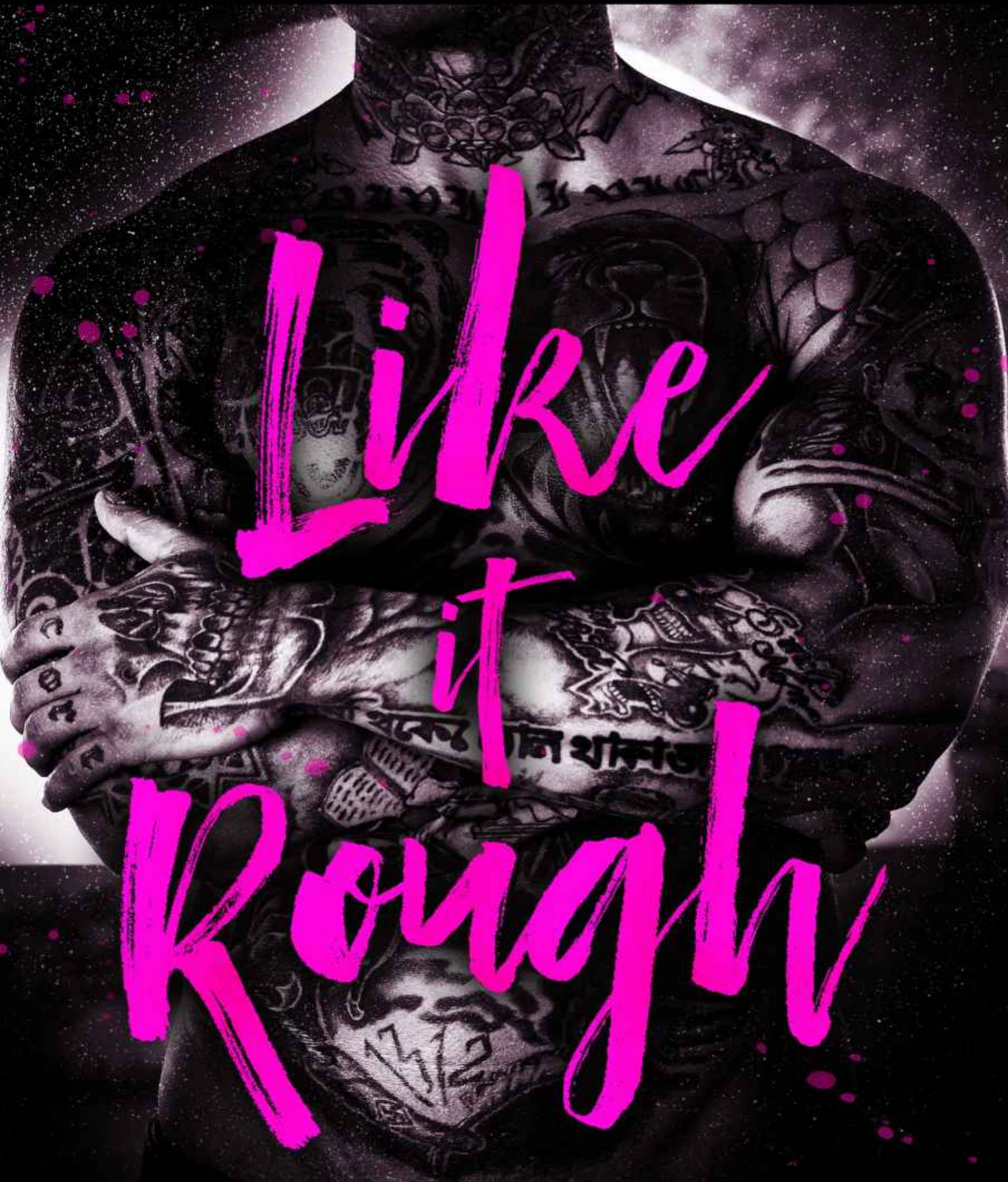


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Like
it
Rough

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

SAM CRESCENT

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A black and white photograph of a man's muscular, tattooed torso. A woman's hands are placed on his chest. The background is a dark, starry night sky with a crescent moon. The title 'Like it Rough' is written in a large, pink, cursive font across the center of the image.

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LIKE IT ROUGH

Sam Crescent

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Chapter One

Chloe Baker told herself she was not going to cry, even as tears filled her eyes and her heart felt like it was breaking. She should have known, and now she felt even more foolish than she ever had in her entire life.

Her husband of exactly three hours had been ordered to marry her. Roman Sidorov. When they had met a year ago, she had known him as Roman Smith. He was supposedly a small businessman who owned a couple of restaurants, but that was the furthest thing from the truth.

He was a member of the terrifying Zaitsev Bratva. They ruled the city. She hadn't dealt with them on a one-to-one level, but they were the reason she had no family. Her parents as well as her brother had been driving home from the cinema, and gotten caught in the crossfire. They'd been killed by stray bullets.

Chloe had lost everyone that night. Her parents had not left a will, so she'd been unable to keep her home. She had no choice but to move out, selling what possessions she could in order to find a place to stay.

She worked as a bartender, until Roman came along.

The bar was owned by the Zaitsev Bratva. It all made sense now. Chloe had vowed to bring them down, and being a curvy woman, she was able to blend into places because everyone overlooked her, and she had seen some ... things.

Chloe thought about the cop she'd been going to see. He must have been in on it as well. Paid off by the Bratva to look the other way. He sold her out.

Roman had come into the bar late one night, asking for a drink. Chloe had been the one to serve him. The first night, he didn't say anything, nor the second. For a whole week, he came, ordered a drink, rarely drank it, and then left. It was during the second week that he began to talk to her. It started as small talk. He'd bring up his day, mention work, and he seemed like a nice guy.

She found herself looking forward to his visits, even anticipating them. After the pain of losing her family, she didn't think it was possible to enjoy life again, but Roman changed that. He made her feel. He helped her to make peace. He had no idea she planned to take down the Bratva — at least she didn't think he had, until today.

Their wedding day.

The first shock had come when she entered the church and saw all the guests. She didn't have any friends, but Roman had packed the church. By the time she made it to the end of the aisle, she had spotted three people from the Zaitsev Bratva, and in that moment she had known.

The next giant shock was, she thought she was marrying Roman Smith, but had become Chloe Sidorov.

Then of course, the wedding photos. She had to stand side by side with the men responsible for killing her family. She didn't make a scene. She stayed polite, smiled, and acted like the good little girl her mother had taught her to be in those settings.

Once they got to the reception, everything had changed.

Roman had been on his cell phone the entire journey. The polite person inside her had struggled, but she had remained calm. She'd not caused a scene. She had sat there while he made his phone call, and then waited.

The moment they arrived at their reception, Roman abandoned her. There was no one she knew. No one. So, it was easy for her to make her escape, to find Roman, to find out what the hell was going on.

“Well, I have to say, Roman, you did surprise me. I suggested the girl needed to die, and you married her.”

“She won't be causing any problems. I'll take care of it.”

“I have a feeling you're going to have your work cut out for you. There's no way of hiding who you are now.”

“You told me to handle it, I did. Chloe has her ... uses.”

It had all been a setup. Roman coming into the bar. He wasn't a normal businessman. He was a member of the Zaitsev Bratva. The ink on his body should have been an indication, but it wasn't.

Chloe let out a scream as arms wrapped around her waist. After discovering the truth, she had tried to make a run for it. The guards at the main entrance had refused to let her pass. She had no choice but to attempt to sneak past the kitchen. That hadn't worked.

There were several rooms at the hotel, so she snuck inside one, found a window that opened, and climbed out of it, attempting to run through the gardens to find an exit.

“Let me go!” She tried to pummel the hand that held her, but it was no use.

Chloe refused to give up. She released a scream, and again berated the thing that was holding her. It wasn't Roman. She would recognize that touch anywhere. She was going to be sick.

She had given her virginity to Roman. There was not a part of her soul she hadn't opened up to him.

A fresh wave of anger rushed over her as she attempted to attack the man that held her captive. This was insane. Could she not escape now?

She slapped the hands again, trying to wriggle free. There was no way this was easy for the guy. She wasn't a light woman, hadn't been for some time. Chloe wanted to scream because no matter how hard she tried, he refused to let go. Insufferable man.

Anger filled her.

They were back inside the hotel, and the next thing she knew, she was being dumped on the floor. She saw the bed out of the corner of her eye, and then the two feet — Roman's two feet, in what appeared to be Italian leather, of course. Another little tidbit she should have paid attention to. Roman always

had perfect-fitting suits. It was like the suit had been made for him, and from what she could see, this one had. Expensive.

Everything about him screamed money. She figured he was just a good small-time businessman, maybe was owed a few favors along the way. She had no idea the extent of those favors.

None of it was true. He wasn't owed any favors. Fear helped him get what he wanted.

"Chloe, trying to run... I didn't think you were the kind of woman to flee a problem," Roman said.

She clenched her hands into fists. How dare he? Finally, after several seconds passed, she lifted her head and glared at him.

"And I didn't expect you to lie to get your way."

He crouched down, his feet lifting, and he reached out, cupping her chin. She jerked back, but he grabbed her once again, this time tighter than before. There was no way for her to get him to leave her alone.

"I know you're upset, but you and I both know you love it when I touch you."

Heat filled her cheeks, and a certain hatred flooded her heart.

She was swift, shoving him hard against the chest, and he was unprepared for her attack. She straddled his waist. Chloe couldn't do anything but press down on his shoulders. She was no match for him in strength. She didn't even come close. The only reason she had gotten the upper hand was she'd taken him by surprise, and Roman was letting her.

"That was uncalled for. The only reason I ever let you touch me is because I thought you were someone else. You lied to me, and for what? You were supposed to kill me."

She gasped because suddenly she was the one on the floor. Roman slid his thighs between her legs, and she realized how vulnerable she was, open like this. He could take what he wanted.

He tutted.

“Why would I kill you, Chloe? When I know I can have a whole lot more fun with you.” He pressed his lips against her neck and she hated the gasp that escaped.

She didn't know what it was about this man, but he seemed to set her whole body on fire. There was no way for her to control it. She felt completely owned by him.

His teeth nibbled on her pulse, and his tongue slid back and forth, then suddenly, he moved down.

The wedding dress she wore didn't have any straps, and her breasts were held up and confined by a tight corset built within the dress. Roman's lips teased across the top of her dress, hinting at what he could do to her.

Her traitorous body was already on fire.

Chloe wanted to deny him.

She wanted to hate him.

In fact, she did hate him, but it didn't stop her from loving him as well.

Roman Sidorov was not known for doing things the easy way. In fact, he was used to doing things the very hard way. He had no problem getting his hands dirty when the occasion called for it.

He had a lot of kills under his belt, and he was loyal to the Zaitsev Bratva. After the street war that broke out two years ago, he had learned of the casualties, including civilians. Roman didn't mourn people. He simply had no feelings about them, but he did work to a code. People who didn't get in the way were free to live their lives.

Now, the people in the car had lost their lives due to sloppiness.

He had already killed the men who'd attacked without thinking, causing a scene, and costing a lot of money to deal with, through different avenues of the law. The Zaitsev Bratva

had legal and illegal businesses. He was one of the men responsible for making money, but keeping problems at bay. Roman knew he was the master of it. Whenever there was a problem within the Bratva, something needing to be cleaned up and dealt with, he was the one to call, in every situation and scenario.

Then a year after the incident, he got a call from a cop on their payroll about a young woman, Chloe Baker. She was attempting to give information to help incarcerate the Zaitsev Bratva. At first, he was intrigued, until he listened to everything she had — recordings, photographs — all of them coming from their own bar, Hugh's.

Hugh's wasn't a bar he frequented. The women who danced there were often desperate for a taste of the good life, and he just didn't like that level of desperation, unless he was the one doing the torture. He had gone to the bar, intent on finding out who Chloe Baker was. He had his orders to handle the problem, from Zaitsev himself.

The easy option would be to kill her. Only, Chloe had intrigued him from the moment he walked into the bar. First, she had given him a drink without a word. No conversation or even flirting. She didn't attempt to press her tits together to gain his attention, and she was dressed as most barmen, long black pants and a shirt. Obviously, she wore the female versions that did amazing things for her figure. There was another little detail he liked. Roman loved a woman with curves. He loved big tits, a nice, juicy ass, thick thighs, all of which Chloe possessed.

She never flirted with him. He had to initiate conversation, and again, this was new to him. Over the years, he had gotten used to women throwing themselves at him, practically drooling at the title.

Rather than kill Chloe, he'd decided to enjoy her. It had taken him ten months to get her into his bed, and much to his surprise, she had been a virgin, even though he had a hunch she was. In all his forty years, he'd never had a virgin. Chloe had become a pure addiction to him. One taste hadn't

been enough, so for the last two months, he'd been enjoying her every chance he got.

Marrying her was the only solution. As his wife, she wouldn't be able to get into too much trouble, at least that was what he told himself. He never planned for her to learn the truth, not so soon anyway.

“You're sick!”

“Are you telling me your pussy isn't wet for me right now?” he asked.

In response, she let out a whimper.

Chloe liked it when he talked dirty. He'd never been much of a talker, and when it came to sex, he liked to fuck. With Chloe, he was learning a whole lot more that he enjoyed.

She had been a virgin, his special virgin.

No more. He'd claimed that two months ago. It was the final decision he had to ask her to marry him. Roman hadn't realized just how much of a virgin she had been. Now he knew. And he fucking loved the fact he was the only man who would ever know how amazing she felt. How tight and hot. He would be the only man to hear those little gasps as he took her by surprise and drove her higher and higher.

As he kissed along the top of her dress, hinting at taking her tits into his mouth, he reached down, pushing the wedding dress out of the way, and stroked her inner thigh. He started at her knee and traced the tip of his fingers up, moving closer toward her pussy. The moment he reached the apex of her thighs, he gripped the lace of her panties and tore them right off her body. The offending item was in the way, and he wanted to touch her, skin to skin.

He pressed his palm to her pussy and slid two fingers between her wet slit. She was soaked with her own arousal. Plunging two fingers deep inside her cunt, he pumped in and out, hearing her moan. She arched up, thrusting her pelvis against him. With two digits inside her, he pressed his thumb to her clit and stroked back and forth. Another moan.

She could try and fight it all she wanted, but Chloe loved him. She had told him so. When he asked her to marry him, she had been filled with joy. Roman wasn't a man controlled by his emotions, but he had loved how excited she was.

It was all for business.

He knew just the right way to touch her, to set her on fire. The dress was a problem, but he didn't care.

"Tell me to stop," he said.

Chloe glared at him. "I hate you."

"There's a fine line between love and hate." He leaned in close, pressing his lips to her ear. "And I know you love me. I know you want to spend the rest of your life with me, giving yourself to me."

He repeated some of her vows back.

With one hand inside her, working its magic on her sweet cunt, he unbuttoned the zipper of his fly with the other and eased out his cock. He was rock-hard.

Roman had gone along with her silly tradition of them not having sex for the whole week. She had said it would make their wedding night more of an anticipation. He didn't need to wait a whole week as each time with her was even better than the last.

This woman was messing with his head. He couldn't seem to control himself.

Pulling his fingers through her pussy, he pressed the tip of his cock to her entrance, and then inch by inch, slid inside her.

She cried out, but didn't once tell him to stop. He gave her a chance, a few precious seconds to make this stop, but he felt her tight, hot cunt as it fluttered around him. Desperate. Hungry for cock. And he was more than willing to give it to her.

Grabbing her hips, he fucked her harder, driving in deep, filling her, fucking her. He slammed balls-deep inside

her, and then stopped, pulling back so he could feel her clit. Stroking back and forth across her sweet nub, he drove her higher and higher, pushing her over the edge, and she screamed his name as she came, hard.

He held her hips, driving inside her, filling her with each thrust. Roman didn't give her a chance to come down from the peak, but he was determined to join her. He did so within minutes of her release.

This time, he drove inside her. All the other times, he'd used a condom. This time, he didn't. Nothing to protect her from having his child. Roman held her in place as wave upon wave of his cum flooded her body, filling her up. In that moment, he wanted her to get pregnant.

Chloe wasn't going anywhere. She was his wife, and he intended to keep her.

"I want a divorce," she said.

"No."

She wouldn't be getting a divorce, an annulment, nothing.

Chapter Two

Roman watched as Chloe stepped out of the bedroom, coming to a stop the moment she saw him. During their wedding, he had already taken care of her apartment, not that there was much to take care of. The few pieces of furniture had come from her old home. They were the only pieces she hadn't sold.

They were now in a room in his country estate, along with a few other items she wasn't aware he had located and repurchased.

Looking over his newspaper at her, he saw her hesitate as she caught sight of him. They'd been married for three days. Three very long days. At least to her, they had been long days. Not to him. He was enjoying his time as a married man.

"I thought you would be gone already."

The past three days he had no choice but to attend to business. When his presence was needed, he was always there. For Chloe, she had tried to make an escape multiple times a day. His men were no fools and they didn't take any chances. He had told them she was not to leave under any circumstances.

"No work today," he said.

Chloe wore one of the silk and lace negligees he loved so much. He had purchased a whole range of colors for her, and today she wore the red one with black lace. Absolutely stunning. He loved it.

They hadn't talked since their wedding. After they had fucked, he left her alone, gone for a drink, and given her a chance to ... be. That's what he had done the last three days, but no more.

She looked at the chair then toward his kitchen.

He watched her ass as she stepped into his kitchen. He picked up his mug of coffee and took a sip. Chloe took a few

moments and then stepped back through, carrying a bowl, spoon, and her cup of coffee.

She put her stuff down on the table and left, coming back seconds later with the cereal he knew she loved. The woman was obsessed with peanut butter. She loved everything to do with it, including cereal. She sat down, poured out a bowl, and then added some milk, taking a seat opposite him. He watched her as she put her spoon into the bowl and then hesitated.

They had known each other a year, and she had revealed a lot about herself. Stuff she had never told Roman Sidorov, but she had given to Roman Smith. He knew her mother had instilled in her the need to be respectful and kind. She loved her mother and had followed in her footsteps. She believed even if someone treated you like shit, that didn't give you the right to do the same. That was what was wrong with the world, according to Chloe's mother. There was nothing wrong with being kind.

“How are you?” Chloe asked.

That was all he had to wait for.

“I'm fine, I guess the real question is, how are you?” he asked.

“Why?” Chloe asked.

Roman tilted his head to the side and watched her. “I told you my reasoning three days ago.”

Her cheeks started to heat, again, just another part of her that he adored.

She dropped her spoon into the bowl, and he noticed she did it carefully so as not to spill a single drop of milk.

“I don't get it. I went to the cops with the information I had. I must be some kind of liability. Why not just kill me? There's no way you, your boss, or anyone within the Zaitsev Bratva could be happy with me being here.”

“They're very happy, in fact.”

“How?”

“Don’t you get it, my sweet? You’re powerless.”

“I’m not.”

“No? You’re a young woman. Twenty-five years old, and just married to a very strong and powerful man. Anytime you go to the cops now, you’ll look nothing more than the petulant housewife. You want your husband’s attention and the only way to do that is to cause drama. I could have killed you, quite easily as well, but that requires more paperwork, more details. There are always those pesky cops that put two and two together and come out with four.”

He saw the tears in her eyes. “So, that’s it. Marrying me was easier than killing me. You just didn’t want the ... inconvenience.” She looked away and he ignored that kick to the gut he felt.

Chloe rarely cried. Even when she talked about her parents’ and brother’s death, she’d not shed a tear. When he asked her about that, she said she had cried for three months afterward. She had to carry around tissues because she couldn’t get the tears to stop. Then one day, it was like she had cried as much as her body could stand. She hadn’t cried since. Until now.

He watched as she swiped at her cheek and stood.

“It was a lie, this past year, wasn’t it? All of it. You being ... you.” She pressed her lips together.

“It was a means to an end.”

She nodded her head, then stepped away from the table. This wasn’t what he anticipated. He expected her to be angry, to scream at him, maybe even throw things, but this coldness was new.

“I didn’t dismiss you,” he said.

“I’m your wife. I’m not your employee or anyone you control. You don’t get to *dismiss* me.” With that, she turned on her heel and left.

Roman looked down at her breakfast. She had taken three scoops of cereal. According to his men, she had rarely

eaten anything. He had made sure they kept an eye on her, even ordering food for her. Pizza was her favorite, but each night he came home, the pizza was uneaten. In the trash, he saw only a couple of banana skins and a few apple cores. He didn't know if she was intentionally starving herself, or just couldn't eat.

Getting to his feet, he picked up the bowl and dumped it in the trash, after pouring the milk down the sink. He cleaned up the mess, did the same with the cups, and then went to the bedroom where he found her already dressed. She wore a pair of jeans and an old, button-up checked shirt. She had pulled her long, brown hair back, and wore no makeup. Chloe rarely used makeup.

“You're ready. We're going out,” he said.

“Where?”

“To work.”

Most men left their women at home with a credit card. When it came to Chloe, he couldn't trust her to go shopping, but he also knew letting her loose with a credit card just wouldn't work. She never enjoyed shopping, even during the year they had been together, and he wanted to take her out and buy her things. Chloe had been more interested in enjoying each other's company.

In all his years, Roman had never been to a picnic, a play fair, or even attempted to walk around any gardens, but Chloe had taken him. They were always doing something on their dates, rarely did they go shopping, apart from when she asked to go to the beach. He ended up destroying a pair of Italian shoes, and she took him to a shop to buy flip-flops.

Yes, he had walked around, holding Chloe's hand, like any regular guy. She had no idea he constantly had two guns and multiple knives in his possession “just in case.”

“No. I'm not going anywhere with you.”

“You're not staying here,” he said.

“Why not? I've spent the last three days here.”

He took a step toward her. “I will only take your insolence for so long, Chloe. I thought your mother taught you better than that.”

She gasped. “How dare you even use her like this?”

“Then stop behaving like a child. We’re leaving.”

She finished zipping up her shoe and got to her feet. He reached for her, and she pulled away.

Roman looked at her, and he knew his comment about her mother wasn’t nice. Chloe averted her eyes first and then took his hand. With that small victory, he led her out of the apartment.

He didn’t like what he had seen at the table, and knew he had to do something about it.

Bringing her with him was a risk, but it was one he was willing to take. Zaitsev knew he was handling his marriage and wouldn’t interfere. While Chloe was with him, she was safe, and for now, that was all she could be.

Chloe didn’t know how to get out of her marriage. Roman felt like a stranger, and yet, he also didn’t at the same time. It was so confusing to her. He had lied to her for a year about who he was. She didn’t know what to do with this man. Yet, even as she felt confused by him and the fact he was a stranger, she also knew him. There was a love that had bloomed during that year.

He wasn’t that man, and yet he was. The man who had brought her Valentine’s Day flowers because they had reminded him of her. He had presented them to her at work.

It had taken three months before she accepted an outside-of-work date. He would come to the bar every single night. She worked all the time to help pay her rent. Living in the city didn’t come cheap. It was why she had to sell most of her parents’ things, which she hated doing, but she knew they would want her to survive. The guilt didn’t go away.

On the anniversary of their death, Roman had taken her to her family's grave, and he'd sat with her while she attempted to make peace. That day had been hard. She hadn't cried. The tears had been spilled, but it had meant a lot to her that he had seemed content to just sit with her.

She might have started to fall in love with him at that moment. He had offered to take her to dinner, and she had told him no. When he asked why not, she had been tempted to lie, but her mother had told her that lies only complicated things. She told him the truth, and he came with her. What kind of man did that? Not Roman Sidorov. Yet, it had been him. Because he planned to marry her?

Pulling out of her thoughts of the past, she looked across the table at him. They were sitting in a restaurant. The maître d' hadn't wanted her to enter, but one stern look with a warning from Roman, declaring her as his wife, meant they got a very nice table.

She stood out like a sore thumb. All the other women were in beautiful dresses, looking feminine, their hair done perfectly, makeup — they looked like they had stepped out of a magazine. She, on the other hand, wore her jeans, an old shirt of her dad's, hair pulled back, but she knew some strands had escaped and looked frizzy. Her mother had shown her how to apply makeup, but had also told her it was only there to enhance beauty. The truth was, Chloe hated the feel of the stuff on her face, so never wore it.

Roman picked up the menu and Chloe did the same.

She hated that she might be embarrassing. “Why don't you take me back ... to your apartment?” She was about to call it home.

“*Home*, and no, we're going to eat lunch here.”

“I'm embarrassing you.” She lowered the menu and looked at him.

“No, you're not.”

“Seriously? Have you looked around at everyone here? How can I not be embarrassing you?” She was mortified by

how she looked compared to everyone else.

“First of all, you are my wife, and I’m not embarrassed of you. Secondly, why would I be? You have done nothing to upset or offend me. Thirdly, we’re here to eat lunch. You’re not dressed as a prostitute, you’re not drunk, you are dressed in your dad’s shirt and a pair of jeans that has seen better days. You’re still entitled to eat lunch, now, what would you like to order?”

“How do you know this was my father’s shirt?” she asked.

“You showed me pictures of him, and that was his favorite shirt, because your mother made it for him.”

She pressed her lips together, hating how emotional she felt.

“Excuse me,” she said, getting to her feet.

Roman didn’t make any move to stop her, and she quickly fled in the direction of the bathroom.

No one else was inside when she stepped through. Walking up to the sinks, she pressed her hands against the edge of the counter and took several deep breaths, in and out. She didn’t want to look into the mirror. Not yet.

Why did he have to remember the little details, the tiny, insignificant details that mattered to her?

“Insufferable man,” she said, not speaking to anyone but herself.

Opening her eyes, she stared at the sink and then slowly lifted her head to glance at her reflection. Her cheeks looked a little flushed. For some strange reason, she didn’t quite recognize herself. There was nothing different, not really, she was the same person. Then her gaze dropped down to the ring on her finger. She hadn’t removed the ring. She was still very much married to Roman.

Part of her wanted to throw the ring back in his face for the lies he’d given her, but another part wanted to stay married

to him. She had fallen in love with him, which is what she felt was the most cruel.

The door to the bathroom opened and she turned to find Roman standing inside.

“This is the ladies’ room,” she said.

“I know.” He stepped up behind her, wrapping his arms around her waist. He had done this so often in the past few months that it felt natural to just tilt her head back against his shoulder and accept comfort from him. Chloe didn’t have much fight in her today so she took what she could get.

“I don’t want you crying,” he said.

“I told you, I stopped crying a long time ago.”

“That is still unacceptable.” He pressed a kiss to her temple. “You cannot allow yourself to not cry.”

She smirked. “Do you cry?”

Silence.

“Of course you don’t cry.” She turned in his arms. “Because you don’t believe in crying, but you want me to?”

“It’s different.”

“No, it’s not.” She looked up into his startling blue eyes. For a long time, she often imagined the ocean, peaceful, calm. This man was anything but. Being part of the Zaitsev Bratva, she knew they were now the eyes of a killer. He would have ended plenty of lives.

He cupped her face. “Stop.”

“Stop what?”

“Thinking whatever it is you’re thinking about,” he said, tilting her head back.

“You can’t control my thoughts.”

He took possession of her lips, making her gasp. The moment she did, he plundered her lips with his tongue, deepening the kiss. Slowly, his hands slid down from her face, going to her neck, then down even further toward her ass. He

didn't stop there as he suddenly changed direction and went for her hips, lifting her up. His strength surprised her. He perched her on the edge of the counter, on the spot between the sinks.

Roman broke the kiss. "You don't think I can control your thoughts." She hadn't even realized he'd been opening her shirt and was already halfway up.

Chloe knew she should stop him. But she just couldn't.

He opened her shirt, and she noticed he was being careful with it. He dropped it onto the counter, but the bra didn't get the same consideration. He tore that off her body, placing it in the pocket of his jacket.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

Roman didn't answer. He cupped her tits, pressing them together, and then his lips were doing all the work. He sucked on her nipples, dancing his tongue across each peak, sliding back and forth, and then nibbling on each mound. He wasn't done there as he suddenly pulled her from the counter, bent her over it, and reached for the zipper of her jeans. Roman eased it down, pushing her jeans down her body.

It was on the tip of her tongue to tell him no, but the truth was she was so aroused, and in that moment, she wanted to feel him.

He didn't push the jeans off her body, only to her knees, and then he angled her hips. She heard his own zipper and then felt as he spread the lips of her sex. She whimpered as he pressed the tip of his cock into her pussy. His hands returned to her hips, and then he slammed every single inch of him inside her. From behind like this, he always felt so big, much bigger than she believed she could take.

Roman didn't go easy, he fucked her hard and fast, driving into her over and over again. She had no choice but to hold onto the counter.

Chloe didn't know when he stopped and began to play with her clit, but the moment he did, she lost all sense of

thought and who she was. She could only beg for more, hungry for his touch, desperate for it.

Roman brought her to orgasm, and before the final waves of her orgasm had finished, he was already holding onto her hips and driving inside her repeatedly. Over and over, fucking her, taking her, and she felt when he found his own release, as his cock jerked inside her, and she felt his cum pulsing inside her.

“See, I can control your thoughts.”

Chapter Three

Part of his work was boring, another dangerous, and some parts he wouldn't dream of allowing Chloe to join him.

Today was one of those days, which is why he made sure she was dressed to go out, and he'd dropped her off at a nightclub, with strict instructions to several of his men that she was not to leave. They were also to make sure no one danced with his woman. He hated when other men approached what belonged to him, and Chloe was all his.

Stepping into the factory, the moment he was seen, he heard the masculine whimpers. He hated when men lost control like that and cried.

He had been called because a job needed to be done. Michael Anderson hadn't paid his bills. He borrowed money off the Zaitsev Bratva, with the agreement of a percentage of profits every quarter. The last two quarters, he hadn't paid up, and then, as an insult, he had wrapped a couple of fifty-dollar bills around a bunch of one-dollar bills, taking them as fools.

No one took the Zaitsev as fools.

The very thought always brought Roman work. He was the one they called because he was known for getting the work done. He made sure to send a message that would instill fear into everyone and anyone wanting to associate with them.

If they paid their debts and didn't insult them, there was nothing to worry about. Roman didn't only terrify and torture those that attempted to play them as fools. He also made sure those associates that worked well with them always stayed safe.

He had helped a struggling family of a man who worked for them for many years. Unfortunately, the man had died, but he'd been loyal from the moment he was initiated. When their loyal men died, their families were taken care of.

A couple of punks had tried to extort money from them, forcing them to pay up for protection. It got so bad that

the mother of the old soldier had no choice but to reach out. They were bleeding the place dry for money.

Roman took care of it.

On one of the nights they were due to come and collect money, he was waiting for them. They paid back all the money, and as an apology, they were working for the young woman, but not until they had to suffer several broken bones.

If the situation required it, he'd break bones, skin them, remove teeth, nails, and then even kill if necessary. Roman didn't care. He was given orders and then told to assess for himself, and to handle the situation, which was exactly what he did.

Michael was whimpering and shaking like mad. This wasn't fear. Roman had seen fear. The man was needing another fix.

He stepped up to Michael and shoved up Michael's shirt sleeve, and sure enough, the track marks were a sign. That was where their money was going. Roman hated drugs. It was part of their many businesses, but he'd seen way too many people fall under the control of drugs. It wasn't something he ever planned to try.

"You've been a naughty boy, Michael," he said.

"So I missed a couple of quarters. I bet everyone has done it."

Roman crouched down so he had no choice but to look at him. Michael attempted to look away, but he grabbed his chin, hard. He knew he was hurting him, as the man whimpered. He wasn't even trying to be gentle. Roman wanted to hurt this man, to teach him a lesson.

"Do you see anyone around to tell the tale of *missing* a couple of quarters?" Roman asked. "People don't miss quarters. They pay on time, or even before the due date."

Most people paid on time.

"Fuck you," Michael said. "It's my money. I don't need you. I never needed you. Your money is shit. Fucking

bullshit.”

Roman smiled. He didn't have a problem if he wanted to continue throwing abuse out. It was all good fun.

“You know what, go ahead, do your worst, you evil fucker. The moment you're done with me, I'll go to the cops. They'll help me. They'll want anything to hang you motherfuckers.”

Roman had to give it to him. Michael had gone from crying and whimpering, to fighting. It was rather refreshing. Pulling a chair toward Michael, he looked at his masterpiece. If Michael had kept his mouth shut, he wouldn't have needed to do what he had to do. Threatening and insulting had taken it to a whole new level.

He sat and waited. Years of experience had taught him that silence and calm seemed to be the deadliest weapon he possessed.

He watched.

Waited.

And then, he struck.

He grabbed the pliers, and then as Michael attempted to fight him, he pulled out the man's tongue. Then, grabbing one of the blades that had been carefully placed beside Michael, in a quick easy swoop, he removed the man's tongue and allowed it to drop to the floor. Blood poured down his mouth, onto his front. Roman held the piece of tongue within the pliers and wrinkled his nose. As a piece of flesh, it wasn't his favorite, not in any form. The best place for it was on the floor.

“Let's see you squeal with no tongue.”

There was no way he could allow Michael to leave the factory alive. That wasn't his fault, but on Michael.

No one threatened the Zaitsev Bratva.

Next, he removed the man's fingers, and after that, his teeth. He waited as long as he could, and then he ended Michael Anderson's life. Once he was finished, he placed a

call to the cleaning crew as he wiped the dirt from his fingers. His cell phone went off. It was one of his guards.

Answering his cell, he stepped out of the factory, into the night. The job had taken a few hours extra than he would have liked.

“Talk to me,” he said.

“She’s trying to get onto the dance floor,” his guard said.

“Then allow her to dance, but if another man is near her, I will hold you personally responsible.”

“I won’t allow her to leave.”

Roman smiled. Chloe was proving to be a handful. Anticipation filled him.

He had no choice but to wait until the cleaning crew had finished. Once he had paid them, he climbed into his car and took off, heading toward the nightclub.

There was a line, easily a mile long, waiting to get in. Roman owned the nightclub, so the moment he parked, his man on the door let him inside. Several people booed and complained, and he could understand why since it was cold outside.

Stepping into the main nightclub, the music was incredibly loud, banging off the walls. The dance floor was busy, but he wasn’t interested in anyone else. The only person he wanted was in the VIP section.

He saw his two men standing with their backs to his woman, and the moment they saw him, they all looked a little relieved.

Chloe was a lady, a sweetheart, and as he stepped behind the men, he saw why. Someone had allowed his woman to have a drink. She was a little drunk and kneeling on the table. The dress she wore had ridden up to mid-thigh, but even that was showing too much flesh for his liking.

“Look who finally decides to show up. My fake husband.”

“There is nothing fake about me. I am your husband.”

“Yeah, because you lied about who you were and what you’re associated with.” She picked up her drink and took another sip. “You’re ... shh, I’m not allowed to say anything, am I? Saying what you are will get me killed.”

She stepped off the table. He didn’t even know how she’d been able to climb up there, but she got off and stepped toward him. In the heels she wore, it did look incredibly dangerous for her to be moving. Roman ignored the desire to wrap his arms around her waist and hold her up. He had a feeling she wouldn’t appreciate that, at least not yet. He’d wait until she desperately needed him.

“Don’t you want to kill me, Roman?” she asked, placing her hands on his chest.

“No.”

She tilted her head to the side. “But wouldn’t that be so much easier?” She closed the distance between them. “I’m pretty sure you can have any woman your heart desires. You don’t have to have me. I’m nothing compared to others.”

He didn’t want anyone else but her.

“You’re drunk.”

“Just a little bit. Tell me, Roman, if you don’t want to kill me, what do you want to do with me?” she asked.

He grabbed her wrist, and without waiting for a response, he pulled her onto the dance floor. “I want to dance.”

Chloe expected him to be a monster, but while she was intoxicated, he wouldn’t touch her. He’d always wait for her to consent.

The moment Chloe opened her eyes, she felt a wave of pain jolt right through her body, taking her by surprise. She groaned and pressed her hands to her head, attempting to stop the pain. What the hell had happened?

“Take these,” Roman said, drawing attention to the fact he was there.

She lowered her hands, and sure enough, he was sitting beside her bed. He held his hand open for her to take the two white tablets, as well as some juice.

“What are they?”

“Ecstasy.” He shook his head. “Painkillers. Standard packets are purchased in most supermarkets, liquor stores, and even pharmacies. And this, just juice, from a carton, I don’t press my own.”

She rolled her eyes, but even that seemed to hurt.

“You know, you’re funny.”

“I wasn’t trying to be.”

She took the painkillers, one at a time. She always struggled to swallow the tablets. Even though she ate more in a spoonful of pasta, she always felt like she was going to choke. She never did, but it meant taking them one at a time. She knew that was lame. Her brother had often teased her about it.

“What happened?” she asked, cutting off thoughts of her brother and her family.

“Tequila and lime, I do believe.”

“What?”

“Your drink of choice last night.”

She wrinkled her nose. “I don’t even like tequila.”

“Last night, before I arrived, you’d had four glasses.”

“Ugh,” she said.

“Exactly, and now you’re suffering the aftereffects.”

“I don’t remember much of last night.” She glanced down at herself and saw she wore one of his old shirts.

“Even though you threw yourself at me, begging for me to fuck you, I stopped myself.”

She gasped. “No, I didn’t.”

“Yes, you did. You said if I didn’t want to kill you, that must mean I wanted to fuck you, and I’m not going to lie, you’re right. I do want to fuck you, but — and this is a big but — I like my woman to be alive.”

Chloe groaned, pressing her hands to her face. This couldn’t get any more mortifying.

“So, after you threw yourself at me, I made sure you were over the toilet when the vomiting started, and I even brushed your teeth for you.”

She couldn’t remember any of this.

“Why would you do that?”

“In sickness and in health, I do believe the line is.”

“Come on, Roman, you don’t have to pretend.”

“I’m not the one pretending anything, babe. I took care of you last night and I’m taking care of you this morning.” He got to his feet and then pointed at the juice in her hand. “Drink that and I’ll be back in a minute.”

Chloe sipped at the drink. The juice was nice, not too sweet and not too tart. Her head was still pounding, but she felt the juice had stopped her from throwing up.

Why would she drink tequila? She hadn’t drunk that stuff in years, when her parents had to clean up the mess. There was one time, with her brother, where they had gotten a bottle of tequila and drank it while their parents were out at a party. They had their own pizza and tequila party inside the house. That night had ended with a severe headache, sickness, scolding, and being sent to school as punishment. Her brother had been a year older than her, so he had to go to work. He’d been back home from college when they had experimented with the tequila.

She had never felt so embarrassed in her life when she had to have her mother drop her off at school. As per Mrs. Baker’s usual style when she did something naughty, there was humiliation, as she promised to pick up her little baby girl in

the afternoon. Even going so far as blowing her kisses and expressing her love. The whole day people had mocked her, but she didn't care.

Even as she hated her mother for doing it, she knew she did it out of love. Chloe knew she would have another thousand days, one after the other of humiliation, just to hug her mother again. To tell her that she loved her.

No one and nothing ever prepared you for the death of a loved one. For Chloe, she had lost three people all in one night.

Finishing the juice, she refused to stay in bed.

She couldn't quite handle the memories and wanted them all gone. She attempted to rush into the bathroom, but it was more of a slow walk. She chanced a look at her reflection, and it was in these moments she was thankful she didn't have any makeup on. Her face looked pale.

She brushed her teeth, splashed some fresh water onto her face, and then glided a brush through her hair. Pulling the length back, she clipped it in place, and looked a little better than the dead. Taking a deep breath, she stepped out of the bathroom, back into the bedroom, and opted out of getting changed. Her head could only handle so much responsibility right now.

She made her way into the kitchen to find Roman at the stove, which was a huge surprise.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Cooking you some bacon and eggs, as well as toast. The eggs are scrambled. I didn't think you could handle a fried egg."

She pressed a hand to her stomach. "You didn't have to do this for me."

"I know my way around a hangover. Painkillers, juice, and a hearty breakfast."

He was acting normal again. Not the Bratva husband she knew him to be.

“If you don’t want it in bed, then go take a seat at the table. I’ll have coffee for you as well.”

Who was this man? He didn’t seem real to her. She didn’t argue with him as she went into the dining room.

On that night, all those years ago, her mother had cooked her pancakes. She claimed it would soak up the alcohol. Chloe felt like the taste had remained in her mouth for days, even though she brushed her teeth religiously. This is why she avoided tequila.

Last night, she didn’t even know what was going on in her head. It was a little a fuzzy to her. Waiting at the nightclub for hours hadn’t been her idea of fun. She remembered wanting to go and dance, but the guards wouldn’t let her. They did allow her to drink.

Is that why she did it? Wanting to be a giant pain in the ass? It had to be. She knew how alcohol affected her, and yet she had done it anyway.

Seconds passed, and Roman walked into the room carrying the tray of goodies. The scents didn’t turn her stomach, but made her mouth water. She couldn’t recall eating last evening. The drinking might have started because she was starving. Not a great combination.

Picking up the knife and fork, she cut up a piece of bacon and some eggs, and scooped them into her mouth. She closed her eyes. Roman had overcooked the scrambled eggs she loved. She liked the crispness to the egg. She had a feeling it was down to a memory as a kid. Her mother did her scrambled eggs the gooey way, and she threw them all up. She never ate scrambled eggs again, until her mother cooked them like this. Picking up a piece of toast, she took a bite. With each minute that passed, the pain in her head was starting to ease.

“You didn’t have to leave me at the nightclub last night,” Chloe said.

“I didn’t expect business to take that long.”

“You were doing business? At eight o’clock at night?”

He didn't say anything and Chloe just knew he was conducting *that* kind of business.

"Do you ... ever hate what you do?"

"No."

"Just like that. No hesitation."

"I have a job to do, Chloe."

"I know." She dropped the toast onto the plate. "You think I don't know exactly the kind of job you do?"

"Why do you hate us so much?" Roman asked.

"Hate? You think this is about hate. You know exactly who I am, and yet you ask me that." She pushed her chair out and stepped away from the table.

"Do not leave this room," Roman said.

"Why?" she asked. "What exactly are you going to do to me? Kill me? Hit me? Punish me?"

Roman shoved his chair back and closed the distance between them. Even though she wanted to take a step back, she didn't. There was no way she would look weak. However, she never anticipated what Roman did next.

He pulled out a chair, sat down, grabbed her, thrust her over his lap, and then proceeded to slap her ass. Not once either, and not gentle, but hard and firm. Once he was done, he lifted her, cupped her face, and kissed her.

"Don't ever hurt yourself again," he said, kissing her one more time.

Chapter Four

Roman knew he had startled Chloe with spanking her ass. She needed it. After last night, when she had passed out in his arms, he had been alarmed. No, not alarmed, a little terrified, in case she had alcohol poisoning. He had truly believed she might be sick.

He had even called the Bratva's doctor to consult with him, and as he'd been on the phone, Chloe had chosen that moment to start vomiting. The doctor had told him he simply had a woman who couldn't handle her drink, to help her, stay with her through the night to make sure she didn't throw up in her sleep, and offer her painkillers and a good breakfast in the morning.

All night Roman sat at Chloe's bedside. He hadn't slept in nearly forty-eight hours. Roman was used to surviving on very little sleep. Lack of sleep he could handle. He couldn't handle his woman potentially hurting herself. He had no choice but to spank her delectable ass, and the truth was he wanted to do it again.

Instead, she sat in his office at said nightclub, with a pair of glasses on her eyes, arms folded, pretending not to be asleep. He'd heard the soft, subtle hints of her snoring, and he wasn't going to deny how adorable she sounded. Clearing his throat, he saw her jolt in her seat and he tried not to laugh as she finally pulled the sunglasses off her nose.

"Why are you finding this funny?"

"If you need to sleep, sleep," he said.

"I don't need to sleep."

She had no idea that he sat at her bedside the whole night, watching over her.

"What kind of work do you do here?" she asked. "What is this a front for?" She got to her feet and moved toward the window that overlooked the whole nightclub. He could see out across the floor, but no one knew he was watching.

“Simple, it’s a front for a nightclub.” He wouldn’t take her to any places that put her at risk.

The Bratva wouldn’t harm her. She would never know what was going on in that side of his life. He kept the two very much separate.

Chloe folded her arms, stepped away from the window, and turned to look at him, then glanced away.

He missed how close she would get to him. Their wedding day had spoiled some of the little parts he loved. She never randomly touched him anymore.

In the year he’d known her, she was never one to just walk around with her arms folded beneath her breasts. She was expressive and passionate. Chloe loved with her whole being, but in the past week, he saw someone he didn’t even recognize and he hated that feeling. There was nothing he could do.

Even though he knew on their wedding day the truth would come out, he had hoped to distract her enough to ignore what was going on around her. Chloe wasn’t easily distracted.

“How...” She stopped and shook her head.

He watched her, knowing she had a lot of questions. He couldn’t answer them, if he didn’t know what they were.

“Talk to me, Chloe.”

“You make it sound so simple.”

“Because it *is* simple.”

“No.” She threw her hands up in the air. “Simple is thinking of you as a small-time businessman. A random guy who entered a bar one day and happened to like me.” She stopped once again but this time she laughed. “Only it wasn’t a random meeting. You knew exactly who I was and you knew what your intentions were.”

He had no intention of marrying her. Fucking her, yes, but not marrying her. In fact, the moment he met her, all his plans had gone up in smoke. Roman didn’t have a clue what to do with her. She had taken him completely and utterly by surprise.

Now, he didn't know what to think. He didn't want to kill her. He also knew he couldn't let her go.

"How we met is irrelevant."

"No, it's not. I fell in love with a lie. You're not real. You're not Roman Smith, small businessman, who is looking for a woman to spend the rest of his life with. You're Roman Sidorov, a member of the Zaitsev Bratva. The people partly responsible for killing my family." She pressed her lips together. "It was all a lie. If I had lied to you about who I was, wouldn't you be hurt?"

Roman refused to answer that.

Chloe didn't lie. She hadn't lied about anything. She had even opened up to him about what she had been doing at the bar. In the beginning she hadn't realized it had been owned by the Zaitsev Bratva, or that it was a personal hangout for them. It was after she realized that, she set her plans in motion. He believed that.

"You're not going to answer that."

"My father was a member of the Zaitsev Bratva. It was a much smaller organization when I was a young boy. I knew then that I was going to serve in the Bratva myself. I intended to rise up the ranks, become a soldier, earn the respect and loyalty of those around me." He got to his feet, rounded his desk, and leaned against it. "My father taught me well. He taught me to have rules, to have ethics within myself. If I followed my code, then those around me would see the value in that."

"You don't have any parents."

"My father died at the hands of my mother."

"What? How is that even possible?"

Roman chuckled. It had been a shock to many. His father had been a respected man within the Bratva. Men and women were loyal to him. His death had shocked the men who followed him. His mother had poisoned him, weakened him, and then shot him through the head, before taking her own life. He'd been the one to find their bodies.

“You found them?” Chloe asked.

“Yes, I had been away on business and when I came home, the scent of rotting flesh had already taken over.”

“What about their soldiers or staff?”

“They’d been sent away, told not to return until further notice.”

“Why did she kill him?” Chloe asked.

“She believed he was having an affair with a younger woman.”

“Was he?”

Roman chuckled. “No. He wasn’t. My father was many things but he loved my mother. At least, they did love each other in the beginning, or so he said. It’s rare for men not to take mistresses, but it does happen.”

“Mistresses?”

“Yes.”

Chloe looked down at the ground and he was just waiting for her to ask the question. He kept waiting, but so far she didn’t say a word. He didn’t know if he was disappointed.

“Will you be taking a mistress?” she asked, suddenly lifting her head.

Roman noticed her hands were clenched into fists and he rather liked seeing the fire in her eyes.

“Well, that depends, doesn’t it?” He stepped away from the desk and closed the distance between them.

“On what?”

“I guess you can say, it depends on you.”

“Why?” she asked.

He reached out, gripping the back of her neck and pulling her in close. The scent of her invaded his senses and he found her utterly intoxicating. He didn’t know what it was about Chloe that drove him insane, but he couldn’t seem to help himself when it came to her.

Even now, while he should be working over the figures that had been given to him by the club, all he wanted to do was fuck her, hard and fast. Driving the fullness of his cock all the way to the hilt. He wanted to feel her pulsing around his dick.

Tilting her head back, he looked into her eyes. “The only time I’ll ever need someone else is if you don’t give me what I need.”

She let out a little gasp. “You can’t be serious.”

He slammed his lips down on hers, feeling her hands against his chest. She wasn’t quite pushing him away, but it was close.

Roman was tempted to push just slightly to see how far he could take it, but instead, he pulled away.

“I’m deadly serious when it comes to your sweet pussy. Provided you give me what I want, there will never be anyone else.”

Chloe didn’t know whether she should hate him or punch him. She hated violence of all kinds, but that was just plain crude, wasn’t it?

She was soaking wet and she loved the fact he’d not been with anyone else since he’d been with her. What the hell was the matter with her? She had to be going crazy to even consider that a love token. Roman wouldn’t go with anyone else, as long as she was with him? What kind of crazy idea was that?

She lay in bed, staring up at the ceiling. Roman was in his office. For some reason, she felt the heaviness of the ring on her finger tonight. She didn’t feel guilty for marrying him. She had fallen in love with Roman Smith. It was why she had given herself to him. Never, in her life had she felt such a strong connection to another person.

He’d been there. Now she knew why he’d been there, and it had nothing to do with divine intervention. Her husband was the man they used to clean things up. He was going to clean *her* up. Until he didn’t, and instead, married her.

There was one moment, as he proposed, where he claimed to have loved her, but she couldn't believe it, not anymore. Roman didn't do love. He was a businessman through and through. A coldhearted killer for the Zaitsev Bratva. Willing to do whatever it took to get the job done.

He could have killed me. She couldn't help but wonder why he didn't. Zaitsev were not known for their humble ways. They were known for being killers of the highest order. Even she had heard the whispers of people as she passed. The rumors, the fairy tales, or more like horror stories, especially working in the bar. *And now he's my husband.*

Chloe sat up in bed and shoved the blankets off her body. She wasn't going to lie here and do nothing. She knew exactly why she was agitated and she hated it. Roman had kissed her lips at the nightclub last night. He'd come to bed late, and he'd not reached for her. He hadn't touched her and she was horny. This just wasn't fair. She expected him to make the first move. To take what he wanted, and yet he seemed perfectly content to be working in his office.

Chloe walked to the kitchen, intent on grabbing herself a glass of water, but it didn't matter. Water wasn't what she wanted. She stepped back toward the bedroom, but the truth was, sleep was the last thing on her mind.

The ring once again seemed to feel heavy on her finger.

Don't do it.

What harm could it possibly do?

No. Leave it be.

I did fall in love with him. He's the same guy, he just has a different name.

Chloe knew this man wasn't the same guy. He was totally different, and yet, what harm could it be going into his office and having sex? She wasn't doing anything wrong, and while she was more than willing to give him what he wanted, he wouldn't stray.

Even though she wanted to hate him, she found it difficult to do so. She'd fallen in love with this man, and it

hadn't been easy. She'd still been dealing with the pain of losing her family. Trying to make ends meet in a city intent on destroying any hope of the people who lived there. Her life had hit rock bottom, and then out of nowhere, this light, in the form of Roman Smith, had entered her life.

She had stopped crying, but it was him that got her to laugh. It was him that got her to look forward to her work, and she slowly stopped having a death wish.

The very thought of him being with another woman sent anger chasing up her spine. She didn't want to even think about him with anyone else, so her decision was made. Before she could stop herself, she was outside of the door to his office, which was wide open.

He sat at the desk, a low light on over his work. The sleeves of his shirt were rolled up to the elbow, showing off the abundance of ink he had. Several buttons on the front of his shirt were open as well, giving a tempting view of his chest. She licked her lips, and then stepped into the room. The moment she stepped over the threshold, he lifted his head. She saw him tense and reach out for what she assumed was a gun.

“Scared?” she asked.

“Prepared — there's a difference.”

She walked up to his desk, around it, and she felt her heart beating rapidly. She had to wonder if he could hear it as well. Maybe he could.

She watched him, unable to look away. Seconds passed.

“Is there anything I can help you with?” he asked.

She took a deep breath.

He'd moved away from the desk, giving a very small space for her to move into. Without waiting for a response from him, she closed the file on his desk, then slid it across, allowing it to land on the floor.

“Chloe?”

She climbed onto the desk. The strap of her negligee fell from her shoulder. She didn't know if she looked a mess because of trying to sleep, or seductive, but she didn't care. All she wanted to do was fuck. There was nothing wrong with taking pleasure from her husband.

Roman rolled the chair forward and she reached out, cupping his face. She kissed him, not caring who he was, or the lies he'd told her. In that moment, all she cared about was feeling. Roman was the same man, just slightly different, and she could handle that.

He put his hands on her thighs and she broke the kiss, releasing a moan.

“What exactly do you want, Chloe?” he asked.

She looked into his eyes. “You know what I want.”

“Then tell me. You're here, interrupting my work, tell me what you want.”

“I want to fuck,” she said, taking herself by surprise as well as him. “But, if I'm interrupting your work, then I guess I better leave.”

She went to climb off the desk, but with Roman in the way, it was impossible. He stopped her by grabbing her hips, holding her down onto the desk.

“So, my wife is feeling a little horny?” he asked.

His hands once again touched her thighs, and she refused to back down. Her pussy was so slick and her nipples so hard, he knew exactly what she wanted.

“Yes.”

Roman let her go and leaned back. “Show me.”

He was testing her. Seeing how far he could push her.

Chloe didn't know what came over her, but she wasn't going to be a coward. She pulled the negligee up and over her head. The panties she wore were loose and he placed her feet on his thighs, giving her the leverage she needed to lift herself up, which she did. With the panties off, she tossed them to the

side to join her negligee. She was now completely naked as she sat on his desk.

Roman didn't avert his gaze once. He watched her, and she loved it.

Now, he wanted to see just how horny she was, how desperate she wanted to fuck.

Placing a hand on her chest, she slowly slid down, delving between her spread legs. She grazed across her swollen clit and went down further, filling her cunt with her fingers, wishing it was his rock-hard cock. In and out, she pumped her fingers inside herself and then drew them up to tease her clit. She closed her eyes, biting her lip, trying to control the noises.

Roman suddenly grabbed her hand. "I told you to show me, not make yourself come in front of me."

Chloe smiled. Removing her fingers from her pussy, she held them up for him to see. "I'm horny and I want to fuck, Roman."

She didn't know where this newfound confidence had come from, but so far, she was liking it. From the glint in Roman's eyes, she had a feeling he was as well.

They were married. Unless he killed her, they were going to remain married, and she didn't want to make either of their lives a misery, because the truth was she did love him. She had to wait for that love to ebb away, and once it did, she could then be free of him.

What was wrong with having some fun along the way?

Chapter Five

Roman had a feeling Chloe would be horny, and he wasn't wrong. That was why he'd kissed her and left her alone. He'd given her space, time to think about him, to yearn for him, to be hungry for him.

She had surprised him, though. He figured she would leave the chasing to him, but he loved this woman coming into his office, taking what she wanted. He had to wonder just how far he could push her. Chloe had been a virgin. He'd been the first, and he would be the only one, but he knew deep down there was a passion inside her, a lust he'd been wanting to explore. It was one of the many reasons he married her.

She intrigued him. And so far, she'd not let him down.

Pushing away the chair, he stood, opening the buttons of his shirt, one by one, then his pants. He rid himself of his clothes. His cock was already rock-hard. It had been difficult to stay away from her, especially as he knew exactly what he wanted. Chloe was a very desirable woman.

He couldn't look away as her hand relaxed against her thigh. Picking up her wrist, she held her fingers out, and he took them into his mouth, each one in turn, licking the cream from them.

"I want those lips wrapped around my cock," he said.

Roman sat back down and Chloe climbed off his desk. She was the most beautiful thing he'd ever had on his desk.

She lowered to her knees. Chloe had sucked his cock before, and he'd guided her. This would be the first time since they were married.

She wrapped her fingers around his length, and he expected to feel her shaking. Her grip was firm, but not painful. He watched as she flicked the tip of his cock with her tongue. There was already a lot of pre-cum spilling from the tip. Her lips covered the head, and then slowly, inch by inch, she sucked down on his length. Roman grabbed her hair,

wrapping it around his fist, holding the locks out of the way of his view. He didn't want anything to hinder the view of her lips on his dick.

She sucked down on him, teeth retracted, and he couldn't help but close his eyes as she went deep, allowing him to hit the back of her throat. The first time he did this, he nearly choked her. Chloe had tears in her eyes, but she'd not wanted him to stop. He allowed her to set the pace. She started slowly, pulling away from the base, sucking on the tip. When she used just a little of her teeth, he was so sensitive he winced, but it wasn't painful. It was almost too good. He struggled between the pleasure and pain threshold.

This time, as he hit the back of her throat, she just stayed there. Her tongue brushed across the bottom and he groaned. Roman expected her to pull back, but she didn't. She sucked a little harder, taking him deeper. He felt her work past her gag reflex and he growled.

“Fuck!”

She pulled away from him, but she dripped saliva all over his length. Chloe did this again, and he fucking loved it. Feeling her take more of him. His first assumptions had been correct. There was a lust, a passion, burning bright within his wife, and all he had to do was allow it to spark. He didn't want a dull wife.

He had been fascinated by Chloe. He knew if she could find it in her heart to forgive and move on, they could be fire together.

Roman didn't want to blow down her throat, so he used the grip he had on her hair to pull her off his length. He lifted her up, putting her back over his desk, and placing her feet on the edge. Chloe placed her hand between her thighs and began to stroke her clit.

Roman watched as she took her pleasure. He slapped her hand out of the way and she gave a little yelp.

Spreading the lips of her sex, he pressed his tongue to her aching bud, flicking back and forth across. She screamed

his name, arching up. The moment she started to get accustomed to his touch, he moved down, going to her entrance, and plunging his tongue inside her cunt. In and out he pressed, driving her higher and wilder.

Her hands went to her head as if she couldn't handle what he was doing, and he drew his tongue back up, lapping at her clit. He placed his teeth around her clit and used just a little bit of pressure, not too much, but enough to dance between that fine line. She screamed his name, and then he wanted her to come.

His cock was aching and rock-hard. He wanted to be inside her so badly.

Roman already knew his wife's body, and felt the change inside her. She came hard and he pressed a hand on her stomach, keeping her in place, making her ride the wave of her orgasm. He didn't want her to stop until she felt everything. He wanted her soaking wet, dripping, so that he could fuck her hard.

"Please," she said.

He loved it when she begged.

Staring into her eyes, he slowed down the movements, allowing the orgasm to last. He watched her begin to lose control, knowing he was pushing her just a little past the edge, but he wanted her to dance on that cloud. She looked stunning, naked, spread out and open for him.

Roman stopped the moment she couldn't handle any more, but he pressed the tip of his cock to her entrance, and then slowly, inch by glorious inch, sunk into her tight, hot cunt.

He dropped his eyes to between their legs and pulled out of her pussy, seeing his cock covered in her orgasm. With only the tip inside, he grabbed her hips, and then slammed in hard and deep, fucking her with three to four thrusts, then he stopped. Running his hands up her body, he cupped her hips, then up to her tits, pressing the mounds together and pinching each nipple before going back to her hips. Holding onto the

delicious curves, he thrust hard and deep inside her. She wrapped her legs around his waist, and he drove inside her, about to lose control.

Pulling out of her pussy, he moved her so that she was spread across his desk. Spreading her legs, he slid balls-deep back inside, holding onto her hips as he took her harder. He pulled back just a little and admired the curve of her ass.

Running one of his hands from her hip toward her ass, he placed his thumb right across that forbidden entrance. She gasped and he felt her tense up but at the same time, he also felt her pussy ripple around his cock.

“Would you like me to fuck your ass, Chloe?”

She gave a moan that could have been agreement or not. He knew she would love feeling him inside her ass. He fucked her slowly, making her take every single inch of him, and then drawing back to stroke across her anus. His name echoed off the walls and he knew he wouldn't last. Not being with her for a couple of days was driving him insane.

Holding onto her hips, he drove inside her and spilled his release deep inside her womb, flooding her with the amount of cum he gave her. Roman lingered for several seconds, but it could have been minutes. Easing out of her pussy, he lifted Chloe onto the desk.

Her face was flushed and he pushed some of her hair out of the way. Staring into her eyes, he ran his fingers through her slit, gathering both of their releases, and then he held his fingers to her mouth.

“Open for me.”

She did so without any hesitation.

He pressed them into her mouth. “That is the both of us together.”

She moaned around his fingers, and he couldn't help but feel love for this woman.

Chloe looked across the nightclub at her husband.

It had been three nights since she had visited him at his office. He'd been a busy man.

On one of the days, he had no choice but to leave her at the apartment. During those hours, she had sat or wandered around the apartment, wondering what he was doing. She'd been tempted to go to his office, but she didn't want to invade his privacy.

When he had come home, she'd been in the living room, flicking through the television, and he'd come up to her, cupped the back of her neck, and kissed her. Chloe couldn't remember how they made it to the bedroom, but they had at some point. She couldn't get enough of him. Even as she promised herself that would be the last time, it never was.

Picking up her drink, she took a tentative sip, making sure it wasn't something alcoholic. She had sworn off the stuff after the last tequila party.

Roman was talking with three men and she sat, watched, and waited. He had been stopped from going to the VIP section, so he left her at the bar, giving strict instructions for the barman to watch her. The bar had gotten busy, and she hadn't seen the barman for nearly five minutes.

"You're looking lonely tonight," a man said. He was dressed all in black, suddenly blocking her view of her husband. He had blonde hair, blue eyes, but not quite as blue as her husband's.

"I'm not lonely," she said.

There was something about this guy that gave her the creeps. She couldn't quite put her finger on it, but it was annoying her as he didn't take the hint. He had the boy-next-door look, but there was something in his eyes she didn't trust, and made her place her palm over her glass. She noticed the way he kept looking toward her drink.

"Let me buy you a drink," he said, clicking his fingers.

"I've already got a drink."

He tutted. "Water is not a good enough drink here."

“You know my husband is over there.” She nodded her head toward Roman. He hadn’t noticed the man talking to her.

With him distracted, Chloe reached into his pockets. This was something her brother had taught her to do as a kid. She never went around picking pockets or thieving, but they used to play and see who could feel the other when they were stealing. Chloe had become very good at it. She pulled out a small packet with white pills, and she didn’t like it. Glancing around the nightclub, she saw a lot of women.

Now, all she wanted was Roman. Getting to her feet, she leaned in close to the man. “Should I also mention that my man is part of the Zaitsev Bratva?” she said. “I believe he owns this nightclub.”

Before she could say anything more, Roman had spotted her and was heading toward her. Her pest chose that moment to disappear and she tried to keep an eye on him in the crowd.

“Who was that man?” Roman asked.

Chloe grabbed his hand, a little shaken she had used her husband’s associations to help her. Stepping out of the main clubhouse, she saw a room with a sign that said STAFF ONLY, and she pulled him through. No one was around.

“I just took this from that man. I have no idea who he is, but I think this is the date rape drug, or something. I don’t know. He seemed intent on buying me a drink.”

“You pick pockets?”

Chloe frowned. “No, not really. It was an old stupid game my brother and I played as kids. Will you please take this seriously?”

“I am taking this seriously. I already have my men grabbing him.”

“Wait? How?”

“A woman has just passed out in the bathroom. One of my men was passing the ladies bathroom, put two and two together and realized we had a fucking pervert working my

nightclub.” Roman cupped her face, tilting her head back. “He didn’t give you anything?”

“He didn’t get the chance.” She wouldn’t drink from her glass anymore as she had left it unattended. “When he wouldn’t go away, I pointed you out.”

“And then he left you alone?”

“No, I told him you were part of the Zaitsev Bratva.”

Roman touched her cheek with the back of his knuckles. The touch was so sweet, so delicate. “How are you now?”

“I don’t know.” She really didn’t know. “I never thought I would use ... Zaitsev Bratva to help protect me.”

“Not every part of us is bad.”

“You killed my family,” she said.

“There was more than Zaitsev that day, Chloe. You know it, and so do I.”

Tears filled her eyes and she pulled away from him. Taking a deep breath, she opened her eyes after gaining control of her emotions. “I think it’s time that I head back.”

She still didn’t refer to his apartment as home. It was his apartment, his place, his home. She knew it drove him a little crazy.

Roman took hold of her hand. “No, I brought you here to dance, and I’m not going to let a little shit spoil our fun.” He pulled her out of the staff room and onto the dance floor, before she could refuse him.

She wanted to yell at him, slap his chest, but the moment they were on the floor and he wrapped his arms around her, all of that faded. Chloe no longer felt angry. She felt a sense of peace as he slid his thigh between her legs.

The anger had melted away, but now she felt something else, something a little more powerful as he gripped the back of her neck. Roman was in total control.

Even as they were surrounded by multiple couples, they faded away, and all that remained was the two of them. His thigh kept gliding up, going toward her pussy, and each touch heightened her arousal. All the fear and panic left her body.

One song moved into another, and when she couldn't stand it any longer, it was her turn to take his hand. She didn't lead him to the VIP section, but brought him back to his office. Some of his men followed and she closed the door, giving them some space.

Roman didn't say a word as she pushed him onto the sofa and then moved to straddle him. They hadn't worn a condom since they had gotten married and she knew it was a risk, but she didn't want to stop. She also didn't want a condom between them. Chloe loved feeling his naked cock inside her.

Straddling his waist, she let out a moan as he ran his hands up her body, curving around her hips, going down toward her ass, and then running his hands over her body. He pulled the dress up, and she moaned as he touched her pussy.

“Your panties are soaked, Chloe.” He slid his fingers beneath the elastic and stroked through her slit. Roman pressed two fingers inside her and she let out a moan.

There was sudden pressure at the top of her bodice and she heard fabric tear. Opening her eyes, she was shocked to see that Roman had torn the dress from her body.

He took one of her tits into his mouth, biting at the tip. His other hand gripped the flesh of her ass, tightening his hold to the point of pain, but not going over it. He added another finger into her pussy, using his thumb to stroke her clit.

“You want my cock, don't you?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“Then get my cock out, baby.”

She reached for his pants and released the button, followed by the zipper. He was already rock-hard. Wrapping her fingers around the base, she began to work his cock as

Roman did the same with her pussy. Suddenly, Roman pulled his fingers from her and spread his hands either side of the sofa.

“You know what to do. Take what you want, Chloe. Fuck me.”

He didn't help, not as she grabbed his cock, and lined it up to her pussy. She had never done this before, but it was like they were magnets. She placed the tip of his cock against her, and then, inch by inch, sank down onto his length. They both cried out, but still Roman didn't touch her.

She sat on his cock, taking him to the hilt. Chloe closed her eyes and reached out, grabbing his shoulders, using them as leverage as she began to work up and down his length, driving harder onto him.

“That's it, baby, take it all. You want my cum, don't you, ride it, fuck yesh. Let me see those tits bounce for me. You're all mine, Chloe. Only my dick will satisfy you. Fuck yeah, I know you're close, stop and make yourself come all over my cock.”

She kept one hand on his shoulder and the other reached between her legs and began to stroke her clit. She was so close, and with his cock deep inside her, she wasn't able to prolong it. She came hard and fast. Any other time, she would have been mortified with how quickly she came, but not this time.

Returning her hand to his shoulders, she held onto him and began to fuck him, wanting him to fill her pussy. She stared into his eyes. Even as she had fought it, there was no denying it. She loved this man with all of her being.

She rode his cock, and when she felt him pulse inside her, it was her name that spilled from his lips.

Chapter Six

Roman checked over the necklace. It did look exactly like the one in the pictures he'd seen, but this could have been one of many produced. According to Chloe, her father had this one specially engraved.

"Where is the engraving?" Roman asked.

The man shook as he reached out and turned the locket over. "You need to open it, sir."

Roman checked the lock and flicked it open, staring down inside. There were no pictures and as he held it up to the light, he saw the engraving, *Mine Forever*.

This was Chloe's mother's locket, given to her during her courtship with Chloe's father. It was a sweet kind of romance when he heard Chloe talk about it.

He dealt with the man who had the ability to find anything, paid him a great deal, and then sent him away. He'd left Chloe at the apartment today so he could take care of some of the more delicate sides of his work. She didn't need to see a few men get hurt, and she didn't need to know that he was on the hunt for all the possessions she had no choice but to sell.

There was no way for him to acquire the house, as it had been purchased and knocked down as some kind of start-up neighborhood thing. He had looked into it — Chloe's childhood home was no more, and the land where it stood actually had two homes now.

The locket was something he'd gotten along with several other items of furniture and trinkets. When the time was right, he'd take her to where he'd stored them all, but not now. Running a hand down his face, in the privacy of his office, he opened the locket again.

"My parents had this ... love. I don't know how to describe it. They just seemed to gravitate toward each other. Wherever he was, she wasn't too far, and vice versa, you know."

He didn't have a clue.

Love wasn't something he was accustomed to in his world. It was death, power, and greed. The women were usually as bloodthirsty as the men, determined to make it in this world. Their constant thirst for power rivaled their husbands'.

Pocketing the locket, he got to his feet and moved toward the window. Glancing out over the city below, he marveled at the place that never slept. The city full of secrets, lies, and the deadliest of sins. And yet, his thoughts returned to Chloe.

It would have been a lot easier to kill her. She worked in one of the many bars they owned. The mess would have been easy to clean up, and he didn't know what it was about her that saved her. He was surrounded by beautiful women with just the snap of his fingers. His men would bring women to match what he desired, with no questions asked.

They were nothing like Chloe. They didn't have the same fire or passion. The women would try to lure him, bring him to his knees, so they could have the title of owning Roman Sidorov.

Not Chloe.

During their year of dating, when she didn't have a clue who he was, she'd been charming. When they were out enjoying a nice meal, Chloe would wait for him to order before ordering herself. Any dessert she ate, she'd share. Even when they went to the fair, she made sure he took part in every ride. She didn't try to play him.

It had been natural with Chloe, and the truth was, in all his adult years, he'd never had a woman just *be* with him. He was used to women putting on a show. Chloe had no qualms about wearing a pair of sweatpants, a large stained shirt, and hanging out with him. Yes, he'd seen her wearing beautiful dresses, skirts, tops, the works, but she also showed him that other side of her.

He found her refreshing. Just thinking about her made him hard. And ... he missed her.

What the fuck was wrong with him? Roman didn't miss anyone.

But it didn't stop him from taking a seat, reaching for his cell phone, and dialing his apartment. It kept ringing until it went to voicemail. Rather than call his men, he checked in on Chloe again, and this time, she answered it.

"Hello," she said.

"What took you so long to answer?" he asked.

She also sounded a little out of breath.

"You do realize the proper protocol when answering the phone is to say hello back?"

"Answer the question."

"You're a little moody today. What's wrong with you?"

"Nothing is wrong, I want to know why you took so long to answer the phone."

He heard her blow out a breath. Was this woman exasperated with him? He couldn't help but smile.

"If you must know, I was cleaning our bathroom, and I couldn't figure out where the phone was coming from. I had to keep listening for it to ring, and the louder it got, the closer I was to it."

"It's in my office," he said.

"I know that now, and trust me, I didn't like the idea of coming inside here either."

"You do realize you don't have to clean," he said. "I have a house cleaner."

"So? I like cleaning, and besides, you realize you left me here with absolutely nothing to do."

"There's a television."

"Yeah, and I got bored after the first thirty minutes. I had to do something else. Besides, I like cleaning." She

snorted.

He knew she hated cleaning, but she always said it was a necessary evil as she hated dirty environments.

“What are you wearing?” he asked.

“Be careful, Roman, this is going to turn you on.”

Again, he couldn't help but smile. “I'm listening.”

“Sweats that have holes in certain places, at the knees, from all the cleaning. My shirt is way too big, it hangs off my shoulder, and there are bleach stains. I think there might be a few questionable stains, but I would hate to really think about where they came from.” She had deepened her voice, to almost make it quite sexual.

Roman burst out laughing.

“But if you must know, underneath my dirty, filthy cleaning clothes, I'm wearing the red lacy set with the blue ribbons that you got me.”

This made him stop laughing.

“The red and blue?” he asked.

“Yes, the red and blue. It feels so comfortable.”

“Take off your shirt.”

She let out a gasp. “Roman, inside your office, how could I do that?”

“Easy, take it off, and the pants as well.”

He was pretty sure he heard her putting the phone down and out of the way. Roman heard rustling but he couldn't be sure what the sound was.

“They're off,” she said.

“Sit down in my chair.”

As she did so, she let out a little gasp. He had a leather chair. “It's cold,” she said.

“Don't worry, you're going to be warming yourself up.”

He felt his dick getting even harder, imagining his woman sitting in his office, in just a pair of panties and a bra he'd bought her. Roman had picked them up last week. He'd walked past a lingerie shop, had no choice but to stop, admire them, and then go and purchase them in Chloe's size. They were perfect for her. This was the first time Chloe had worn them.

"Put your legs up on my desk and spread them open."

"Yes, Sir."

He liked that.

"I'm going to get you to say that to me more often."

"I'll look forward to it, Sir."

Yes, he liked the sound of that.

"Now, I want you to put your hand over your pussy."

She let out a little gasp. "Like this?"

"Yes, exactly like that. Rub yourself over the lace. How does it feel?" he asked.

"So soft." Another little breathy moan escaped. "And they're wet, Roman."

"Tell me, baby, are you missing me?" he asked.

"Yes, so much. So, so, so much. I wish you were here."

"I will be. Now, slide your fingers beneath the fabric and start to stroke your clit."

She released another moan. "Oh, Roman," she said.

The sounds she made were driving him crazy.

Chloe couldn't believe she was doing this. Sitting in Roman's office chair, naked but for the sexy lingerie he'd gotten her, with her hand beneath the fabric of her panties as she stroked herself. Another moan left her.

"Are you touching your clit?"

“Yes,” she said. Chloe couldn’t believe how wet she was.

Closing her eyes, she imagined Roman there with her. “Are you touching yourself?” she asked. Even as she asked the question, she couldn’t help but feel her face heat up.

“You want me to touch my dick?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“Then tell me to,” he said.

Chloe couldn’t help but smile, and she stroked her clit, back and forth, over and over. With her eyes closed, she could imagine him standing in front of her, touching his cock. Over the phone line, she heard the unmistakable sound of his zipper opening.

“Touch your cock,” she said.

“I’m holding my dick, baby, and I’m thinking about it being you.”

“Would I be holding it tightly, or just lightly caressing?”

“You’ll hold me just right. You know what I like.” He liked it quite tight, but not painful. He liked to dance on the rough side of things.

She continued to work her clit, imagining him working his dick. Chloe wished he was here right now. She’d be able to touch him, explore his body.

He lied to me.

She ignored that voice in her head — the one that wanted to hate him — but the truth was she couldn’t hate him. Roman had made her fall in love with him, and it wasn’t quite so easy to fall out of love with him. He was her man.

“Slide your fingers down,” Roman said.

She did so.

“Now, press two fingers inside yourself. Are you tight?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“Do you wish it was my cock inside you?”

“Yes. Oh, Roman, are you hard?”

“Yes.”

She pumped her fingers in and out of her. “Would you make me suck your cock?”

“Would you like that, baby?”

“Yes. I’d like to feel your big dick inside my mouth.” Without him in the room, Chloe let her imagination run wild. “I love it when you hold my hair, how you tighten it in your fist. I’d love for you to make me go on my knees, order me to open my mouth, and slide your big, fat cock inside my mouth.” She let out a moan. “I don’t even mind if it’s covered in my arousal.” She couldn’t help but lick her lips. “You’d make me lick all of my cum off your cock, getting it nice and wet, and then you’ll have me taking you.”

She was so close to her own peak. Stroking her clit, she let out a moan.

“Roman, I’m going to come.”

“Not yet, tell me more.”

It was too late. She was so close. “Come home and I’ll show you.” She cried out as she came. Rubbing her clit, stroking higher and higher, she let go of the phone to grip the edge of the chair. Afterward, she collapsed against the chair. Picking his phone back up, she said his name but he wasn’t there.

Chloe licked her lips and wondered if he had hung up accidentally, or if he was on the way home. Chloe put the phone back in the cradle and now that Roman wasn’t here, she didn’t want to be in his office. She rushed out of his office and through to the bedroom. One glance in the mirror and she saw that she looked flushed all over. Roman had a good eye. The lingerie set was stunning. She was tempted to remove it, but then changed her mind.

Glancing around the bedroom, she had an idea. She believed he was coming home, so she knelt on the bedroom floor. Chloe quickly ran her fingers through her hair and waited. She didn't know how long it was, but she heard the apartment door open.

“Chloe?” Roman's voice echoed off the walls.

“I'm in here,” she said.

Seconds later, he stepped into the room.

“Hello, Sir,” she said, tilting her head back. “I was wondering when you'd arrive.”

“Oh, fuck me. You're a fucking dream,” he said.

He went to his knees, sinking his fingers into her hair, tilting her head back, and kissing her hard. She released a moan, unable to contain her excitement. Roman ran his hands down her body, going from her hair down, touching her tits, then down even more to her ass.

Chloe wasn't sure how it happened, but they were on the bed. The suit he wore, and her pretty lacy panties and bra were now on the floor.

She cried out as he sucked on her nipple. There was an answering heat between her thighs. Almost like her breast and clit were connected as she felt her arousal start to build.

Roman slid his hand down her body, stroking across her nub, and she was still so sensitive. His touch lightened, but then he moved down, thrusting a single finger to the knuckle inside her. Another moan escaped her.

“You're so fucking wet, baby, it's beautiful,” he said.

She couldn't help but smile. “It's all for you.”

“That's right. No one else will ever know just how perfect you are. Just how dirty.”

He pulled his fingers from her pussy and held them up to her lips. “Lick them,” he said.

She took each finger into her mouth, sucking one by one.

“Fucking perfect,” he said.

He spread her legs wide and knelt between them. The hard tip of his cock pressed against her core, and she moaned his name. Slowly, he began to fill her, and she yelled his name, wanting more. He grabbed hold of her hips and fucked her harder.

“Watch, baby,” he said.

She couldn't help but look down and watch as he began to fill her. He pulled all the way out of her until only the tip remained and then slammed every single inch within her. It felt amazing. She didn't want him to stop.

“Fuck, you feel so good,” he said.

She wrapped her legs around his waist, but suddenly he pulled out of her and moved toward the edge of the bed. Chloe whimpered, already missing him.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

He grabbed her ankle and she gasped as he pulled her down toward the bed. Once she was at the edge, Chloe sank down to the floor before him. She knew exactly what he was going to do and as he wrapped her hair around her fist, she felt an answering arousal between her thighs.

“Fuck, baby, you look beautiful.”

He pressed the tip of his cock to her lips, and she couldn't help but lick the tip, which was covered in pre-cum. She slid her tongue across the mushroomed head, then down the long vein at the side. She tasted herself and then covering the whole tip of his cock, she took him slowly until he hit the back of her throat. There was a point where she knew she was going to gag, but she fought it as long as possible.

Roman thrust his hips, hitting that spot. She couldn't help but gag, then he eased out of her mouth and began to do some shallow thrusts. Chloe loved the feel of him inside her mouth. He was long, hard, thick, and yet soft at the same time. He pumped inside her mouth, and she knew he wouldn't last.

“Baby, you need to tell me if you don’t want a mouthful of cum.”

Chloe continued to suck on his length. She wanted to feel him lose control and she wanted to taste him.

“Oh, fuck me,” he said.

He filled her mouth, exploding his release to the back of her throat. His orgasm was so unexpected, but instinct took over and she began to swallow down his cum, relishing every single drop.

The moment there was nothing more to give, he sank to his knees, cupping her face, and he stroked her cheek. “You’re fucking amazing,” he said.

Chloe smiled up at him. There were no words as he cupped her face and then pulled her in for a kiss. She grabbed his arms, and even as she was completely sated, she couldn’t help but wonder if he ... loved her. It was the oddest of feelings to be swept over by.

Chloe had fallen in love with him, during their year that was a lie, when she knew him as Roman Smith, small businessman. Falling out of love with him was impossible. She loved him so completely.

But, did he love her?

Roman had lied from the beginning. She wasn’t sure she even wanted to know the truth.

Chapter Seven

Roman knew there was no holding back with Chloe. He wasn't going to be able to hide his bride away forever. There weren't many celebrated events within the Zaitsev Bratva, but when a Brigadier finally marries, it is always cause for celebration.

He couldn't turn down the invitation, nor could he allow Chloe to seem disrespectful by not showing up. When she'd been nothing more than a job, it was easier to go about his business, but not today. The sun was high in the sky, but the limousine they were driving in shaded it all out. Chloe wore the white dress he'd asked her to wear.

"I don't think the guests are supposed to wear white to a wedding. Isn't it kind of ... bitchy?" she asked.

This was a couple of hours before. The theme of the wedding was white and black. Women were meant to wear white, the men wearing black. Roman had his designer suit on, and he'd picked out the white wraparound-style dress for his woman. She looked so beautiful in it.

"I won't leave your side," he said.

"You know I don't want to be here," Chloe said, as they finally arrived at the country estate where the wedding was being held.

This was the first time since their wedding that Chloe had been exposed to the Zaitsev Bratva.

"I know," he said. "But we all must do things we don't want to do. This is business."

"Business. Right. And nothing gets in the way of business. Not even civilian people who were just living their lives without a care in the world."

"Chloe?"

"It's fine. It is just something I have to put up with, right? Just another part of our charm. You know, the fact that

you lied about who you were. That you never loved me, and our whole wedding was a complete sham.”

The limousine came to a stop. Chloe reached for the door handle. Roman had the sense to get the driver to put the child lock on so she couldn't make her escape. He grabbed her hand and pulled her in close.

“What?” she asked. “Are you angry with me? Are you going to hit me?”

Other than spanking her ass, he'd never raised his hand to her in anger, or to cause fear. He would never hit Chloe.

Cupping her cheek, he forced her to tilt her head back. “I know this is hard for you. To you, that night, everyone was part of your family's death. I can promise you, no one here had anything to do with that night. They don't even know who you are. Only Zaitsev, he's the only one who knows. As far as everyone is concerned, you are mine. I made my claim of you.”

“Why are you telling me this?”

“The only person you're allowed to be angry at, is me.”

She glared at him. “I hate you.”

“No, you don't.”

She growled at him, and he found the sound so utterly cute.

“No, you don't,” he said, gripping the back of her neck, and kissing her hard. “You don't hate me.”

“But you don't love me.”

Roman stared at her and saw the tears in her eyes. She tucked her head down, but then she glanced past his shoulder. “We better go inside.”

Gritting his teeth, he opened the door and stepped out. He gave Chloe a few seconds before reaching for her hand. She took it, but he felt the shake of her palm.

Chloe thought he didn't love her. What was love? He didn't know the emotion. He certainly didn't understand it. Love made men weak. It made them fools.

No, he wasn't in love.

He wasn't capable of loving anyone or anything.

Stepping into the main foyer, he shook his head at the lavishness being exposed. There were flowers everywhere. The scent of them hung heavy in the air. There were so many different kinds — daffodils, daisies, roses, petunias, dahlias. He shook his head and held onto his wife. There were a lot of people — men he recognized, several other Brigadiers, associates, powerful politicians, and many more. He noticed Zaitsev himself, who gave him a nod.

“There are a lot of people here,” Chloe said.

“They would have all been at our wedding, but I knew you wouldn't approve.”

There were several passing waiters, holding trays of champagne. When one passed him by, he took two glasses and handed one to Chloe.

“You're allowing me to drink?” she asked.

“One glass before the ceremony. It won't hurt.”

She took a sip and he saw her wrinkle her nose.

“Yeah, I think this is going to last the whole ceremony.”

Chloe wasn't a big drinker. Roman checked out the room, looking for any sign of an attack. The Zaitsev had a lot of enemies who would love to take advantage of the moment. He wasn't a fool, and knew this put them at risk. So did Zaitsev, but he refused to lower the numbers for any wedding. The only reason he had done so for him was at his personal request, and considering who Chloe was, it had been one he'd gone through with.

Sipping at the champagne, he took hold of Chloe's hand as they were escorted out of the back into the lavish garden that had been set up as a church. He spotted the priest

at the end of the aisle. The seats on the bride's side were all white, and the men's side were all black.

Roman didn't get it, but he didn't have to. All he needed to do was get through this wedding and get Chloe home. He saw several of the women sitting in the bride's area, but Roman wouldn't allow Chloe to go anywhere.

"I think I have to go over there," Chloe said.

"No, you're not leaving my side." He wrapped his arms around her shoulders, and made her sit with him.

"Roman?"

"Chloe, I know you didn't want to come to this, but I won't allow you to leave." He pressed a kiss to her temple. "And no one is going to make you."

She was tense in his arms, clearly waiting for someone to have a word, or order her to the bride's section. No one did. Chloe wasn't the only woman in the groom's section. There were a few women who stayed by their man's side. Roman didn't let her go.

The music sounded and Roman wasn't interested in the event. He was much more distracted by his woman's scent and the feel of her body against his.

"She's beautiful," Chloe said.

The bride would always look stunning on her wedding day, but no one else would even compare to his bride. Chloe was stunning. Even when she'd been a little terrified and shocked, she was utterly breathtaking. Roman didn't regret marrying his woman.

The bride gave her flowers to one of the women, and then turned toward her groom. The priest cleared his throat, and then for Roman came the boring procedure. He'd hated listening to the priest at his own wedding. He'd wanted it to be done with, just as he wanted it to be over now.

It wasn't over. The bride and groom had vows. Very long, wordy vows.

Roman felt like he was going to throw up, but then he heard the snuffle and looked down at his wife.

“What’s the matter?” he asked.

“It’s just so beautiful. They love each other.”

Roman looked up to the altar. That wasn’t entirely accurate. The bride was playing a part, because he was pretty sure there was a price tag on today being successful.

Love matches didn’t occur in the Zaitsev Bratva. Business. Money. The transition of different kinds of power. But never love.

Zaitsev had given him an ultimatum when it came to Chloe. Either kill her or marry her, because he was getting bored with him taking too long to decide.

He wasn’t going to kill her. Marrying her was the easiest option. Roman wasn’t going to tell Chloe those finer details.

The couple turned around and he had no choice but to clap as the rest of them did. Always going through the motions. They all stood and he placed a hand on Chloe’s hip, keeping her close.

He knew there were a lot of vultures circling at this wedding. Many of them would like to make his life difficult. Some weren’t happy about not being invited to his wedding, and he didn’t give a fuck. They were not going to hurt his woman. He wouldn’t allow it.

Chloe didn’t know what Roman was hiding, or why he was being so domineering. Part of her loved it, another wanted to just ask him to stop.

She loved his hands on her, the fact he didn’t leave her side, but at the same time, she couldn’t help but wonder why. If he was so worried about her coming, why allow her to in the first place? It made no sense to her. The wedding had been such a beautiful affair. Throughout the drive, she’d been worried that Roman was going to make her look like a careless

fool for wearing white. She was so thankful to see all the women wearing the same color.

The ceremony had been beautiful. Afterward, everyone had to have a photograph, including herself and Roman.

They didn't have to travel to another venue. She saw the staff quickly rush out to set up the chairs.

Roman didn't leave her side, his hands on her waist. The couple did the rounds, shaking hands, hugging.

"Do you know them?" Chloe asked.

"Yes, I know him."

"Will he be a good husband?" she asked.

Roman shook his head and she couldn't help but smile.

"What?"

"This isn't about love, Chloe. This is all business."

She highly doubted that, but she didn't have time to question as they once again went back outside to be seated.

She and Roman were close to the main couple. Several men approached Roman, shook his hand, and then looked toward her, giving Roman no choice but to introduce her. She offered her smile. Her mother had always taught her the value of manners. Even though she hadn't been happy to be part of the Zaitsev Bratva, and he'd manipulated her into being his wife, she wasn't going to embarrass him.

"You know you can go and mingle," Chloe said. "I don't mind."

Roman had a curl of her hair wrapped around his finger. "There will be time for that."

She rolled her eyes. "Please don't worry. I'm not going anywhere."

He cupped her cheek and pulled her close. "You're right." He pressed a kiss to her lips.

The waiters brought out plates of food and Chloe picked at it while listening to the speeches. Then there was

time for the first dance, and the couple were so sweet together. Her wedding would have been just as magical if it hadn't been for the revelation of who her husband really was. It had come as a complete and total surprise to her, and not one she'd been expecting.

She clasped her hands together and loved the sight before her.

“Come and dance with me,” Roman said.

Couples were already joining on the dance floor.

She took Roman's hand, and they stepped onto the dance floor together. “Have I told you how beautiful you look today?” he asked.

“You might have said it a couple of times, but not a lot.” She attempted to tease.

Seconds passed.

“How are you?”

“I'm fine. Like you said, no one here had anything to do with it. There's no point in causing a scene.” Her mother would be so embarrassed of her if she did so. “This is not my wedding and I'm not going to ruin anyone else's big day.”

Roman's hands danced toward her ass.

“Good.”

“I do need to use the bathroom, though. Do you think I can leave you long enough to go there?” Chloe asked.

“I'll take you.”

She rolled her eyes as he took her hand. He locked their fingers together, and they stepped back into the main house.

They walked down a long corridor to the bathrooms. “I'll wait here.” He pressed a kiss to her knuckles.

She offered him a smile and then stepped into the main bathroom. The moment she caught sight of the bride, she stopped. The bride looked up and then back down to her cell

phone. Her lips were pursed and she tapped her foot impatiently.

“What?” the bride asked, sounding a little annoyed.

“I ... you look beautiful.”

“Yeah, I know. That’s what thousands of dollars will pay. Trust me, I know I look good. The perfect part?” She shook her head. “You look good as well.”

“Thank you.”

“How much did you get?” the bride asked as Chloe was about to enter a stall.

“What?”

“You’re a Bratva bride, aren’t you? You’re married to one of the men.”

“Roman Sidorov, yes.”

“Well, how much did you get paid? I know he’s closely linked to the Zaitsev, so I bet you got a fortune, didn’t you?”

“I’m not sure I follow you?”

“I’m twenty-one years old. Do you really think I’d marry a man twice my age?” She snorted. “I have to let that old dude touch me, and I wasn’t going to do that without getting some kind of deal out of it. I settled on a monthly allowance of my choice, as well as a lump sum.”

Chloe was twenty-five years old. Roman was forty years old. That was a fifteen-year age gap, but she didn’t need money to be with him.

“I ... there is no money.”

The bride wrinkled her nose.

“You don’t love your husband?” Chloe asked.

“Love. Don’t make me vomit. Hell, no. Who does love in this world? Not us. We know we have a price tag on our virginity, but nothing else. He’s going to make me spit out a couple of kids as well, and trust me, that will come with a steep price.”

Chloe had thought the ceremony was a beautiful one, but watching the bride now, she understood it had all been a lie. She had no idea what to say.

No money had exchanged hands between her or Roman. There had been no deal, other than one of love. She did love Roman, and it was why she had married him. Nibbling her lip, she wasn't exactly sure what to say.

The bride's cell phone rang, and the moment it did, she looked down at the screen and smiled.

"Showtime. This day is looking up."

She had clearly been paid and she stepped out of the bathroom without another word. Chloe walked into the stall. She sat down and heard several other women enter the bathroom. Chloe didn't know how much more she could take.

"They didn't lie, she is beautiful."

"Yeah, but she's clearly stuck up."

There had to be four women, maybe five. Chloe frowned. Who were they talking about?

"My husband told me we weren't invited because she didn't know. Something about Sidorov's identity being secret. I don't know. How could she not know who Sidorov is?"

"Well, I heard it was all fake. He had to marry her to shut her up."

"No, I've heard rumors that Roman does in fact love her."

They were talking about her.

"It can't be love. There's no way these men love anything other than the color green. Money or gold."

"He won't let her leave his side. He also doesn't force her to attend the dinners. Trust me, this is not just rumor. I even heard he's got a little shrine he's building for her."

"A shrine."

They all began to cackle.

“I wonder how she was able to snag him. I mean, I’ve heard that some of the most beautiful women haven’t been able to get him.”

Chloe flushed the toilet. She hated being talked about. Silence rang out and she opened the door, hating that her face must be bright red. She felt every woman’s gaze on her. She washed her hands, dried them on some tissue, then turned toward them.

“Ladies,” she said.

Mom always taught me to be a good girl. To be nice and polite.

Don’t say anything.

Don’t do anything.

At the door, she couldn’t help but look back toward the room. “If you must know how I’m able to keep Roman, it’s because I suck his cock so very well.”

Chloe regretted the words the moment they came out of her mouth. Stepping out of the bathroom, she rushed toward Roman’s side.

“Are you okay?” Roman asked.

“Why are we the ... why are people gossiping about us?” she asked.

She didn’t look back as the women left the bathroom. There were a few giggles and she closed her eyes, counting to ten, then to twenty, hoping some sanity would return to her brain.

“What did you do?” he asked.

Wrinkling her nose, she shook her head, not wanting to tell him what she had said in the heat of the moment.

“Chloe?”

She told him. “Look, I don’t like being gossiped about, and it’s unfair because I don’t get it.”

He threw back his head and laughed. “You’re not wrong.” He pulled her in close so that his lips were next to her ear. “You do suck my cock so very well.”

“Roman?”

“It’s clearly not lost to you that everyone here knows everyone else’s business. It’s an ongoing theme, and you’re not like everyone else. I didn’t allow everyone to intrude. You’re a mystery because I made it so.”

Chapter Eight

Roman was late again. He promised Chloe he'd make it home by seven, but business had run on, and it had gotten messy. There were a couple of pimps running street corners, kidnapping women. Their operation was sloppy and Zaitsev wanted it all closed down, and the men made an example of. All of them would be in the hospital, and their lives had been permanently changed. They were never going to cause anyone any trouble again.

It was Roman's specialty for Zaitsev. When a message needed to be given, he was the man for the job. The clothes had to go, and the mess cleaned up.

Stepping into his apartment, it was close to midnight, and he saw the rose petals at the door. He winced. Roman had no idea Chloe had planned something this lavish. There were candles, some of them still burning. Closing the door, he walked over the petals and followed the lead toward the bedroom.

His woman was curled up on their bed, and he saw a present laid beside her on his side of the bed. She hadn't stirred. Tiptoeing into the room, he walked up to Chloe's side. She wore one of his favorite negligees.

"You're late," she said, startling him.

"You're awake."

"I heard you arrive home." It was the first time since they'd been married that she called the apartment *home*.

"I had business. What is all this?" he asked. He had saved the important dates, and their anniversary wasn't until next month.

Chloe ran a hand over her face and sat up. "It's nothing."

"It can't be nothing. This is important to you," he said, taking a seat on the bed.

She reached out for the gift. He looked down, a little confused.

“Chloe?”

“Just open it. It’s not anything big or expensive.”

He opened the wrapping and looked at the picture of the two of them and frowned.

“It’s corny. I know our anniversary — when we first met — has come and gone, but I had that picture and I wanted you to have it ... maybe for your office. I know you don’t love me, and it’s so stupid now. It was supposed to be ready for our anniversary, but I got the call the other day, and I had them deliver it.” She went to reach for it. “Roman?”

He pulled it out of her reach. “I love it. What’s with all the flowers?” he asked.

“I wanted to do something nice. That’s all.” She pressed her hands into her lap.

The picture was taken at the bar. He couldn’t quite remember why it was taken, but he’d pulled Chloe against him, and it showed her looking up at him with a smile on her lips. He was going to keep the picture.

“It’s lame,” she said.

“No, it’s not.” He got to his feet.

“Roman?”

He didn’t stop to answer her and instead took it straight to his office, putting the picture in a prominent place on his desk.

“You know, only people who love their wives have pictures of them,” Chloe said. “You don’t have to do that.”

Roman turned toward her. “I don’t know love. I don’t understand love. I never have and I don’t feel it. I care about you, Chloe. I want you to be happy.”

“Do all women married within this Bratva get money?” Chloe asked.

“No.”

“They don’t?”

“I’m starting to think I should have gone into that bathroom with you,” he said.

Chloe chuckled. She pressed a hand to her mouth as she stifled a yawn. “I’m tired.”

“Go to bed, I’ll blow out the candles and come join you.” He watched her leave his office, and Roman rounded his desk and took a seat, staring at the picture of his wife.

Money always passed hands when it came to marriages, but he’d done no negotiation. He had married her because he wanted to.

He rubbed his eyes. The Zaitsev Bratva had taken so much from her. He’d not intended for this life to truly touch her. He hoped to keep her away from it, but there had only been so much he could do. Standing up, he made his way around the apartment, and blew out every single candle, wishing he’d been able to make it home. He stepped into the bedroom and Chloe was already curled up onto her side of the bed, looking completely out of it.

Roman took a quick shower, washing away the day, as well as the memory of what he’d done. Once he was clean, he dried his body and then walked into the bedroom. Climbing into bed, he stayed on his side, giving her some distance, but that was not how he could sleep, nor how he could settle.

Closing the distance, he slid a hand beneath her and guided her over toward him. She released a sigh and his name spilled from her lips. Gripping her hip, he waited for her to get settled and snuggle up against him and the moment she was, he felt his eyes start to close as peace finally settled over him.

Chloe threw up. She just couldn’t keep anything down. Yesterday she had felt incredibly weak. The sickness came in and out all day, and now, at four o’clock in the morning, she hadn’t been able to hold it back. Roman was still home, and he currently held her hair back.

“You’re pregnant,” he said.

“I’m not pregnant.” She held onto the toilet seat as the shivers wracked her body. “I’ll be fine. You might want to stand back in case you catch whatever this is.”

“Pregnant women have morning sickness.”

“Roman, this is not morning sickness. Women wake up and then vomit, they don’t wake up because they’re about to vomit.” She wrinkled her nose and hoped he didn’t answer her because the truth was, she didn’t make a whole lot of sense. She had no idea what the proper protocol was for pregnant women or morning sickness.

She and Roman hadn’t been using condoms and had been married for nearly three months. She hadn’t skipped her period, so she knew she wasn’t pregnant. Pressing her head to the edge of the toilet, she tried to take several deep breaths. Roman still held her hair and was rubbing her back.

“You’re soaking wet,” he said.

Yes, this was a bug. She didn’t know where she had caught it from. Possibly one of his nightclubs. They did go to one on Friday night. It was now Monday morning, and, well, she wasn’t feeling great.

“I can take care of it. You need to sleep, Roman. You’ve got work in the morning.” They had been able to settle into a strange routine. Roman took her to work with him most of the time. She loved to learn what he did on the legal side of things. So far, she didn’t have the first clue what any of his *other* work was like. He didn’t talk to her about the Bratva stuff, and she was thankful for that.

What didn’t help was the fact she was trying to fall *out* of love with him, not more *in* love with him. She wanted to hate him.

“I’m not going anywhere.”

“I’ll be...” She didn’t get chance to finish as her vomit chose that moment to come right up. She made it over the toilet and started to heave.

“I’ve got you, baby. That’s it, bring it all up.”

She kept throwing up, until she was gagging and taking large, deep breaths. “Oh, God.”

Once again, her head was pressed to the toilet and the shivers started to take over.

“Roman, you need to leave.”

“Not happening.” He picked her up and she let out a squeal. He had moved her a little too fast, but she didn’t have to go far.

Roman stepped into the shower and turned on the water. He used his body as a guard, stopping the water from hitting her. She was already freezing cold. She didn’t know if she was going to be able to take much more of it.

“I’ve got you,” he said.

He kept saying that. She wanted to be angry with him, but it was the furthest thing from her mind.

“Roman...” He helped her under the warm water and this time, she moaned. She just couldn’t help it. She’d been so cold and now she felt so warm.

“You’re sick,” he said.

Chloe didn’t even have the energy to come back with a snarky comment. He held her up and her body felt like it weighed a ton. She probably did. Roman didn’t complain, not once.

“I’ve got you,” he said again.

Each time he said so, she felt a huge relief sweep over her body.

She rested against him and Roman peeled the clothes from her body. She helped him as best she could. Her whole body ached. Roman washed her and she was able to stand. She tried to do everything herself but he wouldn’t let her.

“I’ve got you, baby.”

Chloe had no idea why those words helped her, but they did. Sometime during the shower, she had another wave of sickness. Roman took her back to the shower. He finished washing her and then he dried her as well.

Chloe protested as he picked her up. He didn't take her back to the bed, as her side was soaking wet from all the sweating. He lowered her into a chair. She watched, unable to help as he stripped the bed, removed the covers, and then changed it.

Chloe had never seen him make the bed before. "I didn't think you knew how. Don't you have staff to do it?"

"I have a wife who sleeps a little later than me. I'm guessing she's the one who makes our bed."

"Correct."

She groaned, pressing her fingers to her head.

"Are you going to be sick again?"

"No, no. I'm fine."

He grabbed a shirt and a pair of sweatpants.

"These aren't mine," she said.

"I know. They're mine." It was on the tip of her tongue to protest, but she didn't, because the moment the clothes were on her body, what was the point? They smelled like him, and right now, she needed all the comfort she could get.

"Right, time for you to get into bed. I'll call the doctor."

"You don't need to call the doctor." She pouted.

"I'll do what I think is best. You don't have the best track record for taking care of yourself."

She gasped. "That is such a lie." Talking was hurting her head. "I'll be fine. You can go to work. I can take care of myself."

Lying down in bed felt so good. The moment her head touched the cool pillow, her headache began to ease. She

would just rest a little while and then get up and do everything she needed to do. Resting was fine. She wanted to curl up and go to sleep.

“Chloe, I’m not going anywhere.”

“You don’t have to take care of me. I know you don’t love me.” She smiled. “I have to keep telling myself that so I can try and fall out of love with you.” She couldn’t help but pout and she opened her eyes and looked at him. “I think that’s the cruelest thing you’ve done to me.”

He didn’t say a word, just looked at her.

“You made me fall in love with you, and you didn’t love me at all.” It was so tiring talking and her stomach was hurting, and she just needed to fall asleep.

Chapter Nine

“I never get ill,” Roman said, then tried to stop himself from crying out. The pain was ridiculous.

He saw Chloe wince. Whatever she had, she’d given to him, and now he struggled to not vomit.

“You’re not going into work today,” Chloe said, taking over and removing his jacket from him.

“Be careful,” he said, knowing his jacket had several guns. All of them had the safety on, but he wasn’t willing to risk her life.

She slowly, patiently, put the jacket over the back of the chair. Her hand came out and she gently placed it over his head. “You’re burning up.”

“I’m fine. I always run a little hot.” Another stomach spasm hit him and he placed his hand over his mouth.

He hadn’t been sick in a long time. In fact, he couldn’t remember the last time. He had a strong constitution. This made no sense to him how he could be feeling so rotten.

“You’re going to be sick.” She reached out and grabbed his arm. “And you’re shaking. I know you don’t like the idea of being ill, but you have to accept it.”

“I don’t have to accept anything. I don’t believe I’m ill. I’m perfectly fine.”

“Well, how about we get you to the bathroom, just in case? I know you’d hate for me to be cleaning up your vomit, and getting sick on the carpet is a nightmare, trust me.”

The more she talked about cleaning up vomit, the worse he felt.

“I’m going to be sick,” he said.

He allowed Chloe to guide him to the bathroom. There was no way he would allow any of his men to see him like

this. She helped him to the toilet, he sank to his knees, and then the world tried to escape.

This was awful. Roman expected Chloe to go as the smell was even worse, but she stayed. She rubbed his back and soothed him, telling him it was going to be okay. He loved the feel of her hands on his back. She did help to soothe the pain.

“I’m fine,” he said.

She didn’t allow him to move and then he knew why. Another wave of sickness erupted. This time, he was vomiting for so long, he struggled to catch his breath. Once he was done, he couldn’t help but collapse on the bathroom floor. The tile was so cool against his heated flesh.

“You can leave,” he said. “I can do this.”

“Roman, stop being stubborn. I’m not going to leave you. Please, stop it. Also, I’m your wife. Do you think my mom left my dad’s side when he was sick? No, she didn’t.”

“I hate when you talk about your parents,” he said.

“I’m sorry.”

“I failed them,” Roman said. “They should never have been caught up in harm’s way, and every time you talk about them, I know they were good people. They had to be good people, because they had you, and you’re precious.”

There was silence.

“I know they wouldn’t have approved of who I am.”

“Roman, stop.”

“I wanted to do right by you. We took everything from you, and I just wanted to be a reason to give you back your smile. I love it when you smile.” Roman placed a hand to his face and groaned. “I think I smell.”

“You do. We need to get you up, so I can help you shower.”

“Trying to get me naked, Mrs. Sidorov? Are you going to try and seduce me?”

“As charming and easy as I think that might be, I also think it would be cruel, and I’m not cruel. I won’t hurt you.” She touched his arm. “Come on, Roman.”

It took a lot of strength to bring himself up, and he groaned. Everything ached. He’d been in fights and battles that hadn’t hurt as much as this did.

“I think someone poisoned me,” he said.

“Only the stomach flu, or something. You’re a man, so this is going to be, like, ten times worse.”

“You’re mocking me?” he asked.

“A little bit, but it’s only because I want to make you laugh.”

He was on his feet and he turned toward her. The room couldn’t be spinning. He’d stood in this bathroom many times, and it never moved at all. This had to be the illness.

“You do. You make me laugh, Chloe. You make me want to come home. I’ve never felt that way before.” He stroked her cheek.

Chloe grabbed his waist and guided him into the shower. She pushed him up against the wall as she turned the shower on, and she wouldn’t let him move until the water had warmed up. She placed a hand beneath the spray, testing it.

“You’re fine.” She started to pull and tug on his clothes. As she did, she jolted his body and it made him ache even more. “I know. I know. You’re feeling awful. I am trying to be careful.”

She removed his clothes and then grabbed the soap, lathering her hands. Roman wished he wasn’t ill, so that he could enjoy the pleasure of her hands. His skin felt so sensitive and even though he wanted to be aroused, he couldn’t bring himself to be, as he hurt too much.

Chloe slowly and tentatively washed his body. He was much taller than her, so when it came to doing his hair, he had no choice but to kneel before her. This position put him in

direct sight of her stomach. He put his hands at her waist and then leaned down, pressing a kiss to her belly.

“Do you think we’re going to have a child?”

“I don’t know.”

“I think I’m being punished for lying to you. I’d hoped you’d be pregnant by now.”

“Why would you be punished?”

“Because you’re not,” he said. “I don’t want you to go. Not ever.” He wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close.

She was still fully dressed, but he didn’t care. Her hands had been soaping his hair, and he closed his eyes, attempting to breathe her in, but the only smell he got was the one of his shampoo.

“I want you to stay.”

“And you think babies are going to help?”

“Yes.”

“Roman?”

“I want you pregnant. I know you’ll be an amazing mom, and I took so much from you. I want to give it back.” He pressed kisses to her stomach. “I want you to get pregnant.”

“Roman, I need to finish washing you so I can get you back into bed.”

He didn’t want to let her go, but he saw he didn’t have much choice. He still held onto her waist, but this time, he leaned back far enough for her to finish washing his hair. She rinsed the shampoo and then applied conditioner. He was starting to slowly feel like his old self again. A little bit. His stomach still felt way too weak.

Chloe turned off the water and he tried not to let her go.

“I’ve got to grab you a towel.”

He didn't want to let her leave, but he was also getting cold now. She returned seconds later with a couple of towels.

"I'm going to need you to stand," she said.

She held out her hands and he did use her for leverage, but he also made sure not to put too much pressure on her.

"Are you good?" she asked.

The world was still spinning.

"No, no, you're not good." She held her hands tightly around him. "I've got you. I've got you."

She walked him into the bedroom and then perched him on the chair. Chloe dried him, and then changed him into a pair of sweatpants and an ugly-looking shirt.

"Why are you trying to dress me? Don't you want me naked so you can have your wicked way with me?" he asked.

"As tempting as you make that sound, it is not going to happen. Come on, it's time for you to go to bed."

"Aren't you going to join me?" he asked.

"No, I'm going to make you something to eat."

"I can't eat."

"Not now, but after a little rest, you'll be able to eat. Trust me."

"I do trust you, Chloe. You're the only person I trust."

Chloe recalled her mother often described her father as a pain in the ass to care for, but she wouldn't have it any other way. She loved her husband so much, and taking care of him when he needed it most was her specialty.

Chloe loved taking care of Roman. She put all his little confessions down to the illness. She wasn't sure if they were real or not, but she didn't ignore them. The way he was talking in the bathroom sounded like he loved her. That couldn't be right. There was no way Roman had any feelings for her

whatsoever. It wasn't even possible, and yet she felt that hope blooming in her chest.

She finished taking the chicken meat off the bone, and once it was on the chopping board, she ran her knife through it, turning it into small chunks. This was her mother's recipe, and it was perfect. Lots of onions, celery, carrots, and a few bits of garlic. A whole chicken for extra flavor. Herbs. Salt and pepper. This was her mother's miracle cure for her children. Chloe didn't believe it healed anything, but it was always so tasty. She hadn't made it since her mother was gone.

Picking up the chopping board, she slid the pieces of chicken back into the broth, and then took the large wooden spoon and gave it a good stir. It felt right making it again.

Bringing the pot back up to a boil, she then lowered it to a simmer and waited ten minutes. Before the ten minutes were up, she added the frozen peas, and then once they were finished, she gave it a final stir and ladled out a bowlful for Roman. She had gone to check on him. So far, no more sickness, but she didn't want him dry-heaving.

With the bowl and a spoon in her hand, she walked to the bedroom. He let out a moan and then sat up.

"Hey," she said. "It's just me. I've got a bowlful of my mother's soup. It should help make you feel better."

"Your mother?"

"Yes."

"Do you think I should drink it?" he asked.

"Yes, I do. I think it's going to help you feel better, much better."

"And you want me to feel better?" he asked.

"Yes, of course I do." She had no idea what had gotten into him. The flu must be making him a little woozy.

He let out a groan and then placed a pillow behind his back, helping him to stay up. "Everything aches. Why do I feel so fucking rotten?"

“It’s the flu or the bug.”

“*You* didn’t moan like this,” he said.

She couldn’t help but smile. The truth was, she had felt awful, even worse, but she didn’t want to give Roman an excuse to leave, so she’d put up with it, and instead focused on him being there.

Chloe sat on the edge of the bed close to him. “Would you like me to feed you? Or would you like to feed yourself?” she asked.

“You feed me.”

She held the bowl, gave it a small stir with the spoon, and then scooped up some of the soup and lifted the bowl as she presented it to Roman. He took a mouthful and she watched as his eyes closed.

“It’s good,” he said.

She smiled. “Good. That’s good.”

She fed him, pleased that he liked it. Her mother always made sure it was good, and she did taste it for him, but it did bring back memories.

“Do you want children?” he asked.

“Someday, yes.”

“My children?”

“Yes, Roman, your children. Unless you’ve got plans to divorce me?” she asked.

“Never.”

“Never? You don’t think you’re ever going to want to divorce me?” This did surprise her.

“I’m never going to want to divorce you, Chloe. You’re mine.”

That shouldn’t make her happy, but it did. She didn’t let him see how it made her feel, though.

Lifting the spoon, she fed him more food and waited for him to be done.

“You’re a lucky person, Chloe, to have known truly loving parents.”

“I know.”

Roman hadn’t been quite so lucky.

“What was it like when you were a boy?” she asked.

“A nightmare. I didn’t get soup. I still had jobs to do. There was no time to be ill.”

“That’s not good,” Chloe said.

“My father was building his reputation, and he didn’t have time for a weak son. My mom was already losing her mind at the time, so she was useless in taking care of anyone. I like this, Chloe. Would you do this for our children?”

“Yes, I would.”

She wanted to have his children. She wanted to be a mother so badly, but she hadn’t told him that. Even though she wanted to stay angry with him for hurting her, for lying to her, at the same time she couldn’t bring herself to be. What was the point?

She loved him.

Yes, that love had developed out of lies, but at the same time it hadn’t. Roman was the same guy. The only difference was his last name and his associations. Other than that, nothing was different. She noticed he never smiled for anyone. The only person he smiled for was her.

He flirted and teased, which was no different. If anyone was around, he’d just be himself, and she had come to see that.

As much as she wanted to be angry with him and demand a divorce, or force him to leave her alone, she really didn’t want to.

Roman was still Roman, and she had fallen in love with him.

She finished feeding him the soup and he placed a hand to his stomach.

“Are you going to be sick?”

“No, no, I think I’d like a little more soup.”

“I’ll be right back,” she said, getting to her feet. She ladled out some more soup. She’d turned the stove off, but made sure to put the lid on the pan, keeping it nice and warm.

Returning to the bedroom, she saw Roman had snuggled back down into the bed, and was softly snoring. He looked so cute and adorable as he slept.

Chloe sighed. She had already changed the spoon, so she lowered down into the chair and began to eat the bowl of soup she had gotten for him. As she did, she closed her eyes, feeling the essence of her mother surround her.

She knew her mother wouldn’t approve of Roman’s associations with the Zaitsev Bratva, but she also knew her mother would definitely approve of him when it came to her feelings. She couldn’t hide the fact she loved him. That love wasn’t easy to hide.

Even now, taking care of him was a pleasure to her. She loved being with him. Did it make her a bad person?

She finished the soup and carried the bowl back to the sink. Chloe grabbed several containers from the drawer, cleaned them along with the lids, and ladled the soup into the containers. She left the tops off to allow it to cool. She was sure to make a note and stick it to each lid, indicating what she made. Again, this was something her mother did. Once they were cool, she placed the ones they didn’t need into the freezer, and placed the leftovers that didn’t fit into a container into the fridge.

Once everything was clean, she went and took a proper shower, changed into a pair of pajamas, and then settled into the chair in the bedroom, watching over Roman. She loved him so much. This love could not be wrong.

Within the hour of watching him, Roman woke up, and she had to help him to the bathroom. She rubbed his back as he threw up the soup, and he even moaned as he did so.

“I hate this,” he said.

Once he was done, she brushed his teeth for him and then helped him back into bed. He was so out of it, but he grabbed her arm, held her tightly, and pulled her close.

“I do love you.”

“What?” she asked.

Had she heard him right? No, that couldn't be possible. She must not have heard him right.

“Roman?”

He was already fast asleep.

He loved her?

What did that mean?

Chapter Ten

One Month Later

Chloe had skipped her period.

Roman made a note of her time of the month, and she hadn't asked for more sanitary towels or feminine products. The first time she had to ask him for them, she'd been so embarrassed, although he didn't mind. It was part of Chloe and the most natural thing in the world.

It had been a month since she had taken care of him as well. Roman didn't know what had happened during that time, as it had been a blur. Chloe had told him she'd fed him soup and he complained a lot. He refused to believe he complained about anything. There was no way he'd do such a thing. He wasn't a big baby. He was a full-grown man and could handle any sickness.

Standing in Zaitsev's office, waiting for him to arrive, Roman didn't quite know why the boss had called him in. It was rare for him to have a meeting with Zaitsev. In fact, the last time had been over Chloe. Zaitsev had told him to handle it, and that he didn't have the time to deal with such nonsense. So, he'd taken care of it — not quite in the way Zaitsev had wanted him to, but it was done. Chloe was not a problem anymore. She wouldn't be taken seriously now that she was married to him. Not that she was taken seriously before.

He stood at the window, overlooking the city. Rumor had it that Zaitsev had a fear of heights, and the reason he put his office in a tall building was to combat that fear. Roman doubted the man had many fears.

“Enjoying the view?”

Roman turned to see Zaitsev entering his office. The office was a front for where they helped to process money.

“It's a good view.”

Zaitsev came to stand with him. “Ah, yes, you can see far and wide.”

Roman kept his hands in his pockets.

“I suppose you’re curious as to why I called you in?”

“Yes,” Roman said.

“I want to know how things are going with your bride.”

Roman felt every single part of his body tense, but he didn’t show it. In their world, loyalty kept you alive, but also power. He had never upset Zaitsev. He’d not even been upset with him when he declared that he was marrying Chloe.

“Everything is fine,” he said. “Chloe is no longer a concern.”

“You’re right. I had a call last night. One of the cops told me someone has reached out to them, insisting they have information on the Zaitsev Bratva. They were willing to meet in person.” Zaitsev pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket and handed it to Roman.

“This isn’t Chloe.” Last night, he had Chloe beneath him all night long. Even once he had finished with her, making her scream and beg, he’d held her in his arms, breathing her in. Roman took the few moments when she had fallen asleep, when sleep seemed impossible to him, to just hold her, feel her, and love her.

“This is your area of expertise.”

“Man or woman?”

“They wouldn’t say. They covered up their voice,” Zaitsev said. “If this is your woman, Roman, you can’t give her any more chances. She’s a liability, and has to be removed.”

The very thought of killing his wife sent a punch to his gut.

“It’s not my wife, but if it is, for Zaitsev, I will take care of it.” Roman didn’t know what he would do, but he had to believe it wasn’t his woman.

There was no opportunity for her to call, to betray him. Chloe loved him. He knew that and knew it would be difficult

for her to turn her back on him. If she didn't love him, she wouldn't have been able to take care of him, and he imagined after several months of marriage, the truth would have finally come out. She didn't want to know any more than she had to.

Leaving Zaitsev's office, the piece of paper in his fist felt like it was burning a hole straight through his hand. He stepped out onto the street. People went about their day, and he watched them go. None of them seemed to have a care in the world. Staring down at the piece of paper, he understood why Zaitsev had his doubts.

The park where they wanted to meet was close to where Roman lived. His apartment building was less than ten minutes away. Pulling out his cell phone, he dialed Chloe's number.

She answered on the second ring. "Hey, where do you want me to meet you?"

"What?"

"I got a text five minutes ago. Someone told me to meet you, I'm heading to a café, ugh, stupid phone. I don't know which café it's supposed to be."

"You're not heading to a park?" he asked.

"No, and your men were happy to follow me and allow me to go."

Roman clicked his fingers as he listened to his wife. "Chloe, I want you to turn around and go back to the apartment."

Shit. The person was supposed to be meeting the cops at the park in less than twenty minutes. He didn't have a lot of time.

"But, you wanted to meet me?"

"No, that text isn't from me. I've got something to do, but I'm begging you to trust me, and to go back to the apartment." He didn't know if this was a test from Zaitsev. If he picked Chloe, then his loyalty to the Bratva was in question. He couldn't put Chloe's life at risk.

“It’s not.”

“No, so go back to the apartment. You’ll do that, right?”

“Yes.”

“Great, put Steele on.”

“Steele?”

“He’s the guard on the door,” Roman said.

His hand was tightened into a fist. Roman didn’t get chance to talk to Steele as the call came to an end.

“Shit! Fuck!” He slammed his hand against the steering wheel.

Chloe or the Zaitsev.

This shit wasn’t fucking right.

In his mind he saw Chloe from the moment he walked into the bar. She had offered him a smile, but it had been empty. He saw the sadness in her eyes, the loneliness. Yes, he’d known that she had lost her whole family because of him. That night, he was supposed to kill her.

It would have been a quick and easy kill. In fact, he’d followed her home, intent on taking her out, but he hadn’t been able to do it. Instead, he made sure she got home safely. She’d been so lost in her loneliness, she hadn’t even realized he’d been following her home. How fucked up was that?

The next night, and the night after that. Every single night, he’d gone to her at the bar. He’d watched her, talked to her, and slowly drew her out of her shell. Yes, he’d lied about his name and who he was, but everything else had all been truth. The Zaitsev was his life, but there was no point to it without Chloe. He had to protect her.

Turning over his ignition, he pressed his foot to the gas and took off. He broke the speed limit but was sure not to put his life in any danger. He had to get to where Chloe was.

Opening his cell phone, he was about to put a call in to one of his contacts on the force. He didn’t understand why the

cops had gone to Zaitsev. That part didn't make any sense to him.

The only reason Zaitsev had been informed about Chloe was because she had actual evidence. This other person hadn't given any evidence, it was all subjective. That should have come to him.

Just as he was about to make the call, his cell phone began to ring. It wasn't a number he recognized. Answering the call, he pressed the cell phone to his ear. No one answered. Roman wasn't going to be the first one to talk.

Then he heard it — the slight feminine scream. His wife. Chloe.

“You made a big mistake taking my wife,” he said.

There was a sudden tut. “Roman, you should know by now that I like to take care of business.”

“Zaitsev!”

“Yes, my men got her while I was talking with you. If you know my true intentions, then you will know exactly where to find me.”

With that, the call ended and Roman couldn't help but wonder what the fuck was happening. Why was Zaitsev getting involved? What was his plan?

Chloe looked over at the older man. He was in his sixties, at least that's what she had read when there had been news articles about Zaitsev. No one said his first name. She had no idea why, but all media outlets simply called him Zaitsev.

Her heart raced as she looked over to him. She had walked right into a trap. The moment she got the text, she was a little confused. Roman didn't text her, but the guards at the door seemed to know exactly what it meant. Zaitsev had changed them. She didn't know where Roman's men were and she had no idea where they were going.

“I’m sure you know who I am, don’t you, dear?” he said.

Chloe nodded her head. She didn’t want to appear weak but words right now seemed to be failing her.

After getting the text, she had planned to stop at a pharmacy for a pregnancy test kit. She hadn’t told Roman yet, but she had a feeling he already knew that her period was late.

Nibbling her lip, she couldn’t look away from the man beside her. She felt sick to her stomach. Everyone claimed this man was a monster, and considering the fact he’d just kidnapped her, she believed every word of it.

“You don’t have to be afraid,” he said.

That didn’t make her feel comforted. She watched him. He sat back and looked so calm, so at peace.

Chloe had been happy before she got a call from Roman.

“Where is my husband?” she asked.

What had they done with Roman? Is this where her life ended? Was Zaitsev going to do what Roman couldn’t?

“I imagine he is trying to figure out where I took you.” Zaitsev turned to look at her. “I can understand why he became so smitten with you. You’re very different from most women within our world.”

“Roman isn’t smitten with me,” she said.

“Don’t play dumb with me.”

“I’m not playing anything. I’m just stating a fact, I’m not ... Roman doesn’t love me. He just, I don’t know, didn’t want me going to the cops.”

“Now I’m starting to wonder about Roman’s choice of a wife.” He tutted. “I get that you’re nervous, but I don’t like when you play dumb.”

“I’m not playing dumb. Roman doesn’t do love.”

“No, Roman *thinks* he doesn’t do love.” Zaitsev sighed. “You know, that man has never failed anything for me. He is the most efficient man I know. A natural killer. No job is too hard for him. He makes all my problems disappear. He is far more than any Brigadier. He is a powerful man. I know a lot of men are loyal to him. His father helped him become the man he is today.”

Chloe gritted her teeth and took deep breaths, not wanting to draw attention to the fact she was alive. Why was he telling her these things?

“I was made aware of a problem. Now, my associates don’t bore me with the pathetic details, because the truth is I don’t need them. They don’t matter to me. Men and women come and go as threats. But nearly a year and five or six months ago, I got a call that a woman had entered the police station. She asked to speak to a cop interested in the Zaitsev Bratva, and she held a file. One that was quite detailed. The cop in question happened to be a personal friend of mine. He alerted me to the file and the problem, so I had no choice but to get my man. The one known for cleaning up loose ends.”

“You killed my parents,” Chloe said, feeling tears fill her eyes.

“That is not exactly accurate. I didn’t kill your parents. They, unfortunately, were caught in the middle of a street war between our men and a couple of street pimps.” He shook his head. “Have you ever asked Roman what happened to those men involved?”

“No.” She sniffled and turned to look out of the window. Chloe didn’t know why he was telling her these things, or even why he was asking her questions. “I had no idea who he was, and I only found out on our wedding day.”

“Ah, yes, Roman did want to keep a lot of things secret. He had hoped to keep his true identity hidden for a short time. Don’t you find that interesting?” he asked.

“Why?” At the moment, everything seemed confusing to her. She didn’t know if she should be staring out of the

window or looking over at him. Nothing made sense to her anymore.

Tears filled her eyes, but for some odd reason, they refused to fall. Her whole body felt incredibly heavy. Was this man going to kill her?

“Finally, we’ve arrived,” Zaitsev said, looking out the window. She saw they had come to a large iron gate.

Zaitsev rolled the window down and typed into the keypad. She didn’t see the code. Her heart was already starting to race and she felt sick to her stomach. She kept telling herself it was going to be fine, yet it was the last thing she felt. There was no way any of this was going to fine. How could it be? She wrapped her arms around her body, trying not to feel sick, but it was impossible.

The gates opened and the car slowly drove down a long driveway, which was completely covered on either side by trees. The shade didn’t help her to feel safe.

Zaitsev didn’t say another word until the car came to a stop at a beautiful country home. She felt the rumble of the car stop, and Chloe looked toward Zaitsev.

“You know, I have always considered Roman a great and personal friend.”

“You have?”

“Yes. When I came to him with you as my problem, I figured it would take him a matter of minutes to solve it, but then days turned to weeks, and then weeks into months. I had men follow him, to watch the two of you. Then I realized something, and I’m pretty sure I know it and Roman doesn’t have a clue.”

“What?”

“He’s in love. Roman has never avoided dealing with a problem before. Killing a woman doesn’t bother him, but you weren’t just any woman. You were a woman who’d been hurt because of bad judgment calls. His judgment calls. That day, he ordered his men to stand down. He already had a plan for dealing with the pimps, but they disobeyed his instructions,

and in doing so, they ended up killing your parents and a few other people along the way.”

“My brother as well.”

“Killing your *family*.”

Chloe couldn't believe she had corrected him. She had to have a death wish or something.

“Anyway,” Zaitsev said, and continued. “The street pimps were handled, and at the time, the men were punished. However, after the night he met you, Roman dealt with every man involved who had disobeyed him.”

“What?”

“Roman killed them all. He made sure the message was clear. No one disobeyed his instructions, but we both know why he did it, don't we, Chloe?”

She opened her mouth and closed it.

“He did it because of you. He failed you that night.”

“I don't know why you're telling me this.”

Zaitsev sighed. “I try not to meddle too much in the lives of my men, but with Roman, he's been like a son to me. I took him under my wing after his father's death. I guided him, and now I'm going to make sure he has his happily ever after.”

He opened the car door and Chloe had no choice but to climb out and follow him. She had a bad feeling, but there was no place to run or hide.

They entered the home, and it smelled like chocolate chip and cinnamon cookies. So inviting and sweet. It made her mouth water. She closed her eyes for just a second.

Zaitsev grabbed her arm and walked her down a large corridor. Was this going to be the moment he killed her?

“I expected Roman to show this to you, but I don't know why he continues to wait.” With that, he opened the door, and Chloe was shocked by what she saw.

This couldn't be possible.

Chapter Eleven

Roman didn't know exactly what game Zaitsev was playing, but as he arrived at his home, he saw the gates had already closed.

“Shit!”

He pulled up to the gate, typed in his code, and the gates chose that moment to be incredibly slow. It was driving him insane. He gripped the steering wheel tightly, attempting to be patient, but it wasn't working.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, the gates opened, and he pressed his foot to the gas. Nothing could happen to Chloe. Nothing. She had to live.

He hadn't gone through all of this for her to die — not now. He'd followed every order. He'd been the perfect soldier and Brigadier for Zaitsev. All he'd done was take Chloe for himself. He couldn't take her away from him.

He parked his car, climbed out, and rushed to the house, only to stop when he saw Zaitsev at the door.

“Hello, Roman.”

“There was no tip-off, was there?”

“No, I just needed you distracted for a bit. I had to get to Chloe, and it all worked out.”

“Why?”

“I happen to like you, Roman.” Zaitsev stepped closer to him. “I consider you like a son. Your father was a good man, a good soldier, but he was nowhere near as good as you. If there had been a chance, I would have promised him I'd take care of you as if you were my own.”

“You'd kill most men for taking Chloe to be their wife?”

“True, but you see, Chloe is a special circumstance. She is quite useful, as I've heard she has a certain specialty for

gathering information.”

“I’m not going to use her.”

“No, but she might be exactly what you need, what *we* need, when the time is right. While she is your wife, and her loyalty is to you, she will remain safe. The moment she wants out, she will die.”

With that Zaitsev left and Roman rushed into his home. He knew exactly where to go. To the room he’d been building with all of Chloe’s family’s personal items. Everything she had to sell. He stepped into the room and there she was, sitting in one of the chairs.

“You know, this was my father’s chair,” Chloe said. “Mom hated it, but he refused to get rid of it, so she attempted to recover the chair, so it would match the other pieces of furniture. It never did, but Mom wouldn’t get rid of it. Dad would sit in it every single night, to enjoy his hot chocolate or a whiskey. My mom would sit in his lap. He would sit Christmas morning while my brother and I unwrapped Christmas presents. This was a hard one to give up.” She got to her feet and reached across the fireplace at the mirror. “Mom loved this. They went to a thrift store, and the moment she saw it, she had to have it. Dad hated it, but without batting an eye, he got it for her.”

Around the room, she moved, talking about her parents and brother, their favorite items and memories associated with it. Chloe came to stand in front of him.

“Why would you do this?” she asked.

“Because your family didn’t have much, Chloe. I know that, but you shouldn’t have lost them when you did, and you shouldn’t have had to give up everything you loved.”

She held the locket he’d acquired not too long ago.

“Is that all?” she asked.

Roman looked into her eyes, and he just knew what she was waiting for.

Tell her.

Seriously.

It is no secret.

A guy doesn't go out of his way to find her previous possessions if he didn't understand love.

“I think ... I love you, Chloe Sidorov.”

“You only think?” she asked.

“I don't know what love is, but if love is meeting a woman and never wanting to leave her side, then yes, I am in love. If love is looking forward to seeing that woman, and it becoming the best part of your day, then yes, I am in love. If telling little white lies for a woman to fall in love with you so she wouldn't be hurt by who you actually are, then yes, I am. If finding all her family's possessions and wanting to get her pregnant, and almost considering starting a war because he thought her life was in danger today, then yes, I am in love, and I'm in love with you.”

Chloe threw her arms around him and he pulled her in close, breathing her in. He had never known real fear, not in his life, not until today, when he thought Zaitsev was going to take her away from him.

“I love you too.”

He gripped the back of her neck and then slammed his lips down on hers. She moaned and melted against him. Roman broke the kiss and trailed his lips down her neck, sucking at the pulse, hearing her sudden soft gasp as he did so.

“I think I'm pregnant,” she said.

Roman looked into her eyes. “Are you happy about that?” he asked.

She chuckled. “Yes, I'm happy. I forgive you. I know you had nothing to do with my family's death, not directly. You don't have to feel guilty about anything.” She cupped his face. “And I love you. I'm not going to the cops. I'm not going to do anything but love you.”

Roman's heart pounded and he stared into her eyes. He'd known anger, pain, sadness, grief, but he had never

known true love or joy, or happiness, and in that moment, he finally knew what it was, and that it was worth fighting for.

Chloe was his. He would do everything in his power to protect her.

She was the love of his life.

Epilogue

Five Years Later

Chloe watched as Roman sat on the floor with their nearly five-year-old son, driving a train along the track. Arthur was sitting between his legs getting all excited.

She sipped her hot chocolate and then walked over to her little girl who was fast asleep. Roman had already rocked her to sleep. It was Christmas morning, the fifth one they had shared together. During the first one, she'd been heavily pregnant with Arthur, whose birthday was in a couple of weeks' time, and he'd be five.

Roman hadn't known how to handle Christmas that first year, so Chloe had shown him what to do. They had purchased a Christmas tree together for their country home as well as their apartment in the city. She had also taken him to buy decorations, and when he asked if they threw them out at the end of the year, she nearly had a heart attack. No. You saved your decorations for each year, and Chloe hoped to add to them, creating memories.

When it came to Christmas decorations of her parents, none of them had been salvageable. Mainly because she had no choice but to throw them out as no one would buy them. They had a lot of memories. Now, she was going to make new memories with her husband and her two children. Roman didn't know yet, but she would tell him later that she was pregnant with their third child.

Roman, the killer for the Zaitsev, was one of the most romantic men, charming, sweet, and a brilliant father. He'd been terrified with Arthur, afraid of dropping him, of "fucking everything up," as he said.

Chloe had known from the moment he held him that their children would never know a bad day, because Roman wouldn't allow it. He'd fight for all of them.

In the past five years, she had made peace with Zaitsev, and even looked forward to the older man, who was referred to

as a grandfather because their children didn't have anyone else. She had come to love Zaitsev and saw him as a guide and a mentor.

After she had given birth to Arthur, Zaitsev had asked for her assistance in gathering information on a suspected snitch. Roman hadn't wanted her to do it, but Zaitsev warned her it put all of them at risk. So, she did it.

She held the Zaitsev brand, was Roman's, and had sworn her loyalty to the Zaitsev Bratva. She was part of them.

Roman looked back at her and smiled. She didn't have any regrets. Roman had told her everything, and even now, there were no secrets between them.

He held out his hand, and she stepped into the room. Taking a seat, she reached for her little girl, holding her hand, and then rested her head on Roman's shoulder.

"Do you like playing with trains?" Chloe asked.

"I love playing with my son," Roman said, kissing her lips. "And I already know we're going to be having another." He winked at her.

Chloe burst out laughing.

This was happiness.

And she wouldn't change it for anything.

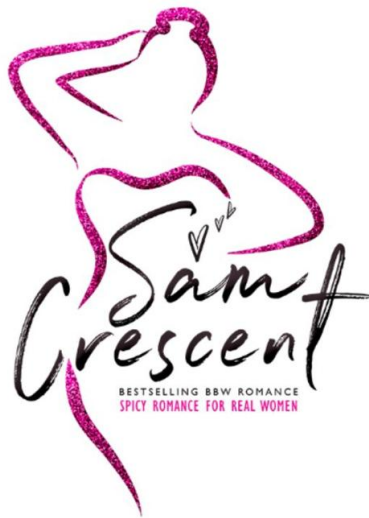
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BONUS SAMPLE CHAPTER

TOXIC

Satan's Death Riders MC, 1

Sam Crescent

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Sample Chapter

Life can change before we know it.

Rosalie Barlowe, or Rose to her friends, threw back her head and laughed. Her best friend couldn't sing, not even a single note. Everything that came out of Petal's mouth was a disaster. People would actually pay her to just shut up, but she loved her so damn much.

When a long note came up, she had no choice but to cover her ears. Once the song came to an end, Rosalie quickly turned the music down. "That's enough singing for one day."

"Spoil sport. Come on, it's a lot of fun," Petal said.

"We need to preserve our voices." Rosalie touched her throat as it already felt a little scratchy from screeching at the top of her lungs.

Petal snorted. "Right, because asking horrible assholes if they want more coffee or the free fries is so challenging."

Rosalie didn't even need to look at her friend to know she was already rolling her eyes. They worked at Al's Diner, a run-down shack in the middle of nowhere, but clearly had enough business as it had been going for years. Rosalie recalled many times her mother took her there for a birthday treat. Al made the best cakes. Even now kids got excited at the prospect of going to Al's. As for her and Petal, they had long forgotten the attraction seeing as Al was ... handsy.

He liked to think of them as his property and with him, they had no choice but to be stern. Some of the waitresses had fallen into his trap, but neither she nor Petal had. So long as they didn't give him any confusing vibes, he left them alone.

"It's a job."

"Yeah, and when are we going to get out of this shithole!" Petal raised her voice and slammed her palm onto the steering wheel.

Ever since they were kids, they both had this dream of getting out of town, getting away and starting a new life together. Rosalie had spent many nights thinking about what she could do, where she could go. As the years went by, she realized she couldn't leave her mom behind.

She had to protect her, from *him*.

"Where do you want to go?" Rosalie asked.

Petal tilted her head back and howled. "Anywhere but here."

They both laughed.

For Petal, that often meant a beach with some kind of hunky stranger who was her love slave for all eternity. Rosalie wanted a life where her mother didn't hear certain sounds and become a mess.

"That sounds awesome."

"So, are we going to that party?" Petal asked.

"What party?"

Rosalie had no idea how her friend got to know where a party was happening let alone when. She never heard anything.

“At some biker bar, I think it is. It’s supposed to be like a big deal or something.”

She paused. “A biker bar?”

“Yeah, I don’t know what they’re called. Some kind of stupid name.”

Rosalie tried never to say the name but she needed to know. “Evil Fuckers MC?”

Petal threw back her head and laughed. She had no choice but to reach for the steering wheel as they veered a little toward the opposite road. Not good. She didn’t want to die.

Her friend whistled. “You saved us.”

“Yeah, I think it’s time we keep an eye on the road.”

There was no argument. Petal liked to have fun and party, but she also knew when to keep her shit together. This was one of those times. Neither of them wanted to die because she drove recklessly.

“What a messed-up name,” Petal said. “But it’s not that one.”

“It’s not?”

“No, this one ... ugh, what is it?” She let one hand go off the wheel and clicked her fingers. “It’s Death something or other. This is going to drive me mental if I don’t think of it.”

Rosalie didn’t make it a habit of learning the names of MC clubs that often ventured through town. She reached into her jeans pocket and pulled out her cell phone to see if her mother had called her. Nothing. She was probably still working.

Gabrielle, her mother, loved working in the fabric shop, but then she was also an avid seamstress. Like her mother, she also loved to sew and craft, but she’d not been

able to get a job in the same store, so it was waitressing for her.

“Satan’s Death Riders MC.” Petal slapped the steering wheel. “That’s the club.”

“Seriously?”

Rosalie tried not to become aware of the local MCs that surrounded them, but she couldn’t help but hear the gossip.

The Satan’s Death Riders were meant to be worse than the Evil Fuckers MC, or they were supposed to be evenly matched in being assholes. Rosalie didn’t quite know which one it was. Either way, there was no way she would hang out at any MC club. None.

She wrinkled her nose. “Not happening.”

“Oh, come on, Rosalie. Free booze, lots of guys, dancing.”

“Yeah, I don’t think there’s going to be a whole lot of dancing in those places or free anything.” She rubbed at her temple, pleased to see her street coming up. She couldn’t afford her own car yet, so she constantly had to get rides from Petal. Not that her friend minded.

“It’s going to be fun and wild. We did promise ourselves we would live more dangerously while we’re still in town.”

Rosalie chuckled as she pulled up outside her home. She didn’t look back at her house and focused on her friend. “We said dangerous and wild, not crazy or making stupid decisions. We can’t go there.”

Another eye roll and Petal’s gaze went past her shoulder and she whistled. “Does your mom have a lover you don’t know about?”

“No, why?”

“Because that is one insane bike. Whoever is riding that, I bet is a scary motherfucker. Way to go, Gabby.”

Her mother hated that nickname. Rosalie had tried to get Petal to stop calling her that and once Petal saw how much it upset her, she stopped saying it in front of her.

Rosalie looked behind her and then saw the bike she hated more than anything in the world. She tried not to tense up or show her friend any sign that the bike affected her.

“It’s nothing,” Rosalie said, but she was already climbing out of the car.

“Whoa, Rose, you okay, babe?” Petal asked.

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine. I just better head inside. Call me later and we’ll talk about this MC party thing.”

“Come on, Rose, we’ve got to do something fun. Working at the diner, avoiding his hands is getting old and I’ve already checked. There are no other jobs for us, but there must be more to life than this.”

Rosalie forced a smile to her lips. Right now, she’d say or do anything to get Petal gone so she could go and see what the hell was going on.

“We’ll talk, okay?”

Petal threw her arms up in the air and whooped. “That’s what I’m talking about. Talk to you later, girlfriend.”

Rosalie stayed on her driveway, watching her friend leave and turn off the street, before spinning on her heel and rushing toward her home.

Pulling out her keys, her hands shook so badly. She tried to get her shit together, but she didn’t know how long *he’d* been here. She should have known there was something going on. The day had been too good. Her mother had been so happy this very morning. Everything had seemed amazing. Work aside, Rosalie had felt hopeful.

It was like he knew when her mother was feeling stronger, happier. He always stopped by to fuck it up. The piece of shit.

Twisting the key into the lock, Rosalie opened the door, being as noisy as possible.

“Mom, I’m home,” Rosalie said. “Sorry I’m late, I had to work at the diner a few extra hours. It was a crazy shift, but someone’s got to do it.”

She closed the door and stepped into the house, knowing *he* was there somewhere.

Rosalie took a step toward the kitchen and there he was — Daemon. She didn’t even know his last name. Her father. And ... the president of the Evil Fuckers MC.

That was why she knew of the club and also why she would insist and try to lure her best friend into something else. Something safe. Something sane.

“Hello, Rosalie,” he said.

His voice was rough and always had a sharp edge to it. He wore his leather cut, but he’d opted for the one that didn’t have any sleeves, which showcased his endless tattoos as well as his muscles. He always did this on purpose.

“Where’s Mom?” she asked.

“Gabby’s in the kitchen.”

Staring at him, she tried to listen for her mother, for any sign that she was okay. With Daemon in their home, nothing was okay. Not until he left. Like so many other times before, she would have to pick up the pieces of the mess he created.

Rosalie had two choices: to stay where she was, keeping a distance between herself and her old man; or risk pissing him off, to go and check on her mother. He clearly didn’t want her to go into the kitchen, which only made her want to check on her mother even more.

Staring at him, she waited, hating him, and then decided Gabrielle was far more important than him.

Big mistake.

He wrapped his fingers around her neck and pressed her up against the nearest wall.

“Are you disobeying me?”

“I want to go check on my mother,” she said, gritting her teeth.

He tutted. “And I’m telling you that you’re not going. You will do as you’re told.” He didn’t cuss and was completely calm. This wasn’t good. This was never a good look. She stared at the man she called her father—well, she didn’t call him that—and wondered what the hell he’d done. The only consolation she had was she couldn’t hear her mother sobbing.

“Why are you here?” she asked.

He stared at her, his gaze moving up and down her body, assessing her.

“How old are you?” he asked.

This was almost laughable. He was her father and yet, he didn’t have a clue of her age.

“I’m twenty-one in a couple of weeks.”

He smiled and it scared the shit out of Rosalie. The man never smiled.

At the sight of her mother in the kitchen doorway, she was distracted.

“Mom, are you okay?”

“I’m fine, sweetheart.” She was positively shaking. Were those red marks around her neck? “Your father wanted to talk to you about something.”

Rosalie didn’t want to talk to him about anything. There was nothing good he could say to her. She waited, trying to figure out what it was he wanted but she kept drawing a blank. It couldn’t be anything important.

“You’ll do. It would help if you were skinny, but I think we could make this work.”

She wanted him out of their house. Her mother was pale and she didn’t look good. She shook so freaking much as well. The fear was clearly getting too much for her.

“I think you should leave.”

“I’ve found a husband for you.”

This made Rosalie pause. “Excuse me.”

“You heard me. I found a husband for you. Sunday, a couple of the boys are going to pick you up. We’ll get everything ready. You can get married.”

“What the fuck?” she asked.

His lips pursed.

“I’m not getting married. There’s no way in hell I am.”

The calm, collective man was gone, and in his place was something far more terrifying as he wrapped his fingers around her throat and pressed her against the wall. He tightened his grip just enough to offer the threat of choking, but not too much to make her stop breathing.

The threat, though, oh, it was there.

“You will do as I fucking tell you,” Daemon said, practically spitting in her face as he did.

“Let her go,” Gabrielle said.

“Do you think I’ll stop with her? You know what I’m capable of, Gabby.”

“Leave her alone,” her mother said.

Daemon loosened his grip but she saw the look he sent her mother and that wasn’t good. Her mother could be the protector, but when faced with him, she crumbled.

“It’s fine. It’s fine,” Rosalie said, stepping in front of her mother so he could only see her. “Sunday, a couple of your guys will pick me up. It’s fine.”

He took a step toward her.

“Mom, why don’t you go and fix us some food?” Rosalie said, facing off with the man that terrified her.

She wished she had the strength to take him out. Her hands clenched, hoping one day she’d get to hurt him, just once. To make him afraid as he’d made her mother for so many years.

“When you arrive at my clubhouse, I expect you to dress accordingly. I’ll send the necessary clothes, and you will not speak, you will not say a single word. If you do, I’ll make sure your mother pays for it.”

Rosalie tried not to argue with him. Keeping her lips closed, she stared at him, waiting, and then Daemon took one last lingering look into the kitchen, before turning on his heel and leaving. The moment the door closed, Rosalie rushed to it and flicked the lock into place. Her throat felt sore.

She didn’t linger, though, and instead went straight to her mother. “Are you okay?”

Gabrielle broke down. She collapsed to the floor, covering her face with her hands. “I’m so sorry, Rose, so, so, so sorry.”

Rosalie wrapped her arms around her mother, holding her. “It will be fine.”

“How? You will ... he’ll...”

“It’ll be fine.”

Daemon had made up his mind. Whoever she was supposed to marry, that would happen. There was no getting away from that, she only hoped whoever it was didn’t want her and would gladly leave her the fuck alone.

“This is a fucking joke, right?” Colt asked, looking at his dad and president of the Satan’s Death Riders MC. Warden was not laughing. There was no twinkle in his eyes. This shit was serious.

He should have known it was no joke, seeing his mom, Kim, sitting on the office sofa. It was rare for his mother to be invited to club meetings. The whole club wasn’t present but Ox, Crow, and Pirate stood, arms folded, not looking the least bit happy.

“It’s not a joke, son,” Warden said.

“You want me to marry that piece of shit’s daughter, assuming he even has one.”

“There’s a rumor he has one,” Kim said. “I’ve never seen her myself, but I don’t know, the details are kind of murky.” She gave a shrug. “From what I know, she has nothing to do with her father.”

“I don’t believe that for a second,” Colt said. “There’s no way that anyone attached to the Evil Fuckers MC wouldn’t use that connection.” It was a trick, it had to be.

“I’ve spoken to Daemon, they’re on their way over here.”

“What?” Colt didn’t like this. Inviting that shithead to their clubhouse was a big mistake. “Prez, you can’t do this.”

“Right now, Colt, I’m your father, and I’m telling you, this is good for both clubs. We’ve had a lot of bloodshed lately, on both sides. Something has to give.”

“They’re responsible for what happened to Nancy. Have you forgotten that?” he asked.

Warden glared at him.

“Enough, Colt,” Kim said.

“You agree with him?” Colt asked.

“Yes, I do. How many more people are we going to bury because of this petty dispute?” Kim stood. “I know it’s not the best idea, you marrying someone you don’t love or care about, but we all have to make sacrifices for this family. I have, every single day.”

One look toward his father and he saw Warden drop his head.

Out of everyone in the room, Kim had to give up the most. One night at a party, many years ago, Kim had been hanging out with friends. She’d been the good girl, but for one night, she wanted to experience the wild side. That night, she met Warden, unbeknownst to Kim at the time, he’d arranged for them to meet. Warden had been passing through and spotted Kim running some errands or something. Either way, he took one look at her and wanted her. The rest, well, it ended up in him having to spend a whole year wooing her in secret,

and then knocking her up. What happened after that was a wedding without any of her friends or family. They all turned their backs on her, and since then, Warden had kept his promise to love and honor her for the rest of his life. Not once had he swayed.

Colt knew it still upset him to know Kim missed her family. She never said anything, but it always bugged her that she couldn't take him nor Nancy—when she was alive—to Grandma's or Grandpa's.

“You're asking me to be with the enemy, Dad.”

“This woman, whoever she is, is not the one who killed Nancy,” Kim said. “Have you ever considered that she might not want this either?”

“Please, the chance to have a Satan's Death Rider between her thighs, I'm pretty sure she's fucking thrilled.”

He got a slap around the back of the head.

“Don't you speak so much disrespect in my presence,” Kim said. “You do not know who this woman is. I raised you better than this, and if it means we no longer have to bury our people, then it's what we must do.” Kim licked her lips and lifted her head high. “I'm going to get a drink.”

She walked to Warden, touched his cheek, making the bangles on her wrist clink as she did so. Next, she came to him and kissed his cheek before leaving the office.

“Prez, come on, what's the deal here?” Colt asked.

While his mother was in Warden's presence, he was Dad. When they were alone with other members of the club, he was back to being the boss.

His dad nodded at Ox, Crow, and Pirate, clicked his fingers, and without a word, they left. Warden stepped back, resting against the front of his desk. For the longest time, he didn't speak. Colt waited, wondering what he wasn't saying.

“I know this is not an ideal situation, Colt, but you are my only son. I've met with Daemon and we both have felt loss.”

“We didn’t kill his daughter,” Colt said.

“I know and I know Nancy’s death on you is hard to bear.”

Hard to bear? Colt had been there. They’d been in the park, he’d been the one watching her, and then, out of nowhere, bullets flew at them. He’d acted too late. Nancy had been shot. He’d held her as she died, as she begged and pleaded with him to make her stay.

That would stay with him forever. There was no way he’d ever forgive any Evil Fuckers MC.

“But, I need us to come to an arrangement with them this time, Colt. We need them on our side.”

He stared at his father and hearing him say that, he knew something else was going on. “What is it?”

Warden shook his head. “I don’t expect you to like her, but you will need to marry her, and you will ... need to have children.”

“I’ve got to fuck her as well?” Colt gritted his teeth.

“Yes. This is not a joke marriage, Colt. I expect you to act accordingly. Your mother would expect nothing less from you.”

Colt ran a hand down his face. At nearly thirty years old, he hated that his father was still making him jump through all the hoops, not that he wanted any leeway. Being his father’s son, guys at the club had assumed life would be easy for him, but it hadn’t. He’d had to fight and claw his way to where he was right now, a fully patched member of the club.

No one would take his patch and if his dad needed a dick to marry this woman, then that was exactly what Colt would be.

“Fine,” Colt said.

“You may go. Daemon will arrive in ten minutes. Tell the club to be on alert.”

Colt nodded, left his father's office, and headed out. Several of the club looked toward him and he lifted his finger in the air, spinning it around, a signal they all knew, and would pass along the message better than any text.

They never knew who was reading their messages, so only necessary texts were sent, nothing that would point the finger at any wrongdoing. Heading toward the bar, he slapped his hand on the counter. Rooster was serving tonight. Normally they had a couple of prospects but they'd been sent away for the day and now he knew why.

Their prospects were viewed as weak and it was up to the club to make them strong. Until they got inside their heads and tested their very fucking being, they were not to be trusted. They had to prove themselves time and time again. It wasn't easy.

Colt had been there, sometimes close to shitting himself, but he'd never backed down. He'd always done what needed to be done.

"You look fucking cheery," Rooster said.

He picked up the shot of whiskey and downed it in one gulp. It was the only thing that would keep him sane for the next few hours.

"Another."

"What the man asked for." Rooster was about to pour another shot when Kim's hand came over the glass.

"Enough."

"Mom, come on."

"You're not going to meet this woman drunk and be an embarrassment to me or the club. You can drown your sorrows after they leave, not before."

Rooster left him alone and he turned to his mother.

Kim was a force to be reckoned with. Life at the club hadn't always been easy. He knew that. She fought hard for where she was right now and she was finally happy. His

parents were both happy. Their life hadn't been easy. Colt knew this.

“I'm surprised you're happy with this.”

“Colt, I mean it. Enough.”

There was a sudden whistle, alerting them to the approaching Evil Fuckers MC.

“I guess it's showtime.”

Kim looked at him and shook her head.

Colt watched as his father came out of his office and for a split second, he was pretty sure he saw rage in his eyes. There was no time to ask questions. Following behind his father and mother, he and several of the men walked out. A show of force.

They waited.

It was dark out and they had put on the lights to illuminate the parking lot.

He spotted Daemon up front, but there was no one with him. Colt adjusted to the darkness and then he heard the feminine grunt and saw as a mass of brown hair seemed to land on the floor, to which she gave a wince.

“Get up,” Daemon said.

The woman, whoever she was, flicked her hair back and glared up at him, but then stood.

Okay, this was a surprise.

The woman wore ... dungarees. She looked like she had stepped right out of the nineties. Dungarees as well as shirt underneath that went all the way around her neck. Not what he was expecting. She also wore a pair of glasses, which she pushed up her nose.

No one offered to help her up, nor did she ask for help. She got up and then winced as Daemon grabbed her arm. As he brought her closer, Colt saw her lip had swollen, and there was a little blood in the corner.

“Daemon,” Warden said.

“Warden, I’d like you to meet my daughter, Gabrielle Barlowe.”

The woman in front of them shook her head. “My name’s Rosalie,” she said. “Gabrielle is my mother.”

Interesting.

Did she even realize in correcting Daemon, she had made him look like a fool? Colt saw the slight tilt of her lips, and he imagined she did realize what she was doing and enjoyed it. There was no love between father and daughter, unless it was a trick.

“Are we conducting business outside, or do you want to continue insulting us, Warden?” Daemon asked.

“By all means, come through to my office.”

Colt watched as Daemon grabbed Rosalie’s arm. She let out a gasp but he saw her hand clench and her teeth grit.

“If this doesn’t go well, he’ll kill her,” one of the Evil Fuckers MC said.

Colt didn’t know who it was, but he waited for people to keep moving. Seeing as he was the groom in this scenario, he should be the first one at the office, but he wanted to hear what people had to say.

“She didn’t wear what he sent. She was supposed to be in a miniskirt and a top that showed her tits off.”

How interesting. He’d heard enough and made his way toward his father’s office, which was now crowded. He noticed his mother had gone to Rosalie’s side and wrapped an arm around her, almost protecting her. Why?

One look at the room and they were surrounded by men. On closer inspection, Colt also saw that she was shaking a little. Was she nervous? Angry? Or was it just an act? He didn’t trust her, so he wasn’t going to believe anything he saw. It was probably all lies anyway.

Warden cleared his throat.

“As we’re all clear, I take it we can confirm this as an agreement. My son and your daughter will marry and align our clubs.”

“Yes. We will become allies. Your enemies become mine and mine become yours,” Daemon said.

Colt didn’t like this. This wasn’t going to end well. He wondered if he could just kill his forced bride and then everything would go smoothly.

“The finer details need to be dealt with,” Warden said. “The wedding needs to take place as soon as possible.”

“We can have the wedding tomorrow if you’re ready,” Daemon said.

“It needs to be in a church,” Rosalie said, speaking up.

Daemon spun around and glared at her.

Rosalie glared right back. Colt had a feeling he’d have hit her again if it wasn’t for his mother standing by her side.

“A church?” Kim asked.

“My mother has always wanted to see me get married in a church. Seeing as all her other wishes are being squashed, the least I can do is give her the church.”

“Then a church is where it will be,” Kim said. “We can make that arrangement. I would love the opportunity to speak with your mother. We can work together to have this wedding in, say, a few months.”

“No,” Warden and Daemon said at the same time.

“A couple of weeks,” Daemon said. “That’s the longest it can be.”

Rosalie averted her gaze from her father.

“A couple of weeks,” Warden said.

“Perfect. I’m sure Rosalie’s mother and I can handle it.” Kim stood and smiled. “Now, don’t you think we should let the happy couple have a few moments with each other?”

End of sample chapter

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