco's words bounced off the walls.

I was just leaving my bedroom. I stopped in my tracks.

There was a loud explosion. It took a fraction of a second to realize the sound had been a gunshot that echoed through the house downstairs. My blood ran cold.

“Paco,” I whispered.

## Chapter Twenty-eight

*Reaper*

“We shouldn’t have let her go,” Venom argued.

It didn’t matter that I thought he was right. We couldn’t chain her in the bedroom. Although, the idea did have merit. I couldn’t help but smile at the thought. She’d be so damn furious. I enjoyed it when she fought and argued with us.

“You know I’m right because you’re smiling.”

Ghost looked up. “He’s right. You are smiling.”

I stopped and frowned at them. “Mia has been in a cage her whole life. Her family treated her like crap. We can’t do the same to her.”

“We didn’t even ask if she wanted to stay. I think she liked me. She damned well enjoyed having sex with me. We should’ve asked,” Venom spoke softly.

Ghost stretched his legs out in front of him. “He has a point. Not about the sex part with him, but about asking her to stay. I do know she enjoyed it when *we* had sex.” Ghost was thoughtful for a moment, then continued. “Mia comes across as being full of confidence, but I think she’s had to hide her true emotions all her life just to survive her family.”

“So, you think we should’ve asked her, too.”

He nodded. “Yeah, Venom does bring up a good point.”

“I know I’m right.” Venom came to his feet and walked over to the window, staring at the manicured lawns. “Besides, I miss her.”

“She’s only been gone a few hours.”

Venom turned back around. “So? I still miss her. Tell me you don’t.” He grimaced. “And it hasn’t been a few hours. She’s been gone most of the day.”

“We have to give her time away from us. She’s been through a lot in the last few weeks. Let’s give her a few days.”

“We could at least tell her how we feel. That would give her something to think about.” Venom walked over to the bar, started to pour himself a drink, then apparently changed his mind and set the decanter back down. He leaned the palms of his hands on the bar. “She’s going to have to stay in that house. Do you know how many bad memories she’s going to relive? We should’ve put her up in a hotel. Speaking of which, did she even have any money with her? How is she going to eat?”

I blew out an exasperated breath. “Paco will make sure she’s okay. I gave him a credit card. Whatever she wants, he’ll make sure she has it. Isn’t there something you need to be doing?”

“Yeah, going after her. Or at least being there to support her.”

“She might need to go through everything alone,” Ghost gently told him.

“Well, I don’t think she does, and I’m going to call her.”



Before I could stop him, he already had his phone out of his pocket and had pushed in the number to the phone we'd given her a few days ago. He frowned. "She's not answering."

"Maybe she doesn't want to talk to you." It did seem strange that she wouldn't even answer her phone. The hairs on the back of my neck began to tingle. "I'll call Paco to make sure they made it there okay." I glanced at my watch. It was already late afternoon. They would've been at the estate for a few hours. I hit the number to speed dial him, then brought the phone to my ear. Cold chills began to run up and down my spine when he didn't answer.

Ghost drew his feet toward the sofa, then stood. "What?"

"I don't know. He's not answering."

"I don't care what either one of you do. I've had a bad feeling about this from the start. I'm going to Houston." Venom started toward the doorway.

"It could be nothing," I told him, but I was already following him. Ghost right behind me.

"Do you believe that?" Venom asked.

"Grab a bag, throw some clothes in, your gun and ammo, whatever you need for a few days, and meet me back downstairs," I told them.

Something was wrong. I could feel it in my bones. Angelo and his sons had made a lot of enemies. Any one of them could've decided they still wanted retribution, even though Angelo and his sons were dead.

Fuck! I should've sent more men with Mia. I was sure she'd be safe. I should've thought this through better. It all seemed to happen so fast. One minute, she was at the house, then in the next, she was gone. I'd never forgive myself if I'd put her in danger.

We were on the road in less than ten minutes, driving to a private airstrip. Four of our men were in the car behind us, and eight more in the van behind them. We split at the end of the driveway. They would drive to Mia's estate. It would take us about an hour to get to the plane and fly down so we could see what the hell was going on.

Maybe it was nothing. Paco's phone could've been dead, and he was recharging it. The same could've happened to Mia's phone. She wasn't used to carrying one, and Paco could be absent-minded sometimes when it came to recharging his.

But I didn't believe any of that. Something had gone wrong. I pushed down on the accelerator, and the car shot forward. Time seemed to crawl and as visions of Mia filled my mind. Her anger that first night, the way she fought us all the way, then later, her passion. I gripped the steering wheel tighter.

Were they dead, lying in a pool of blood? If anyone harmed either of them, they would have to deal with our rage, which wouldn't be pretty.

"Keep trying to call them," I said.

"Yeah, I'm already on top of that," Venom said from the back seat. "Still no answer."

“The plane will be ready when we get to the hangar, and our pilot has all the information about where we’ll be landing,” Ghost said as he slipped his phone back into his pocket.

This was why we worked well together. We all knew what to do and when to do it.

It still seemed to take forever before we got to the small airfield. I didn’t bother parking but pulled up near the plane. We jumped out and grabbed our bags from the trunk. I tossed the keys to a man who came running over. As soon as we boarded, the stairs came up, and we buckled into our seats.

We loved taking the plane somewhere—usually to visit our parents in Italy. The seats were soft, light gray leather with a B embroidered on each of the eight seats. There was a coffee station, a small bar, a refrigerator, and a bathroom with a shower.

But all we could think about was Mia and Paco and hope to God they were okay. We didn’t talk on the flight. We were each lost in our own thoughts. If no one broke the silence, then everything would be okay.

We had just landed when Venom’s phone rang. I looked up. Ghost looked across the seat.

“It’s Paco,” he said. “I’m putting you on speaker,” Venom said.

I breathed a sigh of relief. I wouldn’t relax until I knew what was going on, though. Like, why no one was answering our calls. I still didn’t have a good feeling about any of this.

“I can’t find her anywhere,” Paco said, his words slurred. “She was upstairs. I yelled for her to run. I don’t know if she got away or not. I don’t think she did because I’ve been calling out to her, and she hasn’t answered.”

“What happened?” Venom asked.

“They must’ve been watching the house. We hadn’t been here more than an hour when they came inside—about six of them. I was just pulling my gun when one of the men fired.”

“Are you okay?”

“I’ll live. They only grazed my temple, but I fell, hitting my head against the banister, and I guess it knocked me out. When I came to, Mia was gone.”

“Do you know who took her?” I asked.

“I didn’t recognize the men. But I’ll damn sure find out who took her.”

“We should be there in about twenty minutes,” Venom told him. “When you didn’t answer your phone, we decided to fly down.”

“Good thinking. I’ll keep looking for her.”

Venom ended the call, and our gazes met. I saw the anger building inside him. Not that I could blame him. I wanted to kill whoever did this. And we probably would.

“We’ll find her,” Ghost said. His gaze moved to the window, but I didn’t think he focused on the scenery. “We have to.”

“We will.”

Paco was sitting on the front steps when we pulled up. He didn't look good. Blood was on the side of his head where the bullet had grazed him. I quickly checked him out.

"I'm okay. I've had a lot worse. They took Mia. We've got to get her back." His words were less slurred than when we spoke on the phone. Now, he just sounded more angry than anything.

"We will," I repeated. Maybe if I said it enough, I would even believe it myself.

"Then we'll kill the son of a bitch who took her," Paco continued.

"We'll do that, too."

Paco's lips pursed. "You shouldn't have let her go. She was sad. I don't know why she should care about you. You're pendejos for letting her leave."

"You're right," I said.

He frowned. "Then do something to get her back."

"We will." I looked at my brothers. "Let's go upstairs and see what we can find. Maybe they left a clue."

I took the stairs two at a time. The first bedroom was obviously one of the brothers. There were posters of naked women splattered all over the walls. The next one had porn magazines scattered around. I didn't think Mia would've run into one of them. The next door was a supply closet. The next room was Mia's.

"Did her father not spend any money on her?" Ghost commented.

I scanned the sparsely furnished bedroom. She'd probably had the same bedroom set her whole life. I went to the closet and opened the door. There were no designer clothes except for one long dress. Angelo probably used it to entice men to negotiate a marriage contract.

Some hangers with clothes still on them were lying on the floor haphazardly. As if she had been trying to grab hold of something. The wire hook of one of the hangers was stretched out. I could almost see her grabbing a pair of jeans and holding on until the hanger snapped loose.

"She hid in the closet." There were blood splatters on the floor. Hers or someone else? She was a fighter. It was probably the person dragging her out of the closet.

I looked over my shoulder. Ghost was on his knees looking under the bed. He carefully reached under and brought out a syringe, holding it up.

"I think they drugged her." He brought the syringe to his nose and sniffed. He nodded. "They gave her a sedative that would knock her out. She was probably fighting them."

"Knowing Mia, she probably was. There's blood on the floor," Venom said. "But we still don't know who might have taken her."

"I might have an idea," I said.

They looked at me for more information.

"Luca. I think he was pissed that she was with us. "

"But why?" Venom's forehead wrinkled. "She would be used goods to him."

“Except now that her family is dead, we helped make her an easy target. Marry her, and the man would inherit all of Angelo’s businesses. All they would have to do is keep her in line until she had an unfortunate accident,” Ghost said what I was thinking.

“Then let’s go kill him and get her back.”

“He knows she’s under our protection, and he’ll be ready for us. If we fail, Mia’s as good as dead.”

“So, what are we going to do?” Venom asked.

“Find where she’s at, get her back, then kill him.”

He nodded. “Yeah, that’s a good plan.”

## Chapter Twenty-nine

*Mia*

My head was pounding. I kept my eyes closed and tried to figure out what happened. Paco had driven me back to my father's estate. No, it belonged to me now. My father and half-brothers were dead. So, it wasn't Enzo or Dirk doing something terrible to me.

Whatever happened hadn't been good. My heart began to pound inside my chest. I tried to stay calm, taking slow breaths. That didn't help my headache, though. I laid very still as I tried to get past whoever played drums inside my head.

Memories began to return. Someone had broken into the house. Paco yelled for me to run. There was a gunshot.

My stomach clenched. Oh my God, where was Paco? But I think I already knew. He'd tried to protect me by calling out, but it put him in more danger. Damn, he'd risked his life for me. Yes, I knew he was supposed to protect me, but still, I didn't want anyone to die because of me.

As soon as he called out, I didn't think, just blindly obeyed his orders. Trusting him without question. I ran and hid in the closet. Not my most brilliant move, but my brain had stopped working by then as fear took total control.

I'd heard the pounding of running footsteps. I looked around the dark closet and knew it was only a matter of time before they found me. Fuck, I needed a weapon! I started to



move from the closet when I heard someone come into the room. I held my breath.

They dragged me out of the closet. I fought them. I bit one at them, drawing blood. He cursed, slapping me hard. I saw stars, but didn't stop fighting. I kicked as hard as I could and was satisfied when I connected with a man's face. He yelled that I had broken his nose, and when I looked at him, I saw he was bleeding.

But someone else moved in and grabbed my arm in a vise-like grip. He stuck a needle in it. The medicine burned, and then everything went dark. That was the last thing I remembered.

I opened my eyes just a little. It was dark inside the room. Someone's bedroom and I was on the bed. I was alone. I tried to raise to a sitting position, but my hands were tied, as were my feet.

It wasn't difficult to figure out I'd been kidnapped—again, but I knew it wasn't the Barones. I had a feeling I was in trouble. I finally swung my legs over the side and pushed myself to a sitting position, then I got to work on the ropes, but they were damned tight.

I'd just got one knot loosened when the door rattled. I quickly laid back on the bed, bringing my legs up. I tried to keep my breathing even and regular, but it wasn't easy. Whoever came in switched the light on.

“You might as well open your eyes, my lovely,” he said.

There was no use faking it. I opened my eyes and glared at Luca. “They’re going to kill you for this,” I spat.

He laughed. “I never realized you were such a firecracker.” He walked closer to the bed, running his hand up my leg. Even through my slacks, his touch felt slimy. “I might have to keep you around after we’re married.”

“I’ll never marry you.” I tried to kick his hand off my leg, but it only amused him more.

“Yes, you will,” he said with so much confidence it scared the hell out of me.

“I’m not a virgin anymore.” What would he think about marrying used goods?

He laughed. “I don’t give a fuck. You’ll be bringing something even better to the table: your inheritance. Now that your family is conveniently dead, which I find very interesting, to say the least, you inherit everything.”

“That doesn’t mean it will belong to you.”

His expression turned sad, which looked fake as hell.

“Unless you have a horrible accident. Then, it will all come to me. Of course, I’ll be heartbroken about losing my beautiful wife, then after a year or so, I’ll marry again and add even more to my wealth.”

“But you won’t be able to do that if you’re dead. The Barones will come after you.”

He laughed. “They probably only kept you as a plaything. I would imagine you’re quite amusing. Don’t flatter

yourself into thinking men of their stature will want you back.”

“They will.” But I knew my words lacked conviction. Oh God, they had to rescue me. They just had to.

He sat on the side of the bed, running his hand up and down my arm. I tried to pull away, but he grasped it so tight that I cried out. I immediately stilled.

“That’s better. I don’t think I’ll have much trouble training you.” He studied me for a moment. “You are quite beautiful. I’m going to enjoy fucking you.”

“Touch me, and I’ll rip your cock off.”

He threw his head back and roared with laughter. “Yes, it’ll be quite fun having you around.” He squeezed my breast.

I cringed. This couldn’t be happening.

No! I was stronger than this. My eyes narrowed. “If they don’t kill you, I will. Do you really think they were the ones who killed my half-brothers and my father? It was me. I’m the one who wielded the knife that ripped Dirk to shreds. I lured Enzo into the alleyway and watched them torture and kill him. I was the one who played Russian roulette with Angelo. It was very satisfying pulling the trigger and watching his brains splatter everywhere. The first chance I get, I’ll slit your fucking throat myself.”

He hesitated just briefly, then he grabbed my chin and squeezed hard. “I’ll never give you the chance. He crushed his lips down on mine. I tried to move away, but couldn’t. When I tried to bite him, he jerked away and slapped me hard across the face. For a moment, lights flashed in front of my eyes.

He jumped to his feet. “If I were you, I’d give up on the Barones riding to your rescue. If they do, we’ll be waiting for them. I have the manpower that your family didn’t have. We’ll slaughter them. If you know what’s good for you, you’ll do whatever I tell you. If not, I’m afraid you’re going to have some scars on that very sexy body. By the way, we’ll be getting married tonight.” With those parting words, he left the bedroom.

No, no, no! This could not be happening. I swore I would never be a prisoner again. I would die first. I closed my eyes tightly for just a moment. If Luca had his way, I would be dead within a year. All the anger, all the fight, drained out of me all at once.

*“You are a fighter. You are my daughter.”*

It was as if my mother whispered in my ear. She was right. I would not give up. I frantically began to work at the ropes binding my wrists. I finally got the knots loose, then started working on the ropes around my ankles.

As soon as they were off, I jumped to my feet. I didn’t bother going to the door. They would probably have a guard posted. Instead, I hurried straight to the window and flung the curtains open. The sun was just starting to set.

My shoulders slumped when I looked out and saw that I was on the second floor. It was difficult to tell if I might be able to escape this way. I turned the lock, then put all my weight behind raising the window. I was breathless when I finally got it open and leaned out.

There was nothing outside my window that I could use to climb down to the patio below. No ledge of any kind. No

trellis I could've used as a ladder—nothing. I glanced around the room, looking for anything that I could use. As I stared at the bed, an idea began forming.

There were sheets on the bed. I quickly ripped them off and fastened the fitted sheet to the bedpost—which didn't leave much left. Using my teeth, I ripped a hole in the middle of the flat sheet and tore it straight down the middle. At least that would give me a few more feet. I tied the ends together, then hurried over to the window.

“Please let this hold,” I prayed. Although breaking my neck and dying would be much better than having Luca touch me again.

I clung to the sheets as I slipped halfway out the window. It took a moment for me to get up enough nerve to start moving downward. Inch by slow inch, I made my way down the sheet. I soon realized I should've knotted it every few inches so I would have something more to hold on to, but it was too late now.

My palms began to sweat. I unintentionally slipped downward a few inches. I began to shake. Oh, fuck, I was probably going to crash down to the patio pavers and splatter my brains everywhere. I gripped the sheet even tighter.

I realized I was holding my breath when I started to get dizzy. I paused, taking a deep breath, then expelling it. Okay, I could do this. I started moving down a few more inches at a time.

A door opened. I froze when someone began talking not far below me. Thankfully, I was in the shadows. I recognized Luca's voice, but not the other man.

“They’ll come after her.”

Luca laughed. “I’m counting on it. I’ll have men stationed in the woods all around the chapel. They’ll be walking into an ambush.” He laughed again. “They won’t even know what hit them.”

Not if I could help it, I thought to myself. When I escaped, I’d warn them what Luca had planned. Then we would kill the son of a bitch. My forehead creased. Where was I? I tried to think back. Something about my father saying Luca had an estate near ours. That must be where he’d brought me.

I gripped the sheets tighter, but it was getting harder and harder to hold on. I started to think about what Luca had said. Maybe Reaper, Ghost, and Venom wouldn’t come after me. They hadn’t asked me to stay. I closed my eyes tightly.

No, I wouldn’t let Luca poison my mind. I had no doubts they would come after me. I had to warn them. If I didn’t, their death would be my fault.

“And the girl?” The other man asked.

I stilled, waiting to hear what he had planned for me.

“She’ll be fun to tame. She was still fighting when I went to her room. Damn, can you imagine all that fire inside turning to passion? I’ll rip her clothes off and explore every inch of that sexy body, and then I’ll plunge inside her heat. It has been a long time since a woman has given me an erection so fucking fast. I’ll fuck her brains out.”

“Just don’t kill her too quickly. It wouldn’t look good if you become a widow on your wedding night.” He laughed.

I frowned. Yeah, he was hilarious.

“I don’t think you have to worry about that. I want to keep her around for a little while.”

“Don’t forget, that’s what you said about the last one. You got carried away and killed her the first night. Don’t get carried away with this one.”

“She was only a whore, and meant nothing to anyone.” He paused. “Are you questioning my judgment?” Luca asked in a deadly quiet voice.

“No, I just don’t want to see you up on murder charges. You barely scraped past the last time. It was a good thing she was a whore.”

“No worries. I have enough money to pay off the law around here.”

My stomach began to churn. I’d heard all the rumors about how Luca likes to inflict pain on women. My half-brothers had taken delight in telling me how Luca treated his women. Luca was just as bad, if not worse, than my family had been. There was no way I was going to marry him. My grip began to loosen. I silently prayed for them to go back inside.

“Have someone make her ready,” Luca said. “It’s almost time.”

I slid down the sheets a few inches before I caught hold again. I must’ve made some kind of noise that alerted them to my presence.

Luca chuckled. “Now you know why I’ll keep her around for a while. She’s going to be quite entertaining.”

I dropped the last couple of feet. The hard patio surface jarred me. I turned to run, but the man with Luca grabbed my arm. I lashed out. He began to laugh.

“You’re right. You’ll have fun with her tonight.”

“No one is going to have fun with me. I’ll kill you all! Fucking bastards!”

“Frank!” Luca called out. When the man came to the door, Luca continued. “Get the other shot.”

“No! No more drugs.”

The man’s grip was painfully tight. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t get away.

“You might as well give up. You *will* get the shot. But don’t worry, it won’t knock you out. You’ll still be able to say I do.”

“I’ll never say I do. Never to you.”

He only laughed. Frank brought out the needle. Luca was right. There was nothing I could do as Frank stuck me in the arm with the shot. It only took a few minutes for the medicine to start working. Soon, I felt as if I was floating on air.

“Have them get her dressed. I want my future wife to look beautiful.”

When I met Luca’s gaze, I could see the crazed look in his eyes. When had he lost touch with reality? Maybe he’d never had a grasp on it. He’d always had money and thought he was untouchable. If he got into trouble, what was the worst that could happen? That daddy would pay him out and maybe



slap his wrist. But his kind always fell hard when they did fall. I only hoped I was around when it happened.

I was carried upstairs and laid on the bed. The door closed. Then opened again. The shadowy figures finally took shape. At least it was two women removing my clothes.

“Please, help me,” I murmured. I thought I saw the pity in one of the maid’s eyes.

“We can’t, Miss. He would kill us.”

“Shut up!” the other maid hissed. “No talking or we’ll get into trouble.”

They didn’t speak as they pulled a white satin dress over my head. Tears filled my eyes. I could only hope my three saviors would get to me in time. With one on each side, the maids help me stumble over to sit on the bench in front of the mirrored makeup table.

I stared at my reflection. The dress was beautiful. I wanted to rip it off, but when I reached for the neckline, the older woman must’ve guessed my intentions and moved my hand away. I didn’t have the strength to fight her.

The younger one swept my hair up on top of my head and then pinned it with a clip. The veil came next. It was adorned with pearls and diamonds. My fairytale wedding clothes, except I was marrying a monster.

“You’re so beautiful,” the younger maid said.

The older one shushed her.

“Please don’t make me do this.” I don’t think they even heard my mumbled words. If they did, they were ignoring me.

Not that I could blame them. Luca probably would kill them if they helped me. The only thing I could do was attempt to delay what was going to happen.

“I have to go to the bathroom,” I said.

They looked at each other.

“I have to pee really bad. If you don’t let me go to the bathroom, I might pee all over myself. I don’t think Luca would like that very much.”

They relented and helped me to the bathroom but didn’t leave.

“Please, I need some privacy,” I pleaded.

The younger maid turned and started to leave, but the older one grabbed her arm so tightly that she cried out.

“Don’t be an idiot. She’s already tried to escape once.” She turned back to me with a stern glare. “We’re not going anywhere.”

I tried to linger, but the older woman was smarter than she looked and forced me back into the other room. The younger one scurried out, but the older maid stayed to guard me. I had a feeling she enjoyed her superiority over me. The next thing I knew, a man came into the bedroom and carried me downstairs, then stood me on my feet. I swayed. He grabbed my arm.

Luca came to stand in front of me. “Stunning,” he breathed.

I spat and was satisfied to see my spit land on his face.

He brought his arm back and slapped me. I fell to the floor. My face felt as if it was on fire. Pain shot all the way down my neck. He knelt in front of me, wiping his face with a handkerchief. I'd never seen a more evil smile.

“You will soon be mine. If you want to live, you'll learn how to obey me. Is that understood?”

“I'd rather die,” I managed to get out, but my words were feeble.

He laughed. “That can be arranged, but not before I've had my fill of you.”

Tears began to gather. I tried to blink them away, but one single tear escaped to roll down my face.

“Don't cry. Life with me isn't what you imagine.” He laughed. “No, it'll be much worse.”

That was what I was afraid of.

# Chapter Thirty

## *Venom*

“He’ll set a trap for us,” Reaper warned.

“That’s never stopped us before,” I said. I glanced around the Conti estate, where we had made our temporary headquarters. How the hell had Mia survived living here? It wasn’t just her family either. This place was like a fucking tomb—dark and dreary.

Dammit! I was ready to go in, guns blazing, and rescue Mia. It hadn’t taken us long to figure out who’d taken her. But Reaper was right when he said Luca would set a trap for whoever might try to stop him. Luca wasn’t stupid. But he wasn’t sure about our relationship with Mia. That might throw him off.

“We should’ve realized that Mia would be fair game since her family was out of the way,” Ghost said. “She inherits everything.”

“Luca is the only person who knows just exactly what Mia inherited. He would’ve already looked into their finances when he negotiated for her hand in marriage.” Dammit, we should’ve realized this could happen. All three of us had to take the blame. We had let her walk out the door. Yeah, I’d wanted her to stay and even said as much, but I hadn’t thought she would be in danger.

Did she know we only wanted to give her a chance at freedom? That it wasn’t because we didn’t care about her? The

opposite was true. We cared too damn much.

“His estate is heavily guarded,” Reaper said, breaking into my thoughts. “We have to wait until our backup gets here.”

“Luca shouldn’t have taken her,” Paco growled in his raspy voice. “Me and the men could storm the estate. He’ll never know what hit him. I owe him, too.”

“I don’t want to wait either,” I said. Every minute Mia was with Luca, she was in danger. If he hurt her, I’d strangle him with my bare hands.

Reaper shook his head. “If we rushed them, there would be too many bullets flying. One could hit Mia. The way it stands now, he won’t hurt her until they’re officially married.”

“And afterward?” I asked.

“We’ll get her back before anything happens,” Ghost reassured me. “Besides, Luca isn’t far away. We could get to her in less than an hour. We just have to be more patient.”

As if he was being patient. He paced the floor, then sat on one of the chairs, then would jump up and pace some more. He was making me antsy.

There was a knock on the door. We all looked up. I think we expelled a sigh of relief at the same time. Our backup had arrived. One of the men opened it, and our cousins came inside, along with Uncle Claude.

Uncle Claude was six feet, two inches of pure muscle and meanness. He’d just as soon rip your head off if you angered him than he would be to walk away from an

argument. He had scars all over him from fights and wrestling alligators, but he was still good-looking with thick, black hair and piercing green eyes. His sons were younger versions, except with lighter hair.

His oldest son, Bastien, came in right behind him, along with his brother Marcel. They were a little more polished. I could see my aunt's influence, but I still knew not to push them too far. They might not look as rough as their father, but they were just as mean. That was why I'd called them. They didn't fight like ordinary men.

Once, I was visiting, and Bastien was talking to a man who came into the bar. The man ordered a beer and then joined us. Hell, I'd thought they were best friends until, in the blink of an eye, Bastien pulled a knife and slit the man's throat. The man fell forward onto the counter, blood pouring from the vein Bastien opened and spreading over the scarred wood.

Bastien casually explained the man had cheated at cards, then bragged about it a few nights before. Besides, he never cared that much for the man anyway. Then he'd raised the beer bottle, blood dripping off the bottom, and downed it.

But family was everything to them. We called, and they came. No hesitation.

We stepped forward. "We're glad you could make it," Reaper said.

"Dem alligators not putting up much fight, so we needed something more exciting. This should be fun," Uncle Claude said. His eyes twinkled with excitement.

I almost felt sorry for Luca. “Let’s go back to the dining room. We have a layout of their property.”

“This woman must be pretty special,” Bastien commented as if it didn’t really matter one way or the other. He was here for the fight.

I met his gaze. “She means a lot to all three of us.”

“You can include me, too,” Paco said. “We all care about her.”

“Then let’s get her back,” Marcel said.

“My men can come up from the back side of the property,” Paco said, pointing with his finger. “We’ll take care of his men, then anyone who might try to circle back around.”

“Our men can come up both sides,” Marcel said.

Uncle Claude said. “Me and de boys will take de front wid you.”

“They’ll have added more men. Mia is worth a hell of a lot to him. Now that her family is dead, she’s worth a fortune,” I warned them. They had to know what they were getting into.

“Are you the reason her family be dead?” Uncle Claude asked.

“Yes, but she killed two of them herself. They murdered her mother. She avenged her death.”

Marcel grimaced. “If you sink to the level of killing women or children, then you should die.”

“Agreed,” I said.

Uncle Claude only grinned. “Dey not be knowing what hit them. It’ll be like going after alligators in de swamp, you know. You sneak up behind, dat way dey can’t be seeing you, den you slice across de throat where it be nice and soft.”

I had alligator soup before and knew that’s the way Uncle Claude killed an alligator. “Just don’t make soup out of them.”

Uncle Claude laughed. “Nah, we might use dem for gator bait, though.”

We decided to go in at different times to avoid attracting attention. As soon as we got there, I looked around. They had more men, and that was only the ones I could spot. I was sure there were more we weren’t seeing. Luca wasn’t about to take any chances.

Trees surrounded the estate, except for the house itself. It wouldn’t be easy to get close. We would have to take out the guards as we went, but they were in groups of three or four. We would need to take the group out before they could alert the others. If we used our guns, it would definitely alert Luca’s men.

“I think if we crept up...” Reaper began.

“No need,” Uncle Claude said. They opened the bags they’d brought and pulled out crossbows. They quickly loaded them.

“Ready: one, two, three,” Uncle Claude said. They fired as one, taking out three of the men. The fourth looked confused, opened his mouth to call out a warning, but Bastien



had already reloaded and fired, taking him out before he could utter a word.

We ran toward the house. The door was unlocked. I didn't like that at all. I slipped inside. The house was dimly lit. I motioned for the others to wait and crept deeper inside the house.

A young maid was coming down the stairs. I waited until she was even with me, then grabbed her around the waist and slapped a hand over her mouth. "Where's Mia?" I whispered near her ear. She trembled so hard she could barely hold her own weight.

"They went to the chapel," she croaked. "They're getting married."

My blood ran cold. "Has he hurt her?" he growled.

The fear was easy to see in her eyes. It wasn't the maid's fault. She was young and scared to death right now. I loosened my hold.

"I'm sorry. We care about Mia very much and don't want to see any harm come to her. I won't hurt you."

She nodded, then tentatively smiled. "She's nice." Her gaze clouded. "I couldn't help her. Mr. Catorini hit her a few times, but she still fought him. I wish I was strong like her."

I was definitely going to kill Luca. "Where's the chapel he took her to?" I prodded.

"On the property." She quickly gave the location. "He drugged her so she wouldn't fight back."

I smiled. “Thank you.” As I turned to leave, she spoke again.

“He hurts women. He likes to beat them. I hope you get to her soon. If she continues to fight him, he will kill her.”

“We’ll get her before that can happen.” I hurried back to the door and slipped back outside. I could feel the adrenaline coursing through my veins. Yeah, we’d get her back.

We couldn’t fucking live without her.

## Chapter Thirty-one

*Mia*

Sometimes, I was aware of what was happening, as if I snapped out of the fog surrounding me. Then, at other times, it was as if I jumped through time. One minute, we were in a house, and in the very next, I was standing, actually more like weaving, beside Luca in a chapel, and there was a very nervous priest in front of us.

“I’m not going to marry you,” I mumbled.

“I’m not sure I can marry someone against their will,” the priest began.

“You will unless you want to have a very intimate face-to-face conversation with God tonight,” Luca told him.

The priest cleared his throat. “Dearly beloved...”

“You call yourself a man of God?” My words came out slurred, but when he cast an apologetic look in my direction, I knew he was aware of what I’d said. “He’s a murderer!”

“And if you don’t want the priest to die tonight, you’ll let him marry us.”

Luca gripped my arm so tightly that I cried out. “Okay, fine,” I spat.

With a smug smile, Luca looked at the priest.  
“Continue.”

I silently vowed I would slit Luca’s throat the first chance I got. He must’ve guessed my thoughts because he

laughed.

“It will all be over soon, my pet.”

My anger drained away with the priest’s next words.

“Do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?”

“No! Never!” The drug he’d given me was starting to wear off. I was going to fight him tooth and nail. I would never agree to marry him. There was no way he’d kill a man of God.

Luca pulled a gun from the holster beneath his jacket and pointed it at the priest. “Say I do, or I’ll kill him right now. His blood will be on your hands.”

The priest quickly crossed himself and began to pray.

My hands clenched into fists. Dammit, I didn’t know if he would kill him or not. It wasn’t the priest’s fault. He was forced to do this. “I do,” I grated out.

“I now pronounce you man and wife,” the priest’s words stumbled over each other.

Luca jerked me into his arms. I slammed against his chest as his lips came crashing down on mine. I hated this man with all my heart and soul. I bit down on his lip. He yelled and pushed me down onto the floor. I rubbed the back of my hand across my lips. I didn’t want any part of him on me. I wiped his blood across the front of the dress, staining the white satin.

“You fucking bitch. I should kill you right now.”

“You’re in the house of God,” the priest reminded him.

Luca ignored him and came at me. He grabbed me by the front of the dress and jerked me to my feet. The neckline ripped, sending beads in every direction. I tried to brace myself for what I knew was about to come, but when his hand connected with my face, lights danced in front of me.

“That’s just a taste of what I’ll do to you tonight,” he warned, then laughed. “I’ll have you begging me to fuck you. You’ll do anything I want to stop the pain.”

“No, you’re wrong. I won’t. You might as well kill me right now.”

He slowly shook his head. “There would be no fun in that. I’ll have a special collar made for you and keep you chained to the end of my bed. And when I get tired of you, I’ll share you with my men.”

A shudder of revulsion rippled over me. If that happened, I would find a way to kill myself.

The doors to the chapel were suddenly flung open, slamming against the walls. Luca’s men at the back of the chapel quickly turned, but were gunned down. Luca grabbed me to his chest.

“Stay back or I’ll kill her.” He put his hands around my throat. “There’s nothing you can do about it now. We’re married. One step closer and I’ll snap her...”

Venom pointed his gun and pulled the trigger. I felt it slam into Luca. I could almost hear the back of his head explode. Then, as if in slow motion, he stumbled back. I quickly moved away from him, falling to my knees. That’s when I saw the bullet hole in the center of his forehead.

“And now she’s your widow, you son of a bitch.”

I covered my face and started to cry. Venom ran forward and scooped me up into his arms. “Are you okay,” he asked, his eyes searching for any wounds.

“I’m fine now,” I blubbered, then met his gaze. “I wasn’t sure you would come to save me.”

“How could we not?”

Reaper and Ghost hurried forward. I held out a hand toward them, and they moved in closer. I knew no one would ever hurt me again. Right now, there was a shield of love surrounding me. It had been a long time coming.

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*Four months later*

I thought life would be perfect now that I was back at the Barone estate and with my guys. Well, it hadn’t been perfect. Sure, they gathered around me and made sure I had everything I wanted. We even had sex. Lots of sex. That was good. I liked sex. But there was one problem. I still felt as if I was in limbo.

The brothers were taking care of business and giving me part of the profits. I had lots of money in the bank but didn’t need anything. If I did, they bought it. They’d even gotten me a sports car, taught me how to drive, then warned me not to go too fast. Why the hell would they buy me a sports car and tell me not to go too fast?

We were one big happy family. At least, three of them were. I wanted more, but I was finding they could be a little dense at times. But now I had a reason to hurry things along. Paco and I had gone into town a few days ago after I'd sworn him to secrecy. I was discovering he was very loyal to me. I think he still felt bad that Luca's men had taken me. I constantly reminded him there had been six of them, and he'd been shot.

Today was the day, though. Except I was nervous as hell. I took a deep breath, then exhaled. I could do this. I went down the staircase and into the dining room. They were all sitting around the table, talking and drinking coffee. They came to their feet when I entered. I motioned for them to sit down.

"Something has to change," I said. "I can't go on like this."

They looked confused and a little worried. So they should.

I walked over to Reaper and got down on one knee. His eyebrows drew together. I only prayed this would have a good outcome because I didn't know what I was going to do if it didn't.

I drew in a quick breath and wished I would stop shaking. "Reaper Barone, will you marry me?" I cast a quick glance toward Ghost and Venom. They looked crestfallen.

Reaper smiled. "Yes, I'll marry you."

"Good." I came to my feet and kissed him before moving to Ghost. I got down on one knee and met his relieved

gaze.

“Yes,” he said.

“Shut the fuck up. I haven’t asked you yet.” I smiled to soften my words. “Will you marry me, Ghost Barone?”

“Absolutely,” he said.

I came to my feet and kissed him before moving to Venom. He opened his mouth, then quickly snapped it shut when I raised one eyebrow. When he didn’t say anything, I moved to one knee. “Venom Barone, will you marry me?”

“You know damn well I will.”

I waited.

“Yes, Mia Conti, I would love to marry you.”

As I came to my feet, he pulled me onto his lap. The other two came to stand beside us, one on each side. I might as well get it all out.

“I want the fairytale wedding. I want it all. I mean, just some of your family and the men. A small wedding, but I want to marry in a church in a white wedding dress.” I watched their expressions. Maybe they didn’t want all that fancy stuff.

“Then you shall have it all,” Reaper said.

“But it has to be legal,” I said.

“That may be a little more difficult,” Ghost began.

“But we’ll figure it out,” he quickly amended.

“Good, because I want our children to be Barones.” I nibbled my bottom lip, waiting for that to sink in.

“You’re pregnant?” Reaper finally asked.



I nodded.

He looked at his brothers. “But who’s the father?”

“Does it matter?”

Venom shook his head. “Not one bit. When is our baby due?”

“Plural,” I said.

“Twins?” Ghost asked.

I chuckled. “It looks like we’re having triplets. Maybe it’s good that I’m marrying all three of you.”

They wrapped their arms around me in a gentle hug. I had a feeling our life would be a little strange, but I didn’t care. I had enough love inside me to go around.

I hope you enjoyed Dirty Rich Monsters. Continue reading for a sneak peek at

Sadistic Beasts.

# **Sadistic Beasts**

# Chapter One

*Bastien*

After stripping him down to his dingy white boxers, our men dumped Alan on the dirty wooden floor, arms and feet tied. He was pathetic, crying and slobbering. What a fucking waste of air.

“You fucked up, Couillon,” I said in a soft, deadly voice as I stared down at him.

Alan was maybe forty-one with skinny legs and a paunch. His pale blond hair had thinned so much he had a circle of baldness forming on top. He always reminded me of a slimy worm the way his eyes bugged out. More so now as he attempted to squirm away from us.

“No, Bastien,” he cried, a flood of tears streaming down his face. “You know I would never betray the Landrys.”

I looked at Marcel. My brother rolled his eyes as he casually leaned against the bar, at least what was left of it.

T.J.’s Bar had fallen into disrepair the last few years. The building sat on the edge of the swamp, not that big, but a decent size. The paint had begun peeling long ago, and the walls were already starting to sag.

The glass in the windows had been busted out long ago and now resembled malevolent eyes wide open and glaring at anyone who dared enter. It wouldn’t be long before the swamp swallowed the building. The swamp always took back its own.

T.J. said he was tired of the fucking alligators, wild hogs, and people who didn’t pay their bills. He’d gone back to

the city. I heard he'd been shot and killed by a mugger a week later.

The bar was nice and quiet now, except for Alan begging and crying. He'd always been a whiner. We just didn't think he would hurt any of our girls. The dumbass had taken a knife to her. Cut her up pretty bad. She lived, but just barely.

We started interviewing the other women when we saw what he'd done. It only took a few hours to find out he'd been throwing his weight around and acting like a big man. We'd put our trust in him, and he abused it.

"The women all said the same thing about you. That you regularly beat them and forced yourself on them."

He shook his head as much as he could. "No, they're lying bitches! I'd never betray you. I swear."

"You know you're the one lying, Alan," Marcel said, then looked at me again. "Want to go for drinks when we're through here? Maybe get a burger or some etouffee. We missed dinner because of this idiot."

He'd mentioned going out later as if we were relaxing at home and he was bored. That was my younger brother. Nothing ever really affected him. He was cool, calm, and collected. He'd learned from the best—me.

"No, don't leave me here," Alan whined.

I squatted close to Alan's face. "No, of course, we wouldn't leave you here. We know the alligators like to come inside from time to time."

He sobbed with relief.

Richard chuckled. I looked at him and grinned. He was our first in charge, and I'd trust him with my life—I had, in fact, more than once. He was a sick bastard. He fit in well with us. He was a little older than me and Marcel. Maybe thirty-two. And big. He was six feet of pure, badass muscle. He wore his shaggy black hair pulled back in a low ponytail, and he had dark blue eyes.

Alan looked between us. His face drained of color. “No, you can't do this. I have a family...kids.”

I'd heard he treated them like shit, too. “You should've thought about them before you tried to destroy part of our business.” I nodded to Richard.

“What? What are you going to do?” Alan frantically looked around.

Marcel strolled over, bringing his switchblade out of his pocket. “We'll give you a break. Make it happen fast, which is better than what you did to Margo.” He drew the knife down Alan's leg, drawing a line of blood, then wiped the blade clean on Alan's boxers.

“No, no, no!” Alan screamed. “Oh God, please, no. I promise I won't ever hurt another whore again.”

“That's your problem,” Marcel said, looking furious for the first time. “The women came to us for jobs. They perform a service, but they are not...fucking...whores! You never did understand that, you little shit.”

Richard and another man lifted Alan. I could barely hear anything over Alan's screaming and crying. We walked

behind them as they took him through the bar to the back room and onto the porch.

The air was heavy with humidity and the musty smell of the swamp. I could already feel a drop of sweat trickling down my back. Yeah, I was ready to end this and get back to town.

The swamp came right up to the back of the bar, which made this an ideal place to dispose of our trash. I scanned the area. A full moon hung low in the sky. When a cloud didn't drift by, whispers of light slipped through the canopy of gnarled cypress trees, their roots snaking through the murky waters.

There was something beautiful about the swamp. It always intrigued me. The way the Spanish moss clung to limbs like fragile lace. There were secrets here in the muggy silence with only the sounds of the occasional croak of a frog or the hoot of an owl. I enjoyed the music of the swamp.

I even liked hearing about the tall tales and legends. Ghosts wandering the marshes. Rougarou, creatures to be feared. I had a feeling the stories were created by man to keep people away—especially the law. I grimaced. Which was why we were here tonight, and Alan was giving me a fucking headache with his blubbering.

I nodded at Richard.

“Oh, God, no,” Alan whimpered.

The men swung Alan back and forth, then let go. Alan flew into the air, landing with a loud plop in the water. He

went under for a few seconds, then bobbed up, choking and spitting.

The thing about gators is they love eggs. It's a delicacy to them. Anytime they see something white, they hope it might be an egg. That's why our men had left Alan's white boxers on. He looked like the egg jackpot.

Marcel shined his light on the murky water. We didn't need much to see what was happening, but the beam was bright enough to reach the dark corners.

Alan tried to swim to the bank, which wasn't easy since his wrists and legs were tied. All he did was splash a lot, which got the attention of the gators.

"Look at that big one," Marcel said, shining his light toward one of the beasts.

"Nice." I nodded. "He must be about twelve feet."

The alligator glided silently through the water, moving toward his prey. I was impressed with Alan. He'd made it close to the bank when the alligator opened his massive jaws and clamped down on his leg. Alan screamed, his eyes going wide. The alligator went into a roll, snapping off Alan's leg. If it hadn't been for all the blood pouring into the water, he might've survived, but it drew the attention of more scaly beasts.

Then Alan disappeared beneath the water. He'd never cut another woman.

"Let's go get that beer," I said.

"Sounds good."

We went out the front and climbed into our boats. Marcel had a good idea: beer and food. Killing someone always made me hungry.

But as soon as we were in cell phone range, my phone began to ring. I pulled it out of my pocket and answered when I recognized the caller. “Yeah, Noah, what do you have?”

Marcel raised an eyebrow, so I put him on speaker.

“Looks like someone’s breaking into the estate.”

“You’ve got to be fucking kidding me.”

“No, and it’s either a small man or a woman. I’m leaning more toward female. She’s dressed all in black and wearing a black toboggan. Damn, she has some sweet curves. I hope to fuck it’s a woman because she’s giving me a hard-on.” He laughed. “She shimmied over the rock fence in nothing flat, like she’s done this before. If you two can’t handle her, I’ll help you out and take her off your hands.”

Marcel met my gaze and grinned.

Food and beer were now the last things on our minds.

“Let’s go home,” I said.

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