



ITALIAN PROFESSOR

AMAZON BESTSELLING AUTHOR

LENA LITTLE

ITALIAN PROFESSOR

YES, DADDY: BOOK 43

LENA LITTLE

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Also by Lena Little

PREVIEW

As acting headmaster, I'm practically a shoo-in for the permanent spot.

Since all I have in this world is the gym and my career, I want this promotion more than anything. The only thing that could possibly screw things up for me would be some sort of drama or an accusation of impropriety on my part, but something like that isn't likely.

That is...until Aria Kane walks into my office and turns my world upside down.

Aria is an American exchange student whose supermodel mother relocated her here to Italy. This is her second year with us, but it's the first time I'm meeting her face-to-face. Seems Ms. Kane has decided to habitually use her cell phone in class, and I need to discipline her.

Mio dio.

This girl is like a living work of art, and I'm alarmed by the realization that I want her...badly. I try to compose myself, but she isn't making it easy. Can it be? Is this sexy, little thing trying to seduce me? When she proposes that I punish her bad behavior in class, my wafer-thin control almost snaps.

Almost.

This *little girl* is way younger than me. I shouldn't even consider being involved with her.

But all excuses fly out the window the moment her skin touches mine. With heat licking through my veins, there's only one thought in my mind—I will have her. She will be mine. Now and forever.

F*ck the consequences.

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MY ITALIAN PROFESSOR

P *orca puttana.*

I will never understand why today's kids find it so hard to follow simple rules.

“As if I don't already have a full schedule today,” I groan and Rosa, my secretary, rolls her eyes at me. “I understand how sitting at a desk all day might lead you to believe that working here is a walk in the park, but I don't have that luxury. I have philosophy classes to teach and administrative duties to complete. These people are on the cusp of adulthood. They should no longer need discipline.”

“Be that as it may, Professor Arrabella. Everyone needs to be redirected every once in a while,” she purses her middle-aged lips at me. She still addresses me as Professor even though that's my secondary title now. Once the school budget restraints are lifted and a new professor is hired, I'll be the full-time Dean of Education.

“Call her in here so that I can get this over with.”

“Yes, sir,” she replies and waddles back to the outer office.

I wait for the student to arrive and take a quick look at her file. She's an American exchange student. As I skim through her grades, attendance, and record of discipline, I realize exactly who she is, and there's only one description that comes to mind—a spoiled little rich girl.

Aria Kane is the daughter of supermodel Jennifer Kane and some billionaire playboy who left the picture not long after she

was born. She transferred to the academy last year when her American mother decided to make her Milan estate her permanent residence, but this will be the first time I've met this girl. If she has a disciplinary problem, how has she managed to fly under the radar for this long?

My thoughts are interrupted by the most gentle knock on the door. Rosa pounds the door like she's kneading bread, so it must be Aria.

"Come," I shout as I close her file and move to the front of my desk, ready to lecture this girl and give her a piece of my mind.

The door opens and I briefly wonder if the floor underneath me has disappeared, leaving my heart pounding like a fist on a drum. I don't know what I expected to find on the other side of the door, but not this.

I'm stunned by the petite, blue-eyed beauty that saunters through the door. She's wearing her uniform skirt a bit shorter than regulation and has the top three buttons of her white blouse open, exposing her ample, ivory cleavage. I could address these infractions but then I wouldn't be able to look at them.

Dammit. What's happening to me?

"Ms. Kane, have a seat please so we can get started."

"Yes, sir," she smiles and sits in the leather chair closest to where I'm standing. Her tiny skirt inches up a bit more on her thighs, and I can't help but take a quick glance before settling my gaze on her bright blue eyes.

"Ms. Kane..."

"Aria. No need to be so formal," she interjects.

"Ms. Kane, you've been summoned so that we can discuss your continued failure to follow the cell phone use policy."

"Oh, is that it?" she grins and tugs at her shirt, showing the lacy edge of her pale pink bra.

"Yes, your professor indicated that this is the fourth time he's addressed this with you. I know you kids tend to become

addicted to your devices, but this sort of behavior won't be tolerated here."

She nods slowly and gnaws on her bottom lip.

"I've reviewed your record of discipline, and until now, you've been a model student. Can you tell me why you're suddenly so distracted by your phone? What's changed?"

She crosses her legs and looks down at her hands. Her breasts heave as she takes an overly dramatic deep breath.

"It's not my phone that's distracted me," her cheeks flushing with a hint of pink when she says it.

"I'm not understanding. Are you saying that there's something else distracting you?" I lean back against my desk and can't believe my eyes. She looks right down at my crotch and licks her lips. She gazes back up at my face and says, "Maybe I just wanted an opportunity to come see you. Maybe I thought that it was time for us to get to know each other."

Fuck me. Did I hear that right?

I swallow hard, attempting to clear whatever's stuck in my throat, and shift my position so she doesn't see the rise in my pants. It's getting way uncomfortable with all the blood rushing south.

"If you wanted to meet me, you could have scheduled an appointment. You didn't need to break the rules to see me."

"But if I scheduled an appointment, you'd have no reason to discipline me. Did I read the handbook correctly? Don't repeated offenses escalate disciplinary action to include paddling?"

"We...we don't traditionally spank students who are over the age of eighteen. We expect students in your grade level to respond to more adult forms of discipline."

"Well, where's the fun in that? Honestly, Mr. Arrabella, if you want me to stop pulling my phone out in class, you're going to need to spank me. I need to learn my lesson, right?"

She stands up, turns around, and bends over her chair, providing me a bird's eye view of her thick ass and pink

panties.

Jesus Christ. What's going on here? Is this a test of my self-control? Because if so, I'm failing miserably.

A more rational me would tell her to act like a lady and send her out of my office right now, but her behavior up to this point has awakened my feral side. Instead of telling her to leave, I walk to the door and turn the lock.

This is wrong, and I'll probably go to hell for this. But at this point, I don't care. I don't care if we're in school or anyone can come knocking. All I care about is her, the air between us thick and alive. Consequences be damned.

I walk to the leather sofa under the office window, sit down, and point to my lap. Her face lights up as she approaches and lies across my lap. I stare down at her round bottom and ask myself what I'm doing. This is just too crazy. I mean, it would cost me my career and my reputation, but there's a beast in me very few have seen, and this little girl came in here fully prepared to feed that beast.

She holds her breath as I raise my hand and let it hover over her. Last chance to come to my senses and stop this. No, I'll just make sure that it's a one-time thing and never let it happen again. That's how I need to rectify this in my head. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience to savor and revisit on those lonely nights when it's just me and my hand.

Crack! My hand makes contact with her sweet ass. As plump and round as it is, it looks tiny under my big hand.

"Oh," she gasps and wiggles her ass, teasing me further. "Is that the best you can do?"

My blood starts pumping and I feel it in my temples. "You want more?"

"Maybe you should go under my panties," she sighs.

I lift her skirt slightly and look down at her reddened cheek. Do I do it? She made the offer so she'll have to remove her panties.

"Get up and take them off," I growl.

She leaps to her feet without hesitation. Lifting her skirt, she slides her panties down her legs, making certain to bend in such a way that her ass is in my face. It's too much for me to take sitting down, so I hop off the sofa, grab her wrists, and bend her over my desk.

I slap her bare ass and watch as her big cheeks jiggle. This is it. I've lost control of the beast. Her moans sound like a sweet symphony each time my hand comes down on her.

She wants me so badly, why would I disappoint her? I rub her red cheeks then slide my hand under her ass so I can survey the secret sweetness between her legs. She trembles when she feels my hand on her slit. My spanking has her dripping wet, so I easily slip my fingers inside.

"Mmm, this doesn't feel like a punishment anymore," she giggles and thrusts her hips against my invading hand.

I'm not sure when I did it, but I opened my pants and pulled out my cock. I stroke it with my left hand as I fuck her with my right. I want so badly to mount her, but there's still enough of the straight-laced professor alive in me to make me take pause. I can easily get us both off without penetrating her, and in my twisted state of mind, that somehow seems less inappropriate.

We're both so close. Yeah, we're almost there.

Bang, bang, bang.

Rosa's big truck driver hands pound my office door.

"Professor? Why is the door locked? You have a call from the Chancellor. He says it's an emergency."

I grit my teeth and painfully stuff my stiff penis back in my pants.

"Get up, girl. Game over," I tell Aria.

"For now, you mean," she smirks.

"No, for good. This should never have gone this far. And don't tell anyone about this. If you do, it won't turn out well for either of us."

“It’s our little secret. If I told someone, we couldn’t do it again.”

She moves her hips with an exaggerated sway and walks to the door.

“Wait, your panties,” I say as I snatch them off the floor.

She spins around, blows me a kiss, and says, “They’re yours now.”

Before I can argue, she unlocks the door and turns the knob, so I quickly shove her pink panties in my pocket. She brushes past Rosa, who glares at me with her owl-like eyes from the threshold.

“Is everything okay, Professor?” she asks me.

“Yes, Rosa. What line is the Chancellor on?”

Considering the current size of the unsatisfied monster in my pants, it’s going to be a long day.

STEPPING THROUGH THE DOOR

The bell rings as I slip into the corridor. What just happened in there has me over the moon. Admittedly, I've been planning this for a long time, but I didn't know how Professor Arrabella would react to my advances. I've been practically stalking him since the first time I laid eyes on him last year, but he hasn't even given me a second glance.

I'd all but given up on ever getting his attention. But then, I saw him out on the soccer field in his tight-fitting shirt and tiny shorts last Friday. That's when I decided it was time to turn up the heat and see if I could get him to boil over. I must have pulled my phone out in class twenty times before they finally initiated my referral. I was about to resort to screaming obscenities in the classroom or picking a fight with my professor. I'm relieved I didn't have to escalate to those extremes.

Making the sexy Professor think that I'd lost my mind probably would have been counterproductive.

Now, with the sting on my behind still fresh and my insides still tingling from his exploration, I think it's safe to say that he wants me just as much as I want him. I smile so widely that it hurts my cheeks as I begin calculating my next move. I'm lost in the idea of it when my shoulder smacks against another student's chest.

"Hey there, American girl, watch where you're going," a male voice tells me and I feel his hands on my arms.

“Sorry, I wasn’t paying attention,” I try to shake myself back to reality.

“It might have been my fault. I was kind of busy looking at those,” he motions down to my breasts and I suddenly realize that I didn’t button up my shirt.

“Oh, Jesus,” I mutter and frantically button up.

“Damn, I should’ve kept my mouth shut. Now you closed the curtains and ruined the view,” the boy grins.

“Not funny,” I reprimand him with my glare.

“No, it’s not funny. It’s heartbreaking. I guess I’ll have to keep staring at your ass now.”

I pull myself out of his grasp and say, “Excuse me.”

“Don’t be mad. You’re the one who flashed me,” he laughs but I don’t find his childish behavior even remotely amusing so I push past him and hurry to my next class.

I suppose I should be grateful for the encounter. It prevented me from walking into a room full of students looking like a stripper.

For the rest of the day, I look for Professor Arrabella around every corner. Surely, I’ve gotten into his head, right? He must want to steal a look at me or share a knowing wink the way that I want to do the same to him. I sit in class zoning out the ramblings of my professors and staring into space as I relive the heat between us when I lay across his lap.

I could get up and run back to his office right now if it wouldn’t mean expulsion and a gross overreaction from my mother. Not that she cares, she just doesn’t want to be inconvenienced by me.

Finally, as the dismissal bell rings, I spot him standing between his office and the front exit. He zeroes in on me as I approach and looks me straight in the eye, but his face is blank and expressionless. My heart thumps and sadness sinks into my belly.

Is it possible that I’ve been wrong about him this whole time? Could what happened between us just be the activities of a

typical Tuesday for him? I mean, he is the most attractive man I've ever seen. I can't be the first girl to express my interest in him. Am I just one in a long line of coeds who've had his fingers inside them? No, it can't be that. He's just putting on an act so no one gets suspicious.

As the rest of the students rush to freedom, I slow my pace and hang back a little. Summoning all the courage I can muster, I decide to approach him. Realizing that I'm about to be face-to-face with him, he turns his head from side to side and then looks down at his patent leather loafers.

"Excuse me, Professor. Do you have a moment to speak with me?" I ask him.

"I'm not sure that's a good idea at the moment, Ms. Kane," he clears his throat.

"I think you can call me Aria now," I grin.

"This isn't amusing, little girl. If you have some plan to do something to me...to blackmail me or something, it isn't going to work."

"What? Blackmail? Is that what you think of me? Wow, that's a total bunch of bullshit." My heart shatters into a thousand pieces in my chest and I feel the tears welling up in my eyes.

He scans my face for a moment then takes me by my arm.

"Let's go," he whispers and pulls me into his office.

His secretary lowers her glasses and stares me up and down.

"Professor? What's the problem?" she asks as he drags me past her.

"It's fine, Rosa. Go home," he answers without even looking in her direction.

We enter his office and he slams the door. He doesn't lock it this time, which may be a bad sign. He spins on his heels and says, "What are you up to? Just what is it that you're trying to accomplish?"

"What do you mean? I'm not trying to accomplish anything. I just want to get to know you better."

“You’re eighteen years old. I’m thirty-five. What do we have in common? Why do you want to get to know me?”

“What does our age have to do with anything? We’re both technically adults so there’s no law against us getting to know each other.”

“I’m in a position of authority over you. It’s inappropriate. I could lose my job and my professional reputation. And what about you? Do you want to have to deal with the public scrutiny that would arise from that sort of scandal? I have a duty to protect you even if it’s from your own poor judgment.”

The concept of him wanting to protect me is pretty attractive, but I’m not going to let his good judgment prevent us from being together.

“The only way this could become a problem is if we tell people about it. I’m not going to tell anyone, are you?”

“Aria, that’s not the point.”

The sound of my name on his lips makes me want to kiss it right off. God, he’s so ruggedly handsome and sexy. Everything about him is.

“What’s the point?”

“This was a mistake,” he says but he won’t look at me.

“You didn’t think it was a mistake when it was happening. Look at me.”

“No, I knew it was a mistake then, too, but I didn’t care. Now I’ve had some time to think, and I’ve decided something like that can’t happen again.”

I pause for a moment and try to swallow the disappointment that’s quickly consuming me.

“I can’t believe you feel that way. I won’t believe it. I know you want me,” I argue.

He shakes his head and sighs, “Of course, I want you, little girl, but there’s just too much at stake.”

“Then, kiss me goodbye.”

I step close to him and lean forward, pausing just before our lips touch. He breathes deeply and grabs my face with both of his hands, kissing me with an urgency and passion that causes fireworks to flash and crack in my mind. It's a violent kiss that lays me defenseless like a slave to his will.

He releases me and hovers close with his eyes closed then says, "Goodbye."

This is the very moment I feel my heart break.

TEETERING THE LINE

ANTHONY

Aria leaves the room like a little, lost child. She's defeated, as if her ego has been deflated and I'm the one responsible. This isn't how it's supposed to be. I don't know why these things overtake my rational mind, but I feel as if I should be the one to build her up and protect her from heartache. It's ridiculous. Before today, I couldn't put a face to her name. Now, the very thought of disappointing her makes me feel like someone's crushing my windpipe.

The halls have emptied out and I lock the outer office door before leaving for the day. I can sense a long workout, a stiff drink, and a cold shower in the near future, and hope that this combination will take my mind off of Aria Kane. As I approach the parking lot, I notice a group of kids milling around beside the ball field. We don't schedule games or practices mid-week so I cross the lot and head in their direction to see what they're up to.

Four boys have their backs turned to me and don't see me approaching, so they continue their banter. Finally, within earshot, I hear one of the boys boast, "That's right. She was walking down the hall with her tits hanging right out. She knew she was gonna pass me. That's why she did it."

"Bullshit!" another boy cries.

"Oh, yeah. If it wasn't for me, then why did she button up as soon as I told her how horny she was making me? She smiled the whole time. I'm telling you, I'm gonna hit that hard."

Maybe I'll get lucky enough to do her and her MILF model mother."

"Keep dreaming, idiot," another boy says and they all laugh.

"We'll see. I'll invite you guys over to her mansion for a pool party. If I'm done with her by then, you can pass her around," the grinning little shit adds.

I can hear the beast whispering in my ear, "Wipe that smile right off his fat, fucking face. He can't talk about your girl that way. He needs to be taught a lesson," but I clench my fists until my fingernails draw blood from my palms to push him back down.

"What's your name?" the sound of my own voice alarms me.

The boys all turn to me with stunned expressions on their faces.

"We're just talking, Sir. We aren't doing anything wrong," the fat-faced jock retorts.

"I didn't ask what you were doing. I asked for your name," I snarl.

"Why? What do you need my name for?"

"You know what, it doesn't matter. You can't hide from me. I'll find out who you are tomorrow. Then, I'll have you benched for two games for your insubordination."

"I'm Lanz, Lanz Lazarro," he spits.

"Well, Lanz Lazarro, spreading inappropriate lies about your female classmates is pretty low. That's not the type of behavior I expect from our athletes. We trust you to represent our academy to other institutions and the public."

"It's just locker room talk, Sir. I didn't mean anything."

"I get it. I do, but you see, locker room talk is supposed to be true. Now, why don't you admit to your friends that you lied? Tell them Aria Kane would never flash her breasts at you. Let them know she has never expressed any interest in you at all."

"I mean no disrespect, Sir, but how would you know?"

That's a good question. So good, in fact, that all of his friends stare at me, awaiting my answer.

"School's out boys. You're now loitering. It's time for you all to clear out of here," I answer and turn on my heels.

I should have kept my mouth shut. What was I thinking? Lanz is a big kid who might just be able to hold his own in a fight with me but that doesn't excuse the thoughts that were going through my head.

He's my student and so is Aria Kane. Getting physical with either of them is unethical. I tell myself this. Yet as I drive home to change into my gym clothes, I replay the sensation of slipping my fingers inside her in my head. What is it? I'm not some love-struck school boy like Lanz Lazarro but this girl has a spell on me just the same.

True, her beauty demands appreciation, but it's more than that. Way more than that. She has me in a chokehold, and that thought rattles me. Shakes me to my core. My body goes haywire when she's around, but I can feel my obsession with her take root. She's too young for me and I'm trying to fight off this primal desire to have her all to myself. Make her my wife. Fill her with my babies.

Shit. I must be going crazy.

Two sweat-filled hours in the gym, a cold shower, and some vodka later, I still can't get this girl off my mind going so far as to scour last year's yearbook for photos of her. I find a candid shot of her standing outside clutching her books to her chest, and I can't tell if she's pensive or sad.

I trace her profile with my finger like a psycho, and I begin to wonder if she knows how perfect she is. Does she look in the mirror and see what I see or has she convinced herself that she belongs hidden in the shadow of her famous mother? The possibility of the latter being true stirs my frustration so I close the book and go to bed. I lie awake for a while, wondering if I did the right thing.

There are a thousand reasons to keep my distance from this girl and only one reason to get close to her. I know that

pushing her away was the responsible thing. I just don't know if I'll be able to live up to that responsibility.

MORNING COMES and I juggle my coffee and my briefcase as I try to swim through the pack of students who are waiting for the bell to ring. If I hadn't tossed and turned all night, I would have been tucked away in my office before they arrived. I find myself scanning the crowd for Aria. Maybe a quick glimpse of her will be enough to get me through the day.

No, I should cut this off cold turkey, you know, the whole "out of sight, out of mind" philosophy. Yeah, I don't think that's even possible.

I reach for the door and stop dead in my tracks as her reflection in the glass catches my eye. I watch as she takes two steps forward. She knows I'm looking and flashes me a smile. I guess there's another raging hard-on forecasted for me today. It takes all of my strength to fight the urge to wave her to the front of the crowd and take her to my office.

I'm still holding the door handle when the bell rings and the crowd of teenagers moves forward, nearly crushing me against the door.

"Back up. The doors swing out, ladies and gentlemen," I shout.

They inch back a bit, and I let myself in, stepping to the side to prevent being trampled by the stampede. *Go to the office now. What are you waiting for?* I tell myself to move but my feet refuse to take a single step until I feel Aria's breath on my neck.

"Good morning, Professor Arrabella," she whispers, making the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end.

"Good morning, Aria," I answer as someone pushes her ample breasts against my back. "Don't be late for class, young lady." I struggle to form the words as tiny beads of sweat form on my forehead.

“Oh, you’re right. If I’m late, they’ll send me to the office. We don’t want that to happen. Or do we?” she giggles and walks away.

Holy shit. Shit, shit, shit. This just isn’t right. Does this little girl think she’s getting the better of me? No, that’s not going to happen. I’m the one in control here, and it’s time I start showing it.

LIBRARY TIME

ARIA

It's been three days since I last saw Professor Arrabella.

At first, I didn't know if he was out of the building or just avoiding me, but I spotted him rushing to his car after school yesterday. I was disappointed when I saw him but realized what his avoidance really means. If he wasn't interested in me, he wouldn't be going to such great lengths to keep his distance. No, he's fighting his desire to be with me, and for him to be going to such extremes, that desire must be very strong.

Each Wednesday at one, I have research hour in the school library. I look forward to the smell of the old paper, the towering mahogany shelves, and the quiet. With the sunlight breaking through the stained glass windows, stepping into the library is like stepping back in time surrounded by an endless record of romance, fantasy, and mystery.

I take my usual seat at the table closest to the back and lose myself in an old poetry anthology, but as I read the perfectly timed lines, I hear a familiar voice in the distance. I lift my head and see Professor Arrabella conversing with the librarian. My heart flutters as I will him to turn and face me, but it's clear that I don't have psychic powers.

He finishes up his conversation and starts toward the exit. I can't let him go like this so I do the only thing that I can think of. I cough, loudly, causing everyone in the library to turn and look in my direction.

The humiliation is worth it. Professor Arrabella turns and stares into my eyes. I don't know what's going on in his head right now, but he flinches and twitches as if a war is raging between his ears. He turns to look at the librarian and sees that she has gone back to her duties then he surveys the room. This is good. He's deciding whether or not he should approach me. He looks back at me, and I bat my eyes at him. He shakes his head and begins walking in my direction.

I sit straight, pushing out my chest and sucking in my stomach. What will I say when he gets here? Do I chastise him for avoiding me or do I confess how happy I am that he's finally speaking to me again?

My mind races with possible opening lines, but it seems to be for nothing. He walks right past my table without saying a word. What is he doing? He has no reason to be in the back of the library. Until he saw me, he was headed out the door. Is he playing with me? My fluttering heart grows heavy as it fills with anger and frustration. There's no way I can stand for this, so I get up and follow his path behind the stacks of books, planning to give him a piece of my mind.

I feel like a mouse in a maze as I navigate the towering rows of books, becoming more anxious with every step. I take the corner so quickly that I trip over my own feet and topple face-first into the outstretched arms of my prey.

"Were you waiting for me to fall on you?" I ask, amazed at how quickly he reacted to my clumsiness.

"No, but I was waiting for you," he says, maintaining his grip on my arms.

"Have you been avoiding me?" I pant, still recovering from the shock of almost cracking my skull on the marble floor.

"Yes, I have."

"But why? Why would you do that?"

"So I wouldn't end up doing this." He pulls me into his arms and kisses me, sending warmth straight to my lower belly, but he doesn't stop there. He spins around and slams my body into the wall. He grinds his hips, letting me feel his rock-hard penis

as he cups and squeezes my breasts. His tongue probes the inside of my mouth until I lose my breath, wondering just how far he's willing to go in broad daylight in the school library.

"You feel too good. Damn it, why are you so perfect?" he rasps., "You're making me crazy, you know that? You and your damn games."

His hand slips under my skirt and he rubs me through my panties. I close my eyes as I succumb to this magical sensation that causes me to quiver and shake. With his other hand, he unzips his pants and pulls out his cock. He rubs it against my panties, leaving me longing to feel it inside me. I'm ready. I've never felt so ready for anything in my life, but the bell rings and people start milling around. Cursing under his breath, he lets me go and zips his pants.

"When can I see you again?" I whisper.

"I can't keep doing this," he mumbles and walks away.

I try to understand the battle he's fighting but it isn't fair. He needs to see that I would never do anything to jeopardize his career or reputation. I don't want to ruin him. I just want to be with him. Why does this have to be so hard for him? It's just a shot in the dark, but maybe the answer is in the question. Maybe I just need to tell him.

PACING A HOLE IN THE FLOOR

ANTHONY

T aking Aria's phone number from her student file was a huge mistake. Now, three drinks later I'm making tracks in my carpet, pacing in circles with my phone in my hand. What could I possibly say if I make this phone call? Hey, little girl. I had a great time feeling you up in the library. Do you want to do it again? No, but I could call to apologize for my behavior even though I don't regret it for a second.

As someone who lives his life following the rules, I should feel guilty for what happened. But dammit, I don't. Not even one bit. If I could turn back time, the only thing I'd do differently is get to the library earlier so we wouldn't be interrupted.

With an exasperated sigh, I dial the number. As the phone rings, I tell myself that I'm acting like a fool. I don't get tied up in knots over women or anyone for that matter. They only distract me from work, and I don't like being distracted. But with Aira... It feels different. I don't hate the distraction. I'm fucking welcoming it.

I'm about to hang up when I hear her voice on the other end of the call.

"Hello?"

"Hello, I'm calling for Aria Kane."

"This is Aria Kane. Professor Arrabella, is that you?"

"Yes, hello Aria."

“Oh my god, hi. I almost didn’t answer. Nobody ever calls the landline. I figured you were a telemarketer or something.”

“Sorry, I don’t have your cell phone number. This is the number in your student file.”

“Yeah, because my mother doesn’t want the school disturbing her in her cell when she’s attending shows and parties. Nice, right? Anyway, I’m glad you called, but what can I do for you?”

“I..I just wanted to talk about what happened today.” Should I be doing this? What if she’s recording the conversation? But no. She won’t do that. “Do you know what I’m referring to?”

“Of course I do. I was there, remember? It was nice.”

“Nice? Well, I was actually calling to apologize.”

“For what? Do you think you did something wrong?”

“Maybe this was a bad idea. Forget it. I’m just sorry, that’s all.”

“Listen, maybe we could talk in person. I have something I’d like to discuss with you anyway.”

“No, I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

“Please. Let’s just see each other face to face and clear the air. It’s the mature thing to do, isn’t it?”

“Are you schooling me on maturity, little girl?” Oh, damn. Why did I call her that? Coming from my mouth, it sounds... almost salacious.

“Little girl? I like the sound of that,” she giggles. “Please come see me. I’m home all alone. You don’t even need to come inside. We can sit out by the pool and talk.”

I know I shouldn’t because it’s a bad idea all around, but I want to see her. Alarm bells are ringing in my head, but I ignore every single one of them. This is the first time I’ve ever done something that feels good. And fuck it, Aria makes me feel good.

No matter how I try to rationalize, I was hoping she’d say something like this if I called.

“Alright. Give me the address and I’ll see you in a bit.”

“Excellent. I promise you won’t regret it. I think we’ll both feel better once we clear the air.”

IT’S A WARM NIGHT, and I was dressed for the gym when I made the call to Aria, so I decide not to change. I guess I’m trying to place some distance between this meeting and my position of authority over her at school. I suppose showing up in a tee shirt and gym shorts is as good a way as any.

Aria lives in Lombardy, which is on the outskirts of Milan. My GPS leads me up her long, winding driveway past the large, ancient fountain with its sculpted Roman goddesses spilling water from urns on all sides. It surprises me that her mother would choose to live on an estate like this over a luxury villa in the city. I may be resorting to stereotypes, but she doesn’t strike me as the type who would walk the gardens or hunt pheasant in the woods.

I park near the front entry and take a deep breath. “What the fuck are you doing, man? *Non fare lo stupido*,” I snarl. I pause, still holding my key in the ignition, and shake my head. “She’s worth it,” I tell myself and pull out the key.

The bell rings. Moments later, Aria arrives at the door. She’s wearing a sheer, yellow cover over her emerald green bikini. Naturally, she’d be half naked so those all-too-familiar feelings could brew inside me. Blood roars in my ears and I can’t look away. Of fucking course.

“Hi. I’m so glad you came. I thought you might have changed your mind,” she grins.

What’s that supposed to mean? Does she still think she has the upper hand with me? I try to brush the thought from my head. It’s that type of thinking that awakens the beast in me.

She struts ahead of me and I watch as her sweet ass bounces as she walks. I clench my fists to physically stop myself from reaching out and kneading those globes.

“Would you like something to drink to take outside with you? I have tea but you’re old enough for a beer or something from the liquor cabinet,” she looks over her shoulder at me and licks her lips.

“Water would be nice,” I answer, suddenly feeling parched.

“The kitchen is this way. We can get to the veranda through there.”

I look around at the perfectly decorated estate and wonder how many housekeepers it takes to keep this place so pristine. I do well on my salary but my place is nothing like this. Far from it.

Aria pours me a glass of water and holds it out to me. She makes sure that our hands touch when I take it, and I’m amazed that such a tiny gesture can send an electric current pulsing through me straight to my cock. Damn, she’s working hard to get a rise out of me. Little does she know, she doesn’t need to do anything but be herself.

She leads me out to the veranda and I take a seat in one of the lounge chairs beside the pool.

“Aria, I wanted to talk to you about what’s been going on between us.”

“Wait, before you say anything else I wanted to talk to you about it, too. I was trying to figure out why you were so freaked about this and I think I understand. You’re afraid that I’ll do or say something that will get you in trouble at school.”

“That’s definitely a big part of it,” I nod.

“I won’t. I swear I won’t do or say anything. I’m not some stupid kid who’s gonna run my mouth to the other girls at some sleepover. I’m an adult. Heck, I don’t even know any girls to have a sleepover with.”

I have to look at my feet because seeing her in that bikini is completely clouding my judgment. It’s like all my blood left my brain and went straight somewhere else.

“Did you hear me? I wouldn’t do anything that would jeopardize things between us. We don’t even have to see each

other at school as long as we can spend time together after school. I swear it.”

“Aria, I’m old enough to be your father.”

“But you’re not, right? I mean, I never met the guy so you could be, but you’re not so I’m not seeing a problem here.”

“Aria, I’m not what you think I am. If you think I’m just some mild-mannered geek, that couldn’t be further from the truth. I’m passionate, I have a temper, and I’m extremely possessive. What’s mine is mine and I don’t let anyone play with my things.”

“I never thought you were some stuffy, old high school principal. There’s nothing attractive about that,” she smiles then looks over at the pool. “Why don’t you prove how passionate and possessive you are?”

She drops her yellow top to the ground and removes her bikini top. Seeing her topless with her perky, round breasts shining in the moonlight knocks the breath out of me, making my loins tighten. I’m arrested by her sight and all I want to do is strip her completely naked and drive myself home.

“Come and get me,” she says and dives into the pool.

She doesn’t have to tell me twice. I pull off my shirt and dive in right behind her. She has to learn that she can’t tease me this way without facing the repercussions. She floats on her back, her tits bouncing on the water, and says, “Are you coming to get me or what?”

I go under the water and swim beneath her, emerging with her in my arms. She wraps her arms and legs around me, and I pull her face to mine, kissing her as I fondle her bountiful breasts. She’s got me on fire and I want her to feel the same, so I carry her to the edge and set her on the deck. I untie the strings on the side of her suit bottom and rip it off her.

With her eyes at half-mast, she leans back and gasps as I part her legs and slide my fingers inside her. Dammit. She’s already wet and ready for me. She arches her back and cries out, which only makes me want to give her more.

I toss her legs over my shoulders and bury my head between her thighs, licking the droplets of pool water from her soft flesh. She nearly knees me in the face when I part her lips and slip my tongue inside her.

“Relax, baby girl. You’re delicious,” I tell her and continue to explore the soft folds of skin inside her.

Her breath catches, and she reaches down and places her hands in mine. She squeezes our fingers together as her hips begin to grind against my face. I slap her engorged clit with my tongue and she goes absolutely feral, kicking and thrashing. I love seeing her this way, coming apart because of me.

I wrap my lips around the little button and suckle it until her body convulses and shakes. When the tremors subside, I take one final lick of her luscious lady spot then lift my head.

“Did you like coming on my face, Princess?” I smirk.

“I... I never felt anything like that in my life,” she stutters, eyes still dazed and unfocused.

“Well, there’s more where that came from, but not tonight. First, I need to take you out on a date or two.”

“Really? You know I wouldn’t say no, right?”

“I do, but you deserve better than that. A girl like you should be treated like a princess.”

She pouts and asks, “Is it because of where I live and who my mother is?”

“No, beautiful girl. It’s because of who you are. You could live in a tenement in downtown Milan with your waitress mother and you’d still be a princess.”

I climb out of the pool and help her to her feet. Her naked body is even more amazing than it was in my imagination. I take two towels off the hook beside the outdoor shower and wrap her in one of them before drying myself off with the other.

She lies on top of me on the lounge chair, and I stroke her hair as we look up at the star-peppered sky. This is it. There’s no going back now. I’ve crossed a line I can never uncross. I look

for feelings of guilt or even the slightest bit of hesitation, but there's none to be found anymore.

“So, what do I call you now?” she asks, snuggling my neck.

“At school, you call me Professor Arrabella. Outside of school, you call me Anthony.”

As midnight approaches, I kiss her goodbye and pull down the long driveway to the road below. As I prepare to make my turn, I notice a car parked on the side of the road. I inch closer, but its tail lights illuminate, and it tears out in the opposite direction. It seems odd but I'm not familiar with this area and think it may be paid security on patrol.

MOMMY ISSUES

It's been three days since Anthony came to my house, and it's been difficult for me to keep up appearances at school.

I wish I could find an excuse to go to the office that didn't entail acting like a complete fool in class. If it wasn't for the fact that we speak on the phone every night, I might just run through the hallways screaming for his attention.

The weekend has finally arrived and tonight is the night that we go on our first date. I spend way too much time putting on outfits and thinking I'm ready only to return to my closet and start over from scratch. As an eighteen-year-old, I have a closet filled with trendy casual clothes, and I don't want to look like I'm out to dinner with my dad. After much deliberation, I bite the bullet and throw open the doors to my mother's dressing room.

The center of the room contains a settee and a wall of mirrors, but the sidewalls are covered in floor-to-ceiling clothes racks organized by color family and season.

I put on a light beige pants suit with a low cut, blue blouse and matching heels. Checking myself in the mirrors, I decide to put my hair up and borrow some jewelry from my mother's collection as well. Finally feeling secure with my outfit decision, I rush down the stairs with only a few minutes to spare. As I head toward the door to check for his car, my mother calls out, causing me to skid to a stop on the marble floor, my face frozen in horror.

“Mom? What are you doing here?”

“I live here, Aria. I know I’ve been gone for a while but it’s still my house,” she holds her arms out to me and I accept her embrace. “Look at you pilfering my wardrobe. That looks good on you. Keep it.”

“Thanks, I just wanted to look a little less like a teenager.”

“Well you succeeded there,” she takes me by my arms and looks me up and down. “Where are you off to?”

“Dinner. My ride should be here any minute.”

“A date? Finally. I didn’t think you’d ever find a boy that met your high standards. Don’t get me wrong, it’s okay to be picky. You are gorgeous just like your mother,” she giggles and I pick up the faint scent of liquor on her breath. Great. Just perfect.

“Have you been drinking, Mom?”

“Just a little on the plane to take the edge off. Well, that and maybe a little more to help me sleep off the jet lag.”

Anthony’s headlights shine through the front windows, and she strains her neck to try to see what he’s driving.

“Have him come inside. I want to see the lucky boy who caught your attention.”

“No, not tonight. Maybe next time,” I place my hand on the doorknob.

“Excuse me, I’m still your mother. If I want to meet this boy, you need to invite him in.”

I take a deep breath and turn to face her, “My mother? I haven’t seen you in almost two months. I could be having cocaine-fueled sex parties out by the pool every night for months and you would have a clue. You wouldn’t care, either, so please don’t act as if you want any control over my life. It’s just too ridiculous to even consider. Now, I’m leaving. You’ll probably be asleep when I get back so welcome home and sleep well, Mother.”

“You’re pissed at me for treating you like an adult?” she scoffs.

“No, I’m pissed at you for suddenly thinking that you have the right to go back on that. I have to go. He’s waiting.” I open the door and quickly pull it closed behind me.

Anthony opens his door and I rush to the car. He’s a gentleman and wants to open my door for me, but I don’t want my mother to see him through the window. I hop in the car before he has a chance to get out.

“I was going to open your door for you,” he looks stunned by my erratic behavior.

“Oh, sorry. We don’t really do that in America,” I gulp. “Are you ready to go?”

“Sure, but, are you okay?” he asks me. “You’re wound up pretty tight.”

Shit, I didn’t know it was that obvious. “My mother made a surprise appearance tonight. I guess she’s home from attending fashion shows left and right.”

“And that’s a bad thing?” he reaches over and takes my hand.

“No, it isn’t bad. Well, not really. It’s just complicated and I wasn’t prepared.”

“Okay, then. We won’t talk about it. I promise I’ll make you forget all about her for a while.”

“That won’t be easy,” I sigh.

He squeezes my hand and says, “Yes, it will.”

I believe him but there’s still one major problem plaguing my mind. If this thing turns into something more like I want it to, how will I ever explain it to my mother? I mean, I got away with kicking my feet and telling her no tonight, but I know my mother. She’ll win. She always does.

FIRST DATE

ANTHONY

After a great deal of contemplation, I decided where to take Aria for our first night out together. I didn't want to take her to a place where someone from the school might see us, but I didn't want her to feel like my dirty little secret either, so I compromised. I picked a local place that's too pricey for the academy staff and students. I may be late paying my mortgage after this, but she's worth every penny. Anything for this little girl.

The Baretto al Baglioni ristorante is the in-place for jet setters from both Italy and abroad due to its location inside the Carlton Hotel Baglioni. Stepping inside is like stepping back in time to a twentieth-century English clubhouse with wood and dark papered walls, painted hunting scenes, and Scottish carpets. Everything from the leather-bound chairs to the decorated tray ceilings screams aristocracy. If I hadn't played rugby with the General Manager in college, I would have had to wait a month just to get a table.

We arrive and I hand the valet my keys before meeting Aria on the sidewalk and taking her by the arm.

"Baretto al Baglioni," she breathes. I don't know if she's just reading the signage or if she's been here before.

"You know this place?" I ask as the doorman opens the door for us.

"Only because my mother comes here. She comes here a lot."

"And she's never taken you?"

“Ha, no way. If she’s coming here, it’s because a man she’s meeting has a room upstairs.”

“Wow. Is it common for a daughter to know these things about her mother?”

“I hope not,” she says and I hear the sadness in her voice.

“Well, tonight is our night, and in case you’re wondering, I don’t have a room upstairs.”

She smiles at me as we’re escorted to our table, and I wonder exactly what’s going through her head. Everything about her piques my curiosity. I’ve never been here before and I’m pleased to see that, although the place is exclusive, the atmosphere is very comfortable and quiet. It’s the perfect place to have an intimate conversation.

“This is not what I expected at all,” Aria says as she looks around the crowded restaurant.

“What did you expect?” I ask.

“Well, since my mother comes here, I expected it to be flashy. I guess I should have figured that if you picked it, it would be like this. This isn’t her but it’s definitely you, if you get what I mean.”

“So, you see me as a stiff, old academic who wouldn’t be caught in a hip place,” I tease.

“No, nothing like that. I see you as more sophisticated than my mother.”

“Sophisticated boring or sophisticated sexy?”

“The second one obviously,” she takes a bit of a carrot from her salad and grins. Jesus, this girl.

“Should we have some wine?” I ask her.

“I’m not twenty-one,” she whispers.

“You’re also not in America. The drinking age in Italy is eighteen. How can you go to school here and not know that? Don’t your friends have drinking parties?”

“What friends?”

“You can’t tell me that you don’t have friends. You’re smart, funny, beautiful, and an American. These kids should be falling all over you.”

“I don’t know. I’m just not into that. I know some people and talk to them at school, but I spend most of my after-school time alone. I think I’ve been to like two movies with people from my class and took a trip to the coast last summer, but the friendships didn’t really stick if that makes sense.”

“Maybe you’re just a bit more mature than them. Is that it?”

“I don’t want to sound like I think I’m better than them. I guess, I’ve pretty much raised myself since the age of twelve so I had to be more responsible and grow up faster than them.”

“Does that bother you?”

“No, not at all. Do I wonder what it would have been like to have a stay-at-home mother and an actual father? Sure I do, but I really like who I am.”

I take her hand in mine and brush my lips along her knuckles.

“I really like who you are, too.”

“Enough of this nonsense. You were supposed to make me forget about my mother and everything we talk about seems to circle back to her.”

“Okay, what do you want to talk about?”

“You? Tell me about you,” she leans in close. “You’re built like a bodybuilder but you’re a scholar. Nobody seems to know anything about your personal life like where you live or what you do in your spare time.”

“Well, let’s see, I’m a big guy who used to have a lot of difficulty handling my emotions so I had two choices. I could eat my feelings or I could go lift weights and punch things. Lifting weights and punching things feels better than stuffing my face.”

“Did you have anger issues?”

“Not from my perspective, but I guess my anger tends to be an issue for other people. Now, what else did you ask me?”

“Family? Hobbies?”

“My family lives in the north so I don’t see them as much as I’d like. I don’t know if I have hobbies per se, but I like to spend time outdoors. I hike, bike, and go to the mountains to fish.”

“And where do you live?”

“One day I’ll show you.”

“But not today?”

“No, your mother just came home, and I’m not going to keep you out all night.”

“Uh, back to my mother.”

“Sorry.”

Our dinner arrives, and two bottles of wine later, we seem to have worn out our welcome. The waiter comes over several times to ask if we need anything else, so I take Aria by the hand and tell her, “It’s time to go.”

“Where to now? Our date isn’t over, is it?” she asks.

“No, I’m not finished with you, yet. I thought we’d take a drive to the Navigli.”

“Like to a nightclub?” she sounds terrified by the thought.

“No, to the Naviglio Grande.”

“Are we going on a boat ride or something?”

“You ask a lot of questions. Have you ever been there at night?”

“No.”

“Good, then you’re in for a treat.”

We arrive and park the car just before the bridge. I get out and open Aria’s door for her.

“Let’s take a walk. Are you warm enough?”

“Yes, I’m good,” she replies.

I wrap my arm around her and lead her up onto the walkway beside the bridge. When we reach the peak, I stop and lean against the concrete railing. She looks out at all of the lights reflected on the water and says, “This is beautiful.”

“I thought you’d like it. The sky is nice tonight, too.”

She looks up at the heavens and shouts, “Look, a shooting star!”

“Aren’t you going to make a wish?” I say, tucking a stray hair behind her ear.

She looks deeply into my eyes and shakes her head, “It already came true.”

Whatever control I have snaps and I pull her close, tasting her sweet lips and caressing the small of her back. We’re both out of breath when we finally part, and I still don’t want to let her go.

We stand on the bridge, watching the city lights dance on the water. There’s something about having her beside me. Even though we’re not doing anything. It’s like this is where she’s always supposed to be—in my arms, right by my side.

She tugs my collar and smiles, “Let’s go back to the car. I want to give you something.”

“Something for me?”

“Yes.”

We walk back to the car and climb inside. Before I can turn the key in the ignition, she practically leaps onto my lap.

“What are you doing?” I hiss as her hand slips down to my crotch.

“Teach me how to make you feel good like you did to me the other night.”

“You want to suck my cock?”

She blushes and bites her lip, “Yes.”

“Have you ever done this before?”

“No, that’s why you have to teach me.”

Her innocence will be the death of me. But right now, it's turning me into an animal.

I look around and see that the streets are mostly deserted. We have about two hours before the nightclubs start hopping and the streets fill up with people. It's a tempting offer but I don't want to literally get caught with my pants down. I almost tell her no but her tiny hand is stroking my dick through my pants, and it isn't going to take no for an answer. Moving her hand away, I unzip my pants.

I pull out my member, and she watches with wide eyes as I stroke it. I don't think she's expecting me to be this well-endowed.

"Have you changed your mind, Princess?"

"No," she shakes her head, her breathing ragged.

I place my hand on the back of her head and pull her into my lap, rubbing the tip of my cock on her lips. It's like a fucking dream come true and I want to savor every second of it.

"Stick your tongue out and have a lick, little girl."

She parts her lips and swipes my head with her tongue, sending an electric charge up the shaft. Oh, fuck. I might embarrass myself and come in two seconds.

"Now suck on it," I command her and she wraps her lips around it. Gritting my teeth, I try to think about things other than the fact that her warm, wet mouth feels so good milking me. It almost sends me over the edge.

Dio mio.

It's her first time and I want to take things slow with her, but I can't help but feed her an inch or two more. She takes it willingly so I keep going until about half of my length is in her mouth. I take her head in both of my hands and hold her steady while I slip in and out of her mouth. This is how I want it. I like to be the one in control. I look down at the beautiful, tiny creature, and my arousal peaks.

"You feel good, baby. You're gonna make me come."

She moans and the vibration on my tip is more than I can take. I pull her down on my shaft until I touch the back of her throat and shoot my creamy release against her tonsils. I don't think I've ever shot so hard or for so long before.

She releases my cock with a pop, and I wipe the corners of her mouth with my thumb.

"Was it really good?" she looks up at me with those innocent, round eyes.

"You did great, baby. You're a very good girl. *Tu sei la mia principessa.*"

"What does that mean?"

"You are my princess."

She sits up and I grab her head and claim her mouth in a long kiss before fixing my pants and starting the car. The streets are filling up with party-goers now so it's time for us to move along.

"I don't want to take you home after what you just did but..."

"No, it's okay. This has been a great night and you were right. It's probably not a good idea for us to be out all night when my mother just got home."

I take her home and we spend the next thirty minutes sitting in her driveway listening to music. She lies across the seat with her head in my lap, and we laugh like a couple of kids. She brings out a side of me that I had almost forgotten existed. Man, a guy could get used to this.

When she's safely inside the house, I notice the same car parked on the side of the road. Again, the lights come on and it pulls away just as I exit. I make a mental note to ask Aria about it tomorrow. I have no idea if this is normal for her, but something doesn't feel right.

Aria's mine now and I intend to keep her safe.

A SCHOOLYARD SCUFFLE

As expected, my mother is passed out when I get home from my night with Anthony. Between the jet lag and too many cocktails, she was still asleep when I left for school this morning. With any luck, she'll have contacted the local trendsetters and inserted herself into all of their social functions. By the time I get home, prying into my personal life will be the furthest thing from her mind.

The math professor drones on about quadratic equations, but instead of listening, I just doodle in my notebook while I daydream about seeing Anthony again.

"Pay attention," I drop my pencil and nearly scream when someone whispers in my ear.

I turn my head and see that it's the same boy who commented on my unbuttoned shirt that day in the hall.

"Maybe you should mind your own business," I grit out.

"Maybe I've decided to make you my business. Would you like that?"

"Not really, no," I snarl at him.

He scoffs it off and says, "Oh, you will."

The boy's name is Lanz Lazzaro, which, in itself, makes me think of a superhero movie villain. Fitting with this villain persona, he's charismatic, tall, dark, and attractive but he just can't seem to bring himself to be a decent person. He's an average student but an above-average athlete with rich parents, so his antics at school tend to go unpunished.

I suspect his home life is equally void of discipline. Naturally, he's a self-centered, overbearing bully. If he was ten to fifteen years older, he would be just my mother's type. He's eye candy stuffed with razor blades.

The bell rings and I start packing up to go to lunch, but Lanz places his hand on my arm and prevents me from leaving.

"I've been by your house a few times. I see a car coming and going at night. It kind of looks like one that I see in the parking lot here every day. That couldn't be right, though, could it? I mean, if he was hanging out at your house, it could only mean one thing. He's fucking your mother, right?"

"I don't know what you're talking about and you shouldn't be sneaking around my house. That's creepy and I could have you arrested."

"No, you couldn't. There are no laws against being on a public drive. Don't be mad, American. I've just been hoping to catch a glimpse of your sweet apple pie."

I pull my arm away and he holds his hands up. His touch disgusts me. I'm gonna scrub myself raw when I get home.

"I'll see you in the cafeteria, American princess," he grins and walks out of the classroom door.

I suppose him thinking that Anthony is screwing my mother is better than him knowing the truth, but if he keeps sneaking around my house, he's bound to see us together at some point.

As I walk to the cafeteria, I ask myself if I should tell Anthony about the conversation. Maybe he should take more precautions when he comes to pick me up. Maybe we should meet somewhere else. By the time I enter the cafeteria, I've told myself not to read too much into this. Lanz Lazzaro is a punk, but he isn't stupid. He wouldn't dare make an enemy of the soon-to-be official headmaster, would he?

I get a salad from the cafeteria and head outside to my usual bench in the courtyard to eat and clear my head. As soon as I sit down, Lanz approaches me. He sits on the bench beside me and says, "I see you out here by yourself every day. I figured you could use some company."

“No, I come out here because it’s quiet. I don’t need company.”

I jump as he places his hand on my thigh and squeezes, “You really need to chill the fuck out, okay? I’m trying to be nice to you and you’re being a real bitch.” He slowly moves his hand under the hem of my skirt.

Frantic and astounded by his audacity, I toss my salad into the air and hop to my feet. Lanz jumps up, too, swatting lettuce and tomatoes out of his pristinely quaffed hair. His white shirt is covered in a raspberry vinaigrette, and there’s a big, round stain on his khaki pants.

“What the fuck is wrong with you? Are you crazy?” he shouts.

Our little altercation begins drawing a crowd of students, and it doesn’t take long before the staff comes out to ascertain the situation. In seconds, I hear Anthony shout, “Both of you to the office now!”

It’s the first time I’ve ever heard him raise his voice, and it makes every hair on my body stand on end. He grabs Lanz by the arm and drags him inside as I trail behind them. It feels like every set of eyes in the academy is looking right through me. I’ve never felt more exposed or mortified in my life.

He marches us into the outer office, points at me, and snaps, “Sit.”

I drop my ass in the chair without hesitation, trembling inside because I can’t understand why he would be angry with me. He takes Lanz into his office and closes the door, leaving me to ponder what horrible lies the jock is spinning about me. Why didn’t he talk to me first? It’s just not fair.

The secretary and I both look at the door as the voices inside get progressively louder. I want to get up and force my way inside. How am I supposed to just sit here?

“What happened?” the secretary asks me.

I clear my throat and try to speak calmly, but my voice trembles, “He touched me inappropriately, and when I tried to get away from him, I dropped my lunch on him.”

“That boy needs a lesson or two in manners. He strolls around here like he owns the place. So disrespectful,” she shakes her head in disapproval.

We both turn our attention back to the office as the door swings open and Lanz storms out. He glares at me, purses his lips, and shakes his head, “Thanks, bitch.”

“Ms. Kane, it’s your turn,” Anthony calls to me.

Still shaking, I rise to my feet and stumble into his office. He closes the door and turns to look at me, but I can’t read his expression.

“Tell me what happened,” he says as he massages the back of his neck, the look of utter exhaustion evident on his face.

“First, he was messing with me in class. He told me he’s been checking out my house and he knows you’ve been there. He thinks you’re having sex with my mother. Then, he came up to me in the courtyard and started again. He sat on the bench with me and put his hand on my leg. I jumped up and my salad went flying. That’s how it ended up all over him.”

A muscle twitches in his jaw as he huffs, “I can’t do this.”

“Do what? What do you mean?”

“Aria, I wanted to rip that little fucker’s head off just now. It took every ounce of self-control that I have to keep me from putting my hands on him. This shit cannot happen. It’s exactly the kind of thing I was worried about.”

“Wait, you’re not saying you don’t want to see me anymore, are you?”

“I want to see you, but I can’t jeopardize my whole life to see you.”

I rush to him and wrap my arms around his waist, tears pricking my eyes. “Don’t do this. He’s just a stupid kid. He doesn’t know anything.”

When he doesn’t respond, I drop to my knees and beg, “Please don’t do this. Please. I’ll move to another school if I have to. I’ll convince my mother to let me have a tutor and stay home.

I don't care. We just have to make it a few more months, and I'll graduate. None of this will matter anymore."

I'm on my knees balling like a baby. I can't lose the only man that I've ever wanted over some stupid, horny teenager.

Anthony takes my hands and helps me to my feet. He wipes the tears from my cheeks and lifts me off the floor, setting me down on top of his desk. Without a word, he unbuttons my shirt and opens the clasp on my bra. I think I'm having a whiplash about how he did a complete 180. His head drops and he kisses each of my nipples then licks his way down to the hem of my skirt.

Within seconds, I'm a panting mess, trying my best to stifle my moans. I'm biting my lip so hard, I think I've drawn blood.

Without thinking, I unbuckle his belt and unzip his pants as he strokes my pussy through my panties. I'm so overcome with emotion and the only thing that will calm me is to finally have him inside me. I stroke his long, thick cock and wonder what it'll feel like, if it will even fit.

Anthony pulls his hand from between my legs and takes a step back. "This isn't right. We shouldn't."

"Yes, we should. I need you to take me," I pant.

"Aria, I don't know what you're used to, but I'm not gonna go easy on you. If I take you, it's gonna be hard and rough. Are you ready for that?"

"I'm not used to anything. I've never done this before, but I know that I want you inside me more than anything,"

"Are you mine?"

"What?"

"Are you mine? Can anyone else have you?"

"No, never. All I've ever wanted was to be yours."

He lifts me to my feet, spins me around, and bends me over his desk. With my skirt raised over my ass, he takes my panties in one hand and rips them off. My body shudders as the cold air touches my bare skin. He smacks and squeezes my ass in his

big hands then slides two fingers inside me. I try to grind my hips, but he places his hand on my back and holds me still.

“Don’t move,” he commands me and I close my eyes and immerse myself in the wild sensations he’s bringing me.

He pulls his hand out of my sopping-wet pussy and grabs my wrists, forcing my arms behind my back. Holding them with one hand, he uses the other to guide his penis inside me. It takes some force for him to penetrate me, and I stiffen up and clench my fists, my eyes snapping shut.

“Relax, little girl. It’s gonna feel good, I promise,” he growls, licking the shell of my ear.

He takes me in long, deep strokes that cause my head to swim. This is it. After this, nothing is ever going to be the same and that’s exactly how I want it to be. I’m completely his.

“I can’t hold back like this,” he rasps, voice thick with lust.

He pulls out, flips me over, and drapes my legs over his shoulders. Holding onto my thighs, he slams his hips against my ass and I take his full length inside me for the first time. My muscles tense around, clamping down on him, begging him for more. My response is enough to send him into a frenzy and he thrusts so hard and fast that all of the papers on his desk go flying. I want to scream but his secretary is right outside, so I bite down on my lips again and dig my fingers into his arms.

“I’m gonna come, baby. Are you coming with me?” he grunts.

Based on the sweet throbbing between my legs, I have to say that I won’t be far behind him. He lifts my ass off the desk and moves his hips from side to side, and I hold my breath as I topple over the edge into the deepest, most intense orgasm. Just two strokes later, he joins me and I feel his warm seed coating my inner walls.

He lifts me into his arms, and I hug his neck with all the strength that my weakened, boneless body can muster.

“That was so good, baby girl. Are you okay? Did I hurt you?”

“No, I loved it,” I whisper in his ear.

“I meant what I said. You’re mine, Princess. Don’t forget that.”

ANGER AND LUST

ANTHONY

Lanz Lazzaro sits in my office looking like a snarky little shit. He thinks that because his father is a big donor, he can do anything he wants. Clearly, he missed the memo about how messing with my things gets you an ambulance ride. Or worse.

“Tell me what happened,” I say as I clench my fists under the desk so he doesn’t see.

“There’s nothing to tell. I was just shooting my shot, you know? Is there a rule against hitting on girls at lunchtime? No, right. Anyway, she got all pissy about it and threw her salad at me. Look at me. I can’t go to class like this. She ruined my shirt, and I look like I pissed my pants.”

“So, you expect me to believe that you were showering her with compliments and she got so offended she assaulted you with a salad?”

“You know what bitches are like.”

“Yeah, I do and I’m looking at one now.”

He stops, stunned, and asks, “Excuse me, Sir. What did you say?”

“You heard me. I’m not playing this game with you. You’re an entitled little punk who thinks you can do whatever you want. You can’t. That stops today. Since you forgot about our last conversation, I’ll make myself as clear as I can. Keep your grubby hands off Aria Kane. Don’t look at her, don’t speak to

her. Forget that she exists or you're gonna have to deal with me."

"I don't know what she's been telling you when you're at her house but...."

"What did you just say?"

"That's right. I've seen you there twice. Well, I've seen you leaving anyway."

"You're the one who's been parking across from her house and driving off when you see me coming?"

"Yup, that's me," he says and I want to smack the smug look right off his face.

"Why would you do that? Do you have some sort of obsession with Aria?"

"Is that what we're here to talk about because I don't think that's any of your business. Like I told her, there's no law against parking on a public street and seeing what my eyes can see."

"So, you told her you're doing this?"

"Yeah, hey. You think that might be why she freaked out and threw her food at me?" He smirks and puts his finger up to his lips in a mock display of confusion.

"Stay away from her. Stay away from her house, too."

"Or what? You're the one boning her hot-ass mother. What? Are you planning to bring Aria in for a threesome? That's not cool, Prof. You should share."

Pezzo di merda. I slam my fist down hard on the desk and rise to my feet with a fire burning all the way to my soul. Dark possessive feelings curl in my gut, testing my wafer-thin patience. I see myself picking him up by the throat and tossing him through the wall, but I do everything I can to keep the beast at bay. If I let myself get carried away, it would mean more problems for Aria. And that I cannot let happen.

"Go home. Take three days to decide if you want to come back. You're suspended. Now, get the fuck out before I put my

hands on you.”

“Wow, you’re just touched enough that I believe you might do it,” he says, walking toward the door. He suddenly stops and adds, “Maybe I was wrong. Maybe the mother isn’t the one you’re boning.”

He storms out feeling just as cocky as he was when he came in, which is a clear sign that this boy has no idea how touched I am. How close I was to rearranging his smug face.

Aria looks terrified when I call her into the office. I don’t know how to explain to her that I’m not angry. My rational mind is just telling me that we should probably cool this thing down until after she graduates. I do my best to be strong but before I can get two sentences out she breaks down on me. Seeing this beautiful angel fall to her knees and cry is more than I can take. I don’t care what the safe thing is anymore. If it all burns down, I’ll roast marshmallows on my career as long as she’s standing beside me.

In an instant, my rage morphs into something just as visceral and feral. If it can all be damned, then there’s no reason not to follow my baser instincts, so I begin undressing her. Her tits are so perfect I can’t resist taking a taste. That’s when she surprises me by undoing my pants.

Our sex play up to this point led me to believe that she lacked experience so this isn’t a pro move. She must be just as overcome by passion as me. Then, she hits me with the best truth bomb ever. She tells me she’s a virgin. My heart practically explodes when I hear it. How this sexy morsel has managed to make it to eighteen as a virgin blows my mind. She could have had anyone she wanted, but I’m glad she waited for me. More than glad, actually. Now I’ll be her first and last. No one else will bring her to great heights of pleasure except for me.

Being inside Aria is even better than it was in the thousands of fantasies that I’ve played out in my mind up to now. She fits me like a glove and responds to my every move. Watching her tiny body thrash and quiver under me turns me on even more. I love that she likes it.

My head swims in a euphoric ocean and I barely keep from exploding, but I want her to come first so I pull back and give her a chance to catch up. Feeling her muscles spasm around my cock is all it takes to bust the floodgates.

I can't let her leave without making sure she's clear. "I meant what I said, Princess. You're mine now, don't forget it," I tell her.

She smiles and blows me a kiss, "That's all I want."

I guess the next step is going to be letting her mother know about us. If she's mine, I'm not going to spend the next four months hiding in the shadows. I don't know how Aria will feel about it, but this is how it needs to be. Nothing and no one is going to keep me from her.

ANTHONY'S PLACE

ARIA

It's the end of the day and the students filter out of the school like cattle leaving the barn for greener pastures. The sky is dark and gloomy except for the occasional lightning strikes a good distance away. I quicken my pace, hoping to hop on the bus before the sky opens up and drowns me. Halfway there, I spot Anthony in the parking lot. He's standing by his car and waving in my direction. My phone beeps in my pocket and I pull it out to see a text from him.

"Come for a drive with me," it reads.

I look around to see if anyone is watching me. I may not have any friends but, thanks to my famous mother, there are a few students who keep an eye on me. If there's any drama going on, they want to know about it before the tabloids. How else will their social media accounts go viral? Everyone is too busy piling on the buses to pay attention to me so I slip around the side of the building and take the back path to the staff parking lot.

"Taking the back way? Clever girl, but you better hurry if you don't want an outdoor shower," Anthony calls out when I'm within earshot.

"Where are we going?" I ask as I get in the passenger seat.

"I don't know. I just don't feel comfortable with you being alone right now. Your jock stalker is probably spitting fire right now."

"There's like twenty kids on my bus. I wouldn't be alone."

“So, tell me, are they all getting off the bus with you when you get home and have to walk up that long, secluded driveway?”

“Okay, point taken, but you don’t really think he’s dangerous, do you?”

“I know a thing or two about what it’s like to be obsessed with you. Combine that with the fact that he’s an entitled punk with no self-control and that makes him very unpredictable. Best to give him a cooling-off period before we take any chances.”

“Okay. So, you’re taking me home then?”

“I thought we should go somewhere and have a talk first. What about a café?”

“That sounds like the perfect setup for a breakup. That’s not what this is, is it?”

“Absolutely not, I promise. So? A café?”

I roll my eyes at him and say, “No. I want to go to your place.”

“What? Why?”

“Why not? You’ve been to my house. I want to see where you live.”

“But why?”

“What’s the deal? Are you hiding a wife and children? Are you a serial killer who doesn’t want me to see your lair?”

“Do you think either of those things is true?”

“No, but if I can’t see where you live, how can I get to know you better?”

“Fine, my house it is.” He shakes his head at me and adds, “Just tell my wife that you’re the new babysitter. You and I can fool around after you put my seventeen children to bed.”

“Seventeen, huh? You must really like having sex with your wife.”

“Who said they were all hers?” he laughs and I smack his arm.

Our drive takes us through the city center and begins to look strangely familiar.

“Hey,” I say looking out the window. “Isn’t that where we... um...parked??”

“You mean the place where you gave me head?” he grins.

“You knew what I meant. This is where you live?”

“Yes, San Lorenzo,” he nods.

“Then, why didn’t you just take me to your place?”

“Because I was still feeling things out between us, and I knew that if I took you home, I was going to have sex with you.”

“And that would have been some sort of problem for you?”

“Aria, I wasn’t ready to have you in my bed just yet. If I take you to my bed, you’re never leaving.”

“So, why are you taking me there now?”

“I told you, we need to talk.”

“Talk?”

“Yes, little girl, talk.”

Smiling, I shake my head, and he asks, “What’s so funny?”

“Isn’t San Lorenzo called the most romantic neighborhood in Milan?”

“That’s what they call it. Why?”

“It makes perfect sense. You go against the grain. You’re a professor, soon-to-be headmaster, of an elite ancient high school, but you could pass for a professional wrestler. While other professors are sipping tea and reading dusty old books, you’re lifting weights. Of course, you’d have a lonely bachelor pad in the most romantic neighborhood in the city.”

“Are you calling me odd?”

“No, I’m calling you perfect.”

He parks on the side of the street and leads me through a tall iron gate to the back of a tall brick building. The garden is like an enchanted realm with cobblestone paths, a rose trellis, and sunflowers as tall as me. Gas lamps are hanging on posts every

few feet, and I imagine how beautiful it must be at night when they illuminate.

We walk to a circular patio decorated with a small iron café table and chairs. Vines of ripening tomatoes flank the patio on both sides. Anthony puts his key in the lock on the French doors and invites me inside his home. If it's anything like the outside, I may not want to leave.

"Do you share that courtyard with the other tenants?" I ask.

"No, it's all mine," he shocks me with his reply.

"Did you plant everything out there?" I ask.

"No, actually. It was my mother's garden originally. I've added a few things over the years. Of course, the vegetables are mine."

"So, your mother lived here?"

"Yes, Aria. I grew up here. This is my building. I own it."

"Wow, how many tenants do you have?" I ask, surprised by this new information.

"Six," he answers while setting up a pot of coffee.

"So, you're like a landlord? Isn't that like having two jobs?"

"No. I don't manage the building. I own it and I live here, but I have a property manager who handles the leasing and the maintenance. I don't do any of that."

His flat is larger than I would have expected from the outside, with beamed ceilings and thick wood molding. It's an open concept with kitchen, living, and dining rooms all in view. His wood floors are covered with woven rugs and the whole place has a sort of cottage feel.

"Take a seat, Princess," he says as he sets two cups of coffee on the table.

"Okay, your place is really nice. I thought maybe you'd give me a tour."

"Maybe. Let's talk first, okay?"

"Fine, tell me whatever terrible thing you have to tell me."

“Why do you think it’s a terrible thing?”

“Because of the way you’re acting. If it was something good, you would have just blurted it out.”

“It’s not good or bad, Aria. It’s just a conversation about how we’re going to proceed.”

“Proceed?”

“Yes. Now that Lanz is fairly certain that you and I are together, we need to tell your mother.”

“What? Why? Do you think Lanz is gonna tell her? He doesn’t even know her.”

“No, but he might tell other people and that might cause an investigation or worse, a scandal. The right thing to do—the adult thing to do—is to let her know about us so she doesn’t feel lied to or betrayed if that happens. We need her on our side.”

“You’ve never met my mother. I don’t think she’s going to side with us.”

“Then, at least, she’ll be prepared if something happens instead of finding out about us from a tabloid or a reporter. She’s a public figure. Something like this could affect her from a PR perspective.”

“So, what? You’re worried about my mother?”

“No, I’m worried about you. It may be hard for you to understand now, but she needs to know who I am and what my intentions are. It’s the right thing to do for us and for your relationship with her.”

“I still don’t agree...but if you think it’s best, tell me how we do this.”

“When I take you home, I’m coming in with you. We’re doing this today.”

“Holy shit. You can’t be serious.”

“Yes, I can and I am. Now, drink up. When you’re finished, I’ll give you that tour and then we’re leaving,” he leans down behind me and kisses my neck.

MEETING THE SUPERMODEL

ANTHONY

Aria and I pull up to her house, and I watch as she squirms in her seat. It's pretty clear she's not looking forward to this encounter. She's an absolute exercise in duality. One minute, she's wise beyond her years. The next, she's as innocent as a lamb. Then again, that's why I'm here. To protect her. Make sure she's safe and happy.

"Are you worried about how your mother is going to react to us?"

"What do you think?" she asks, wide-eyed and white as a sheet.

"I think it would be nice if she accepts us, but her acceptance isn't necessary. I think we're doing the right thing, and if it nets a negative result, it doesn't change that fact."

"Maybe not, but it could make my life a living hell in the meantime."

"Then we'll fix that, too. If she makes threats or gives you ultimatums, I'll move you into an apartment in my building so the two of you can have some space. There are solutions to every problem. If we need to, we'll find one."

"You would really do that?"

"To make you feel safe and secure, I'd do anything."

She hugs me tightly and I plant a kiss on her forehead, breathing her scent in.

“Okay, let’s get this over with.” She smiles for the first time since I told her we’re doing this.

The house is empty but there’s music coming from the veranda where Aria and I played the first time I was here, so she leads me back through the kitchen to the back of the house. I look out the giant bay windows and see her mother lying on the lounge in a red string bikini and round white-framed sunglasses. She rouses when she hears Aria open the door behind her.

She looks first at Aria and then at me, scanning me like a robot checking my vitals. She sits up and drops her sunglasses to reveal her eyes. They’re Aria’s eyes.

“I was going to ask you how school was but I have a better question. Who is this handsome man?”

“Mom, this is Anthony Arrabella. Anthony, this is my mother, Jennifer Kane.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Ms. Kane,” I say. “Perhaps we can go inside. There are some things Aria and I would like to discuss with you.”

“Very formal and ominous. Are you with the police? Is Aria in some kind of trouble?”

“No, I’m not with the police. I’m the acting headmaster at Aria’s school.”

“And you make house calls? What is this about?”

“Please, let’s get out of the sun. We’ll explain everything.”

“What is this ‘we’ shit? Are you here to talk about my daughter or did she bring you here to talk about me?”

“Mom,” Aria breaks in, “come inside. This isn’t a situation that requires theatrics. Nobody is in trouble.”

“Theatrics. Ha. My daughter thinks I’m some kind of a drama queen.”

Aria turns and heads back through the door, clearly tired of her mother’s games. I smile at her mother and follow her inside.

Her mother huffs and puffs as she puts on her robe then picks up her frozen daiquiri and stomps toward the kitchen.

Aria sits on the white leather sofa and motions for me to park myself beside her. It would seem that her fear has morphed into frustration and she's now just ready to get this over with.

Her mother sits down on the matching chaise and says, "Okay, I'm all ears. What is this all about?"

"Ms. Kane, I convinced Aria that coming to speak with you was in our best interest. She was, and is, hesitant because she's concerned about how you're going to react."

"Look, the buildup isn't necessary. I'm a model but that doesn't make me an idiot. Are you screwing around with my kid?" she point blanks at me, raising a brow.

"Mom!" Aria shouts.

"Well, what else could it be? She's not in trouble. I'm not in trouble and you keep using the term 'we'. Tell me I'm wrong. Do you think that I didn't have older men swelling up every time I walked in the room at her age? Look at her. She's probably every professor's wet dream."

"Yes, she is gorgeous, but that's not what this is about. We're involved. That much is true but my intentions aren't to bag your daughter and toss her aside. We're building a relationship here."

"Sure, sure you are. Just like I'm trying to build relationships with every twenty-something that I bag," she scoffs and takes a sip of her drink.

"Respectfully, you and I are not the same," I tell her, trying to quell the desire to assert my position less delicately.

"Aria, are you kidding me? Why? You could have your pick. Quarterback, valedictorian, bad boy, whatever you want and you decide to get involved with a man almost my age?"

"We have a connection, Mother. I like him very much and he likes me. He treats me right and he makes me feel safe."

"Listen, Ms. Kane. We could have just kept this a secret until graduation. We didn't. We came to tell you because you have a

right to know what's going on in your daughter's life. If my intentions weren't honorable, why would I do that?"

"I appreciate you telling me but that doesn't change the fact that I don't approve. She's eighteen. I can't tell her what to do anymore, but I'm telling you, if you hurt her, I will have your job. Do you understand me?"

My baser instincts tell me to shut her down. She's clearly had no idea how to raise this girl for the last eighteen years, and now that she's an adult, she wants to talk about approval and make threats? But then, she is a parent and her opinions do matter. If her intentions are pure and she's trying to look out for her child, then I should respect that. That much I can do for Aria. Always for my little girl.

"I have no intentions of hurting Aria."

"Fine. Now, if you don't mind leaving, I'd like to have a word with my daughter in private."

"Of course. But first, there's one more thing."

"Great, is she pregnant?"

"No, nothing like that. There's this boy, Lanz. He's been watching your house. He's obsessed with Aria and you need to be on the lookout for him. I'm counting on you to be vigilant. Call the police if he comes onto your property."

"Aria, why didn't you tell me about this?"

"It's just become a thing. Before, there was nothing to tell."

"Because this boy has been watching your house, he's seen Aria and me coming and going. It's possible that he might say something about this to the Academy officials. If he does, you need to be prepared for that as well."

"A scandal. Perfect. As if I don't have enough of those on my own," she rolls her eyes and her lack of empathy for her daughter's circumstances pisses me off.

"Yes, you do have enough of those on your own. I've seen most of them in the tabloids, but your daughter isn't having your kind of problem. She's the victim."

She whips her head around and glares at me, “I’m not the victim? I bring all these things on myself. Huh?”

“I have no idea. I don’t even know you. Just...please be prepared for Aria’s sake.”

A MOTHER'S WRATH

ARIA

I t's the moment I've been dreading.

I walk Anthony out to his car, wishing I could just jump in with him and run away, never to return. My mother is watching us through the living room window, just chomping at the bit to bite my head off when I come back inside.

"You'll be fine, baby girl. Stand your ground and show her that you're an adult with a good head on your shoulders."

"She thinks you're trying to take advantage of me."

"Yeah, she does, but it doesn't matter. With time, we'll just prove her wrong."

He pulls out of the drive and I walk back inside. My mother is sitting down on the sofa, pretending she hasn't been watching us.

"Aria, what is wrong with you? I told you all of the stories about my teen years and what older men tried to do to me. Some even succeeded. Now, you're putting yourself in the same position."

"No, I'm not. He didn't approach me. I approached him."

"You did what?"

"I approached him. He didn't want to get involved with me because he knew that it would cause controversy, but I pursued him anyway because I really liked him. I still do. I want to be with him more than I've ever wanted anything in my life."

"You seduced your teacher? Are you kidding me?"

“Why do you make everything sound so vile and dirty when it comes to this? You’ve overshared way too many things about your sex life with me and I’ve never once judged you, Mother.”

“I’m an adult...”

“So am I. Sure I have four months of school left and I guess that might blur your vision, but I’m not going to mature drastically in less than half a year. I’m grown up and I get to decide who I want to be with.”

“You’re going to get hurt.”

“No, you got hurt because you were surrounded by men with bad intentions. I won’t get hurt because Anthony isn’t like that.”

“Do whatever you want but not here. I don’t want him coming into this house to see you.”

“If that makes you feel like you have some kind of power over the situation, that’s fine. It’s your house. Are we finished?”

“If that’s how you’re going to be, then I guess so.”

“Great. I’m hungry and you’re drunk. I’m going to make some dinner,” I tell her and move to the kitchen.

She sits down at the kitchen table and continues to sip on what I can only assume is her third or fourth daiquiri of the day. She’s become a pro at hiding her intoxication from outsiders, but she can’t hide it from me. I can always see the subtle changes in her tone and demeanor.

I slide a plate of pasta in front of her and take a seat at the other end of the table.

“Carbs? I can’t eat carbs.”

“Yes, you can. You’re a solid ten pounds under your ideal body weight and the pasta will soak up some of the alcohol so you don’t wake up with a hangover.”

“You’re so smart,” she grins and picks up her fork.

“Good. For a minute, I thought you’d forgotten.”

“I’m not talking about your choice of lover. Even smart people can have bad judgment. Just look at me for example.”

“Let’s just eat and go to bed. Maybe things will change by morning.”

“That’s a wonderful thought, but I wouldn’t get your hopes up,” she snorts and goes back to sipping her drink.

I stand up and lean on the table in front of her. “You would know, Mother. You’re the only problem here.”

I slip out of the room and up the stairs before she can come up with a response. I sometimes forget how a simple conversation with her can be so exhausting. Everything is about her. She hears me but doesn’t listen, especially to what I’m not saying.

My phone chimes and I see that Anthony has messaged me. He wants to know how things went after he left. I consider texting back but I really need to hear his voice so I call him instead.

“Hey, baby. How’s it going?”

“Okay, I guess. She’s not backing down, but she isn’t throwing a fit, either.”

“Trust me, baby. It was the right thing to do. Eventually, things will all work out.”

“I hope you’re right, but I don’t ever tell my mother my business. This is a first for me.”

“You never know. This might be the start of something new.”

“I already miss you,” I whine, clutching my pillow against my chest and wishing it’s him.

“I miss you, too, baby. I can’t wait to catch a glimpse of you in the hall tomorrow.”

“Seeing you and not being able to touch you makes me crazy.”

“It’s the same for me. Maybe I’ll come up with a plan and surprise you tomorrow.”

“How? What are you going to do?”

“If I told you, it wouldn’t be a surprise. Sleep tight, Princess.”

The idea of Anthony surprising me tomorrow feels exciting and a little naughty. I can't lie. I would love to finish what we started on his desk the day we met, but that might be a little too naughty to go unnoticed. I think his secretary is already suspicious of how he locks the door each time we're alone together. Not wanting to drive myself crazy, I decide to take a shower and go to bed early.

A loud bang awakens me suddenly, and I scramble to check my phone to see how long I've been asleep. Disoriented and half-conscious, I hear another bang followed by the sound of breaking glass then silence.

"Mom, what the hell? You're supposed to be sleeping," I mutter and climb out from under my covers.

I open the bedroom door and start down the hall, fully prepared to give her an earful about responsibility and adult behavior. How dare she question my maturity level when she's drunk and destroying the house? Just as I'm about to descend the staircase, something catches my eye. There's light coming from under my mother's bedroom door. It wasn't there a second ago. She must be in there. So what's going on downstairs?

My heart leaps out of my chest as I realize that someone must have broken in. I hear the creak of my mother's door and throw my finger over my mouth. She looks dumbfounded so I rush to her. I push her back into her room, close the door, and lock it behind us.

"I think there's someone downstairs. They must have broken in."

"You didn't set the alarm?" she asks, rubbing her head

"No, I went to bed before you. You should have set it. Damn it, Mom. That means the police won't get an alert. Fuck!"

"Watch your mouth, Aria."

"Oh, hush, Mother. There's an intruder in our house. Get your phone so we can call the police."

She stumbles across the room and checks her bedside table, but it isn't there.

“I don’t have it. I must have left it out by the pool.”

“Fuck!” she looks at me as though she’s going to tell me to watch my mouth again then changes course.

“Where’s your phone?”

“In my room. I need to go get it but you need to come with me. I’m not running down the hall twice and we need to stick together.”

“Do you think you might be overreacting? We don’t know what those noises were.”

“Sure, maybe the cat knocked something over,” I wait for her to respond.

“We don’t have a... Okay, Aria. You’re not funny.”

“And we aren’t taking any chances. Ready? Let’s go,” I inch the door open slowly and steadily, praying that whoever is in the house is still downstairs.

The coast is clear so I clutch my mother’s hand and run down the hall to my room. Once inside, I close and lock the door. I turn to find my mother standing with her mouth wide open as she stares at something behind me. I spin around and find myself face to face with Lanz, who had tucked himself into the corner behind the door.

“I figured you’d come back for this since I found your mother’s outside,” he smiles and holds out my phone.

“What are you doing here? Are you crazy?” I shout.

“Crazy? Yeah, probably, but you made me this way.”

“I haven’t done anything to you. You’re the one who won’t leave me alone.”

“You get out of my house!” my mother shouts and he laughs at her.

“Hold on, honey. I’ll get to you. Right now, I’m dealing with your cunt daughter. Did you know that she’s fucking a guy who’s almost forty? Crazy, huh? Mom likes guys my age and the daughter likes guys mom’s age. You’re both pretty fucked up.”

“What do you want, Lanz? I mean, what are you expecting to accomplish?”

“Why? Are you scared? Good, you should be. I plan on being the meat in a nice mother/daughter sandwich. If you’re good about it, I’ll go home drained and satisfied. If you put up a fight, I’ll do the same thing, but I’ll have to kill you both first.”

“You’re full of shit. You aren’t gonna kill anyone,” I barely get the words out when he smacks me in the face.

“You little punk!” my mother cries out and rushes toward him but he grabs her by the shoulders and pushes her down on the bed.

“You two aren’t off to a good start,” he sneers, pulls a bottle out of his jacket, and takes a drink. “Let’s get this party started.”

THREE IN THE MORNING

ANTHONY

At first, I wasn't sure what woke me, but as I look down at my phone, I see that I'd missed a call from Aria. Alarmed, I dial her back. She's never called me at this time of night, and I fear that maybe her mother decided to restart their altercation.

The call goes straight to voicemail. I try again but get the same result, so I text her. I wait almost ten minutes without a reply before deciding to get out of bed and start putting my clothes on.

There's no traffic this time of night so the drive should take about thirty minutes. I try to call her six more times, hoping her battery had died and she now had time to charge it. My nerves are strung tight when all of my calls still go to voicemail. There's definitely something wrong, so I step on the gas and barrel through the red signal ahead.

I nearly reach her house and slow my car to a crawl. Lanz is parked in his usual spot across the street. That *testa di cazzo*. He's really done it this time.

I turn off my headlights and creep closer, planning to ambush him and beat his ass. I'm close enough now, so I turn the wheel and pull my car right up to his bumper, leaving him with no way to escape. I peer through the windshield but the driver's seat appears to be empty. With my senses on high alert, I step out of my car and approach his door. Grabbing the handle, I pull the door open and lunge forward but the car is empty.

My body clenches in anger, already primed for a fight, and I drag in a deep breath, willing myself to calm down just a bit to think clearly.

I leave my car on the street and walk up the driveway, expecting to find him hiding in the bushes and peeking through the windows, but I circle the entire house and find no sign of him. I'm about to ring the doorbell when something cracks under my foot. I bend down and shine the light from my phone on the shards of broken glass on the walkway. This little shit broke a window. Not wanting to alert him to my presence, I climb through the hole in the window he left for me.

The first floor is dark and deserted, but the hall light on the second floor is turned on. I've never been upstairs and all of the doors are closed, so I move to the only room with light shining under the door. I throw the door open to find the master bedroom empty and begin inching my way down the hall, opening every door as I pass until there are only two remaining. Left or right? I place my hand on the knob of the door on the left and begin to turn, but I stop when I hear voices from the room on the right.

Pulse leaps in my throat, barbed wire coiling in my belly. If that fucker even harms a hair on her head, I will show him no mercy.

I step over to the door and reach for the knob. A female voice cries out from the other side and all I can see is red. I barrel through the door and see Aria and her mother seated together on the bed. Her mother is crying and Aria has a swollen red whelp on the side of her face. My insides freeze into a block of ice, my head spinning, threatening to explode.

Lanz is facing them but turns as he hears me enter the room. He's holding a large knife and thrashes at me with the sharp blade, but I dodge his advance. He continues to swipe at my face and chest, but he's unsteady on his feet so I grab the blade in my hand and squeeze it as it slices through my flesh, my blood trickling onto the carpet.

Lanz stares at me as if stunned that I would slice my own hand, but he quickly recovers and attempts to pull the knife free from my hand. I squeeze tighter, feeling the blade all the way to the bone, and punch him square in the face with my free hand. Aria leaps to her feet and pulls her cell phone out of the punk's back pocket.

She calls the police as I repeatedly slam my fist into his skull until he loses consciousness and falls to his knees. He lets go of the knife handle. I toss the blade to the floor and kick it out into the hall before using my boot to knock him from his knees to his back. His head bounces off the floor when he lands.

Aria ends her call and rushes to the bathroom. She returns with a towel and wraps it around my hand to stop the bleeding.

"Are you okay?" she asks, searching my face with frantic eyes.

"I'm fine. What about you? Are you alright? Did he hit you?"

"Yeah, but that's all he did. You got here just in time. He was going to..." she begins to sob and I pull her into my arms.

Her mother, disheveled and scared sober, looks at me and says, "Thank you, Professor. I owe you our lives."

The police arrive in less than ten minutes and an army of officers rush the room. They check Lanz, cuff him, and load him into an ambulance. The paramedics seat me on Aria's bed to assess my injury and determine that I need stitches. They insist that I go to the hospital, but I'm not going anywhere without Aria so they bandage me up to hold me over.

They question each of us separately but what happened is pretty obvious given the broken window and weapon. They provide Aria's mother with a case number and leave after I insist that I'll find my own way to the hospital.

As the sun comes up, Aria falls asleep on my chest on the sofa. Her mother is sitting across from us, watching. She sips the coffee Aria made and says, "You two look good together."

"You think so?" I ask as I brush Aria's hair from her face.

“You do. I know she must be exhausted, but I’ve never seen her this comfortable with anyone before. Not even me.”

“You’re her mother. I’m sure she’s fallen asleep in your arms a time or two.”

“When she was a baby, sure, but my career has kept us from being as close as I’d like. By the time she was ten years old, she was so independent she acted like she had no use for me. I couldn’t tuck her into bed or kiss her goodnight. Be careful what you wish for, right? I wanted her to be independent so she wouldn’t be sad when I was away. I guess you can’t have it both ways. They’re either independent all the time or none of the time.”

“She cares very much for you. That’s why she was so frightened to tell you about us. Your opinion of her matters.”

“I’d like to think that’s true. What I saw from her tonight was incredible. She stood right up to that young man. She really took control of the situation and put up a fight for us both. That should have been my job and all I could do was cry. My little girl has become an amazing woman and I missed it.”

“There’s still time,” I tell her.

“Thank you, Anthony.”

“For what, Ms. Kane?”

“It’s Jennifer and I thank you for not taking her away from me. I know you could have. It would have been easy.”

“I would never do that. If you had tossed her out on the street, I would have given her a place to stay. But the fact is, you’re her mother and her place is with you. At least until she graduates and decides what’s next for her.”

“What is next for her, Anthony?” she asks me.

“That’s a conversation for another day, I think. Right now, I need to get her off to bed so I can get this hand stitched up.”

“Well, before you go, I owe you another thank you. The most important one. Thank you for saving my life. Thank you for saving my daughter’s life,” she walks across the room and kisses me on the cheek.

“I’d like to think he wouldn’t have taken it that far, but I’m glad I got here before anything else happened.”

Aria opens her eyes and looks up at her mother’s face.

“What’s going on?” she yawns.

“I was just telling Anthony how happy I am that you have a man like him in your life. Now, I’m going back to bed. Good night, Aria,” she kisses her daughter on the forehead and walks up the stairs.

“She just kissed me,” Aria gasps.

“If I were you, little girl, I’d expect a lot more of that sort of thing.”

“What happened while I was sleeping?”

“All good things. Your mother loves you. Now, you need to go to bed and I need to go to the ER.”

“Oh, god, I forgot. Yes, go and get that taken care of please.”

“I’m good. It’s not all that serious. I just don’t want to have to worry about bleeding all over my papers. You sleep. You’re officially excused from school today and I’ll call you later.”

“Hey, how did you know what was going on here?”

“I missed a call from you and it seemed odd that you would be calling so late. Then, when I tried to call back, it kept going to voicemail. Something didn’t feel right, so I drove over and saw his car across the street.”

“But I didn’t call you,” she says and checks her phone.

“Look, right there. See, you called me.”

“I must have accidentally redialed you when I checked the time on the phone.”

“Good thing you did, Princess,” I say and kiss her goodnight.

GRADUATION DAY

“Good morning, Princess,” Anthony rolls over and kisses me on the lips.

“Good morning,” I grin as he tosses the blankets aside and kisses his way from my face to my chest.

“How does it feel to know that in just a few hours, you’ll be a high school graduate?”

“Absolutely amazing.”

“You taste absolutely amazing, too,” he adds as his tongue reaches my navel.

“What are you doing? I thought you had to be at school early today?”

“I do, but I set the clock so I could have you first.”

He rolls me onto his chest and impales me with his cock, sliding it easily since I’m already dripping for him. Taking my hands, he guides me, filling me entirely with his manhood. I moan as he hits all my pleasure spots.

“Ride me until you come, baby girl,” he growls and the sound of his words sends a tingle up my spine.

I should have known better than to expect Anthony Arrabella to allow me to lead for long. He insists on being in control, and as I sit on his hard cock, he reaches onto the floor and picks up the belt he discarded when we got in bed last night. With expert precision, he wraps the belt around my wrists and tightens it.

I feel like my soul is about to leave my body. Why does his dominating side fill me with such desire? It's like the idea of giving myself over to him is more of a turn-on than any of our foreplays alone could be. It's not about just getting off. It's about being his completely. The more time we spend together, the more his dominant, commanding persona inches to the surface. And God, I love it. I love it so much.

He lifts me off his cock and tosses me down on my belly. My bound hands are over my head and he raises my hips, bringing me to my knees. He slaps my bottom so hard that it stings and I cry out, causing him to smack me again. The painful sensation only stokes the flames of desire that he's lit inside me. This is what I want to do all day, every day, until my last day.

He slides his cock between my legs and digs his fingers into my hips, taking me from behind in hard, fast thrusts that initiate a gushing, wet response from my aching womanhood. It only takes me seconds before I'm riding the wave, screaming his name, and shivering until I feel boneless. It's my most intense orgasm so far.

MY MOTHER IS FLYING BACK from Paris for my graduation so Anthony drives me home from his place before he heads off to the school to prepare for the ceremony. I've been spending most of my nights there with him since she left town. I think that after the situation with Lanz, even my mother is happy that I'm not alone in the house at night.

I've barely had time to shower and dress when I hear a commotion downstairs. It's my mother and a worn-out-looking limo driver dragging suitcase after suitcase. She's not a woman who's known to travel light or carry her own luggage. I reach inside my own overnight bag for my toothpaste and pull out a box wrapped in gold paper with a card attached that reads, "Today is just the beginning." I tear off the paper and open the box.

Inside, dangling from a gold chain is a beautiful diamond heart. I don't know when Anthony slipped it in here or why he didn't just give it to me this morning, but as I run my fingers across the heart, my eyes fill up with tears. He's such an amazing man.

"You have to hurry. I can't be late for my own graduation," I shout.

"I've been traveling all day. I need to freshen up. Just one second, Aria," my mother pouts.

She comes out of the bathroom looking like she's about to walk a runway. I smile and shake my head.

"What's wrong? Too much?" she says, spinning in a circle.

"No, I guess not. You'd steal the spotlight wearing a paper bag. You might as well wear what makes you happy."

"Look at that necklace," she holds the diamond heart in her hand and examines it. "That's Andreoli. Very expensive. Was it a gift from Anthony?"

"Yes, it was."

She sees my shocked expression and scoffs, "You didn't know it was expensive? Have you learned nothing from your mother?"

"Let's get out of here before next year's class graduates, please," I reply.

I SLIP my gown and ropes over my matching purple dress as my mother fixes my cap. As Anthony makes his way to the stage, he stops to shake hands with all of the graduating students. There's one empty seat in the auditorium. It's the one reserved for Lanz. Anthony glances down at the empty seat and his face grimaces, but when he looks up and sees me, the light returns to his eyes.

"You look amazing," he tells me, holding his hand out to me.

I touch the heart pendant with my other hand and say, “Thank you.”

He winks and turns to continue his ascent toward the stage.

As I wait for my name to be called, I think about the magnitude of this day. It’s not just about ending one long phase of life to begin another. It’s also about finally being able to freely express my feelings for Anthony and that feels more significant to me.

“Aria Kane,” Anthony calls me to the stage and my shaky legs move in that direction. If it wasn’t for him standing there with my diploma in hand, I would be mortified. Afterward, my mother would lecture me about having no idea how to walk a runway. It is Anthony and our eyes connect with a sort of secret communication that no one else can hear or see.

He takes my right hand in his and places the diploma in my left hand. He leans forward and kisses my cheek as the crowd of parents and students cheer. This is it. This rolled-up piece of paper is my license to be with the only man I’ve ever wanted.

THE WAIT IS OVER

ANTHONY

Aria texts me to let me know that she and her mother are in the parking lot. They're about fifteen minutes late for our dinner reservation but Aria told me to expect that. Her mother is habitually late for everything. I rise and walk to the door to meet them just as they round the corner.

"Jennifer," I kiss her mother's cheek.

"Thank you for the invitation, Anthony," she replies.

"We can't celebrate Aria's big day without you. Congratulations, Princess," I kiss Aria's sweet lips.

It is a big day but not just because Aria graduated. It's the first day of our new chapter, and I want it to be one to remember.

"I haven't been here in ages," Jennifer says as I hold out her chair.

"Anthony took me here for our first date," Aria tells her. The look on her face is absolutely priceless as she reveals another secret to her mother.

"I took the liberty of ordering champagne and appetizers. They should arrive shortly."

"That was nice of you, Anthony, but while we wait, I have something that I'd like to give Aria," Jennifer tells us.

She reaches into her purse and pulls out a long white envelope.

"What is it? You could have given it to me at home," Aria says, taking it from her mother's hand.

“I wanted us all to be together,” Jennifer shrugs.

Aria opens the envelope and removes a travel itinerary along with two first-class plane tickets.

“What is this?” she gasps as her eyes move through the information on the page.

“My gift to you. It’s a trip to French Polynesia. You’ll be staying in Tahiti and Bora Bora. It’s for both of you.”

“Mom, this is too much. You didn’t need to do this,” Aria wraps her arms around her mother.

“Yes, I did. I’ve been all over the world and, with the exception of uprooting you and moving you here, I haven’t shown you anything of the world. Now, it’s time for you to see it for yourself. Take those two weeks and use them to forget about everything but each other. You deserve that.”

“Thank you, Jennifer. That’s very sweet of you,” I tell her.

“Mom, these tickets are for two days from now! What if Anthony couldn’t get away?” Aria asks, fearing that I may bow out on the trip. Her mother looks at me and I nod.

“Anthony and I spoke about it before I booked the trip. Everything is fine,” she smiles as she pats Aria’s hand.

“So, you two have been conspiring behind my back?” Aria grins.

“Only about this, little girl.”

THE CRYSTAL CLEAR, blue waters of the islands are like nothing I’ve ever seen before, and Aria takes full advantage of it. I don’t think we’ve left the beaches for anything other than to eat, shower, and have some of the greatest sex of our relationship.

She’s already frolicking about in her yellow string bikini when I take my morning coffee out to the deck of our Tahitian cabana. Seeing me, she runs up the beach to greet me. I wish I

could slow this moment down in my mind. I had no idea this level of happiness existed until now...until her.

“Good morning, sleepy head,” she says as she plops her wet ass onto my lap.

“Good morning to you, beach bunny,” I reply as I rub her against the erection she’s just awakened.

“Again, already?” she says, burying her head in the crook of my neck.

“Every time I look at you, Princess.”

“Well, then. Maybe we should go inside and take care of that,” she purrs.

“Or...we can take care of it right here,” I reply as I slide my hand under the rim of her bikini bottom.

“It’s broad daylight. You want to have sex outside?”

“It’s a private beach for rich people like your mother. I bet everyone who stays here has done it. How many women have you seen out here without tops? You think anyone will care if we give them a show?”

“I don’t know about this,” she protests but I can see the glint of naughtiness in her eyes.

“I didn’t give you a choice, did I?”

One tug on a string and her bottom is completely exposed. I slip my finger inside her and rub it against her already-engorged clit. She spreads her legs wider and props herself against the table.

“You’re getting wet so you must not be too worried,” I tease, biting her earlobe and earning a whimper.

I reach beneath her and release my dick from my shorts, slapping it against her wet, tan ass.

“You want this. I know you do,” I say as my fingers fuck her dripping gash.

“I do,” she moans.

“So, ask for what you want, Princess.”

“Fuck me,” she whispers as I continue to tease her with my finger strokes.

“That wasn’t a question. That was a demand and you don’t tell me what to do. Ask nicely, little girl.”

“Please fuck me,” she cries as I flick her swollen button.

“You want Daddy’s cock?” The words leave my mouth, but I’m not quite certain I’m the one who said them. Daddy? Where did that come from?

It must have been the right thing to say because Aria squirms and pushes her ass down against my cock. It feels so right. I want to be her Daddy, and I hold my breath as I wait for her to say it.

“Yes. Please fuck me, Daddy,” she whimpers.

I lift her up and bring her down hard on my cock, feeding her the full length and girth of the hungry monster. Wrapping my arms around her rib cage, I pull her body back against mine and begin thrusting upward from my seated position. We’re both out of breath and frenzied as if our very lives are invested in every stroke.

A pair of topless women walk across the beach and look in our direction.

“They can see us,” Aria pants.

“Do you care? You want me to stop?”

“No. Don’t stop,” she cries and the women share a knowing glance then move on down the beach.

“Did you like that, you naughty girl? You like being watched, don’t you?”

“I think they’re jealous because I have you,” she replies and I feel my manhood jerk.

“I need to see you,” I tell her as I pick her up and sit her on the table facing me. I rip off her top and feast on her perky, young breasts before I penetrate her again.

I’ve abandoned any semblance of dignity. I’m nothing more than a feral beast with a need to fulfill now. I slam into her

hard and mercilessly, and she melts into my animalistic onslaught, loving every intense second of it. We come together in a chorus of grunts and cries as if we're intentionally announcing our pleasure to everyone on the island.

If anyone hears us, we're both past the point of giving a damn.

I've waited all week for the perfect moment, and I don't think there could be a better time than now. My sweet, satisfied little lover lies content on my lap, looking out upon the waves that crash rhythmically onto the shore. I know more than ever before that I want her in my life forever.

"Get up for a minute. There's something I need to do."

"Oh, but I like it here," she whines.

"You can hop back up here in a minute," I tell her as I lift her off my lap.

She sits back down and I go inside to retrieve the other item I purchased from Andreoli. On my way back to her, I stop and just stare. The way the sunlight dances in her long, blonde locks and shines against her tanned skin makes me certain that she's the one perfect thing in this world. Mine. All mine.

"What are you doing?" she asks, spotting me in the doorway.

"I was looking at you, Princess."

"You can come over here and touch me, too...if you want."

I approach with my hand casually tucked behind my back. Without taking my eyes off her, I drop to my knees and smirk.

"What are you doing down there?" she asks and I take her hand.

"Aria, when your mother booked this trip, I told her what my intentions were. She's been waiting all week to hear your answer."

"I don't understand. My answer to what?"

I pull the ring into view and pause to witness the change in her expression from bewilderment to joy.

“Aria, I’ve loved you from the moment we met. I want to be with you forever. I want you beside me. Will you marry me?”

“Yes. Oh God, yes! I love you so much!” she screams and throws her arms around my neck with such force that she nearly topples out of the chair. She cries as she buries her face in my chest, and I pull her closer to me.

This... This is where she’ll always belong—in my arms.

EPILOGUE

ANTHONY

My school admissions board meeting has run later than expected, so I text Aria to let her know I won't be home in time for dinner. I've told her that it isn't necessary but she insists on making a home-cooked meal every night.

Rose, my secretary, told me it's a nesting instinct. Pregnant with our second child, her maternal side is insistent on making a safe and loving home for our family. I have no qualms with that. Having had to feed herself most nights as a child, she's an excellent cook. I just don't want her placing any unnecessary strain on herself while she's pregnant.

My phone rings just as I exit the meeting room. It's Aria.

"Hey, Princess."

"Hi, Daddy. I got your text. Do you know what time you'll be home?"

"The meeting just ended. I have some paperwork to see to. I should be there in two hours or so."

"Okay, just checking in. I guess I won't hold dinner for you, then."

I can hear the disappointment in her tone, so I immediately change my plans.

"You know what? The paperwork can wait. Let me get my coat and keys from the office, and I'll be on my way."

"Are you sure? I don't want you to get behind because of me."

“I’m positive. I’ll be there in twenty minutes, tops.”

I did commit to the board that I’d review these admissions applications tonight, but they can wait. There’s nothing more important than my family, and tonight should have been a special night. With wedding anniversaries, baby showers, and birthdays, I think Aria may have forgotten that this is the second anniversary of the day she stepped into my office and changed my life.

I spend the drive home reminiscing about that day. She was just a fresh-faced baby doing everything in her power to come across like a vixen. She didn’t know it but that was the perfect combination of attributes to awaken the beast inside me. I knew then that having her as my lover would never be enough. I needed her to be my wife and the mother of my children.

To my surprise, the house is silent when I arrive. The typical sounds of my home life—from the baby cooing to Aria blasting music from the kitchen—always make me smile. Did she misunderstand me? I did say I would be here for dinner, right?

I walk to the kitchen and find that the dining table is set for two. The highchair is tucked off in the corner and the candles are lit. Aria sneaks up behind me and wraps her arms around my waist. She smells like lilacs and vanilla, and I take a moment to breathe her in.

“Ariel is down for the night so it’s just the two of us,” she whispers.

“Sorry I missed her, but this is nice. I have my sexy little Princess all to myself,” I turn and rub her growing belly before kissing her.

“I made pasta and Italian beef,” she tells me as she pours me a glass of red wine.

“That sounds delicious, but what’s the occasion?” I ask, wondering if she remembers.

She looks at me, her mouth agape feigning offense to the question.

“I know what it is. I just thought that with everything going on, you might have forgotten. Happy anniversary of the day we met.”

Her beautiful face beams, “Happy anniversary.”

We sit down to an amazing meal, and I decide that this is the perfect moment to give her the gift I was holding for our wedding anniversary.

“Excuse me for a second, love,” I tell her and climb the stairs to the bedroom where I’ve hidden her gift in my sock drawer.

When I return, she’s clearing the table to make room for the dessert she’s baked.

“Baby, sit down for a second. I have something for you,” I tell her.

“What is it?” Her eyes light up as they always do when I have a present for her.

I hand her the box and say, “I’m sorry I didn’t have time to wrap it.”

“That’s okay,” she answers but she isn’t really listening. She’s too focused on getting the box open. “Oh, wow. I can’t believe you did this for me. It’s amazing.”

She takes the bracelet out of the box and holds it up to the candlelight.

“That’s Ariel’s birthstone and...wait, is that the new baby’s birthstone beside it?” she wonders, tears already welling in her eyes.

“Yes. See, I did my research. Next month’s birthstone is aquamarine.”

When she wasn’t looking, I snuck her Andreoli heart back to the store for an alteration. Now, her diamond heart is flanked on either side by a smaller heart encrusted with the birthstones of our children.

“I love it. Thank you so much.”

She holds her hair up so that I can slip it around her neck. “I have something for you, too,” she adds as she hands me a gift

bag filled with colorful paper, “I hope you like it.”

I reach into the bag and remove a picture frame from the inside. It’s one of those frames designed to hold two photographs. On one side is a black and white photo of Aria and me standing in front of the office at school. She’s wearing her school uniform and is smiling up at me as we’re engaging in some conversation that I don’t recall. The second is our wedding photo taken on the beaches of Capri where we married.

“I love both of these pictures, but where did the first one come from?” I ask. I was so certain we’d been discreet enough at school that no one could have photographed us together.

“Do you remember when I volunteered to help with the memory wall at school last week?”

“Yes.”

“Well, they gave me a box of pictures that didn’t make it into the yearbooks over the years. When I was looking through them, there it was! I couldn’t believe my eyes. Look at us. I looked so young.”

“You haven’t changed at all, Princess. You still look like a teenager and you probably always will,” I kiss her cheek.

“So, do you like it?”

“I love it. It’s going on my desk at school so I can see you all day while I’m gone.”

We have our dessert and move to the sofa where Aria lies down and places her head in my lap. I stroke her hair as we reminisce about our life together. She begins to drift off to sleep but leaps up as Ariel’s faint cries come across the baby monitor.

“I’ll go get her,” she tells me but I put my hand up and tell her to stop.

“No, I’ll get her. Once she’s settled, I’ll run you a nice bath. Then, if you’re lucky, I might give you a nice massage before bed,” I smile.

“You know where those massages lead, Daddy,” she grins.

“Well, then. Maybe I’ll get lucky, too,” I tell her as I head off to the nursery.

I reach into the crib and Ariel smiles up at me. She looks so much like Aria and is an amazingly sweet baby. As I cradle her in my arms and rock her back to sleep, I marvel at this miraculous gift that Aria has given me. She’s made me a family man, a father.

It’s something I always thought I’d wanted, but as the years went by, I resigned myself to believing it wasn’t in the cards for me. That was because I hadn’t met a woman that I could see mothering my children. That is, not until Aria.

Ariel closes her eyes and I gently lay her back down. When I’m sure she’s sleeping, I creep from the room to keep my promise and run Aria her bath. I light the three candles that she keeps on the tub and place a big fluffy towel on the vanity before dimming the lights.

She’s still lying on the sofa when I come back downstairs. In the candlelight, she looks even more beautiful, almost unreal. I didn’t think that was possible.

“Baby girl, your bath is waiting,” I tell her and she smiles at me.

It takes a moment for her to get to her feet. This pregnancy has her a little off balance, so I lift her into my arms and carry her up the stairs.

“This is nice but I must weigh a ton right now,” she whispers as we get closer to the nursery.

“You don’t weigh a ton. You’re light as a feather and sexier than a supermodel.”

EXTENDED EPILOGUE

ANTHONY

We arrive at the cottage just as the movers pull into the driveway. The kids are anxious and restless after the four-hour drive, and I can't wait to get them out of the car.

"Listen, you can play in the back but you are not to go near the water unless your mother or I say so. Is that clear?"

"Yes, Daddy," a choir of little voices answers.

Aria unloads Alex, the baby, and I unbuckle Ariel, Armand, and Alessio from their car seats in the back of the SUV. I glance over at Aria as the kids run off to the garden.

"That was quite a ride. Maybe four kids are enough," she says.

"Enough for what, Princess? I say we have four more."

She laughs and replies, "No, maybe one more."

"Alright, I'll settle for one," I say as I take Alex from her arms.

With Ariel and Armand being school-aged now, we made the decision to leave the city for a quieter life. I began looking for administrator positions and was offered a job here in Gromo. From our veranda, we can see the Alps and tell the children tales of walking across the mountains to Switzerland.

This property was a perfect pick for us because it has a guest house for Aria's mother. She's retired from the runway and sold her house in Milan. Still the jet setter, she needs a place to call home when she tires of the party scene.

After providing some direction to the movers, I carry Alex to the garden where I find Aria and Ariel dancing in circles like fairies under the Pintus pines. The boys are pointing and shouting at the sheep wandering through the pasture next door.

“We should have come earlier in the week so we could have some extra family time before you report to the new school,” Aria tells me.

“I know, but I had to finish out the week. I couldn’t leave the school unattended until the new headmaster arrived. Besides, this is going to be our life now. We can take the kids boating from our own back garden every weekend.”

“This is amazing. I’m so glad we found this place. I think my mother is going to love it, too.”

“Are you sure? There isn’t much high society in Gromo.”

“No, but there’s amazing architecture and fantastic views. Oh, I almost forgot the best part. There’s you!” she giggles, kisses my cheek, and takes the baby from my arms.

I sit down on the old wooden rocker the previous owner left behind, and Aria snuggles in on my lap, still holding the baby.

“I don’t know if I’m ready for this party tonight,” she confesses.

“What do you mean? You’ve been so busy with the kids. You deserve to dress up and get out.”

“Yeah, I know. And I know that it’s important for you to be there. You’re the guest of honor, but my mother will have barely landed and we’re going to leave her to babysit?”

“Your mother wants to do this. Besides, we have food coming and Ariel will really be in charge so there’s nothing to worry about. “

“That is true. Our little girl is the boss, isn’t she?” she smiles.

“The movers are just bringing in the last few boxes. Once they’re gone, Ariel and I will take care of everything until your mother gets here and you can get dressed in peace,” I assure her.

I didn't expect my new school board to host a party for me when we arrived, but they insisted. There's been a small resurgence in the population here and that means a lot of new money from wealthy parents who want their children in the best schools. Naturally, the board wants to show me off to them. I'm the first Milanese headmaster to join their ranks.

THIS IS a semi-formal affair and the last thing that Aria did before we arrived was borrow a dress from her mother's wardrobe. I haven't seen it and don't know what to expect, but she's taking a long time getting ready and I'm worried that she may have changed her mind.

I'm about to go upstairs and check on her when I hear a car pull into the drive. It's Jennifer, finally, so I go out to help her with her bags.

"Look at you in your tuxedo. My daughter found herself quite a handsome catch," Jennifer says as I approach.

"Did you have a good trip?" I ask as I lean in to kiss her cheek.

"It was alright. I landed a little early so I stopped for pastries. I hope the kids like them," she replies. "Where is my beautiful daughter?"

"She's been upstairs getting ready for over an hour now. I might need you to go up there and intervene," I tell her.

We walk through the front door, and I nearly drop Jennifer's bags on her toes. Aria is standing at the foot of the stairs, dressed in a form-fitting, royal blue gown. Her hair flows over her shoulders and settles on either side of her cleavage. Her diamond heart pendant catches the light and sparkles in her crystal blue eyes.

"Oh, Aria. That gown was made for you," her mother gasps.

"Thanks, Mom. Are you sure it's okay? I feel like every inch of me is on display in this."

“Every gorgeous inch of you. Who would ever believe that you carried all of these children!”

I would love to add my two cents to the conversation, but she’s rendered me completely speechless. My wife is the most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen, but in this gown, right now, she looks like an angel dropped down from heaven.

“Anthony? Is this okay? Do I look alright?” she asks and it takes me a moment to get out of my head and actually form words. This isn’t the first time Aria has left me breathless, but it feels like the first time, every time.

“You...you look amazing,” I stutter.

I walk to the stairs and hold out my hand to her. She takes it and I walk her out into the living room for the kids to see.

“Mommy, you look like a fairy princess,” Ariel tells her.

“Thank you, baby,” Aria says and I notice that she has a tear in her eye.

“Don’t cry, baby girl. She’s just telling you what we all see. Now, say goodbye. We need to hurry.”

“I’m sorry. I must have spent half an hour looking in the mirror trying to decide if I should wear this.”

“I’m so glad you made the right decision,” I wait for her to kiss the kids and escort her to the car.

OUR WELCOME PARTY is being held at the Spiazzi di Gromo resort hotel. We receive a warm welcome when we arrive, but it’s no surprise to me that my wife instantly becomes the center of attention. She glides across the floor with a delicate radiance that comes so naturally no other woman could imitate it.

We shake hands with the board members and their wives then sneak off to the outdoor lounge. Once there, I do what I’ve been waiting to do since the moment I saw her on the stairs. I

take her in my arms and sway her back and forth to the slow and sultry music from the band inside.

“Shouldn’t you be in there rubbing elbows with the bigwigs?” she asks me.

“They’ll forgive me for wanting to be out here with you. Every man in there is wishing he could be me right now.”

“That’s sweet, but...”

“No, I’m not going to let you say a word about it. Look inside and tell me what you see.”

“They’re looking at us,” she whispers, with a tremble in her voice.

“They’re looking at you, Princess, wishing they can have you but they can’t. You’re mine, little girl. Nothing will ever change that.”

“I love you so much, Anthony. You’re the sexiest man alive and you’re the best father and husband that any woman could ask for.”

I dip her and her face lights up with a smile so big it could illuminate the night sky. The music stops and she asks, “Should we go back inside now?”

“Not yet,” I say and pull her to a quiet corner out of the view of our onlookers. “First, I need to make out with my sexy date. Then, we can get back to the old tight-shirted educators.”

She laughs and says, “Remember when you asked me if I thought of you that way?”

“Vaguely,” I answer but I remember it very well.

“How could I ever think that way about you? You’re still a hulk of a man and an animal in bed.”

“You just wait, Princess. When this party is over, I’ll show you how much of an animal I can be.”

I take her sweet face in my hands and kiss her, slipping my tongue deeply inside her mouth. Her chest heaves, breath hitching, as my hand begins to wander. After all these years, she still has the same effect on me as well.

We take one more turn around our makeshift dance floor then return to the party inside. When all of the guests arrive, the Director of the School Board calls me to the stage.

“We’re here tonight to welcome Anthony Arrabella as the new headmaster of the Seriana Valley School. At this time, please give a round of applause to Headmaster Arrabella and his lovely wife, Aria.”

The applause subsides and he hands me the microphone.

“Thank you for the warm welcome,” I start. “I’m very excited to be joining you. Educating our children is one of the most important and rewarding things that we can do. As educators, we mold the next generation. We are responsible for the future. Before I leave the stage and let you all begin this fine dinner, I’d like to take a moment to say something about my beautiful wife and mother of my four children.

“She’s the reason I’m here with you today. If it weren’t for her giving me a family, I might never have known the other side of education. The parent’s side. It’s that knowledge that drove me to look for a better career, an exemplary academic system, and a beautiful place like Gromo to raise my family. Everything that I do, I do for this beautiful woman and the lovely family she’s made for me. If you’re happy with my performance, it’s her that you will need to thank. Thank you.”

The entire room turns its eyes to my lovely Aria and gives her a resounding round of applause. I step down from the stage and take her by the arm to escort her to the table of honor.

“You didn’t need to do that, Anthony. You’re here because you’re great at your job. I have nothing to do with that.”

“Excuse me? If it wasn’t for you, I’d still be in Milan. You are the reason we’re here, little girl. Now and always, everything I do, I do for you.”

After dinner, several of the wives come over and steal Aria away. They’re making plans for fundraisers and school dances and waste no time enlisting the help of the new headmaster’s wife. I sit back and watch as she and the other women chat.

They're all around the same age as Aria, but not one could hold a candle to her.

My mind drifts back to the day an innocent-looking girl came into my office fully prepared to seduce me. Little did she know, all she had to do was walk through the door. She had me at first sight.

The End. Thanks for reading!

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Book 8: Dad's Russian Friend
Book 9: Dad's Navy SEAL Friend
Book 10: Dad's Cop Friend
Book 11: Halloween With Dad's Ex-Best Friend
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Jealous Psycho

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