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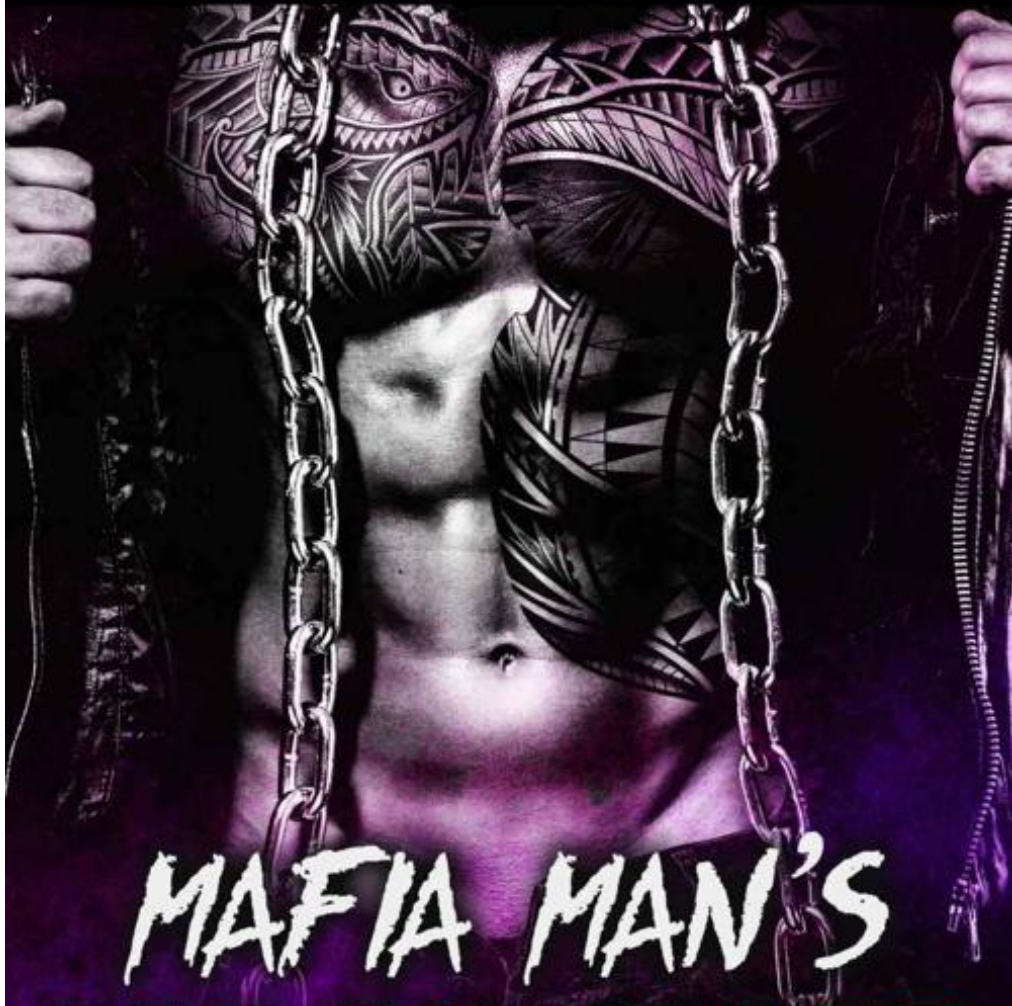
MAFIA MAN'S VIRGIN WIFE

COULD IT BE POSSIBLE FOR HER TO FIND EVERYTHING SHE HAS BEEN LOOKING FOR?

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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Prologue

“You once said if there was anything I needed, I was to come to you, no questions asked.”

Enzo Amato looked at Hank Bianchi, a little surprised. He did owe this man a favor, and it had been plaguing his mind when he'd come to collect. Five years ago, Hank saved his life. They were attending an important wedding, when there had been an attack. If it weren't for Hank, Enzo would be dead.

He had great respect for Hank, even though there were many rumors and gossip that followed this man. Speculation suggested there was a time when Hank wanted to get out of the mafia. There was no getting out of their world. They were in it for life. The moment they made their first kill, their fate was sealed.

Enzo's first kill happened at thirteen. There had been an attack on his family home, and he'd not even hesitated. His father had been teaching him to shoot, to kill, to torture. Most thirteen-year-olds had their dads playing football with them in the backyard. Not Enzo's father. He'd been preparing Enzo to take over the Amato name.

Now, at thirty-five, he'd been head of the family for over ten years. His father had perished in an attack from leaving his mistress.

“What do you need?” he asked, not at all concerned that Hank had come to collect. It was expected.

Hank nodded and then pulled out his wallet.

Enzo did tense. There was always a great deal of animosity between bosses and rival families. He didn't consider Bianchi a rival, but that didn't mean the same was true the other way around.

Hank let out a cough and then pulled out a single photograph, which he handed to him. Taking it, Enzo looked

down into a brown-eyed woman, who was smiling. She looked young.

“Adele was sixteen in that photograph.”

“She’s pretty.”

“She’s my daughter.”

This was one of the rumors. Many of the mafia bosses were known for having illegitimate children. Most of them tended to stay close to the family. Sons became soldiers, daughters became easy pawns to sell off and use for associates.

Enzo had never seen this Adele. She was pretty. Scrap that, she was gorgeous, and what struck him quite quickly was the fact she was smiling. In the picture she had her arms around a tree, but her head slightly bent back, laughing at whatever the person with the camera had said.

“I have never met her,” Enzo said.

“No one has. In all honesty, I don’t have the best of relationships with her. My and her mother’s ... it was complicated, and it didn’t end well. I’ve done everything I could to take care of them. Two years ago, her mother passed away. Cancer. I thought she might allow me into her life, but she wanted nothing to do with me, or with this life.” Hank ran a hand down his face.

This was unheard of. The women of their world did as they were told.

Hank began to laugh. “I know what you’re thinking. Adele was never part of this world. To be honest, it was a miracle she was ever born. My wife...” He stopped. “She found out about ... Carla, that’s Adele’s mother, she had no idea who I was when we first met. Carla was a dancer, and her career had ended when one of the male dancers had dropped her. It broke her ankle, and I know it had also broken a little of her soul as well. I always saw the way she lit up when she danced, or talked about dancing. I met her one night while she was working. Even though she couldn’t dance and it upset her, she didn’t let it stop her. She worked hard.”

Hank ran a hand over his face.

“When I went into the bar, I was rude to her and she called me out for my shit. Told me that I may be a good-looking guy, but that was no excuse to be a pig to her, and that I was to ask her properly with ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, and a bar she may work, but I was to also treat her like a lady.” Hank laughed. “I was smitten. Our women are trained not to talk back. They’re not trained to have respect. They’re trained to do as they’re told.”

Enzo knew this.

“I pursued Carla, kept my life away from her. For a year, she was mine, and I made her believe we were going to get married, have a life together. When she got pregnant, I was the happiest son of a bitch alive. Then my wife found out. Carla was beaten because of it, and told the truth. It changed everything. She had no idea I was married, and that was it. All she would allow me to do was take care of my daughter, so I did as much as I could.”

“What do you need me to do?” He could see this upset Hank. It was strange to watch because as far as he knew, Hank was one of the strongest men around. He was also known for being cruel, but Enzo knew he rivaled him on that score.

“I want her taken care of. I would like you to marry my daughter.”

“You want me to bring her into our world?”

“Yes, but I need you to ... do it without her knowing.”

“You want me to lie.”

“Yes. I need to know she’s going to be okay, that she will be taken care of.”

This was not the favor Enzo hoped to owe. This wasn’t even close. He didn’t want to marry. There had been a couple of women lined up to marry him, but they had all ended badly, or were killed.

Many people within their world had come to think of him as a cursed man. He didn’t believe in such bullshit, but he

was more than happy to allow others to believe it.

“I know this is a lot to ask, but I will provide.”

“Money is not a problem. You want her to gain the respect of one of our women, I get it. You want her to live a lie.” He stared down at the picture, into her smiling face, and nodded. “Consider it done.”

Chapter One

“Ow, fuck, that hurts.” Adele Shanks lifted her finger up to inspect the small smear of blood that suddenly appeared on her finger. She was not impressed. “Why does such a tiny cut sting!”

She wasn't talking to anyone, but being alone in a fabric shop would do that to you. Actually, she wasn't really alone. Martha, the owner of the shop, was behind the counter.

Adele was just losing herself in the many viscose fabrics she'd been able to find. Her mother loved to dressmake, and fortunately, that passion had extended to her, which was why she loved to shop for fabrics. She loved to make her own clothes, and she hoped to eventually extend into making lingerie, but she was a little afraid of the boobies. It had taken her a long time to perfectly fit a few patterns, like the one she was currently wearing.

One day, she hoped to be a pattern designer, but that was a long way off, because she had a pesky little problem. She hated school, and math, but mostly math. It was so strange to her, because she had no problem attempting to solve problems when it came to pattern fitting.

Shaking her head, she thought about how she loved coming to Martha's shop. It reminded her of her mother, and today was her mother's birthday. She had promised her she wouldn't stay at the house moping around or mourning her by eating chocolate ice cream.

Her mother, Carla, had some stern words, and she made sure her daughter made a promise, if not a vow, to continue living her life, even after she was gone. Adele had been allowed two weeks maximum to mourn, after which she was to go into her sewing room, make a dress, and then go fabric shopping. Those were her mother's demands, so she honored them.

She had taken the two weeks away from work, at a local bar. The owner had been nice and considerate, but it also

helped that she advertised the bar on her social media. As far as Adele was concerned, she kind of had two jobs. One for the bar, the other where she posted regular vlogs and pictures about fabric hauls, current designs, and stuff like that.

The moment she thought about her vlog, she couldn't help but wonder about her father — Hank Bianchi.

She hesitated as she reached for the viscose that had caught her eye. Her father had advised that she not do the vlogs or the social media stuff. It was the first time he'd come into her world with demands that she not do something. Adele knew who and what he was.

Her mother hadn't been a fool and she'd told Adele everything. She knew her mother's heart had been broken by Hank. Adele learned everything about the mafia lifestyle, and stayed as far away from it as possible. In the last two years since her mother's death, Hank had reached out a few times. She had not stopped her social media, but it was somewhat reduced.

Nibbling her lip, she grabbed the viscose. "Fuck him."

With four fabrics in her arms, she walked up to Martha, who had a big smile on her face.

"Any pattern ideas for these, lovely?"

"I've got ideas for these two, but not these. They're just gorgeous."

"Tell me about it. They've been very popular on the website as well. How much would you like of each?"

Adele gave the measurement and hummed to herself as she waited for Martha to finish cutting. She chose some buttons to go with the fabric and a couple packets of needles, as she needed them.

With her purchases in her bag, she waved at Martha and headed out into the warm sunshine. Putting her sunglasses on, she made her way to the café that she loved, grabbed a coffee and a doughnut, and then headed back to her home. This was her mother's home, which now belonged to her. It

was all paid for by Hank, but Adele couldn't bring herself to sell it.

Her mother loved this house, and so did she. It was home to her and one of the few places that reminded her of her mother. Stepping inside, she closed the door, locked it, and placed her bag in the hallway, before heading to the laundry room.

Adele had gotten out of the habit of taking fabric to her mound of already purchased fabric stash. Using a beautiful piece of fabric to make a garment, then discover it wasn't prewashed so the dress didn't fit, had been horrible. So, always to the laundry room with new fabrics.

She placed them on the correct cycle, and then made her way to the sewing room, where she put the buttons in with her stash, and placed the needles in the right location. She took a seat and felt a wave of loneliness sweep over her.

Memories of her mother in this room, making a dress or a costume for her. Adele had never worn a costume from the shop before, her mother always made her something. She closed her eyes, clenched her hand into a fist, and tried not to cry. Tears were useless, as her mother said.

She couldn't stay in the sewing room today. She opted to clean, which, was a crazy idea, since she hated it, but she loved a clean house.

In between dusting, vacuuming, and mopping, she hung the fabrics out on the line, and then decided to get ready for work. She had enough time to iron the fabrics and get them on the cutting table before she headed out to the bar.

Even though the sun was slowly setting, there was still a warmth to the air, and she kept humming to herself as she walked along the city street. Her mother lived in a good neighborhood. At least Hank had given her that.

She missed her mother every single day. She had thought about leaving home, selling the house, and just traveling, but she couldn't bring herself to do it.

She recalled when Hank had arrived for her funeral. Adele hadn't shown how pissed she was that he had. There were not a lot of people there as her mother had been somewhat of a recluse. She didn't make friends easily, and Adele truly believed she'd been her mother's best friend. In all honesty, Carla Shanks had been her mother, her best friend, her confidant, everything. She missed her so much.

"Do not cry." She clenched her hands into fists, gritted her teeth, and instead, saw the bar up ahead.

It wasn't a high-end bar, but it was quite popular. Since it was a Friday night, she saw it was already busy. She waved at Bill, the doorman, before heading in. The music was way too loud, but she wasn't interested in the noise. She made her way to the back, placed her bag in the locker designated for her, and then went straight behind the bar.

Bishop, the bar owner, always had a uniform, but because he knew what she did on social media, he allowed her to wear whatever she had created. Some of her fans had come to see her to talk about the new designs. As long as they spent money, Bishop didn't have a problem.

It had been over a week, and since she hadn't made anything new, she wore the uniform Bishop had custom-made for all staff. She had worried his lax rules with her would cause some problems for the rest of the staff, but they didn't mind. So long as she had people coming to the bar, it meant they still had a job, which was a relief.

Arnold, the barman, looked at her clothing and nodded his head. They all knew. Some days, she just couldn't bring herself to wear anything but the uniform. Today was a different kind of day, though, for her at least. It was the anniversary of her mother's death. No one argued with her.

She kept a smile on her face and began serving customers.

"The shirt does not do you justice," Arnold said, as she turned to grab a couple of bottles of juice.

"Shut up." She laughed.

She adored Arnold. He was the only guy who on these nights didn't walk on eggshells around her, and she appreciated it.

“Just saying, you've got the tits to show off. Show them off.”

If it was anyone else she would have been offended, but she knew Arnold was a happily married man who adored his wife and kids. In fact, late at night, he brought out pictures of his family to ward off the few straggling customers. It worked.

Turning around, she was about to take the order, and then froze on the spot.

What the fuck was Enzo Amato doing in the bar?

It had been a long time since Enzo had been in one of these bars. A very long time. As he glanced around, he couldn't help but keep the sneer off his face. The floor was sticky, so they really needed to clean. The place was completely full. Way too many people, and it made him wonder why he had agreed to do this for Hank.

Considering Adele had a rather full life, a lot fuller than anyone else in their circles, she'd been a difficult woman to find.

Hank had given him her home address. This morning he'd gone to her home and she hadn't been there, nor was she there the second time he'd stopped. With it past eleven, he had no choice but to call Hank, and found that she worked in this bar.

None of their women worked. Yet, here was Adele.

She'd been laughing with the barman, and now as she spun around to face him, Enzo had a feeling she knew exactly who he was. How the fuck did that happen?

“What can I get you?” she asked.

He'd watched her from afar. She laughed and smiled with everyone else, but for him, he got the cold shoulder. She

had to know who he was. There was no mistaking the look of recognition.

“I’ll take a shot of your best scotch,” he said.

She reached down and lifted up a single bottle. “We only have one scotch here.”

He watched as she took a glass, poured out a generous shot, and told him the cost. He paid her, intending to leave a large tip. She rang him up, giving him back his change. He was about to offer her a tip, but she’d already moved on to the next customer.

Enzo didn’t move away from the counter, and instead took several minutes to admire her curves. She wore a pair of black pants and a feminine button-up shirt. From the social media images he’d looked through today, it was rare for her to wear the standard uniform. Picking up his glass, he took a sip of the scotch, and knew it was cheap and nasty. He looked over at the bar, but didn’t see any other kind of scotch.

Adele and the barman, whose name he didn’t catch, seemed to know this dance. They worked in sync with each other, avoiding colliding with drinks. After thirty minutes, his glass was empty, and Adele had no choice but to come back to him.

“What can I get you?” she asked.

The bar had quieted down a little, but it was still loud.

“I was wondering what you were doing after your shift?” he asked.

She shook her head. “Not going to happen. I don’t know why you’re here, but I suggest you leave.”

Enzo looked at her. “You know who I am?”

Adele glanced over his shoulder. “I’ve got work to do. If you’re not going to order a drink, then I suggest you leave.”

He liked her spirit. It had been a long since a woman had seemed so completely oblivious to who he was. Enzo knew he was a good-looking man. He worked hard on his physique. Being one of the scariest bastards that rivaled her

father, he had no choice but to keep in shape. No one had gotten the better of him.

The life of a mafia king was what he trained to do and he did it well. He earned the right to be a capo, taking over his father's territory, making it thrive, rising the ranks of respect with fear and loyalty.

Hank asking him to take Adele was unheard of. Women were traded for money, for power, and in most instances were virgins, as that was their only worthy gift. He didn't know if Adele was a virgin, but she had not lived a sheltered life, not like Hank's other daughters. Not like the women of their world. Enzo was expected to marry this woman, take her as his wife, and give her the respect of their world.

"I'll have another scotch," he said.

If Adele was attempting to challenge him, then he had no problem. He owed Hank his life, it was only fair that he make Adele his wife. It was not a bad deal.

Adele was an attractive woman. She had a lot of curves, which were not common. Most of the young women were on some form of diet to make them as thin as possible.

Enzo loved her curves. He wasn't going to deny his attraction to her. She was a sexy woman, and he looked forward to bedding her. Filling her with his kids would not be a problem.

She poured the scotch and he knocked it back, but Adele had already walked away.

The night wore on, and Arnold attempted to serve him, but he wasn't interested. When the time came to leave, he did exit the bar, but he waited at the exit he knew Adele would be coming through.

Arnold was the first to leave, and whatever he said clearly made Adele laugh. They came out of the side exit, chuckling. The moment Adele caught sight of him, the laughter froze and died.

"Is everything okay?" Arnold asked.

“Yeah, it’s fine. This guy is a friend of my ... dad’s,” Adele said.

Now this did surprise him, but he was right in his earlier assessment. Adele knew who he was.

“Do you need me to call anyone?”

“Nah, it’s fine,” Adele said. “I’ll see you tomorrow.” She patted him on the arm, and then started to walk. Her gaze was on his as she walked past, but then she kept moving.

Enzo was not used to this kind of chase.

“Why are you following me?” Adele asked. She suddenly stopped and whirled around.

“You know who I am?”

“Yeah, I know who you are, but I don’t understand why you’re following me. What does Hank want?”

“It’s Hank now, I thought it was your dad?” he asked.

She rolled her eyes. “No one knows who my dad is, and I figure the less I say, the better.” She shook her head. “What does he want? Normally he sends one of his soldiers with a letter or flowers or something. Why did he send you?”

“How do you know who I am?” Enzo asked. He had hoped this was going to be easy.

“My mom wasn’t stupid. When she realized who *he* was, she made sure to learn. In fact, I think she forced him to tell her everything, so she told me. You’re a very popular guy. Enzo Amato, one of the youngest capos ever, and you have a reputation for torture and fear. I would offer you congratulations, but I heard how you rose through the ranks, so I will say, my apologies on the loss of your parents and family.” She gave a head bow.

This did surprise him. No one ever spoke to him that way, not ever.

“What does he want?” she asked.

“Have you ever thought I might not have anything to do with your dad and that I’m here to see you?”

“I’m not known. My presence in that world is a secret. His wife tried to kill my mother and me. He hid us away. Try again.”

Enzo chuckled. “Do you think you get to tell me what to do, little girl?”

She shrugged. “Why don’t you tell me what it is you want, and maybe I can help, and then you can fuck off.”

He loved hearing her curse. It rolled off her tongue, and he knew very soon he was going to get her to beg him to fuck her.

Enzo took a step toward her, then another, then another. Adele didn’t back up. She stayed perfectly still, and tilted her head back to look at him. He stared into her eyes, and was taken aback at just how beautiful she was.

“Your father wants me to marry you. He wants you to have the respect you deserve and for me to take care of you. I guess this is his way of bringing you back into the family.” He wanted to touch her cheek to see if it was quite as soft as he imagined.

“You can tell him he can fuck off as well.”

With that, Adele whirled around and walked away.

Oh, he loved a challenge. Enzo thought she’d be some simpering girl who would fall madly in love with him. Adele was anything but.

Chapter Two

Adele woke up the next morning and the conversation she had with Enzo kept rushing back to her.

Her father couldn't be serious. She pressed her hand to her head, and then groaned. Why? Hank had promised he'd leave her alone. Admittedly, that had been while her mother was alive, but now he intended to impose on her life. How dare he!

She rolled over and reached inside her drawer, pulling out the tiny slip of paper her mother had given to her years ago. It was a direct number to Hank. If she called him, it would mean she'd have to talk to him. Adele avoided talking to him every chance she got.

She had a wonderful childhood and her mother had always been there for her. Hank would turn up, fleetingly, and for a long time, she didn't know what he was. She remembered jumping in his arms, being so excited. If she had an event at school, she'd invite him. Hank would promise to be there, she'd get excited, tell everyone her dad was coming, and he'd never show up. Her mother was always there, telling her he got busy.

He never came on Christmas day, or New Year's, or at Halloween to see her costumes. One year he promised to take her trick-or-treating, but that never happened. She eventually stopped asking him for things, until she finally asked her mother to tell him she wanted nothing to do with him. Hank would come, but Adele wouldn't leave her room.

She had never called that number. Dropping it into the top drawer, she slammed it closed.

She climbed out of bed, used the bathroom, brushed her teeth, and ignored her hair. Then she made her bed and went straight to the kitchen. Making herself a strong cup of coffee, she stepped into the sewing room and lowered herself into her mother's favorite chair.

Two years.

How had it been two years?

Adele had twenty-one years with her mother. Now she was twenty-three years old. Tears filled her eyes, and she tried her hardest to ignore them.

“I’m sorry, Mommy,” she said.

She took a sip of her coffee and allowed the tears to fall. In the back of her mind, she could see her mother telling her not to cry. To be strong.

“I am strong, but I don’t know why he’s doing this.”

Just as she was about to take another sip of coffee, the doorbell rang. Checking the time, she saw it was a little after seven. Adele had always been a light sleeper, and she also didn’t need much sleep. So, even though she arrived home at one o’clock this morning, was in bed by half past, she was wide and awake by six.

She held her coffee as she walked to the door and checked through the peephole to see that it was Enzo on her doorstep.

“I hear you,” Enzo said.

“You do realize that you’re entering stalking territory right now?” She refused to open the door.

“I want to talk to you.”

“No.”

“We can talk on your doorstep or I can break down your door. If you think this is going to keep me out, you’re mistaken.”

“Don’t you dare!” She looked through the peephole and sure enough, he started to tense, giving her no choice but to open the door. “Are you completely insane?”

“Do you open the door in your pajamas to everyone?”

She glanced down at her clothes. They were homemade pajamas, and they had little doggies on them, which she absolutely loved.

“No, but no one arrives at seven in the morning. Not even delivery drivers.”

She released a growl as he pushed past her, entering her home. “I didn’t invite you in!”

“I’m not a vampire, I don’t need a special invite.”

“Did no one ever teach you common courtesy?” she asked.

Adele had no choice but to close the door, and then turn toward him. Why did he have to make her home feel so small? Enzo was not a small man, and the corridor suddenly seemed so tiny.

“I got taught everything I needed to know to get what I want.”

“So, you were taught to be rude.” She shook her head. There was no way she was going into her sewing room. This man was just ... infuriating. She didn’t like him one bit.

She went straight to the kitchen and leaned against the counter. Her mother had instilled in her to be nice, so she offered him a cup of coffee.

“Is it as bad as the scotch you gave me last night?” he asked.

“A simple yes or no will suffice, and I only gave you what you asked for.”

“Is that all the scotch you offer?” Enzo asked.

“Yes, it is.”

Bishop refused to splash out on expensive scotch, he said his customers rarely tasted the stuff anyway, so it was pointless to give them anything decent. Adele wasn’t going to argue with the boss, and besides, most men that wanted the scotch had already had several glasses of beer.

Pouring out the coffee, she turned and offered him cream, milk, or sugar. He declined everything but asked for two spoonfuls of sugar.

She liked her coffee black, with no sugar.

Handing him the coffee, she went back to her own, and took a sip. Enzo seemed so out of place in the small kitchen.

He took a sip and nodded. "Not bad."

She didn't care if he liked it or not. She wanted him out of the house.

"What do you want?"

"I told you what I want."

"You can't be serious. Doesn't a capo like you need some kind of woman with a name or something?"

"You don't have your father's name."

"Stating the obvious," she said. Seeing as her mother and father weren't married. Carla had given her the option when she turned sixteen to take her father's name, or not.

No.

Hell, no.

She was never going to be a Bianchi.

Adele had already started to hate her father, and nothing was going to change that. Not taking a name, not trying to be part of his world. None of it. She lived her life the way she wanted, not being dictated to by him.

"Are you not curious about your father?" Enzo asked.

She stopped and glanced down at her coffee. It was nearly all gone. Was she curious about him? No. She hadn't been curious about him for a long time.

"No," she said.

"You know he sent me here."

"So?"

Enzo released a breath. "You have no idea how important you are to him, do you?"

"I'm not important to him. I'm pretty sure I'm an embarrassment to him. Why don't you go back and see him, and say something like, 'There's no way I'm ever going to

marry your daughter.’ Or better yet, why don’t you say, ‘I promised your daughter I would marry her, but seeing as she’s so used to being let down, and her heart crushed, I’m going to follow in your footsteps and never come through with any of my promises!’”

Adele had said too much and now she was pissed. Growling, she turned toward the sink, threw her coffee out, and rinsed out the cup before heading up to her bedroom.

“Is that what he did?” Enzo asked.

“It doesn’t take a genius to figure it out. Trust me.”

“You had a hard time as a kid, so what? Get over it.”

She wanted to hit him. Adele had never considered herself a violent person before, but the desire to slap him was strong.

Instead, she smiled at him. “I am over it, which is why you can get the hell out of my house, or I’m going to call the police.” She stormed toward her front door and flung it open. “Get out.”

“This is not getting over it.”

“Oh, trust me, it is. I’m not my father’s daughter. I don’t need to marry anyone of his choosing and when I do marry, it’s going to be a man I love, and one I’m sure he’ll despise.”

She was a little shocked that Enzo actually left, but as he stepped over the threshold and out into the world, she slammed the door shut and then flicked the lock into place.

How dare he?

She was over it. She wanted nothing to do with her father.

Nothing he nor anyone else would change that.

“You saw her? Talked to her?” Hank asked.

Enzo stood at the office window and nodded. Hank had called a meeting, wanting to speak to him.

“How is she?”

He thought about Adele. “She is nothing like any of our women.”

“No, I don’t imagine she is.”

“How?” Enzo asked. “Men have women with mistresses all the time. They are never allowed this much freedom.”

Hank fell onto the only sofa in his office. He had a glass of scotch in his hands. “I had every intention of keeping Carla and Adele. They were part of my family, but once my wife nearly killed Carla, I couldn’t allow it. When Carla learned the truth, she was done with me. She never wanted me again, so I just couldn’t do it.” He sighed. “I guess that makes me weak.”

Enzo didn’t say anything. He’d never met a woman that would make him weak.

“She will never fit into our circles,” Enzo said.

“With training, she will.”

He clenched his jaw. So, that was the end game as well — training Adele, tamping out that fire that made her unique.

Enzo knew he shouldn’t care. Adele was a woman, and there was a certain protocol for their women to abide by. If she was to become his wife, all that sass would have to be saved for him and him alone.

He tried to imagine Adele at one of their social functions where she’d be forced to mingle with the women. She’d be an outcast from the start. The only reason she’d be accepted would be because she’d be married to him.

Rubbing at his eyes, he didn’t like the feeling that swept over him. He barely knew this woman, and he shouldn’t care for the outcome.

“Did she talk about me?” Hank asked.

Enzo looked toward Hank. “No.”

He saw the disappointment in his eyes. Hank didn’t need to know the hatred she still had in her heart.

“I don’t imagine she would.” Hank sighed.

“What is the story between you two? Why does your daughter hate you so much?” Enzo already had an idea, but he wanted to see how much Hank was willing to tell him.

“I let her down. Carla never kept me away from Adele. I always hoped she and I would reconcile, but that never happened.” Hank stopped to take a drink. “She never would. The damage had already been done, and no matter what I did or said, she wasn’t going to belong to me. I still got to see her whenever I went to visit Adele. She was such a cute baby, adorable little girl. Every time I went, she wanted me to go to a school event, either at the school or in the surrounding area, and I couldn’t go. You know the drill.”

Hank was a capo, he couldn’t go without some form of soldier or protection.

“I always promised her I would be there, and Carla knew I wouldn’t be. She’d try to make excuses for me. That was what Carla was like. She didn’t want me, but she also tried to make my life as easy as possible. She was a good woman.”

Enzo saw Hank pay close attention to his glass. Clearly, the man was hurting.

It had been two years since Carla had died, and both Hank and Adele were both hurting. He had a feeling Adele was handling it a little better, but then, she could openly mourn the death of her mother.

“I can imagine for a young girl, her father always making promises he couldn’t keep, she’d become a laughingstock of the school. It wasn’t long before the little girl I loved so much stopped running to me. In fact, she stopped coming to see me. Carla would let me in the house and go to her sewing room, and I would stay in the sitting room. Adele

would stay in her room. She'd never come to see me. The presents I got her would remain unopened, or they would be returned. I don't know if Carla knew she returned the presents I sent. I stopped going. Adele went from loving me to hating me. At the funeral, she wouldn't talk to me. We stood on opposite ends of the grave, and she wouldn't even look at me."

Hank blew out a breath, and then laughed. "And I've got my kids here, who would bend over backward for my attention, who want nothing more than to please me. How fucked up is that?"

Enzo didn't say a word.

Adele was hurting. She didn't have anyone in this world, but Hank did.

Enzo stepped toward Hank. "Are you sure you want me to repay my debt this way, by making her my wife? She'll be an easy target."

"She will at least know that I care," Hank said. "And right now, that's all that matters."

He didn't believe that to be the case, but he didn't argue.

Hank saw him out, and Enzo climbed into his car and made his way back to the bar where Adele worked.

It wasn't quite as busy as last night, but there were still a lot of people milling around. He recognized Arnold, working behind the bar. The moment Arnold caught sight of him, he moved toward his spot.

"What can I get you?"

"Scotch."

Arnold raised a brow, but where Adele got the scotch from last night, this man did the same, grabbing a glass. Enzo looked around the bar, but couldn't find Adele.

"Where's Adele?" he asked.

Arnold hesitated in pouring the scotch. "She'll be a little late tonight."

“When does her shift start?”

“It’s not her shift tonight, but Bishop will let her work.” Arnold put the lid back on the scotch. “You do realize what today is, right? I assume you know Adele.”

“Yes, I know her.”

“So, you know the deal her mother made with her, right? That she was never allowed to visit her grave site on the anniversary of her death, but she could do so the day after.”

“Adele’s visiting her mother.”

“Yes, and every night, without fail, the day after, Adele comes to work. I don’t even think she gets paid, but we all know she’s hurting.”

Enzo didn’t like how much this Arnold guy knew about Adele. Once she was his wife, she’d never work another day in her life.

“Speak of the devil,” Arnold said.

The barman was looking at a spot past his shoulder, and he had no choice but to spin around to see. Adele was coming through the door. She had her bag on her shoulder, arms folded, and he saw she’d been crying. Enzo got to his feet, about to go to her, but Adele didn’t even look his way as she passed.

“I wouldn’t interfere if I was you,” Arnold said. “All she wants to do is work. It helps to numb the pain.”

No, it doesn’t.

Sitting at the counter, he played with the glass of scotch. He wasn’t much of a drinker, and he was pretty sure this stuff was straight poison and in no way good for him.

He watched as Adele tied her long brown hair up. She was once again in the standard uniform. No one got in her way as she rounded the bar.

“All right, babe?” Arnold asked.

“Yeah, please tell me it’s busy.”

“You’ve got company.” Arnold pointed toward him and Enzo raised his glass.

Adele stopped and he saw her hesitate. He watched as her hands clenched into fists. He wasn’t sure if his presence was going to give her a reason to fight or run away.

Enzo waited, and he didn’t have to wait long as she squared her shoulders and approached him.

“What are you doing here?” she asked.

He saw the fire in her eyes and knew this woman was a fighter.

“I’m having a drink. Isn’t that what paying customers are allowed to do?” he asked.

“There are a lot of other bars that I’m pretty sure are fancy enough for the likes of you. You didn’t have to pick this bar.”

He wrinkled his nose. “Actually, I did. You see, Adele, this bar has something all those other places don’t have.”

Enzo watched her lips press together, and she was clearly fighting with asking him that question. He waited. Patience wasn’t his forté, but when it came to Adele, he seemed to have some.

“And what is it this place has that the others don’t, besides the cheap scotch?”

Enzo stood and pressed his face close to hers. He felt the fan of her breath.

“Simple, this bar has my future wife.”

With her face so close and feeling her breath, he couldn’t resist slamming his lips down on hers and taking the kiss he wanted.

Chapter Three

Adele had never slapped a man before. She certainly had never slapped a customer. And she'd never been kissed by a man, or by a customer. It was totally lame that at the age of twenty-three, she hadn't been kissed.

Why did Enzo have to be her first kiss?

Her lips still felt a little swollen. After he'd kissed her, she'd pulled away, drew her hand back, and slapped him right across the face. The moment she did it, she'd been in a state of shock. Bishop wasn't around, but Arnold had stepped forward.

"He's a paying customer."

Her heart had raced and she quickly apologized, even though it was the last thing she wanted to do. Only, Bishop had been around, and he'd called her over to him. He told her to leave for the night, and he clearly looked pissed.

Great. Now, Enzo might have cost her a job. It wasn't the best job in the world, but it paid the bills and left a little aside for her to enjoy her hobby, which is what she wanted right now.

Without another look at Enzo, she had left the bar after grabbing her bag, and stepped out into the warm night. She should have known he'd follow her. That was all Enzo did.

"That wasn't quite the reaction I was expecting," he said.

Adele whirled around and glared at him. "I'm sorry if I didn't quite meet your expectations." She was shaking.

That kiss shouldn't mean anything. It wasn't like she'd been imagining what it would be like to kiss a man. Not recently, anyway. Yes, when she hit puberty and started to notice real hot, sexy actors, she'd been curious, but that had faded after her mother's cancer diagnosis. A lot of stuff had faded and stopped being important to her.

"Adele, what is bothering you?"

“I’m living my life, Enzo. It’s been two years since my mom passed away.” She had to stop as she felt a tightening in her chest from the pain. She wasn’t going to back down, though. “Why now? I don’t need you, and I certainly don’t need my father. I don’t want him anywhere near me. I don’t want to be part of your world. I’ve got a nice life here. Don’t you see that? Before you cost me anything else, could you please leave!”

She was growing tired of all the bullshit. The last thing she wanted to do was rely on her father. She had no idea if Enzo was a good man or simply playing a part. Either way, she felt like a pawn, and she didn’t want to be played or moved.

Two years, she’d been alone. Two years, she’d been coping. She finally had a routine, one that she took day by day to get through, and they were ruining it for her.

Adele had hated her father many years ago as a kid, but that hatred had faded, and she accepted who he was, and what he *wasn’t*, to her. Now, he came wandering into her life as if he was going to help her, and she couldn’t and didn’t want to stand for that.

“I can’t be the first guy to take you by surprise with a kiss,” Enzo said, laughing.

Rather than continue the conversation with him, she turned on her heel and began to walk away.

He moved with speed until he was standing in front of her. She tried to move left, then right, and had no choice but to stand her ground as she glared at him.

“Move.”

“Say please.”

“Please, move, please,” she said.

Enzo smiled. “There’s always a price.”

Adele looked at him and she took a deep breath, then opened her mouth and screamed. She made sure she did it at the top of her lungs.

The shock on his face nearly made her stop and start laughing, but this was long past being pissed off. She wanted her space.

Today had been hard. Between Enzo's visit in the morning, then the time in her sewing room before going to visit her mother's grave — it had been a long day. She knew it would be.

“You want to play dirty,” he said. “We can play dirty.”

Before she had any idea what he was doing, he thrust his shoulder into her stomach, and lifted her up and over it. The scream faltered. She tried to reach out to grab something. The only thing available was his ass, and there was no way she was grabbing that.

“Put me down!”

She didn't have a clue if they had any audience, but there was no way she wanted to be caught being carried over a man's shoulder. Hands clenched into fists, she had no choice but to punch him, so she tried to hit him in the ass.

“Put me down. Let me go!”

She knew she wasn't light. The years of chocolate ice cream and cookies had helped contribute to her sexy curves. Adele tried to wriggle. She attempted everything she knew to get him to leave her alone, but nothing worked. Instead, she ended dumped in what she could only assume was the back of his car.

She moved toward the opposite side and tried the door, hoping to be free. The bastard! The child locks were on, which meant she was trapped in the back seat of his car.

“Enzo, this isn't funny. Let me out.”

“You decided to be difficult, and now this is me being difficult.”

He climbed behind the wheel.

Adele was not going to hurt him while he was driving. The purr of the engine lit up, and Adele felt another wave of

panic hit her. She caught her breath, and was just about able to control it.

“Enzo, this is not funny. Take me home.”

“You had your chance, and now your freedom is mine.”

She had no idea what that meant, but she had a horrible feeling she wasn't going to like it.

No woman had ever slapped him before. Enzo knew there was always a first time for everything, but this was certainly new to him.

Arriving at the underground parking of his penthouse suite, he climbed out. Several of his men had been following him during this time. He was a capo, like Hank, and they knew what their jobs were. They all had to blend in while he took care of business. The men who were close were the only ones he trusted.

He slammed his car door and then moved toward the back.

“Are you going to try to run?” he asked.

“Bite me.”

He loved her spirit. Adele was like a breath of fresh air. He had to wonder what it was about his kiss that had caused her to slap him.

Opening the door, he stepped aside, and he just knew she'd try to run. Adele didn't disappoint. The moment she was out and free, she took off, but he was ready for it this time. His men knew to stay back. He caught her around the waist, stopping her in her tracks.

“Let me go. You do realize this is kidnapping, or, I don't know, stalking, or there has to be some law.”

“Not when it comes to me having a little disagreement with my fiancée.”

“Fiancée? There’s no way in hell I’m ever marrying you. I am not your fiancée. No one would ever believe it.”

She tried to fight him, but he was a lot stronger than her, and he managed to move her toward the elevator. He had a feeling his men were entertained by her. Enzo couldn’t deny that he loved the fire and passion inside her. She was a wake-up call from the boring women that had been paraded in front of him. All of them had laughed at his jokes, even when there was no punchline. They all thrust their chests out, trying to capture his attention. None of it worked.

Yet, Adele, with her bad mouth, fiery attitude, and so completely different, had been on his mind a lot in the forty-eight hours he’d known her.

Holy shit. He couldn’t believe it had only been forty-eight hours.

Pushing Adele to the back of the elevator, he grabbed her arms and pressed them above her head.

She still kept wriggling, trying to fight him, to get free, so he wondered what she would do when he pressed his pelvis against her.

The fight within her stopped. His men had stepped onto the elevator, one of them pressing the button to his penthouse suite.

“Let me go,” she said.

“Not yet.”

“I want to go home.”

“You should have thought about that when you kept fighting me. We don’t always get what we want.”

“Even you?” Adele asked.

“Even me. You see, I wanted this to be easy. You’d look at me, fall madly in love, and my debt to your father is repaid.”

“You owe Hank?” Adele asked.

“He wants me to marry you and my debt is paid in full. I don’t go around owing people, Adele. They owe me, and your father has put down his price.”

The elevator doors opened. She had stopped fighting. He grabbed her hands, as he wasn’t willing to risk her taking off.

His men waited outside as he took her into his penthouse suite. The moment the locks were in place and he’d typed in the code to keep the doors locked, he finally let her go. Adele let out a sigh, pulling away from him.

“You don’t want to marry me. Why can’t we come up with some kind of deal we could both benefit from?” Adele asked.

Now Enzo was intrigued. “A deal?”

“Yeah, you want to get married, and I don’t. You want to pay whatever debt Hank has over you, and I couldn’t give a shit about the man. I want to live my life, and I’m pretty sure you don’t want to be chasing me around. I’m the illegitimate daughter of a capo, how is this even fair?”

“Hank has all my respect,” Enzo said. “I have no problem marrying his daughter.”

He was enjoying his time with Adele. It certainly wasn’t boring, and he’d been to enough social gatherings to know the difference between her and the women of his world.

“But *I* have a problem marrying *you*. I’m sure you have a ton of women who would fall at your feet. I’m not one of them. How about we get married, but it’s like a business contract?” Adele asked.

Now he was curious. Adele did surprise him.

“I’m listening,” he said, stepping into his penthouse suite, and going to his kitchen. He opened up the fridge and took out a bottle of water. “Drink?”

“Yeah.”

He threw a bottle of water for her to catch. Much to his surprise, she did. Enzo watched as she unscrewed the cap and

took a large sip. He couldn't help but admire her neck as she took several swallows. He imagined her on her knees as he fed her his cock. How her neck would spasm as he thrust hard and deep, spunking into her mouth, and making her swallow every single drop.

Fuck, he was getting hard just imagining it.

“So, how about we elope, go to Vegas or something? Get married, and then you live here and you can sleep with whoever you want, do whatever you want, but I get to go back home and live my own life. We promise never to darken each other's doorsteps again. Your debt is paid in full, and no one has to know.”

“That's not going to happen, Adele. You and I both know that is not how this works. However, I am intrigued by a deal.” He took a sip of his water.

Her shoulders had already slumped.

“I guess you consider your deal a better one?” she asked.

“How about we get married, make it a whole big deal? You become my wife in full, and you get to rub it in your father's face.”

“No,” Adele said.

This did surprise him.

“You don't want your father to live with what he doesn't have?” Enzo asked. “You'll be my wife, by my side. He'll get to see you, but you don't have to talk to him.” That wasn't quite accurate. She'd have to talk to Hank, especially if he demanded it.

“Hell, no. Do you think I'm stupid?”

Enzo stared at her. He had hoped she wouldn't be too wise to his offer.

“Either way, Adele, you're going to be my wife, so we better find an offer that's suitable to you.”

Chapter Four

“You do realize I have a job and a life?” Adele asked the following morning.

Enzo wouldn't let her leave. He'd gone to bed, and she'd tried to stay awake as long as possible. She'd hoped to kick down the door, or figure out his code. Nothing worked. In the end, Enzo had gotten up, dragged her to bed, and literally kept an arm around her waist while he had fallen asleep. She had hoped to stop him from sleeping, but exhaustion had claimed her, and she'd been enjoying some sweet dreams.

Now, she was wide awake, sitting at Enzo's dining room table, enjoying a morning cup of coffee and a bowl of sweet cereal. She never usually liked sweet cereal, but this one wasn't too bad.

“Your job and life ended when your father asked me for a favor.”

“And let me guess, whatever Hank says, you jump at the chance? What kind of capo are you?”

She hoped insulting him would help him make the choice of getting rid of her. Instead, for her trouble, she got a raised eyebrow. How did he do that without even trying?

“I'm already having the arrangements made,” Enzo said. “You're going for a dress fitting tomorrow. We're getting married at the end of next week.”

“What the hell? There's no way anyone is going to marry us. Not when I'm kicking and screaming and telling everyone you kidnapped me.”

“Do you think you'd be the only bride to have a temper tantrum? Trust me, you're not. There are women who cry, and some who have even refused to say *I do*, so their father does the talking, and trust me, they still have to get married.”

Adele tensed up.

“Sounds wonderful,” she said. “What happens to those women who fail to do as they’re told?”

“They’re disciplined.”

“Right, so if I don’t do as I’m told, you’re going to beat me?” Adele asked.

Enzo looked up at her and shook his head. “I’m not going to have to beat you, because you’re going to be my wife, Adele. Stop trying to fight it. This will go one of two ways. You’ll be my wife, or you can fight me, but I will make your life and every person you know, miserable. I can make things very difficult for Bishop. In fact, I’m looking for a bar just like this one. I think I’ll buy it, and then I’ll make sure everyone there, including you, loses their job, because I’m going to want staff I can trust.”

“You can’t be serious,” Adele said.

“I’m deadly serious.”

“What exactly did Hank do that has made you this loyal puppy dog?” she asked.

There were moments, so very slight, where she did like Enzo. He did make her laugh, and she knew she entertained him. He’d not hidden the twitch of his lips or the humor in his eyes.

“Hank saved my life. If it wasn’t for him, I’d be dead.”

“Oh,” Adele said. She had expected something simple, like borrowing money, or winning at a card game, or some stupid bet that had gone wrong.

“So, you now see how much I owe him,” Enzo said. “You will be my wife. He wants you taken care of.”

Adele sat back in her chair. The coffee was so good, but she suddenly didn’t have the appetite for it, or the sweet cereal. She was between a rock and a hard place, and she couldn’t quite figure how to get out of it. She had no doubt Enzo would see through his threat. If he was determined to have his way, he’d punish those she cared about.

Arnold needed that job, and she knew Bishop loved his bar. They all had their own reasons for loving that bar. Even Adele loved it there. She didn't want to give it up, but what choice did she have?

"What do I get?" Adele asked. She turned to look at Enzo. She hated to admit defeat, but this wasn't really defeat, not yet.

"What do you want?"

"I already told you what I want, and you've told me no. Tell me what I get out of this?" Adele asked. "All my life, my mom kept me away from this world. She made me aware of it. She didn't keep any secrets from me, but she wanted me to be protected. Now, because my ... sperm donor has decided he wants to take care of me, he's going to drag me into this world. You're not going to back down, and I'm not going to let you hurt the people I care about. What do I get?" she asked.

Enzo sipped at his coffee and watched her.

"Why don't you start making your requests and I'll see what I can do?"

"I want to keep my house," she said.

"Why?"

"It was my mother's."

"Hank paid for it."

"She earned that house and not because she was a whore or a mistress. She had no idea he was married, and she got beaten up because of it. That house is mine. I get to keep it."

"Fine."

She took a deep breath.

Adele didn't know what else she wanted. She had no idea what she was doing. Marriage wasn't something she had thought about, and certainly not with a mafia capo. She rubbed at her temple as she felt the beginnings of a headache. This couldn't be happening.

“Adele,” Enzo said.

She looked up at him. “I never wanted this. I don’t want any part of this.”

“Fine.”

Was it going to be fine? Was that really something he could promise her? She didn’t know if she could trust him. Look what happened to her mother over that kind of trust.

“You have to leave Bishop, Arnold, and everyone who works at the bar alone. There’s no way you can hurt them or take their livelihoods away.”

“Consider it done,” he said.

She nibbled her lip and nodded.

“What more do you want?” he asked.

“We’re never having sex. I don’t want to sleep with you. I want us to have separate bedrooms, and I want you to write up a contract, stating that you understand this. No kids. Nothing. We live together, but separate lives.” Once the demands started, it would seem, she struggled to stop them.

Enzo shook his head. “If I was willing to live separate lives, I wouldn’t have threatened your workplace, Adele. You and I both know a marriage like that is not going to work. You will belong to me. You’ll be my wife, in full. I expect you to be the mother of my children.”

“And I don’t want to have sex with you, so what you’re saying is you believe in rape.” It was such a harsh word, and it took all her strength not to wince or instantly apologize. Instead, she stayed strong, not backing down.

“Do you really want to negotiate that lie?” Enzo asked.

“It’s not a lie.”

There was silence for several seconds as Enzo watched her. She didn’t have a clue what was going on in his mind, and she had a horrible feeling she really didn’t want to know.

Suddenly, he stood, and she couldn’t help but tense. Sometimes, she said things she didn’t always mean, but when

it came to this, there were no lies. The last thing she wanted to do was have sex with him.

She wished she had the coffee now, but reaching out or making any sudden movements seemed deeply inappropriate to her. Like she was fidgeting.

Enzo stopped behind her chair and she felt his hands grip the back of it.

He leaned down and his lips were against her ear. “You don’t feel any attraction to me at all?” he asked.

“None.” But as his breath fanned across her ear, she struggled to take in deep enough breaths, and she felt a little light-headed. That didn’t mean anything, did it?

Did Adele really believe her words?

Enzo was tempted to take her earlobe between his teeth and nibble down, to see just how far he could push her body. She was a temptation he didn’t want to deny himself. He already felt his cock hardening, and that was just from inhaling her perfume. Adele smelled so fucking good. No woman should be this tempting. He was made of stronger shit than this.

“Do you feel nothing if I do this?” He pressed his lips against her neck, and she shook her head, indicating no.

She was such a little liar, but he didn’t mind. He found her fight against him cute. In fact, he was finding his time with Adele to be utterly invigorating. She was such a hard ball to crack. She wasn’t making it easy for him, and he was more than okay with that.

Without touching her, he pressed his lips against her neck, and then just slightly brushed that pulse with his tongue. Her tits couldn’t lie, and the penthouse was warm. There was no reason for her to have such tight nipples, and the shirt she wore molded to the curves of her breasts.

Enzo had a sudden need to have her naked, to strip her body down, and to admire every single inch of her. She was

fucking stunning, no doubt about it. His desires for her were so strong. He wanted to fuck her. This need had evaded him for so long, and yet with Adele, it was waking up.

Women were easy to obtain. There were always women waiting and willing to take his cock, or to do whatever he desired.

Adele wasn't just any woman. She was going to be his wife, and that made her even more special.

Opening his lips, he used his teeth to bite down. Not too hard, but just enough to make her gasp. This time, he placed his hands on her shoulder.

“I think you're lying, Adele,” he said.

“I'm not lying.”

“No? So, your nipples aren't tight from my touch, and your pussy isn't soaking wet?” he asked.

“Why are you saying these things to me?” she asked.

He couldn't help but smile. “Because I'm proving you wrong. You're attracted to me, Adele, or at least your body is. You might not be. You might think I'm cruel, or whatever word you want to use, but your body, oh, she wants me very much.”

Enzo refused to push the issue. It would be quite easy to do, but there would be time for him to explore her body, and he had a feeling it was going to be a lot sooner than Adele thought. She was attracted to him, and he had a feeling she hated that attraction.

Standing up, he moved toward his seat and sat down, giving Adele his full attention. Her cheeks were flushed and her chest moved up and down, highlighting just how full her tits were. His cock wasn't doing any better. The arousal he felt for her was getting stronger with every passing second.

“So, when it comes to sex and kids, why don't we agree that has to happen?” Enzo said. “I need children to pass on my bloodline to. I need an heir.”

“An heir? Are you living in the past?”

Enzo didn't say anything and just looked at her.

“What am I even suggesting? Of course you're living in the past. My father asked you to marry me, so why would I think any differently of everything else?” She scoffed and then slapped her hand.

He happened to adore her snarky attitude.

She reached for her coffee and took a sip. He saw the slight wrinkling of her nose, but she didn't put the mug down this time. Was she trying to hide those full nipples of hers? His mouth watered just thinking about sucking on those tight peaks. He had no choice but to move into a much more comfortable position on his chair.

“What other demands do you have?” he asked.

“What's the point in asking? You're going to deny them anyway.”

This made him smile, he just couldn't help it. Her little temper tantrum was so cute.

“Try me.”

“Fine. I don't want to see my father,” Adele said.

This made him tense up.

“I don't know what business you have of his, but I don't want any of this to be cause for him thinking I'm happy to reconcile with him. He hurt my mother and he wasn't a great dad, at all.”

“There are going to be occasions I cannot control,” Enzo said. “My presence will be demanded at each of those events.”

“Then I'm sure between you and Hank, you can come up with an arrangement that means either one of you goes, or I stay at home.?” Adele shrugged. “It's not like he can suddenly introduce me as his daughter. He wanted nothing to do with me growing up, and he doesn't get to be involved in my life now.”

“Do you think that's wise?”

“I don’t care if you see it as wise or not. I don’t want it, nor do I want to meet his wife or his other kids.”

Enzo had a feeling Hank’s broken promises had done a number on her.

“I’ll make sure it happens.” That was his first lie. There was no way Adele would be his wife and not encounter Hank.

He had to wonder if this was what Hank wanted.

Hank wanted to be part of Adele’s life, but she spent way too much time pushing him away, and now, with Carla gone, Adele was alone. He wouldn’t put it past Hank to do something like that.

“Anything else?” he asked.

“You’re not allowed to take a mistress, or if you do take one, then I want a mister, or a male equivalent, and you can’t kill him.”

“Not happening.”

“Then you don’t get to have a mistress,” Adele said.

“Fine, as long as you keep me satisfied in bed, I don’t see a reason for me to go out hunting for a woman I don’t need.”

He watched her lips press together. She looked so cute when she was trying not to lose her temper, and he had a feeling he’d pissed her off a few times already.

“Is that all?”

Adele opened her mouth and closed it.

“Do you really think you’re going to be able to keep it in your pants?” she asked. “Can you have it drawn up that the moment you take a mistress, I get a full payout and a divorce?”

“You’ll never get a divorce,” he said.

She growled. “Then fine, if you screw another woman, I get to have another man?”

“No.”

“I’ll make your life miserable,” Adele said.

“No, you won’t.” He pressed the tips of his fingers together and watched her. She looked so adorable. “Adele, I will not take a mistress, I will not cheat on you. I take my vows seriously. Providing you keep me happy, fuck me regularly, we’re going to be just fine.”

“And if I don’t want to fuck you?” she asked.

He noticed her cheeks going a beautiful shade of red. “Are you a virgin?”

“Will it stop you marrying me if I wasn’t one, or was one?” Adele asked.

Enzo didn’t know if she was or not. She was being quite evasive, and cute. He rather liked it. Sitting back in his chair, he looked at her. He hadn’t asked Hank of her virgin status, because he didn’t think it was that important. Now, as he watched her, he didn’t like the hit of jealousy he got at thinking of another man touching what belonged to him.

Adele was his, no one else’s, but did it matter to him if she’d been with someone else first? It did, just a little, which was complete bullshit, because he was far from a virgin. He’d enjoyed many women in his time. He wasn’t lying to Adele about that. Enzo wouldn’t go finding other women to fuck, not when he had Adele. He had a feeling she was going to be a handful.

“It wouldn’t matter if you were or not. This marriage is going to happen. You’ll be my wife, but I think it would be the right thing to tell me if you’re a virgin or not.”

Adele smiled. “Well, I guess you get to find out on our wedding night, if I am or not.”

Enzo didn’t mind the challenge. Did she not realize that the snarkier she was being with him, the cuter he found her. No, not cuter, *sexy*.

He loved that she bit back.

Their marriage was going to be fucking hot.

Chapter Five

Adele was a virgin, but Enzo didn't need to know that. He was already getting everything he wanted and she was ... well, she didn't know what she was or wasn't getting.

Yes, she was getting married, and her home would remain hers, but other than that, her whole life was going to change. It had already changed. Enzo had gone with her into work, where she had to hand in her immediate notice of resignation. This was part of Enzo's deal. He'd leave them all alone and allow Bishop to keep his bar, but she had to quit work. This was hard.

Handing in her notice felt like the first door of her cage being locked. Enzo was pushing her into a place she had no part of, and it was scaring her. Still, she forced a smile as she handed in her notice, introduced Bishop to Enzo, as well as Arnold, and a couple of others. She was closest to Bishop and Arnold.

After that, Enzo made her collect some of her belongings from the house. This turned out to be even harder than handing in her notice. Her mother's home had been hers since she was a baby. This house was where she was raised, where she was loved.

While Enzo went to make a call, Adele snuck upstairs to her mother's bedroom. She sat down on the bed that hadn't been made in two years. As part of her mother's instructions, which she had followed completely, her mother wanted her not to create a shrine. She was to go in, strip the bed, and make the room a spare one.

The bed was stripped and ready, and she'd gone through her wardrobe, but she only removed what she felt was necessary. Adele had taken several items of her mother's clothing for her own. She never wore them, she just took care of them.

Her mother had loved to sew, and she would not throw out anything her mother made. All the clothes they had

purchased from the shop were gone, but Adele kept everything handmade. Some of them were even in a box up in the loft.

“What the hell am I doing, Mom?” she asked. “Hank wanted nothing to do with me when you were alive, and now that you’re gone, he’s ... meddling.”

She closed her eyes and took in a deep breath. There was no calm. Nor comfort.

She felt tears fill her eyes. It had been a long time since she had last cried. Adele couldn’t remember a time she had felt so alone — maybe those first few days after the funeral, when she woke up and knew there was no denying that her mother was gone. Placing her hands on her knees, she breathed in and out.

“Adele?” Enzo’s voice traveled up the stairs.

Getting to her feet, she stepped out of her mother’s room and closed the door as he came upstairs.

“What?” she asked.

“Are you ready to leave?”

“No.”

She walked back into her own bedroom. A single case sat on the bed. Enzo had said more of her stuff would be taken at a later date. For now, she needed a few of her things. Her life was changing fast, and she struggled to keep up with it. She gritted her teeth, walked to her wardrobe, and took out several items.

“I’ve got business to take care of. I need you to hurry up,” Enzo said.

“Then go,” she said. “I’ll still be here when you get back.” She blew out a breath. “I’ve got nowhere else to be.”

“I’m not leaving you here.”

“Enzo, I’ve lived here for the past twenty-three years.”

“You’re going to be my wife. The announcement has already been made.”

“What?” This made her spin around toward him.

“Adele, you know who I am. My marriage is a big event. There will be a party tomorrow night. We have many guests expected. Your life...”

“Is now at risk. I know the deal,” she said.

“How do you know the deal?” Enzo asked. “Your mother was never part of this life, how did she know what it entailed?”

“I’m guessing she asked Hank.” She shrugged. “I can imagine after getting a beating, nearly losing me and her own life, it would help a woman to make certain demands of the man she thought she was in love with.” An engagement party. “Why?”

“Why what?”

“Why a party? We’re getting married in less than two weeks. Doesn’t that all seem a little suspicious to you?” she asked.

This time he shrugged, and she had a sudden desire to throw something at him. Instead, she walked back into her small closet.

“Will he be there?” she asked, not needing to name her father.

“No, I don’t think he will make it.”

She felt a huge relief.

“That’s good.” Stepping out of the bedroom, she pushed the lid down on the suitcase and slid the zipper into place. “I’m ready.”

It was a big fat, horrible lie. She was nowhere near ready to leave. This was her home. Her sanctuary. The place that gave her peace.

She wasn’t taking anything else with her. No pictures, or tokens. Not even anything from her sewing room. Enzo had promised he’d find space for her things, but she didn’t know if she believed him.

He took the suitcase from her, and they walked out of her home. She locked her home and pocketed the keys. Each step she took away from the house broke her heart a little more.

Enzo placed her case in the trunk, and his men were already in the front of the car. He held the door open for her in the back, and she slid in to the opposite side of the car. From this side, she didn't get to see her home as she drove away. Once again, due to her father's meddling, she was driving away from the only place that had brought her peace.

She thought about her mother, Carla, who had taught her to ride a bike up and down that street. They had spent two days, one summer. She had first attempted to learn at the park, but the uneven ground kept hindering her, and she fell so many times. Carla wouldn't allow her to give up. Each time she fell, her mother was there to pick her up and tell her it would be okay. Would it be okay now? She thought about her mother baking cookies for Halloween, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, or even when she achieved something at school. Her mother was always there for her.

Until now.

Adele took another deep breath and then placed a hand against her chest. It started to feel incredibly tight. She felt tears well up, but she refused to cry. Now was not the time to cry. Not in front of Enzo. Licking her dry lips, she stayed focused on the road ahead.

"You've just got to keep living, baby. No matter what. You've got your whole life ahead of you, and I wish I was going to be there to see it, but I'm not, so you've got to live it for both of us. Remember, I will always be there for you. Always."

"Where would you like to eat?" Enzo asked.

"I'm not hungry."

"Adele, you've got to eat."

She turned toward him and shook her head. "I'm not hungry." The truth was, she just wanted to go home and curl

up on the sofa.

Adele was different.

From the moment he placed her suitcase in the trunk of the car, he knew there was something upsetting her, but he didn't quite know what it was. He had no choice but to leave her at his penthouse apartment, while he went and took care of some business.

While dealing with business, he had a couple of fashion boutiques deliver several evening gowns. He expected to keep Adele busy, trying to choose a dress for their engagement party. Most women loved to shop, or at least that had been his experience of women. When he returned home, he found Adele on the sofa.

All the clothes had been set up on rails for her to look through, but from what he could see, she hadn't looked. When he asked her what she wanted, she told him to choose. He chose a dark red number, and she tried it on.

Now, as he stood at the hotel where he'd made the arrangements for this dinner party, with guests arriving and Adele on his arm, he realized what it was that had changed. There was no fire. Adele had accepted the dress, tried it on without fighting him. He loved the dress as it had molded to every curve just as he knew it would. She wore it now.

He sent hairdressers and makeup artists to get her ready. Enzo had also arranged for a whole new wardrobe. Again, she hadn't fought him.

His wife had to uphold a certain image, and even though he had no problem with Adele, he knew after tonight the vultures would circle. Announcing his upcoming wedding had created a bit of stir within his circle. Many of the capos wanted to come and meet the woman he was taking as his bride.

He'd also lied to Adele. Her father and his family were due to arrive any minute. Enzo had called Hank and advised that he not attend, to which Hank had stated that if he didn't

attend, it would raise suspicion. There was already a lot of suspicion about her identity. People were curious about why he'd chosen a nobody, a civilian.

Adele kept smiling, shaking hands, accepting congratulations, but he sensed her tension. Where was the snarky woman who refused to marry him? Had she given up already? He didn't like that. Enzo didn't want to break her.

Looking toward the door, he caught sight of Hank and his wife entering the building. He couldn't help but tense up and as he did, he glanced down to see Adele looking at him with a frown. Her gaze moved to the door, and he felt her tense. Her head spun toward him so fast, he thought she might get whiplash.

"You said he wasn't supposed to be here," Adele said.

"He had no choice but to come and offer his congratulations." He gripped the back of her neck, pulling her in close so that he could whisper the words against her ear, giving them some semblance of privacy. It was all an illusion. They had no privacy. He sensed everyone circling, ready to pounce.

And you agreed to allow them to see her.

None of them could even be prepared for Adele, but he didn't understand why she was being so passive.

"Can you stop them?" Adele asked.

"No." He took hold of her hand, but she tried to pull away from him. Adele was no match for his strength and he was able to keep hold of her. "Stop."

She squeezed his hand tightly.

Hank had come straight toward him. He held out his hand and gave it a squeeze. "Pleasure to see you, Enzo, and your fiancée." Hank turned to his wife, who took his hand, and then as both went to greet Adele, they were met with a harsh stare.

It was the first fire he'd seen.

"Don't," Adele said, looking straight at Hank.

Enzo saw Hank's wife, Isabella, looking a little confused.

"I don't appreciate being put in this position," Adele said. This time when she pulled away, Enzo let her. He had a feeling he had already pushed her these past forty-eight hours.

"Do you know her?" Isabella asked.

Hank shoved his hands into his pockets. "She's not happy?"

Enzo kept a smile on his face. "What do you think?" He saw the realization on Isabella's face, and this was his time to step away and go find his fiancée. He wasn't interested in any more family drama.

Several people tried to stop him, to which he declined. No one pushed him to linger, and he figured it had to do with his reputation, that they allowed him to go. Leaving the main hall, he couldn't find Adele. He checked the bathrooms, and ended up moving from room to room, until he caught her in one of the conference rooms. He stepped inside and found her rubbing at her chest, eyes closed, and he noticed her taking several deep breaths.

"Adele?"

"Just ... give me a minute."

"What's going on?"

She opened her eyes and then turned toward him. One of her hands kept opening and closing.

"You're having a panic attack." He closed the distance between them, placed a hand on her back, and another on her chest.

"No, it's ... I don't know what it is. I haven't had one in a very long time."

He felt her heart racing and he saw the panic in her eyes.

Enzo moved in behind her, wrapped his arms around her and pulled her in close. "I've got you," he said. He didn't

know if his presence helped her to feel safe, but he held her.

At first, her breathing seemed almost erratic, and then minutes passed, and she finally began to calm down.

“You knew,” Adele said.

“Yes.”

“You should have told me.”

“You’d have been pissed.”

“That woman ... she nearly killed my mother.”

He tightened his grip around her and then Adele began to fight him. She let out a scream, and he had no choice but to spin her around, cup her face, and then capture her lips beneath his. The last time he’d done this, he’d gotten slapped.

Letting go of her face, he caught her hands, placing them at the base of her back, stopping her from being able to fight him. With Adele in this vulnerable position, he pressed her tits and body against his, and he didn’t have a single problem feeling her next to his skin. In fact, his cock hardened. Why did he have to wait until his wedding night?

She’s a virgin.

Or is she?

Breaking the kiss, he looked down at her closed eyes, and they slowly opened up.

“Don’t scream,” he said.

“I hate you.”

“Good. Hate me, but don’t scream.”

“I hate him. I hate her.”

“That’s fine.”

She shook her head. “No. It’s not fine to hate anyone.” She tried to pull away from him, and this made her growl as he wouldn’t allow her to go.

“Tell me what you need?” Enzo asked.

He never cared what anyone wanted before. Women simply had to do as they were told, but not Adele. With Adele he wanted more. He cared a hell of a lot more.

“Talk to me.”

“I need to go home.”

“I’ll take you home later.”

“To my house?” she asked.

He sighed. “No. You know that is not an option.”

“Then there’s nothing you can do for me. Let me go.”

“I’ll let you compose yourself, but then you and I are going out there.”

She shook her head. “This is not my life. This is not my place.”

“This is your place!” He glared at her. “You’ve got two choices here. You can run and hide, and they can see you as weak and a coward. Or, you can hold your head high and know that you stand by my side. You can show them you’re not weak. That your mother raised a strong, independent woman. You, right now, are proof of how strong and amazing your mother was.” Enzo didn’t have a clue what he was saying, but he saw the shock in her eyes.

He couldn’t allow Adele to fall. Enzo didn’t know why he gave a fuck so much. She was going to be his wife. He had won. She belonged to him, but he couldn’t allow this world to eat her up. She had to stay strong.

“What’s it going to be? Are you going to make her proud? Or fucking fail?”

Chapter Six

Adele had felt hate before. There were times growing up where she had hated her father with a fiery passion. Her mother had always told her it was a wasted emotion. That the only person she was hurting was herself. To hate someone wasn't a good feeling to have.

Carla had never hated anyone, not even Hank. She had forgiven him and made peace with it all, but she would never forget.

"How does that help? You're still here and he's still there."

"But I'm happy, Adele. Can't you see that? I've got you? He doesn't have me, and he doesn't have you. I can't hate him."

Adele had never understood what her mother was talking about, not until that moment. Nibbling her lip, she looked at Enzo, and she hated him. His words were cold and cruel, but she realized he was right. The past twenty-four hours, she'd given up. The dress she wore, though beautiful, wasn't one she would choose.

If she allowed Enzo to have his way, she'd lose everything her mother had fought for. She couldn't allow that to happen.

Squaring her shoulders, she turned on her heel and headed toward the door. She expected Enzo to stop her, but he didn't. He allowed her to go, but when it came to them joining the party, Enzo placed a hand across her hip. Adele tried not to think about how good it felt having his hands on her body.

I'm not attracted to Enzo.

My body doesn't want him.

It was all lies, but one day, she hoped if she said it enough, she could convince herself it was true.

They entered the party, and Enzo smiled and seemed to charm the men who continued to stop and speak to them.

Adele stopped looking for her father and the woman that had beaten her mother up. When she had seen her, Adele had felt that rage inside her starting to build. She didn't know if the woman even knew who she was. If she didn't know exactly who she was, then Adele was more than happy to help her understand.

Enzo gripped her hip tightly. He didn't just squeeze, there seemed to be a gentle massage, as if he was making sure she was okay and handling everything.

She was more than okay. It had only been a short blip for her, but in truth, she had felt like she lost everything. Her mother had taken her away from this life, and now glancing at the women, she saw that most of them put on a façade. Adele couldn't help but wonder how many of the women hated it here. Most of them were younger, with older men.

"Didn't you want to be with him, Mommy?"

"No, sweetheart. That world is not for me and I didn't fall for your father because of who he was. I didn't know who he was. There's no way I'd ever be part of that world. I don't want to be. Not now, not ever."

"Men can't get enough of you," Enzo said, placing his lips against her head. "I may have to murder a few of them to let them know who you belong to."

She rolled her eyes. "They don't care who I am. They're more interested in you."

"That's where you're wrong."

They moved through the main room and Adele caught sight of her father. He stood with *that* woman as well as two men.

"Are they supposed to be my half-brothers?" Adele asked.

Enzo glanced at her, then toward Hank. "Yes."

"Are they assholes?"

“Yes.”

“Doesn’t he have a daughter as well?”

“He does, but she rarely attends these functions. She is ... a spoiled brat.”

“Right.” Adele tapped her fingers against the side of her dress. Was it wrong that she wanted to slap that woman and punch the men in the balls?

She had never considered herself a violent person, but in the last few days, her world had changed. It wasn’t because of them, she knew that, but because of that man.

“I’ve got to go to the bathroom,” Adele said, pulling out of Enzo’s hold.

She didn’t wait for further instruction and instead made her way out of the main hall. It had been a long time since she last had a panic attack, and as she made her way to the bathroom, she rubbed at her chest since she still felt a tightening.

Even though she wanted to honor her mother, there was still a little fear that she was going to mess this up, and that was the last thing she wanted to do.

Entering the bathroom, there were a couple of women who shyly smiled toward her. She saw they were covering up a couple of bruises and she couldn’t help but enter the main stall, shaking her head. This was crazy.

She sat on the toilet seat and placed her head in her hands.

I can do this.

I don’t know if I can do this.

I want my mommy.

That was a feeling she hadn’t felt in a very long time. Her mother had done everything in her power to help her be strong, to face the world, and be prepared for everything. Right now, she didn’t feel prepared.

The women left the bathroom and it became eerily quiet.

She finished on the toilet, and then stepped out, only to come to a halt as she stood in front of her father. It had been a long time since she faced him.

Years of waiting for him, broken promises, lies, fake promises, the whole lot of everything. Staring at him now, Adele knew she hated him with a passion that should surprise her, only it didn't.

"Adele," he said.

"This is the ladies' room." She folded her arms across her chest, hating that it had come to this. Many years ago, Adele had vowed never to see him or talk to him again, and yet here he was, right in front of her after all of these years. "You shouldn't be here."

"I know you had a panic attack, Adele. I needed to see you to make sure you're okay."

She had brushed past him and was now washing her hands. "You need to see if I'm okay? Seriously, you were never there for all the other panic attacks in the past, why would it matter now?"

"You must understand the reasons. I did it to protect you."

"No. You did it to protect yourself." She turned toward him and her hands were still wet, and she held them in front of her. "That's all you ever do. You should have left Mom alone, but instead you chased her. You lied to her."

"I know. I loved her and I couldn't be without her."

"You're selfish. Like now. It's all about you and what you want."

"I wanted to take care of you."

"I was fine," Adele said. "I didn't want to be part of this, part of any of this, but now I'm engaged to a man who has threatened people I care about. In order to get your way, you've made my life miserable."

“I’ll talk to Enzo and I’ll deal with all of this. We can talk. I can help. I just want to know that you’re going to be okay.”

“No, you don’t get to do that. You don’t get to talk to Enzo. You don’t get to try to fix this. You asked Enzo to lie to me. Mom had already prepared me for your tricks, so it was never going to work on me.” She squared her shoulders. “But that’s okay, because I’m going to marry Enzo, and we will probably have a couple of kids, but my story will remain the same. I don’t have a father. He abandoned my mother, lied, cheated, and it was so easy for him to stop coming. I’ll be by Enzo’s side. You will never be part of my life, nor will you be part of any of my children’s lives.”

She took another step toward him.

“And you better tell your wife that if she tries anything with me, if she thinks I will bow down, step aside, or take it, then she’s going to meet with a real problem. I’m not my mother, and I’ve got a whole lot of hate for you and for her.”

The Wedding Day

Enzo saw Hank in the aisle.

The past two weeks had been a whirlwind of activity. Adele was no longer placid. She refused to allow him to organize their wedding. She made demands, chose her wedding dress, and even the flowers, which all had to be roses — the darkest of red as they were her mother’s favorite. The wedding cake had to be lemon, with lemon frosting, and she wouldn’t allow him to make any changes.

Enzo couldn’t believe the change in her. He watched as Adele took charge. He’d changed her life, and he wasn’t bluffing with her. If she had fought him, he’d have gone after those she cared about, because he didn’t have a caring bone in his body. He took what he wanted, and to pay for this debt, he was willing to do whatever was necessary.

The church was full of fellow capos, associates, and their wives and families. Hank was front and center with his

wife and family. Soldiers were outside of the church, as well as inside, prepared for any potential attack.

Enzo never thought he'd enjoy his wedding day, but as the hours ticked by, knowing at the end of the day Adele would belong to him, he found it rather exciting.

He stood, waiting.

Adele didn't keep him waiting long. Much to his surprise, she asked for Bishop to walk her down the aisle. He knew the bar owner didn't like him, as he was concerned about Adele marrying him, but there was no stopping him.

Enzo had taken Bishop to one side and warned him if he tried to interfere with Adele, then he'd close the bar and completely remove his business altogether. He would make his life a living hell. Bishop hadn't put up a fight, and now Enzo would finally get what he wanted.

The music changed and Enzo turned to watch as his woman stood at the end of the aisle. Within their circle, the gossip had spread about who she was and what it meant. Enzo was not forthcoming as he didn't feel he needed to be. His decisions were his own.

Bishop held Adele, who walked toward him, head held high, shoulders squared. The dress she had chosen was stunning. There were no straps or arms. It was molded to her tits, nipped in at the waist, and flared out across her hips. She looked like a princess.

Her long, brown hair was curled, and small roses were woven into the strands. They were fake. She didn't have any makeup on at all.

Enzo watched her, unable to take his gaze away. For the past two weeks, he'd seen her in sweatpants and old, stained shirts. He watched her eating pizza, ice cream, and talking constantly about the wedding she didn't want.

Adele was going to belong to him.

He went to Bishop. This was another punch to Hank, and he was aware that Adele knew what she was doing. Hank

should be here, but he hadn't claimed her as his daughter. The speculation was there.

Bishop placed Adele's hand within Enzo's. Enzo sensed her shaking. She hated large crowds, which seemed strange to him considering she was used to dealing with them on a nightly basis. They stepped toward the priest, who cleared his throat.

Less than thirty minutes later, he and Adele were married in front of the mafia with which he was associated, and witnessed as he finally kissed his bride. There was a chorus of applause, and then he placed his hand at the base of Adele's back and they faced their audience.

Hank clapped his hands, but Enzo sensed the conflict within him. He wasn't a happy man.

Bishop was the first to offer them congratulations. He shook Bishop's hand, and then it was time to make their way out toward the main grounds of the church.

Adele hadn't wanted any pictures of their wedding, but this had been the one element he insisted on. With the cameras on, clicking away, he wrapped his arm around his wife and smiled for the pictures. He'd never been one to pose like this before, but something told him he would want the memories of this moment.

She didn't fight him.

His wife.

"I can't believe you wanted this," Adele said.

"It's a right of passage."

She began to chuckle and he couldn't help but admire the way her tits rose and fell with each of her indrawn breaths, or the way they shook as she giggled.

"This is not a right of passage. You do realize to get me down the aisle, you blackmailed me."

This did make him smile. "And to think I have the next fifty years to keep blackmailing you to get whatever the hell I want."

Chapter Seven

Adele tried not to let her nerves build up. The after-party had gone by so fast, but she'd been able to avoid her father, who had insisted on coming to her wedding and to the party. At least she hadn't found herself alone with him, which was a relief. She kept standing straight, looking ahead, but today had worn on her last nerve, especially as they were now at the end of the night.

They were spending their wedding night at a hotel. She gripped the edge of the bathroom sink. She'd already taken a shower and knew Enzo waited for her in the bedroom. Licking her dry lips, she glanced at her reflection and tried to see if there was anything falling apart. Her hair was wet. She had removed the flowers that were in fact small butterfly clips placed in her hair. They were not too heavy, and she'd loved the look. She'd opted for no makeup, and now as she looked at herself, she had to wonder if makeup would have been better.

She'd been dreading this day. Should she have fought harder to be free? Bishop had offered to help her escape, but the thought of him, Arnold, and everyone at the bar paying the price was just too much. She could handle Enzo.

Walking down the aisle, each step had made her think about her mother. Was there anything her mother would have insisted she do, or not do?

Adele pulled away from the mirror and took a step toward the bathroom door. The hotel room was a large one, complete with the en suite. She took another deep breath.

Tonight, she was going to have sex for the first time, with her husband. She'd not been saving her virginity for anyone. Life had thrown so many obstacles in her path that finding romance hadn't been key to her.

Gripping the door handle, she felt her heart start to race, and then she forced herself to step through the bathroom door, into the bedroom. Enzo sat on the edge of the bed. He finished typing something into his phone and as he did, he

stood and turned toward her. For several seconds, neither of them spoke.

“I’ll be back in a minute.”

He walked past her and she wanted to ask him what he was playing at. Didn’t he want to get this over with? Instead, she gritted her teeth and stared at the bed. There was a single negligee laid out. She removed the towel and quickly pulled on the garment, but she soon realized it was pointless as it revealed a lot more than the towel did.

Shaking her head, she finished drying her hair. She found a brush and ran it through the damp strands. She heard the shower turn on and as she moved past the door, she was tempted to sneak a peek inside.

No. No. You don’t want to see him naked.

Forget about him.

Wrinkling her nose, she moved to the bed, pulled back the sheet, and climbed inside. She pulled the blanket up to her chin, and then waited, watching the door. As she waited and listened, she heard the shower turn off. Crap. There was no place for her to run.

You don’t need to run.

The moment Enzo stepped back into the bedroom, her mouth went dry. She had seen naked men on television, but nothing had prepared her for seeing Enzo. He was pure muscle. She didn’t even realize how hard. She had caught glimpses of him late at night, but that had been in the dark. There was nothing hiding him now.

Every inch of his chest and arms were covered in ink. There was not enough time to explore all the different designs, but it led down toward his groin, which was hidden behind a towel.

“Come here,” he said.

It was on the tip of her tongue to argue, but this was her wedding night, and at no point did she want to argue. Pushing the blanket out of the way, she avoided eye contact

and stepped toward him. There was only a small gap between them, and seeing as her eyes were level with his chest, she had no choice but to look at him. He placed a finger beneath her chin and slowly tilted her head back, and she looked up at him.

“I will fuck you tonight, Adele,” he said. “I will make sure no one can question my claim on you, but I need to know right now, are you a virgin or not?”

“Why do you need to know?”

“Because I need to know if I can bend you over this bed and fuck you hard and fast, or if I need to get you prepared. It’s going to be a painful experience for you. I’m trying to avoid that.”

She frowned. Did she want to know why? They were not lovers or friends. Her father had called in a debt. That was what she was, a debt. Adele didn’t know what hurt most — rather than claim her as his daughter, Hank used a favor to deal with her.

“Adele!”

She glared at him. “I’m a virgin. I’ve never been with a man. Happy now?”

“Fucking yes.”

Before she knew what was happening, he’d slammed his lips down on hers. What the hell was this? The kiss was hotter than any she’d ever experienced. Counting the church, this was the fourth time Enzo had kissed her. This was different, though.

She clenched her hands into fists, hoping her body denied him. The last thing she wanted was to give into him.

Why fight?

Why make it hard?

Enjoy it.

This is your life.

But it was a life she didn’t want.

Enzo grabbed her hands and wrapped them around his neck. She had no idea what she was doing. She didn't even know if she wanted to touch him. Her world felt all over the place, and she didn't know what to do to gain control of it. She hated feeling so open and exposed. Raw even.

He ran his hands down her body, curving toward her ass, and drew her close. The towel he wore didn't stop her from feeling the hard ridge of his cock as it pressed against her stomach.

"I'm going to blow your mind," he said. "All you've got to do is trust me. Don't fight me."

His words were whispered against her ear and she was about to make a snarky comment when he suddenly kissed that spot on her neck, right against her pulse. She was so sensitive and as his teeth grazed over the spot, she couldn't help but moan. An instant flush of heat went straight toward her pussy.

Enzo slowly began to kiss her neck, trailing his lips down toward the front, against her collarbone, and then down toward her chest. He let go of her ass to grab the edge of the pointless negligee, and then he pulled it up and over her head, leaving her exposed.

Adele didn't like the feeling and reached for his towel. She didn't know why she wanted him naked because she was a little afraid. Sex was a big deal, wasn't it? She'd not purposefully saved herself for a guy, or for true love. The timing hadn't been right for her, nor had the guys she'd been around, and for the last few years, she'd been focused on her mother, losing her mother, and then just surviving through it.

The towel dropped to the floor, and for what seemed like a lifetime but was only probably a few seconds, they stood opposite each other and stared. She refused to look down at his dick.

Enzo kept his gaze on her, and then it was like whatever spell had woven over them came crashing down. He reached out, grabbed the back of her neck, and pulled her flush against him, tilting her head back as she did this, and taking

possession of her lips. She released a moan which he swallowed down, and then his other hand roamed her body.

He started at her shoulder and began to move down, going toward one of her breasts. She whimpered as he stroked his thumb right across the nipple. The action was so sudden, so tender, and she felt it straight between her thighs.

Enzo began to move her back until the bed stopped her, and then he pushed her back, and now there was no fighting, no getting away.

It would be so easy to allow her to assume the worst about him. For him to climb on top, fuck her, take her virginity, and not care for her enjoyment of their first union. Enzo didn't want that.

He refused to squash that fire he saw in her eyes and knew she was capable of. He didn't want to be married to a doormat or someone who was so submissive, she wouldn't tell him to fuck off. He didn't even care if he liked her reactions or not, the truth was, they were what he wanted. The last thing he wanted was for her to give up and to give in.

He sensed her nerves even as she tried to fight them. Sex would be amazing between them, but first he needed to get her ready for what they both needed.

With her on the bed, naked, he couldn't help but admire her body. Big, juicy tits, a small waist, flared hips, and thick thighs. He fucking loved her curves. They were so tempting. Gripping her waist, he couldn't help but run his hands down her body, learning the shape of her, memorizing it. He loved how big her nipples were as well. Right now, they were incredibly tight.

Her thighs were pressed together and he couldn't help but smile. Pressing his hands either side of her head, he took possession of her lips and then began to trail his lips down past her neck, toward those tits. His cock was so hard and as he stroked his tongue across one plump nipple, he heard her sharp

intake of breath. He had already figured from his first touch that she was sensitive, and now it was confirmed.

Sliding his tongue between the valley of her tits, toward the second, he circled the tight bud, flicking his tongue back and forth before he went back to the first, but this time he took the whole nipple into his mouth. As he sucked, he felt her arch up toward him. He held the tight bud between his teeth and used his tongue to flick across the tip that was inside his mouth. Enzo waited until she couldn't take any more, and then he moved toward her second nipple doing the same.

He moved a hand from the side of her head and began to stroke it down, going toward her waist, and then curving down her body, brushing across her thigh and stroking up. He heard her sudden indrawn breath, and he cupped her pussy, feeling how wet she was. He pressed a finger between her slit, and he was about to stroke her entrance, to test how tight she was, but remembered she was a virgin, so drew his finger back toward her clit.

While he sucked at her nipples, he continued to stroke her clit, building that fire inside her, making her burn hotter, and then he couldn't wait any longer.

Enzo never sucked a woman's pussy. He never had any interest, because the truth was, he didn't know who'd been there before him, but he just knew Adele didn't lie to him. She was all his. His precious little virgin. There was no going back after tonight. Their marriage would be consummated, and he had no intention of wearing a condom.

Enzo kissed down her body, trying not to rush, but then he moved her legs open so that he had space between them.

She didn't fight him, and he loved the scent of her cunt. Adele was so wet for him, and he parted the folds of her sex and saw her swollen clit. Soon, he'd fill that cunt with his cum, and he'd have her so fucking ripe and pregnant, there would be no denying his claim.

Enzo didn't even know where these feelings had come from. He felt so fucking possessive. These were all new feelings for him, because never in all his years had he cared

about women. They were just there. Women threw themselves at him, but from the moment he'd first met Adele, it had been a fucking fight, and he relished it.

Pressing his tongue to her clit, he stroked back and forth, working her pussy, getting her ready to take his cock. She whimpered and he pressed a hand to her stomach, holding her down as he worked her clit.

His name spilled from her lips. Like with her nipple, he took her nub between his teeth, sucking hard on it, and then using his tongue to flick back and forth. He felt the sudden change in her as the orgasm rushed through her body. It was like she couldn't quite stand his touch, but also didn't want him to stop.

Enzo slowed down the teasing of her clit and tested the wetness of her pussy. She was soaking wet, and his cock was painfully hard, so he knew it would have to do. There would be time to explore her more, but until then, he needed to seal the deal.

He pressed her down on the bed, holding her in place, and moved up between her thighs. Her cheeks were flushed. He grabbed the tip of his cock, and Adele placed a hand on his chest. It was the first time she had done something to stop him. Staring into her brown eyes, he saw the alarm in her gaze.

“Is it going to hurt?”

“Yes.”

He couldn't bring himself to lie to her and she nodded her head in a sudden, jerky movement.

“Right.”

Enzo took possession of her lips. “The first time will hurt, but afterward, it won't. I will show you everything your body is capable of. I won't hold back. You'll want for nothing and I'll show you how to get absolutely everything you want.”

She lowered her hand and nodded her head.

He lined his cock to her slit, but rather than tearing through her virginity, he slid the length through, bumping

against her nub. Each stroke made her moan and wriggle against his dick. All he wanted to do was fuck her, to ram his cock balls-deep inside her, but he took his time.

She was nervous and as he worked her clit with his cock, he teased her, drawing more arousal from her. Then, he gripped his cock, lined the tip with her cunt, and he was going to take his time, work his length in inch by inch. Why draw it out? Why make this more painful than it had to be? In his life, the best way of dealing with something, was to tear off the Band-Aid, and with that in mind, he slammed to the hilt, tearing through the thin wall of her virginity, claiming her.

She screamed his name and pressed at his chest. He grabbed her hands, holding them down on the bed, stopping her from fighting him. Enzo swallowed her screams, hating that he'd caused them.

This was a whole new experience to him. He'd filled his life with screams, with the death of others. He wasn't a kind man, but cruel, hard, and did what had to be done for the sake of the mafia. No job was too big or too gory. He'd tortured, maimed, and caused a great deal of suffering. Enzo, himself, had been tortured a few times, but nothing had prepared him for the feelings that swept over him at the sound of Adele's painful screams. They were hell.

He didn't want to ever hear those sounds again. They would remain forever burned into his memories, and he knew that no matter what, he couldn't allow Adele to ever feel pain again. She had to be protected.

Pulling away from the kiss, he forced himself to look at her, to make sure she was okay. Tears fell from her eyes, a steady stream leaking out.

"I didn't want to hurt you," he said.

"You did."

And he hated himself for it.

"It won't happen again."

"Now you know I wasn't lying," Adele said.

“I never thought you were.” He kept their fingers locked together and he refused to move, knowing the pain would lessen. When it did, he would finish this, and then he’d take care of her the way a husband was supposed to.

“Don’t you want to get it over with?” she asked.

“I can wait.”

“Why?”

“The pain will subside. It won’t last, and I’ll wait until you’re ready for more.” He wasn’t going to hurt her.

The truth was, it was taking every single ounce of concentration to keep his dick hard. Those sounds were true torture, and he never, ever wanted to hear them again.

After several seconds passed, Adele suddenly wriggled her hips. He had no choice but to grit his teeth, because that felt amazing.

“I think I’m ready,” Adele said, with a slight pant to her voice.

Chapter Eight

There was nothing different about her the following morning. Adele stared in the bathroom mirror, wondering if there was anything to look at, to see. She couldn't see anything. There was no sign, no indication that she had lost her virginity.

The moment Enzo had taken her, the pain had been indescribable. She had wanted it to end, and all he'd done was kiss her. She had wanted to scream at him that kisses wouldn't take the pain away, but slowly it had ebbed, as if it hadn't existed. Then, he'd begun to move, after she made the initial thrust.

Adele reached out to touch her lips and then moved down toward her neck, where he'd kissed. She couldn't tell there was any difference. Yet, she felt different.

There was soreness between her thighs, but it wasn't painful. No, it was a good ache. She shook her head, completely confused about how any of this could be good or even bad.

She was married now. Glancing down at the ring on her finger, she realized the diamond was shockingly large and very beautiful. She couldn't help but wonder what her mother would have felt about all of this.

"If you don't like it, I can change it," Enzo said.

Adele looked up to see the man himself standing in the doorway. "There's no reason to change it. I was..."

"You were what?" he asked.

"Nothing."

He moved toward her, wrapping his arms around her waist and pressing a kiss to her neck, as if it was the most natural thing in the world, and in a way, she imagined it was. They were married now. Husband and wife.

"Tell me," he said.

She looked at him in the reflection of the mirror and nibbled her lip, a little confused. Should she tell him? Was it silly to talk to him about her feelings?

“I was thinking about my mother,” Adele said.

“While looking at your ring?”

“It’s silly, I was just wondering what she’d think of all this.” She sighed. “I wondered, for just a second, if she wished she’d been able to marry ... Hank.”

“You can call him your dad,” Enzo said.

This made her chuckle. “It’s fine. I stopped calling him that a long time ago.”

“Do you ever wonder what it might have been like for him?” Enzo asked.

Adele looked at him in the mirror. “For him?”

“Yeah, I mean, your dad clearly loved your mom, or he cared about her. I don’t know the full story about your parents, but it was enough for him to let you go.”

“And now I’m married to a man of his choosing.”

“To protect you. I know you don’t like to admit this, Adele, but he is your dad, and you are his weak link, because you were so far away.”

“What am I now?” She hated to be described as weak. Anger traveled through her, and Enzo spun her around, pushing her up against the bathroom sink. He spread her legs and she was unprepared for his palm to go straight to her pussy.

“Now, you’re my wife. That makes you untouchable. No one will mess with you because if they dare to, they’re going to have to deal with me, and trust me, no one is going to want to mess with me.”

“And why is that?” she asked, ending on a moan as he cupped her pussy. She’d put on a silk robe to go to the bathroom, and there was nothing to protect her from his wandering touch, not that she even wanted any protection.

“Because, I don’t know if you know this or not, Adele, I’m not a nice man. I’m a very bad man, and I will kill anyone who threatens to harm you. I will fuck up anyone who tries to take you from me, who even thinks about hurting you. I’ll kill them all.”

That shouldn’t arouse her, but she figured her arousal was more from him touching her pussy than saying mean things.

He pressed a finger to her clit, and she whimpered, sinking her teeth into her lip, trying to contain her sounds. Enzo moved his finger down, touching her entrance, and then sliding a single finger inside her. There was no pain. She still had an ache, but it felt so good.

“I loved how tight your pussy was, Adele. I love that I’m the only man who is ever going to know how good you are. How fucking hot you are.”

She opened her eyes and stared into his blue eyes.

He added a second finger. “And I’m going to show you how good it’s going to be between us. All you have to do is give yourself to me. Don’t fight me.”

Part of Adele wanted to fight him. She wanted to scream, but at the same time, there was a part of her that craved to explore exactly what he was willing to give her.

There was no denying that she didn’t want to be married to this man. Their paths had collided because of her father and there was no going back, but that didn’t mean she couldn’t have some fun with him. There was no promise of love, but that didn’t mean they couldn’t find their own way with each other.

She placed a hand on his chest, and then slowly moved down. Where she’d put a robe on, Enzo had come in completely naked, so there was nothing stopping her from touching him. She wrapped her fingers around his length.

“That’s right, baby, touch me.”

Adele slid her hand to the base and then up.

“Tighter. I can take it.”

She did as he asked and watched him as she did so. He groaned. It was such a deep, guttural sound, and she liked it.

Enzo twisted his fingers inside her and then pressed his thumb against her clit, making her cry out.

“I want you to come all over my fingers and then I’m going to fuck you, Adele, here, up against the sink.”

She didn’t think she’d be able to orgasm, but as he pumped his fingers in and out of her, stroking her clit at the same time, there was no holding back. Enzo was a master when it came to getting what he wanted, and it would seem he already knew how to handle her body.

He focused on her clit, sliding back and forth. The orgasm took her completely by surprise and his name fell from her lips. He waited for as long as it took her to come, and then he pulled out, spun her around, bending her forward. He moved her legs so they were open, and then he cupped her between her legs. She tensed as she felt the hard ridge of his cock pressing against her core, and then, inch by inch, he began to sink inside her.

Suddenly, he paused, running his hands up her back.

“I don’t want to hurt you,” he said.

“You’re not.”

“Then why are you so tense?” he asked, stroking his hands back down, going to her ass.

He wasn’t all the way inside her, and she knew he took his time.

“I ... I think there’s going to be pain.”

“Then how about you tell me when it starts to hurt?” His grip tightened on her hips, and he began to move.

His movements were so incredibly slow. Inch, by inch, he moved inside her, and there was no pain. It was an ache, but she was so wet, and there was a point when she felt her impatience start to build. She didn’t want him to go slow, and

then she thrust back against him, not wanting him to stop. He held her hips even tighter. She had a feeling there were going to be bruises from how tight he held her. Enzo gave a tut.

“You’re being a little impatient, baby. This isn’t hurting you?”

“No!”

She wanted to scream at him to fuck her, but instead she gritted her teeth and tried to calm herself. Nothing was working.

“Is this what you want?” Enzo asked. He held onto her hips and then drove hard and deep inside her.

Adele gasped and thrust back against him, not wanting him to stop. It felt so good. He slowed down, with his cock to the hilt inside her.

“Don’t stop!”

“I’m not hurting you?” he asked.

“No,” she growled out the word.

“Then would my lady like me to fuck her?”

“Yes.”

Heat filled her cheeks.

“I don’t think I heard you correctly,” he said. “What do you want me to do?”

“Fuck me, Enzo, please.”

She added on the “please” for good measure, and Enzo didn’t back down. He fucked her hard and fast, driving in deep, and she loved every single thrust. It wasn’t painful, the pleasure was intense, and she looked in the mirror to find him watching her. When he came, she saw the pulse in his neck, and he growled her name. She loved seeing him let go, and knew she was going to enjoy this journey with him.

One Week Later

Enzo had never experienced the exhilaration of going home before. For the past week, that was exactly what he'd been enjoying. Each morning, he woke up to find his wife either cooking breakfast, or in the shower. Not once had he woken up beside her, but he certainly had gone to sleep with her in his arms.

He always went in search of her. If she was in the shower, he joined her, and often ended up with his cock deep inside her pussy.

With breakfast, she refused to do anything until he'd eaten a good, hearty breakfast, and then he'd pull her onto his lap and ride her right there.

The nights were the same. He came home to dinner and his wife.

Exploring her body had become his new favorite hobby. There was never anything else in his life other than work, so this was all new to him. There was no time to take her on a honeymoon. His work called to him, and seeing as they were having a few rat problems of late, he was the one they called to find all the information.

Like today, there was a guy named Teddy who had worked on the docks, helping to distribute drugs. They all had their fancy names for it, but the truth was, Teddy helped deal the dope. It got smuggled in and sent to where it needed to go. It brought in a lot of money. One of the bricks had gone missing. A source they had in law enforcement had sent word out that they had a rat on the inside who hoped to give the brick to the cops so they could analyze it and do their scientific shit, which would send a lot of them down. It was his job to make sure that didn't happen.

He found Teddy hiding away in a run-down motel outside of the city. With him had been the brick of coke, and the man had stunk. Enzo didn't get it. Teddy had been afraid, and if he'd been loyal, none of this would have happened to him. There always had to be an example made of men like him. His body wouldn't be found whole.

After a long day at the office, all Enzo wanted to do was get home to his wife. Killing Teddy had been a messy job, and he had no choice but to remove his clothing and have it destroyed. It was why he always had clean suits everywhere.

Arriving at his penthouse, he nodded at the guard he placed on the door. The entire building had men and women of the mafia inside, so it was protected, but he was sure to place extra protection around his woman.

He entered the penthouse and the smells of lemon and garlic met his senses. It was a little after eight, and he had called ahead to let Adele know he'd be late. Stepping into the kitchen, he saw her at the stove. She didn't wear anything on her feet, but the pretty yellow sundress looked so cute. It skimmed over her curves but shaped around her body.

He walked right up to her, wrapping his arms around her waist. "Evening, beautiful."

Adele tutted and pulled away. "You're already late, don't make dinner any worse by making it even more so. Go and sit."

It had been a long time since he had a woman serve him. Enzo didn't even realize he'd missed it until this past week. He sat at the head of the table, which was already set for two place settings. Adele came out seconds later carrying two plates, only to come to a stop when she caught sight of him.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"You've changed your clothes," she said.

"You noticed?"

"It's kind of hard not to. You left this morning with a blue shirt on, and now you're wearing a white one."

"Messy day at the office," he said.

Adele put his plate in front of him and then lowered down into her chair opposite him. "Do I want to know why it was a messy day?"

Enzo sat back and looked at her. Neither of them spoke for several seconds, if not minutes.

Should he tell her? Her life was already part of his own. Women were not involved in work. They didn't get to know the gory details. Adele wasn't just any wife, though. She had proven that time and time again. She was different.

"That depends," Enzo said.

"On what?"

"How much you can handle. You know who I am. You know what I'm capable of. What I tell you can never leave this room. Can you live with that?" Enzo asked.

Adele twirled her fork between her fingers and he watched as she stared at him. He couldn't help but wonder what was going through her mind right now.

"I can handle it," she said. "I ... there's no end to this, is there? It's you and me, and we're married."

"You won't get a divorce, and the only way out now is death."

"That's a lovely thought," she said. "I don't want to die, and I don't intend on making it so. I'm guessing you killed someone today." She twirled her fork in her pasta, and he waited as she took a bite.

"A rat," Enzo said.

"What was he or she going to do?" Adele asked.

"Attempt to take us out. He had something of ours, and if it was properly analyzed, it would cause a lot of problems."

She pursed her lips. "Something of yours. I'm guessing a gun?"

"No."

"An item of clothing."

This made Enzo laugh. "No. No gun. No clothing."

"Drugs?" Adele asked.

He nodded his head. She sighed.

"How do you know all of this?" he asked, taking a bite of the pasta, and it was delicious. Adele was a great cook. She

told him it was years spent learning from her mother.

“My mom.” She shrugged. “Like I said, when the truth came out about my ... Hank, she got him to tell her everything and when I was old enough, she told me all I needed to know. By the time she told me everything, he’d already stopped coming around.”

“Does it bother you?” Enzo asked.

“I don’t know.” She took another mouthful of food. “Does it bother you?”

“No. I swore my loyalty and nothing will ever come between that. I will always stand by their side and take care of those that threaten us.”

“Is that all you did all day?”

“Yes.” He did have to locate the fucker first, and it took him a couple of hours to do that. After that, he had to get the information out of him. The cops were giving the guy the runaround. They thought it was a scam or a joke. Either way, Teddy had lost his life for it. The cops didn’t get to win today.

“Are you going to ask me what *I* did all day today?” Adele asked.

There was a certain note to her tone. Enzo ate more of his pasta and looked at Adele. They hadn’t known each other long enough for him to have missed any important anniversaries or birthdays. He hadn’t made any promises. He’d fucked her hard this morning, giving her multiple orgasms, so he didn’t see anything that could be wrong.

“What did you do today?” he asked.

“Nothing.” She had this big fake smile on her lips. “While my husband was out torturing and killing a man or a woman, I can’t clarify which one it was, I was sitting home all day. Oh, I did clean. Yes, I did. Dusted and cleaned, and rearranged the kitchen. If I’m the one cooking, I’ll organize it the way I like it, but other than that, I twiddled my thumbs after I got your message and had to wait until it was time to cook you some dinner. I did nothing, all day.”

“You cleaned.”

She slammed her hand down on the table. “Enzo, I don’t know what women you’re used to, but I’m not used to being cooped up all day.”

“There’s shopping.”

Adele shook her head. “There is more to life than shopping, and I swear, do not even try to tell me that all women like to shop. Yes, I like to shop, but not every single day, and in case you didn’t notice, I don’t like to wear clothes that are purchased.”

He looked at the dress. “But that’s—”

“One my mother made for me years ago!” She took a deep breath. “I need to do something because I am going stir crazy right now. I’m used to working, or doing something. Can I get a job?”

“No.”

“Ugh! Seriously.”

“I’m offering you the chance to do whatever you want.”

“No, you’re not. What you’re offering me is a chance to sit and wait around for you all the freaking time, and that is not fair.” She pushed her chair back and picked up her plate of half-eaten food.

Enzo ran a hand down his face. He should have known this wouldn’t be an easy transition for her.

Chapter Nine

Adele wanted to cry.

For a whole week, she had tried to make this work, but today, while she'd been hunting for a mess, she knew she couldn't keep trying to fill her days with doing the same thing.

She twirled her fork into her spaghetti and shoved too much in her mouth. As she chewed, Enzo chose that moment to enter the kitchen.

"You're still eating."

It was probably childish, but she'd not wanted to eat with him after having her temper tantrum.

"I'm still hungry." She just needed to have some space.

"You're angry."

She rolled her eyes but didn't say another word as she kept eating. Enzo held his empty plate. He moved past her, putting his plate in the sink, and much to her surprise, he washed it as well.

She finished her food and as she went to step around him, he grabbed her wrist. He took the plate from her, put it in the sink, and then wrapped his arms around her waist drawing her in close.

"Talk to me."

"I already did," she said. "I don't want to sit around doing nothing. It's driving me crazy." She rubbed her temple. The last thing she wanted to do was touch him because then she'd be distracted. Enzo was a big distraction.

"I could find a job?" she asked. "You know, I had a whole life of my own before you came into it."

"No."

He didn't even hesitate. Just a simple, straight *no*.

Enzo had taken everything — her house, her hobby, even her social media accounts had been wiped as if she never

existed. Everything was gone.

“So, I’m just supposed to wait until I get pregnant, and then what? Die?”

Enzo wrapped his arms around her and pulled her in close. “I’ll figure something out. Would it be so bad with kids?”

She spun around in his arms with the very intention of threatening him with some serious bodily harm, but instead he kissed her. One of his hands was sinking into her hair, as the other glided down her back going toward the curve of her ass. He drew her closer and she felt the hard ridge of his cock against her stomach.

She should hate him. She should slap him, tell him to fuck off and get out of her life, but instead she found herself kissing him back. How could she not? His lips were like sin. Melting away all her anger, until the only thing that remained was the two of them. She moaned his name, and he growled against her lips.

Enzo broke the kiss first, not to go anywhere but her neck. The moment his teeth grazed her pulse, she couldn’t help but gasp. The pleasure rushed through her body, going to her nipples and her clit. Even as she stood in Enzo’s arms, she tried to press her thighs together, to rub at the pleasure point between her legs.

“Do you want my cock?” he asked.

The guttural sound of his voice sent another wave of arousal through her body. She couldn’t help but gasp and agree at the same time. Yes, she wanted him. She wanted it all, and she didn’t want him to stop.

He grabbed the bottom of her dress and pulled it up and over her head. Her panties didn’t survive his grab, as they were torn from her body. Her bra had a little more success, but each item ended up in a heap on the floor.

Enzo spun her around so that she was flush against the counter and she felt his hands stroking up the inside of her thighs. He went straight between her thighs, pressing a single

finger between her slit. He touched her clit, then slid down, going to her entrance. She felt him press one finger, then a second one inside her, pushing in hard and deep, drawing his finger back, before pushing to the knuckle. He spread his fingers, widening her.

He pulled his fingers out of her pussy, and then pressed them to her clit, stroking her. She was so close. Her body no longer felt like her own, and as he worked her pussy, there was no stopping it. Her body knew what it wanted.

She came hard, after just a few touches to her clit. She screamed his name, not wanting him to stop. It felt so good, but even after her orgasm subsided, she knew she wanted his nice, big cock even more.

He pulled out of her pussy, only to replace with the hard width of his cock. Enzo wasn't gentle as he slammed to the hilt inside her. She took all of him, and only when he was balls-deep did he pause. Adele didn't get chance to become accustomed to the feel of him, though, as he began to pull out of her, only to slam back inside. He started out slow, then grabbed her hips tightly and begin to fuck her harder than ever before, driving hard and deep.

She couldn't think. All she could do was feel. Her body was no longer her own, but commanded by him. She was at his mercy, and in that blissful moment, she didn't care. She wanted him. Hungered for him.

All her anger and frustration melted away as Enzo sent her over the edge of another orgasm, taking her completely by surprise, and through this one, she felt his release. He slammed deep within her, and she felt the pulse of his orgasm as wave upon wave of it filled her to the core.

A couple of days later, Enzo was in the main sitting room in the morning, waiting for Adele to wake up. That very morning, as he enjoyed his morning coffee, he had a delivery made, and it was in the main room.

He kept trying to tell himself he didn't give a fuck about Adele's feelings. It didn't matter if she enjoyed living with him or not, or even being married to him. He was never going to accept no as an answer. His debt to Hank was paid, and Adele was the price of that. She had to get used to it.

Leaving her this morning, to take care of this, was hard. Now, as he sat and enjoyed his coffee, his impatience was growing. When he heard the door of the bedroom opening and her footsteps as she came out of the room, he checked the mirror to watch as she entered. She wore the silk robe he'd purchased for her.

Her full brown hair was mounded on top of her head in a small clip, and he knew she'd already taken a trip to the bathroom. Adele's routine hadn't changed. Every morning, before she did anything else, she went to the bathroom, splashed water on her face, and brushed her teeth before she did anything else. She always looked so refreshed in the morning. So young. He knew she was very young, a lot younger than him, at thirty-five years old.

"Morning," she said.

She hadn't even looked his way.

"Coffee is made."

"You're up early."

"I had a few errands I needed to run." He flicked the newspaper over, not that he was reading any of it. He wasn't paying any attention to anything other than his woman.

Looking through the mirror, he waited and watched as Adele finally came back and as she did, she paused, looking at the items that had been delivered.

"What's this?" Adele asked.

"You know what it is."

Enzo finished his coffee and leaned forward, putting the mug on top of the table.

Adele stepped forward, putting a coaster down before her cup. She stepped toward the items, and he watched as she

stroked the machines. He'd gone back to her house, packed up the sewing room, complete with everything he could find of her hobby, and brought it all back here. He'd used his men as well, to help him to do everything over the course of the last couple of days. He had also had the bed removed from the spare bedroom, and the furniture from Adele's sewing room placed inside. He'd taken her out last night to get that done, and this morning, he'd gotten the rest of her stuff.

"This is mine? From my house?"

He folded up the newspaper and nodded. "Yes."

"How?"

"You gave me the key." He got to his feet. "If you follow me." He walked across the penthouse, toward their bedroom and turned right, going to the spare bedroom. He opened the door.

Adele had followed him, just as he knew she would. "You can arrange everything in there. I have a house out in the country, but I'm here most of the time." He wasn't going to admit it out loud, but he wanted Adele with him at all times. He enjoyed the feeling of coming home, of even *wanting* to come home.

"This is ... incredible," she said.

She turned back toward him. "You did all of this for me?"

"Yes. I don't want you to get stir crazy, or be bored, with your threat of cleaning a hole in the floor."

Adele burst out laughing but then threw herself at him. Enzo chuckled, pulling her in close and kissing her lips.

"I love this," she said. "Thank you."

For a split-second, he froze. At no point had she said she loved him, but hearing the start of "I love" — he didn't like the yearning within his chest to hear more.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

He pressed her up against the wall, taking possession of her lips. He felt a sudden intense need to be inside her. The negligee was no match for his hands, as he ran them all over her body, exploring every inch of her, craving her, desperate. He needed to be inside her.

He tore the negligee from her body and then stroked down, going toward her ass, then back up to her tits, pushing them together. He offered them up to his own lips, and he sucked each nipple in turn. She moaned his name, shaking and quivering around him.

He flicked his tongue back and forth, and then let go of her tits to slide his hand between her thighs, to test if she was ready for him. Adele was soaking wet, and he slid two fingers inside her easily.

He didn't have the patience to give her an orgasm. He'd do that after he finished with her. Lifting her up so that he balanced her weight between his own body and the wall, he thrust inside her, going hard and deep within her tight pussy. She screamed his name, but he didn't stop. Pulling out of her, he pressed back inside, thrusting hard and deep, knowing he should have taken this to the bedroom, but he didn't care.

When Adele was in this room, doing her hobby, he wanted her to think about him. This is why he'd already fucked her in every other room of the house. Their bedroom was a must, the kitchen, the dining room, the living room, even the corridor. Not a place was untouched by his need for Adele to think of him and their time together, and he fucked her harder and faster, driving in.

Only when she called his name and he knew he consumed her thoughts, did he go over the edge into bliss, growling her name as he did so. He spilled every single drop of his cum, flooding her channel. It felt so fucking good to come, but he wasn't done.

He pulled out of her, spun her around so that her back was to him, and he touched her clit, wanting her to orgasm. Enzo couldn't believe that after just a few strokes, she came, his name once again on her lips as she let go.

Chapter Ten

Two Months Later

Enzo sat in his office, going over the latest figures that had been sent to him, when the door opened. One of his men, Smith, was on the other side.

“A Mrs. Isabella Bianchi is here,” Smith said. “She would like to see you.”

He sat back in his chair, tempted to say no, but he didn't see a point in disturbing the peace that had settled over his life the past two months.

“Let her in,” he said, putting the paperwork aside.

It was unusual for a capo's wife to come and visit another capo. Isabella should be going to see Adele, but he wouldn't have that. Hank had been in constant contact with him the past couple of months. In fact, one week ago, Enzo shared the rather unexpected news.

After nearly three months of marriage, Adele was expecting a baby. He had a feeling she was pregnant not long ago when she started to become overwhelmingly sick. At first, Enzo didn't want to concern her, but then he came home with a pregnancy test when Adele kept worrying over feeling ill.

Enzo wasn't sure if his wife was happy about being pregnant. There was a lot about his wife he didn't understand.

Getting the sewing supplies from her house had worked to erase some of her restlessness in the last two months. She hadn't complained once about being bored. In fact, most evenings when he was late he found her in the sewing room.

During the last few months, she had made multiple garments and a couple of quilts, much to his surprise. He hadn't expected the hot pink quilt that now decorated their sofa. Adele had run her hand along the back and said during the winter, she expected him to sit with her, all snuggled up underneath the blanket. He wanted to complain, but he didn't.

Enzo realized that when it came to his woman, he'd do a great deal to make her happy. Even if it meant upsetting a fellow capo. Hank wanted to get to know his daughter. To see her. Enzo refused. Adele didn't want to see or be part of Hank's life. She certainly didn't want anything to do with Isabella Bianchi.

"Take a seat," Enzo said, pulling out his cell phone.

"My husband doesn't know I'm here," Isabella said.

"All the more reason to call him."

"Please, listen to me." She held her hand out as if to stop him from calling her husband, and Enzo looked at her, raising a brow as he waited. She looked very pale and he saw her hand shook. Isabella was afraid of him.

He put his cell phone down on the desk and looked at her.

"I know your wife is ... she is my husband's daughter."

Enzo tensed up. If one word, one insult, left her lips, he was going to kill her.

"Any questions you have, you should take them up with him," Enzo said.

"I know she's pregnant." Isabella offered him a smile. "I wanted to say congratulations to you."

He pressed his fingers together, watching the woman before him, wondering what her game was.

"Hank would like to have a relationship with her."

"Adele doesn't want to have anything to do with him," he said. He looked toward Isabella. "If anything happens to my wife, I will come looking for you, and regardless of the respect I have for your husband, it won't stop me."

Isabella went pale, so incredibly pale. "Twenty-three years ago, I made a big mistake." She pressed her lips together and when she looked up at him, Enzo saw the tears in her eyes. "Do you know what they used to call me?"

Enzo shook his head, not at all interested in this woman.

“I was a stunning beauty.” She gave a little chuckle. “Any man who had me would consider me a prize. My beauty was the talk of the city. My father was so proud that I caused many a head to turn, and he got many offers. My hand in marriage, and being a virgin, was a heady combination, and I got Hank Bianchi — the scariest, sexiest man in the mafia. He was coveted by a lot of women, and I knew several had been offered, but it was me he chose. I became his wife, and I thought it was going to be the perfect match, not something arranged. He and I would be the power couple.”

He watched as Isabella stopped and pursed her lips.

“I fell madly in love with him. For Hank, it was business. We had a son, and then another son. He did his duty, providing heirs, and we had a daughter, and then something changed. The Hank I knew never smiled. He never looked happy. It wasn’t the perfect married life I dreamed about, and then I heard the truth. The rumors that Hank had taken a mistress. Carla Shanks.” Isabella smiled and he watched as the tears fell. “I was devastated. I was a laughing stock. With my beauty and the perfect life, my husband didn’t want me. He wanted a woman who wasn’t even in our circle. She had nothing. She was a no one.”

“And you nearly got her killed.”

“I had never known anyone to ... Hank loved Carla. I wanted her dead, and I paid someone to make it happen.” Isabella tucked some of her hair behind her ear. “That was the first time he ever laid a hand on me. When he knew what I had done, he slapped me so hard. Hank had never hurt me, never raised a hand to me, but he told me in that moment that I was dead to him, and if I ever hurt Carla again, he would make me suffer greatly.” Isabella laughed. “He doesn’t even realize that for the last twenty-three years, he has kept true to his promise. Do you know what it’s like to be in a home with someone you know will never love you? Who will never look at you the same way you saw him look at another woman? A woman that doesn’t even rival you in looks?”

“I wanted Hank’s love. I wanted him to want me the same way he wanted Carla, but I knew that was never going to happen. Before Carla passed, she came to us, at our house. She was so weak and so sick. I watched as Hank held her. For twenty-three years, they had stayed apart. I knew Carla wouldn’t be with him, but she needed him to take care of their daughter.” Isabella reached into her bag and pulled out an envelope. “This is for Adele. I don’t expect her to forgive me. I know I messed up, and trust me, I am paying the price for that, but Hank deserves to be part of her life. It was my fault that he constantly got pulled away from Adele and Carla.”

“What do you get out of this?” Enzo asked, not taking the envelope, and allowing her to put the letter down on his desk.

“Forgiveness. I have ... I’ve been going to church a lot lately. After seeing Adele for the first time a few months ago, I know I need to make peace. It’s all I can do.” She pressed her lips together.

“Adele will never forgive you.”

“I know, but before Carla left, she told me she forgave me for what I did, and as a mother, she hoped one day, I’d be able to love her daughter, because she would need a mother.” Isabella looked up.

Enzo knew that would never happen. Adele wouldn’t allow it.

“I’ve said what I need to say and I know Hank wanted to see Adele, but she won’t even talk to him, not even on the phone. Carla wrote that letter and it has been in our possession for the last few years.”

Enzo placed it inside his jacket.

Isabella left and Enzo had to wonder if he should let Adele read this blasted letter, or leave well enough alone.

Adele couldn’t stop talking about her latest trip to her favorite fabric shop. She had asked Enzo this morning if he

could take her. Business called, so she had no choice but to take one of his trusted men.

She had shown him the three pieces of fabrics she had purchased, but she could tell he was distracted. From time to time, she had seen this happen, where he seemed completely lost within his thoughts.

“Are you okay?” she asked, genuinely concerned.

“Isabella Bianchi came to see me today.”

Adele tensed up. She knew he’d told Hank about her pregnancy. She hadn’t wanted him to, and the less he knew, the better, but Enzo had told her it wasn’t polite for him to ignore him. Hank wanted to see her.

Enzo reached into his jacket pocket. “Did you know your mother went to see them before she died?”

She froze. “That’s not possible.”

He pulled out an envelope and slid it across the table. “She left that for you.”

Adele looked at the letter and she saw her mother’s handwriting. She would recognize it anywhere.

“Why did Isabella have my mother’s letter?” she asked.

“Your mother wanted you to have someone, even if it was Isabella.”

“My mother would never have gone to them. She wouldn’t have ... no.” She pushed back from the table, without even touching the letter. She couldn’t bring herself to do so.

Enzo picked up the letter and he opened it.

“What are you doing?” she asked, feeling a little sick.

He pulled out the letter and looked at her. “One of us is going to read it.”

Adele shook her head.

“Then I’ll read it.” He cleared his throat.

My dearest Adele,

If you are reading this, then I know the worst has happened and against my own wishes, I'm no longer with you. I have a feeling it's going to be some time after I've passed that you will read this, as I know how stubborn you've become, especially when it comes to your father. I've told you many times that I don't want you to have hate in your heart for Hank. Trust me, I know circumstances didn't work out the way I wanted them to. I loved your father with every fiber of my being. He was my world, and when I realized the truth, I knew my heart would never be the same. I was never going to be the same.

Even as Enzo read, Adele could hear her mother in those words.

I'm sick. I'm not going to get better. We know the doctors are telling the truth, and I'm not willing to wait for a miracle, to know that I'm going to be around to see you flourish. I know you. I've told Hank to leave you alone for a year after my death. If you find someone, fall in love, and learn to become part of this life again, then he is to leave you alone and just be there if you ever need him. However, if he watches you and you keep to the same routine of getting up, going to the fabric shop, showing your designs on social media, but working, never socializing, never changing your routine, then he is to interfere. I know right now you're still angry at him and you see him meddling, but Hank is doing exactly as I've asked of him.

Enzo stopped and Adele looked at him, feeling tears fall down her face.

Hank, being Hank, won't tell you this, but he saved a man's life. A man called Enzo Amato. He told me about him. He's a man no one wants to marry, because he is cold, cruel, and no woman interests him, but I have a feeling you'll be different, Adele, and so does your father. Enzo doesn't want a woman who follows the rules. He wants a woman who makes him smile, makes him laugh, because she doesn't know what the hell she's doing. I asked Hank for two things — to help you fall in love, and to take care of you. If you're reading this now,

it means he kept his promise, that you are now married to Enzo, and I hop, you are finding it in your heart to love.

Adele looked at Enzo as she held her hand up. “Is that really in the letter?”

“I’m not ad-libbing. This is everything.”

She pressed her lips together and swiped at her eyes.

This also means there’s a chance you will get pregnant. What I’m about to say to you, or you’re about to read, may seem completely nuts, but I want you to listen. I want you to forgive Isabella Bianchi. I’m your mother and I know you’re angry, you want to hurt her, for hurting me. As you look at your Enzo, I want you to imagine another woman stealing his heart. Someone else making him smile.

Adele didn’t like this.

I was that other woman, Adele. I was the woman who stole his heart. I didn’t know he was married, and I don’t want you to keep making excuses. Life throws us lemons, and we all make mistakes. I can’t be there for you, but Isabella can. You don’t know this, but I made peace with Isabella. When I went to see Hank, I sat with Isabella. I think in another lifetime, we could have been friends. I don’t expect you to trust her now, or next week, or next month, but I want you to know that I forgive her. All I want is for you to have someone. We were our own little family, and I don’t want to leave you with nothing. I want you to have a family, Adele. I want you to have love, and I want you to be happy. I love you, my darling, sweetest girl. Being your mother was a gift. Watching you grow was the greatest gift of all. For that, I will die a happy woman, with the only regret that I won’t be there to see you become a wife, a mother, but I know you. You’re going to be fantastic at both. I love you. Your mother, Carla.

Enzo put the letter down and Adele looked away. She felt the tightness in her chest start to ease. At first, she didn’t move, and then she took a step closer, then another one, and she picked up the letter. She knew her mother did write it.

“I was the one that was taking care of her,” she said. “My mom shouldn’t have had to do this.”

“Adele?” Enzo asked.

“Yes.”

“I love you,” he said.

She dropped the letter onto the table and looked at him, taken aback. “What?”

Had she heard right? No, it couldn’t be, could it? Did he just say he loved her? No, that couldn’t be right, but yet, the words spilled from his lips.

He looked at the letter and then at her. “She was right, so was Hank. None of the other women ever appealed to me. They were boring. When Hank asked me for this favor, I didn’t want to do it. I had no desire to marry his kid.”

Adele frowned and he took hold of her hands, locking them together.

“Then I walked into that bar, and you poured me a drink, and you were nothing like I expected. You knew exactly who I was, what I was capable of, and you rejected me. I had to blackmail you to get what I wanted. You have not made my life easier.”

“I don’t understand how you can love me right now?” Adele asked, confused.

“Because each morning that I wake up, I see you. If you’re not in my bed, then I come looking for you, because I need to see you first thing in the morning.” He stroked her cheek. “During the day, I think about you. I wonder what you’re doing, if you’re happy. I’ve never cared about anyone the way I care about you. I have no interest in other women. I want you, only you. I’m willing to risk everything for you.”

“Why are you saying these things?” Adele asked.

“Because I don’t want to end up like your parents. I don’t want you to doubt who I am. I certainly don’t want you to feel like Isabella Bianchi. I know you don’t love me. I know this has all been forced—”

“Shut up,” Adele said. She sighed and tilted her head to the side. “Not everything is about you. Have you ever thought, for a split-second, that I might ... want you?” she asked. “That even as I hated you threatening my friends, a part of me wanted to be with you. For you to take the decision out of my hands, because even though I didn’t want to give in to you, a part of me wanted to. You have gone out of your way to make my life happy. I know that. I can see it. Do you think I’ve not noticed the little things? Like you making sure my favorite chocolate milk is in the fridge, or the toothpaste I prefer? You took the time to give me a whole room to myself, so I can enjoy my hobby. Even if you weren’t available to go shopping with me, you got one of your men to.” She had started to notice all these little things about Enzo. It had made her realize he wasn’t cruel at all.

“Enzo Amato, I never wanted to love you and the moment you walked into that bar, I’m pretty sure I hated you. I don’t hate you anymore. I’m in love with you, and we’re going to get the chance to have a family, and I don’t know, make this work?”

“It’s already working,” he said, pulling her in close and taking possession of her mouth.

Adele didn’t realize exactly when she had fallen in love with him, just that she had fallen, and there was no stopping it. The love she felt for him was absolute, and as he kissed her, she knew deep in her heart that no matter what, it would all be okay.

Chapter Eleven

A Few Months Later

“You don’t have to do this,” Enzo said.

Adele looked up at the house where her father lived. She knew she didn’t have to do this, which is why it had taken her a couple of months to get to this point. “I know, but I have to.”

Her mother had gone to Hank for a reason. She’d made that letter with the hope of her father delivering it. She knew she didn’t have to do any of it.

“It will be fine.”

“Do you want me to come in?”

She did but she also knew she had to do this alone. Leaning across the car, she pressed her lips against his. “I’ll be right back.”

She got out of the car and took several steps toward the house. She knew Enzo would have called Hank to warn him they were coming. She hoped in that warning, Isabella had been told to leave, or at least to not be seen. She wanted to see her father in the hope of mending bridges, but the last person she wanted to see was his wife.

Adele stood at his door and then lifted her hand to knock, only for the door to be opened, and there was Hank Bianchi, her father.

At first she didn’t know what to say or do.

“Adele,” he said.

“Can I, er, can I come in?” she asked, feeling her cheeks heat.

He stepped away from the door and glanced over her shoulder.

“I asked Enzo to wait in the car. I ... I don’t think this is going to take long.”

“Come in,” he said.

Adele had never stepped foot inside his home. She hadn't realized until a few months ago that her mother actually did. It was a large house, a mansion almost, similar to the one Enzo owned. He'd taken her to his country estate not long after they found out they were pregnant.

“Come with me,” Hank said, leading her across the main reception toward an open sitting room. “Please, have a seat. Coffee? No, not coffee. Er, water?”

“No, I'm fine.” She took a seat and clasped her hands together, realizing that she was nervous. “I know Enzo told you we were coming.”

“Yes, he did, and I wanted to offer you both congratulations.”

There was no hiding her bump and she placed a hand on her stomach, feeling protective of her baby. “Thank you.”

Silence fell between them. In that moment, Adele couldn't help but remember what it was like with him before she learned the truth, before all the disappointments.

They both started suddenly speaking at the same time.

“Please, you go first,” he said.

“No, no, it's fine. You go first.”

Hank looked like he wanted to decline but he sat down opposite her. “I am sorry I wasn't there for you, after your mother.” He stopped and glanced away.

Adele looked at him and realized he wasn't over it. Carla's life still left a lasting mark on this man. A man who was married to another woman, who had another family.

“I had no idea she had come here,” Adele said. “She was sick, and I think I must have had to work or something.”

“Yes, you had to work a double shift. She asked Bishop, the guy you worked for, to give you a double shift so she could come to me.” He ran a hand down his face. “I tried to find a cure.”

“You did?”

“Yes. Seeing her like that...” He shook his head. “It was more than I could bear. Your mother was always so strong. So very strong.”

Tears filled her eyes and she quickly took a deep breath.

“I want to hate you,” Adele said. “For the longest time you were always my hero. My father, my everything, and then you stopped. I realized you were never there, and then when Mom told me the truth, I hated you. I didn’t know how you could be with a woman who did that to my mom.”

“I know, if I could go back, I would.”

She held her hand up. “We can’t go back. Mom doesn’t want me to hate you anymore. She doesn’t want me to have no one in my life, and for some reason she wants me to find peace with you and Isabella.” Adele pressed her lips together. “I don’t know how this is going to work. I don’t even know if I’m going to be able to trust you, or any of this.” She ran fingers through her hair. “I just know that Mom wanted me to try.”

“I’m happy to go at your pace, Adele.”

She nodded her head and then licked her dry lips.

“Then we can try.” She got to her feet.

“Your mother asked me to find you someone who I thought could love you. Who could fall madly in love with you, and I thought Enzo was ... if he gives you any trouble, I can help you.”

Adele couldn’t help but laugh. “I love Enzo,” she said. “And he loves me.” She saw Hank breathe a sigh of relief. “That’s good.”

This made her laugh. “I better go. We’re heading to the doctor’s.”

“Is everything okay?” Hank asked.

“Yes. Just a checkup, possibly an ultrasound.” She went to walk toward the door, to make her escape, but then stopped and turned.

She hadn’t done this in a very long time. She walked up to Hank, threw her arms around her father, and hugged him. In a strange way, he felt and smelled exactly as she remembered him. She had wanted him to remain a monster in her world, but feeling him now, he was the furthest thing from a monster. He was her father.

Hank held her tightly and then after a few minutes, she pulled away. It wasn’t much, but at least it was a start.

Hank saw her to the door, and she quickly moved down the steps, to where Enzo waited. Climbing into the car, Enzo was waiting for her, his driver behind the wheel.

“Are you okay?” Enzo asked. “Do I need to start a war?”

“No, you don’t need to start a war.” She turned to look at him. “I hugged my father today. It was the first time in nearly ten years.”

“And how do you feel?”

“I don’t know. Happy? Sad?” She felt the tears building in her eyes, and she swiped at them.

Enzo wrapped his arms around her and held her close.

“Your mother wants you to have a family, Adele. You love your father, and there’s nothing you can say or do that will change that.”

“I know. I do love him.”

And it was good to finally, in a way, make peace with that love. She didn’t know how long it would last, *if* it would even last, but either way, it was a start. This was what her mother’s final wish was, and Adele loved her enough to give it a try.

Epilogue

Five Years Later

“I can’t believe you have never been camping,” Adele said.

“I don’t consider it a vacation, camping out in the wilderness.” Enzo watched as his wife gave a little twirl and smiled at him.

She had been talking about going camping for the longest time, and he’d done everything in his power to put her off. Over the past five years, they’d enjoyed vacations in Italy, Spain, Rome, Mexico, and when he got very desperate, rainy England.

He had come to the conclusion that England was the bad choice, seeing as during their journey they had seen many people camping. Of course, that had made Adele determined to have them vacation in a tent, in the wilderness, enjoying all the little things.

Of course, he had to have a contingency plan, and that happened to be Hank, Isabella, and the rest of his family. If Enzo had to go camping, then so did all the others.

He watched as Adele and Aurora walked hand in hand. The two half-sisters had hit it off on their first Christmas together, after his son was born.

The first Christmas, he had with his pregnant wife, all alone. Then, Hank convinced him the second Christmas to visit him and the family, with his grandson, and of course Adele was pregnant again.

He and Adele now had three children — two sons and a daughter. Both his sons were running around their feet, while he had his little girl in a carrier attached to his chest. If anyone could see him now, they would laugh. The fierce and scary mafia capo out camping with his wife, family, and kids. It was unheard of.

A lot had happened in the last five years. Adele had made peace with Hank, and that had eventually extended to Isabella. Their relationship at times was still ... formal, but he knew they both tried.

He couldn't imagine being Isabella. He didn't agree with what she did, but looking at her from her perspective, he imagined was what gave Adele some peace.

Isabella loved her husband very much, but he loved another woman. A woman who was dead. Hank had even admitted to him, that since Carla, there had been no one else. He didn't have any other mistress, nor did he have his wife. Carla was gone, and there was no one.

At first, Enzo thought that was crazy, but looking at his wife, he didn't even realize what he'd been missing in his own life. Adele was the flame, his reason for breathing, she was his everything. He loved her more than sense, and he'd do whatever her heart desired to see her smile.

They came to their camp, and Adele broke away from Aurora to come toward him.

“Are you still angry with me?” Adele asked.

He wrapped his arms around her as she pressed a kiss to their daughter's head.

“No,” he said.

Seeing her smile and the happiness in her eyes was more than enough for him. She gave him the world, and in return he wanted to give her everything.

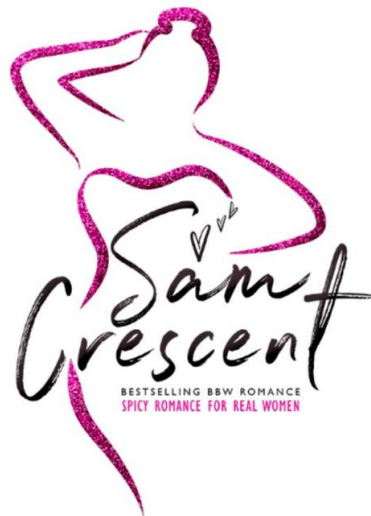
The End

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BONUS SAMPLE CHAPTER

LIKE IT ROUGH

Sam Crescent

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Sample Chapter

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.

End of sample chapter

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