

A man with short, light-colored hair and a serious expression stands in a gothic-style hallway. He is wearing a white, long-sleeved button-down shirt that is unbuttoned at the top, revealing his chest. His arms are crossed over his chest. The hallway features a series of pointed arches that recede into the distance, creating a strong sense of depth. The lighting is dramatic, with the man's face and shirt highlighted against the darker, shadowed background of the stone walls and arches.

Mine
TO HAVE

A.K Wear

Mine To Have

Book 2 of Bloodline of New York

A.K Wear

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Coming Soon

About the Author

*To the girls that have been beaten down but have come out on
the other side stronger.*



*Trigger
Warning*



Thank you so much for reading. But before you continue, know that your mental health is more important than the story within these pages. Please read through them all before starting.

Murder, Praise, Degradation, Voyeurism, Spit Play, Anal, Pierced MMC, Virgin FMC, Parental Physical and Verbal Abuse, Assault (not by mmc), Human Trafficking.

Please feel free to continue only when you are comfortable with the above list. But if you know that any of the above-mentioned triggers will upset you, I suggest finding another amazing book to read.

Playlist



Born for This- The Score

Wildest Moments- Jessie Ware

Insecurities- Fajjr+Ali

In the Name of Love- Martin Garrix & Bebe Rexha

fmk- Gayle & Blackbear

Pinky Promise- Neffex & Neoni

Devilish- Chase Atlantic

Dandelions- Ruth B

Empires- Ruelle

Never Surrender- Liv Ash

Storm- Ruelle

Scars are Beautiful- Alessia Cara

Not Your Baby- Cadmium & Jex

Always Been You- Jessie Murph

Hard to Tell- Briston Maroney

Under the Influence- Chris Brown

Power Over Me- Dermot Kennedy

In Your Eyes- The Weeknd

Do It Like a Girl- Morgan St Jean

Something Beautiful- Matt Cooper

Black Magic- Jaymes Young

Death of a Bachelor- Panic! At the Disco

Dangerous Woman- Rosenfeld

New Girl- Finneas

The Devil is a Gentleman- Merci Raines

Make Me Feel- Elvis Drew

Black Sea- Natasha Blume

Tears of Gold- Faouzia



PROLOGUE

Gabriel

“**Y**ou will talk, or you will die!” My father spits at the man who is tied up to a wooden chair in the center of the room. The Cage, he calls it, where he brings his victims. The stench of blood and screams stain the walls.

My father, Gianni Costello, is the head of the Italian mafia. The Capo, the ruler of New York. Nothing gets past him. He is a respected and feared man by all, including his own family.

The man that's tied up should know this, seeing how he's worked for my father since before I was born. He has been giving secrets to the enemy for months. But that ends today. His screams grow and grow the more my father plays with him.

My father has never hidden his life from my brother and me. He isn't a monster, he is a great man and leader. A great father to Giovanni and I, and a great husband to our mother. He is my hero. The man I wish to become one day.

My brother, Giovanni, and I are being guarded with a few of my father's men in the corner. Lights dimly glow throughout the large space. An angelic glow in the center of the room wraps around my father's body as he stands over the man's almost limp body.

I look up to my brother, his body nervously shaking with fear. He clearly doesn't want to be here. I, on the other hand, love when dad brings us along. Seeing him in his element, watching him rule, it's unlike anything I've ever seen. He's my dad but he's also the ruler of New York. One day that'll be Giovanni and I.

I turn back to look at the man in the chair. I can't seem to look away as my father continues to pump and hit the man. The man's face is bloody, beaten, and bruised. Completely unrecognizable. His chest rising and falling slowly as he fights to inflate his lungs. I feel a sense of pride as I watch my father's hands continue to hit the man over and over again.

That's *my* dad. My hero.

I can't hear what he says as he pulls out his gun from his back and points it at the man's head. I dare not blink wanting to see my father end this traitor's life. I'm hyper fixated on my father's finger on the trigger. As if in slow motion, his finger pulls back on the trigger and the bullet flies out and lands square center on the man's head. I swear I saw the spark ignite as the bullet shot out of the barrel of the gun.

I let out the breath I was holding as the man's head falls back. My eyes snap to his chest, waiting for the last bit of air

to exhale from his mouth. Eyes void of life.

I have no control over my body as my legs lead me to stand next to my father. I look up at him in awe. Not a single crease out of place as my father stands tall in his three piece black suit. A splash of blood on his cheek, the only give away to the crime before us.

A large, toothy grin fills my face. “Great job father. Right in the center of his forehead. Perfect shot.” I praise him. I can’t wait to be just like him. My hero.

His face falls at my praise, eyebrows forming a line on his face as he looks at me. But it’s not pride I see, it’s worry. What does he have to worry about, he just killed a traitor.

“Let’s head home,” he cups his hand over my shoulder, turning me away from the dead body. “Come Giovanni, mom is waiting for us.”

I look to my other brother. Unlike my face that is beaming with amusement and glee, Giovanni’s face is filled with worry and terror. Doesn’t he understand what father just did? Why isn’t he proud of him? Proud of the leader and father he is. There is no one like our father.

As we walk out of the warehouse, I turn my head once more to look at the man’s dead body. Blood is still dripping down from the back of his head into a small puddle that has formed on the concrete floor. My fathers men that were guarding us a few minutes ago are beginning to untie him and move his body. Clearing the scene of the crime.

I can't wait to tell mom about it. Our father doesn't hide anything from her. I'm sure she's going to be just as proud as I am.

Our father opens the door to the large SUV parked in front of the warehouse, as Giovanni and I make our way into the second row of black leather seats. I can feel the adrenaline still pumping throughout my body and my legs bounce up and down.

"That was amazing, wasn't it Gio?" I look at my brother who is facing away from me and staring out the window. "Gio?" I push his shoulder as I try to get his attention.

"What?" He barks. I see tears start to form in the corners of his eyes. Before I have a chance to ask him what's wrong, our father makes his way into the driver's seat and brings the car to life.

I can't seem to slow my heart rate as my father drives up through the black iron gates that lead to our family home. Guards are posted at every point of contact. Being the Capo means people will do anything to have you dead. Which means my father takes security very seriously.

Our family doesn't go anywhere without at least three guards. Giovanni and I have our own guards that go to school with us, go to sport practices, and even dates. Where we go, they go, no questions asked.

"Mom! We're home!" I yell into the large foyer. The first floor of our home is a large open space. The foyer leads

straight into the living and dining room with the kitchen in the right corner.

The walls are covered in family photos taken throughout the years. You wouldn't know that my father is the Capo by the looks of our home. Being Capo is my father's job, but his family is his main priority. Our home screams suburban family, but if only the walls could talk.

"Miei ragazzi," my mother laughs out as she walks from behind the counter top in the kitchen and brings me into a rib crushing embrace. I may be grown, but I'll always be her little boy.

"Mom, I can't breathe!" I huff out as she pulls me away and cups my face.

"Go wash up, dinner will be ready shortly." Her accent is still thick, even after the decades she and my family have lived in America. She grabs at Giovanni and hugs him just as hard, his body limp in her hold. What is wrong with him? I'll find out after dinner!

A few minutes later I walk back into the kitchen from the guest bathroom and notice my mother and father having a whispered conversation. "What's for dinner mama?" I ask as my father straightens his spine as they stop mid conversation.

Mother looks at me with a soft smile, her eyes puffy from crying. "My Gabriel, it's your favorite. Martina and I spent all day preparing it. Go set the table with your brother."

Martina looks away from the big pot and smiles at me.

In that instant, Giovanni comes into the kitchen. He doesn't acknowledge anyone as he makes his way to the cabinet, grabbing a set of bowls. He walks over to the small round dining table. I don't know what his problem is but he needs to cheer up. Today has been a great day.

We spent the day with dad around the city getting business done. Doesn't he know he's going to be in charge one day. Doesn't he understand that all of New York is going to be under his thumb. And I will help him. It's our family against the world. Always.

I grab the utensils off the counter and make my way around the table behind Giovanni. As he sets a plate down, I set the forks and knives. "What's wrong with you?" I whisper to him.

"I don't want to talk about it!" He growls at me. *Dick!*

My father walks over as I set the last set of utensils down. He ruffles Giovanni's and my hair as he takes his set. Martina brings over the big pot she was stirring a few minutes ago and sets it in the center of the table on top of a metal stand. She lifts the lid off the pot, a cloud of steam fills my vision. The aroma fills my lungs as I smiled ear to ear knowing exactly what she made. *Gnocchi.*

"Thank you Martina!" Hugging her before I take my seat, not waiting for anyone as I ladle my first bowl full.

Dinner is spent talking about school and sports, like a normal family. It's by design, mamas rule of no work talk at the table. I do most of the talking as Giovanni stays silent, playing with his food more than eating it.

The minute of silence between conversations is broken when my father says, “*Ragazzi*, your mother and I need to talk to you about something.” He grabs my mother’s hand in his. Both of them taking turns looking Giovanni and me in the eyes. Worry written all over their faces.

The spoon full of soup stays frozen midair at my mouth as I lock eyes with Giovanni. He sits up straighter in his cushioned high back chair.

“What is it?” I ask, gulping down the soup and setting my spoon down back into the bowl.

“We think it is best for our family if I step down. You boys are growing up and you need a stable, normal life.” He says never taking his eyes off of Giovanni and me.

“What?” My shock coming out in a yell, “what do you mean? You can’t step down, you’re the Capo. You’re the leader. Everyone looks to you. Who will take over?” The words spilling out of me. I look over at Giovanni, a shy smile lifting at the corner of his mouth. He’s happy about this!
Traitor!

“Dad you can’t!” I plead with him and my mother.

“It’s been decided, Gabriel. I will be stepping down and your uncle, Georgio, will be leading.” His capo voice coming out as he continues to stare at me.

“When?” Giovanni finally speaks. I glare daggers into the side of his face.

“In the next few months. Nothing will change. We will still live in this house, you boys will still be at the same school. The only thing is I won’t be dealing with the Italian mafia anymore.”

“Just like that?” I ask, suspiciously. It’s never that easy. You don’t just walk away from the mafia. There is only one way out, he has to know that.

“Just like that.” Father says back to me. “We don’t need the mafia. You boys need a normal family, stability, and a normal life. Nothing about our lives is normal. Your mother and I have decided.” There will be no arguing with him, no talking him out of this.

“This is bullshit!” I yell, pushing my chair away from the table and storming away. How can they do this? Everything they’ve worked for is being given away.

Making it to my room, I slam my door and drop down onto my bed. I’m acting like a spoiled child that got caught with their hand in the cookie jar. I know that, but how could they do this? They can’t do this to us, to me.

I wanted to step into his shoes one day. I wanted to lead with Giovanni. I wanted to bring honor to the Costello name. It’s in my blood.

A knock at my door settles my pounding heart as my mother walks in.

“Gabriel, honey,” her voice soft and small. “We only want what is best for you and your brother.”

I don't speak, I just let her talk. "Your father has seen how this life has been affecting you and your brother. You're both becoming something we don't want for you." She sits at the edge of the bed. Her hand on my knee as she continues to speak.

"Gabriel, look at me," she pleads as my eyes lock onto hers. Tears start to pool in the corners of her eyes. "This is no life for a child. Your father and I want you boys to grow up and become something more." It's as if she believes we would be safer without my father ruling. She's been in this world long enough to know that you can never leave the mafia.



CHAPTER 1

Gabriel

As I watch the life drain from this man's body, I wonder how I got here. This wasn't my life five years ago. I had a thriving business with my brother, Giovanni. My father had stepped away from the mafia life, gave the reins over to his brother so that Giovanni and I could lead more normal lives — go to college, start our own business.

We had it all, but that changed when my uncle's health turned and he looked to pass the family business back to us.

Being the oldest, my brother inherited the leadership role. As his brother, I was told to be his right hand man. In the five years under my brother, I've had to turn off my heart to feel any sort of emotion. You have to be heartless in order to take someone's life, over and over.

I was jealous of Giovanni when he first took the leadership role, but now I know I have found my place. He is the brain, I am the muscle, and our men know even though Giovanni is the head of the family, I am to be feared as well.

My hand tightens around the neck of my victim as he hangs by his arms suspended above him. The Cage is where all the blood is shed, where order is restored. We bring our victims here to talk but not much talking happens.

I inflict pain and they scream. Once the screaming stops, they answer my questions and I inflict more pain. Until their body gives in. The cycle goes round and round.

I've seen the light go out in people's eyes, their literal souls leave their bodies. And now my current victim, his body begins to jerk back and forth as he fights for oxygen. His eyes wide with fear as he continues to try and breathe.

I don't know why they fight it so much. Why don't they just let it happen, it would be over much faster. But where is the fun in that?

"Tell the Devil I say hello," is the last thing he hears as his body goes limp. I remove my hand from his neck and step back and stare at his body. It continues to sway back and forth, the dim light casting an ominous shadow on him.

Looking down at my blood soaked hands, I make my way to the sink against the wall. I shake the past two hours from my mind. As if to reset my brain, I look at myself in the dusty mirror hanging above the small sink. I turn the water on as hot as it will go and run my hands under it. The sting of heat on my hands is the first emotion I've felt all day.

"Did he give you anything?" I hear Giovanni behind me. He stands by the door with his hands in his pants pockets. In his

signature black suit and black undershirt, as if he's a walking shadow.

"They always do." I say, watching the blood run down the drain. My relaxation looking back at me in the metal sink.

"Are you going to tell me?" Giovanni asks, as he makes his way to the body of Rafi. Rafi was a lower member of our family but was caught stealing. Stealing is never ok, but stealing from family, the family that puts bread on your table to feed you? That gets you a one on one session with me.

"He has a security box with the money at the bank on 4th street." I turn the water faucet off and grab the towel hanging on the wall and begin to dry my hands.

"Good. I'll let Smith handle getting the money back. Thank you for taking care of him." His eyes run down Rafis' body to check the damage. "Good work brother," he says as he slaps me on my back.

Killing someone can become mundane, so I find unique ways to torture my victims. It's one thing, in the short list of things my brother and I share in common. We come to the Cage when we need to take care of business, but also when we need to take some frustrations out on the world.

Giovanni hasn't been around to the Cage much since he married his wife, Angelica. So it's become my domain more than his now. My safe haven, my sanctuary. The only place in all the world where I can go and let out my own demons.

“Do you have time to have lunch?” he asks. With most of the blood off my hands, I turn the faucet off and grab a towel off the hook. My hand, like my emotions, are numb from the beating I just gave.

The one thing the Costello family is good at doing is prolonging awkward conversations. The last time we had a meal as a family, Giovanni was being told he was going to lead the family. A few months later, our uncle died, fast forward five years and here we are.

“What now?” I ask, trying not to get my eyes stuck in the back of my head as I roll them in annoyance. Throwing the towel into the sink I eye him with suspicion. As we make our way to the door I can’t think of anything my brother would want to talk to me about. I’ve been a good and faithful servant to him and our cause.

“Nothing, I wanted to invite you to lunch at the house,” he says as we step into the daylight. *Liar.*

Daylight, damn it. I always lose track of time when I’m at the Cage. I’ve lost my whole morning. “Fine,” I say, not hiding my displeasure. “I’m going to go home, shower, and change. I’m sure Angelica would lose her shit if I came to lunch drenched in blood.”

We share a laugh as Giovanni gets in the passenger seat of his Navigator and I turn the key to my Lightning LS motorcycle. The bike comes to life as the seat vibrates under me and I make my way into the craziness of New York City.



“It’s about damn time,” Giovanni says as he opens the door to his home.

The sound of children laughing and screaming echoes throughout Giovanni’s penthouse. My brother, oh how he has fallen. From a mansion that sat in the countryside outside of the city to an apartment in the middle of the madness. Why any man would move his life into the city for a woman is beyond me.

Don’t get me wrong, I love women. Women are great. Their bodies are a masterpiece, especially when they are being used for my pleasure. They always come wanting and are sent away satisfied. I haven’t gotten any complaints yet and I’m sure I won’t be getting any, anytime soon. My women are thoroughly taken care of in every position. That’s why most come back for more. But to have only one woman for the rest of my life, that may work for Giovanni, but I am not a one woman man.

“What?” I jokingly ask as I walk past him and I make my way to Angelica, who’s in the kitchen. “What’s cookin’ good lookin’?” I wink down at Angelica as she stirs the pasta noodles.

“Hey!” Giovanni says as his eyes narrow at me as he makes his way into the kitchen and sits at the black marble island.

“Hi, Gabriel,” she smiles up at me. “Lunch is just about ready, go help your brother set the table.”

“Yes, ma’am,” I say as I make my way to the open dining room with a large wooden table that can seat an army.

“Keep your hands off my wife,” Giovanni says as he pushes a set of plates into my chest. His protectiveness over Angelica knows no bounds. “Or you won’t have hands to touch anything ever again.” I know a part of him is joking, but another part, a darker part isn’t.

“Down boy,” Angelica says as she leans up on her toes to kiss his cheek with a large silver pot full of noodles in her arms. She and I share a smile as she winks at me playfully.

More laughter and screams echo from the second level. Martina, their housekeeper, and Emma, their live-in nanny make their way down the steps. Isabella, my niece, comes running to me a second later. Her arms wrap around my leg and a full face smile catches my eyes when I look down at her.

“*Mia Bella*,” I lift her into my arms and give her a bear hug, squeezing her into my chest. Her sweet laugh fills my ears and I spin in my spot with her legs flying out.

“Uncle G,” she laughs as I set her down.

“Where are you off to Isabella?” I ask as I kneel in front of her. She has the perfect combination of Angelica and Giovanni.

“Emma and Martina are taking us to the park and then lunch!” She says with excitement in her voice.

Martina is holding my nephew Alexandro, on her hip. She has been in our family before Giovanni and I were born and

has been there for us through everything, and now she's taking care of the next generation of Costellos.

As she and Emma pack the kids bags by the front door, I set Isabella down and she instantly runs to them. "We will be back in a few hours Mr. and Mrs. Costello." Emma says as she straps Alexandro into his stroller.

"Thank you, Emma," Angelica says as she begins to plate our food.

"Park and lunch only, don't go anywhere where security isn't with you," Giovanni pitches in.

"Yes sir," Emma and Martina say in unison as they make their way out the door.

We spend the next few hours eating and catching up. My plate is empty and my stomach is full as I push my plate away and lean into the back of my chair.

"Thank you Angelica, lunch was amazing." I pat my stomach in a joking manner. "What did we need to discuss Gio?" I ask, eyeing him with curiosity.

He shares a look with Angelica, queuing her to get up from the table to give us time to talk business. Without a word, she gets up, clearing our plates and makes her way to the kitchen.

I watch Giovanni as he watches her move throughout their home. This man looks at her as if she hung the moon and stars. To be that in love with someone, I can only dream.

"You have it bad brother," I joke.

“Damn right, I do,” he answers, not taking his eyes off of Angelica as she finishes the dishes and makes her way up the stairs.

“Dimitri has asked for a meeting,” he finally looks at me after Angelica is out of sight.

“Why? What does he need from us?” Unable to hide the worry and suspicion in my tone anytime the Roman mafia family is concerned.

“He has an event of some kind coming up soon and has a job set for us.” Giovanni answers as he goes to stand and I follow him.

“That man and his events, we’re not in the business of security. Won’t his men be enough?” I try but fail to hide the annoyance in my voice.

Dimitri doesn’t do anything without making sure everyone around him knows it. He himself is the center of his universe and no one will dare take the spotlight from him. The man is scum, everyone knows it, but he is one of the leading families of New York and no one dares defy him.

“When does he want to meet?” I question as Giovanni leads us into his office.

“Tomorrow,” he answers, standing in front of his mini bar and pouring us each a glass of whiskey.

I take my glass from him and tip it onto my lips and down the drink in one full gulp. The liquid warms my already full stomach as I set the glass down on the bar.

“Tomorrow, do we want to ride together to show a united front for whatever game he’s playing?” I ask and we both make our way to the sitting area in the corner of his office. The black couch cushion dips as I sit.

“We can ride together,” he answers as he leans into the corner of the couch.

We spend the next few hours talking and catching up. Shipments have been coming in smoothly and on time, the other legitimate businesses throughout New York are successful, and everything seems to be going great for the Costello family business.



Giovanni and I pull up the driveway leading to Dimitris’ extravagant home the next morning. “Ready?” Giovanni asks as we step out of his car and up the long stone path leading to the house.

Before we have a chance to knock on the door, it swings open with an older woman standing on the other side.

“Hello, Mr. Dimitri is waiting for you,” is all she says as she leads us into his home.

Everything about his house is cold. Dark wooden walls, worn flooring that creaks with every step we take into the house. Framed family photos every few steps is the only sign that a family lives here.

A few steps down the dimly lit hallway, she leads us into the office after she knocks.

Dimitri sits at his desk speaking to a man across from him. He lifts his head and sees Giovanni and I standing at the door. I take in the open space, noting the windows and doors for possible intruders and quick exits.

For a man that runs the most corrupt mafia family in New York, you'd think he had guards posted everywhere. But in his office, he is an open target, and so are we.

“Costellos,” he stands, interrupting the man across from him and makes his way to us. We reach out shaking his cold hand and walk into his office. “This is Nicholas, the man that is marrying my daughter in a few weeks.” He leads us to his desk and before sitting down, he makes sure to fix his overpriced suit.

I look down at Nicholas, he doesn't bother to stand as I reach down and shake his hand. He grips my hand a little too tightly, as if proving his dominance over me. I see a faded scar on his left cheek from his ear lobe to the corner of his lip.

“Nicholas, you may go,” is all Dimitri says before Nicholas stands and without a word leaves the room, slamming the door behind him.

“Boys, sit, please,” calling us boys is his way of belittling us. Giovanni and I take the two chairs and Dimitri takes his chair opposite us. “I asked you here to ask you a favor. As I said, my daughter, Maya,” his tone is ice cold when he says her name.

“She’s marrying Nicholas in a few weeks and I need your help with security at the wedding.”

“We aren’t in the business of security Dimitri.” my brother says, his tone matching the coldness of Dimitri.

“Yes, my men will be at the wedding, I just need a few extra hands to make sure everything goes according to plan. Five million if you and your men agree.”

I don’t hide my shock at the amount of money he’s promising for a few hours. I turn to Giovanni, using my eyes to communicate how stupid we’d be to pass this opportunity. Who would pass up this amount of money?

“Half up front, half at the end of the wedding.” I chime in as Giovanni narrows his eyes at me. He was going to tell him no. *Idiot.*

“Deal,” Dimitri says, standing from his chair, and us mirroring him and shaking hands. “I will have my men email you details soon. Thank you boys.” Again with the *boys*.

Giovanni and I leave his office and down the hallway toward the front of the house, I see Nicholas standing over a woman caging her in with his hands on either side of her. I can see the fear in her eyes, but her chin is held high in defiance to his presence over her.

She locks eyes with me, causing Nicholas to turn his head. His eyes land on me, a smirk lifts on his scared lip. With his attention on me, the woman takes the opportunity to crouch down and leave his embrace.

He senses her leaving and says something to her in what I assume is Romanian. She stops walking away and turns to face him. “Over my dead body.” She spits at him before she makes her way up the stairs to the second level of the house. *Feisty.*

I can't help hiding my amusement as I look to Nicholas one more time before leaving the house where Giovanni is waiting for me.

God help that man when he marries her, he's going to have his hands full.



CHAPTER 2

Maya

My father is a liar. He promised me freedom when I finished school. I dreamed of the day I could walk away from my family and never look back. Dreams of making something of myself in the art world. He is a liar and I am stupid for believing him.

Photography is my safe space. When I'm behind the camera lens, I catch the world around with a single push of the button on my camera. I am my true self when I have my camera in hand. The person I hide from the world, from my parents.

Being a mafia princess, my whole life has been mapped out for me. But when I graduated high school my father promised me freedom. I should have known better. I should have seen through his lies and betrayal.

I've been set to marry Nicholas for the past three years, but I have come up with every excuse in the book to avoid it as long as I can. I have run out of time and excuses. I'm set to walk down the aisle this weekend.

Four days. Four days and my life is over.

The car with my dad's driver pulls up to the curb. He gets out and makes his way to my door. Before he has a chance, I open the door and make my way onto the sidewalk.

"I won't be long," a defiant smile lifts at my lips. His anger written all over his face.

"It's not safe to leave the car without clearing the area first," he huffs at me.

"You need to be faster next time," I laugh out loud as I make my way into the bridal shop. I find joy in torturing my guards. My father pays them enough money, I might as well make them work for it.

The smell of vanilla takes over my senses as I walk in and make my way over to the marble topped receptionist's desk. "I have an appointment for Maya Galanisi," plastering a fake smile onto my face.

"Yes, Miss. Galanisi, your mother is waiting in the dressing area for you. Right this way." She steps out from the desk and leads me through the open area. Racks of white wedding dresses line every wall. A large gold accented mirror at each corner.

As I walk to the private fitting area, I notice a woman with a white mermaid dress on. A strapless sweetheart necklace covers her chest. Her hair pinned back with a white laced veil. Her smile shines through the veil, happy tears run down her cheeks as her friends surround her.

A sinking feeling hits my stomach as I'm reminded of my wedding, the whole reason I'm here. She may be marrying the love of her life, I couldn't be so lucky. I'm marrying my dad's second in command.

Diavolul Romaniei, The Devil of Romania. A much fitting title. I am a lucky bride.

Nicholas is as feared and ruthless as my father. He is my father's right hand man. He is the man that my father calls to get his hands bloody so my father doesn't have to. His dead eyes have haunted my dreams for three years, ever since my father demanded the union. For three years he has touched me every which way he damn well pleases.

My father allowed the looks and the touches, but he demanded I stay pure. My virginity was a prize to Nicholas, a trophy to behold once the time came. Not that he hasn't tried. The vile looks, the disgusting words he would say, all to remind me of what is to come.

Four days.

The receptionist turns the corner leading into a private area. My mother is sitting in the corner on a white chesterfield sofa. Her security guard is next to her with his arms clasped in front of him. He reaches to the ear piece in his ear, notifying my dad of my arrival no doubt.

"Mother," I say as she reaches her hand out and I kiss her knuckles. The only way my mother is greeted. The only affection exchanged between us. Ever.

“Maya, go get your dress on, I have things to do today,” is all she says with her cold emotionless tone. Her eyes go to her security guard as I see his hands tense in front of him.

There hasn't been a day where my father was faithful to my mother. Parading his woman in front of my mother must have hurt her, but the realization that my mother is unfaithful comes as a surprise. Our relationship has been far from a normal mother-daughter bond, but I can't say I blame her.

My father has been knowingly sleeping with other women for years, why can't she do the same. Her security guard isn't a bad looking man. His dark features and muscular figure would have any woman running to him. I smile knowingly to her.

“I won't keep you mother,” I set my handbag and camera bag on the couch next to her and make my way to the dressing room in the corner.

The large dressing room has a wall to wall bench on the opposite wall. A black dress bag hangs to the left. *My wedding dress*. A large floor to ceiling mirror to my right.

A knock at the door has me walking further into the dressing room. A tall, red headed woman dressed in a black floor length dress walks in. “Hello, Miss. Galanisi. Are you ready for your final fitting?” She speaks through the smile that's plastered on her face.

I nod, not wanting to say the words. I have fought this moment tooth and nail. Not wanting to acknowledge the impending doom. The woman walks over to the bag and

unzips the dress bag, removing my dress and hanging it on another dress hook.

My dress, the only thing I had any say in for this shame of a wedding. It was the only compromise my father allowed, to appease me I'm sure. The only stipulation I had in order to not walk down the aisle kicking and screaming.

My dress is everything I envisioned for myself, when the time came. Sooner than I hoped but it's a small sliver of hope I have for myself. The one thing I have control over in my derailed life.

It's an A-Line white satin dress with a lace overlay. The lace detail runs down the sleeves of the dress. My subconscious way of hiding the bruises and scars left by my father and Nicholas. The back is open though, giving a small hint of sexiness. As I start to undress, the woman turns to give me a bit of privacy.

"I'm ready," I say, as she turns around. She grabs the dress off the hanger and lays the dress open on the floor, allowing me to step into it. As she lifts the dress over my body, she begins to secure it with the hidden zipper.

I turn to face the mirror and look at myself in private before I walk out and show my mom. I feel beautiful. I feel like a bride should, but in the pit of my stomach I know this feeling isn't going to last. It's going to be overshadowed by fear and anger.

The woman and I share a smile as she walks over to the door and opens it and leads me into the open area. Without looking at my mother, determined for her not to ruin this moment for

me, I walk over to the large mirror in the corner of the private area and step onto the small platform.

I turn on the spot viewing the dress at every angle. A spark of happiness fills my chest as I smile at myself.

“You look beautiful Maya,” my mothers dull voice fills the room, but I sense a hint of pride as I look at her through the mirror.

“Thank you mother,” I answer back as the woman who helped me into my dress comes behind me cradling a veil.

“What did you have in mind for hair pieces?” She asks as the veil lays over her forearms.

“I actually have a hair piece at home,” I answer in a hushed tone, hoping my mother didn’t hear. How could she, her full attention is on her bodyguard as they can’t seem to stop sneaking looks at each other.

“Yes ma’am,” she walks away, hanging up the veil on the door.

I steal a few more looks at myself, playing with my hair, imagining what I will look like on the day.

Four days.

I would be lying if I said I didn’t dream of this day. Every little girl does. The dress, the venue, the cake, the dancing, the love. I will have all those things, or at least the illusion of all those things. My wedding day won’t be the day of my dreams but my dress will be. A new life outside of the prison my family has me in.

As the woman comes back, I step down from the platform and make my way back into the dressing room with her behind me. I stand in the middle of the room as she begins to unzip my dress so I can step out and get dressed.

My black distressed jeans hug my curves tightly. Patches of skin on my legs peek through the rips and tears. “Did you take note of the changes I requested for the dress?” I ask her as I bring my Metallica shirt off my head and over my chest.

My personal style is another middle finger to my father. Even though he forces me into ball gowns, I defy him one metal band t-shirt at a time.

“Yes ma’am, it should be ready to go before the day.”

Four days.

“Thank you, and no word to my parents please.” I eye her as I sit on the soft bench and lace up my black military style boots.

“Yes ma’am,” is all she says as I walk past her and make my way back into the open space. The smile on my mother’s face fades and her body goes stiff as I walk to her.

“All done mother,” I grab my bags and walk out of her eyesight and out of the store.

The chill of the outdoor air hits me as I make my way to the SUV still sitting at the curb waiting for me. Before he even makes his way out of the car, I open the car door and sit in the back. “You’re too slow, Cristos,” I laugh out, eyeing him

through the rearview mirror. Anger in his eyes as he pulls out into traffic.

“I’d like to make a stop at Central Park please,” I say as I take my phone out scrolling through my social media feed. People I went to school with fill my feed. Smiles and happiness fill my feed as jealousy hits my chest. The privilege of a normal life.

I was forced to keep to myself throughout my schooling. Not bothering to make any emotional connection with anyone, knowing if I did I would not only get a beating from my father, but I would have put them in danger.

Not having anyone to lean on, I found myself in solitary extra curricular activities, specifically photography. I was able to see the world differently as I looked through the lens of the camera. Telling my own story through photos.

I found a passion and talent in myself but hid it from my parents. I knew the minute they found out I had something for myself, they would control it and ultimately destroy it. Photography is mine.

“Your father is expecting you home for dinner,” Cristos says, looking at me through the rearview mirror again.

“Dinner isn’t till 7pm,” I answer back.. “It’s only 2pm now, that’s at least five hours before I *have* to be home. Central Park, now Cristos.” I stay out of the house as much as possible unless demanded by my father. The more I stay away from him, the less pain medication I have to take following one of his beatings.

With annoyance on his face, he nods and makes a left turn, leading to Central Park.

A short drive later, he parks the car and eyes me once again. “Don’t move,” he demands.

“Yes sir,” I laugh out as I sling my bags over my shoulder. My door opens a second later, allowing me to exit the car.

“I’m going to walk around the park,” I say, stepping on the sidewalk.

“I will be behind you every step of the way,” he closes the door of the car and locks it with the key in hand. My little shadow.

We make our way into the park, different pathways leading in every direction of the park. Grounds of people walking by. Families walking with their children, bikes zooming by.

“I’m going to head to the reservoir for a little while.” I turn to Cristos and he nods at me with his signature black shades covering his eyes. I may not look like your typical mafia princess, but the man in a full suit and sunglasses screams bodyguard.

As we make our way further into the park, I pull out my camera and capture a few shots of the sun rays beaming through the trees. Checking the images, a smile creeps up at the moment in time I was able to capture. Promising myself to print this as soon as I get home.

As we make our way to the reservoir, I catch a couple sitting on a yellow blanket. A picnic basket on the edge as they eat

their lunch.

“Excuse me, I don’t want to bother, but would you mind if I snap a few pictures of you?” I ask as I make my way to them.

They both look up at me, a hint of confusion on their faces, but the red headed woman says yes with a soft smile. “How do you want us?” She asks.

“Just as you were, I know I ruined the moment but I want to catch the look in his eyes he had a second ago,” I look at him with a smile.

“What look?” the woman asks. Without hesitation the man reaches for the picnic basket taking out a small red box.

“This look,” he smiles at the woman, holding out the box in front of her. I bring my camera to my face capturing the moment he opens the box. The woman’s hands go flying to her mouth, tears begin to fall down her cheeks.

“Yes, yes, yes,” she repeats over and over again.

“I haven’t asked yet,” he laughs at her. The woman sits back on her feet as he talks about their past and falling in love, and the hopes of their future together. All while I move around them, freezing this moment for them in time.

He asks her to marry him, *click*.

She says yes, again, *click*.

He puts the ring on her finger, *click*.

They hug and kiss and cry, *click*.

I finish taking the pictures and give the couple a moment. Hesitant to end their love bubble, I finally say, “I can email these to you if you’d like.”

“You are a lifesaver,” he says, “I didn’t hire a photographer, but you’re here, please let us Venmo you for your time.” he offers looking to his beaming future bride.

“No sir,” declining his offer. “I’d be happy to email you these at no charge, I just happen to be passing by. Glad I was at the right moment at the right time.”

After exchanging information with the couple, I decided I’ve had my fill for the day. “Let’s head to the house Cristos.” I turn to him as he’s leaning onto the metal railing a few steps away.

“That was very nice what you did Maya,” he praises me as we walk out of the park and to the car. He opens the door and I make my way into the seat. As he makes his way to the driver seat, he pulls into the traffic and drives to the house.

I spend the drive to the house looking through the photos of the couple. A trail of tears run down my cheeks as the realization of my reality hits me. Marrying a man that will surely be the death of me. Marrying a man that only wants power.

Four days.

Cristos pulls up to the house and I make my way inside. The chill of death and hatred hits me as I make my way further into the house. There is no love in this home. Only anger and fear.

“Maya, my office now!” My father yells at me through his office.

I make my way, slowly, to his office. My father and Nicholas are sitting at his desk and I walk in. “Yes, Father?” My tone is flat and emotionless. The only way I know to speak with my father.

“Nicholas is here to go over the details of this weekend. Sit, child.” He points to the chair next to Nicholas. A chill runs down my spine as I sit next to him. Without hesitation Nicholas runs his hand up my thigh landing at the crease between my thighs.

I try to move further away from him but the arm of the chair prevents me from getting too far. His cold eyes run down my body as I’m frozen in place.

“My wife,” Nicholas says with venom in his voice. His wife, a form of ownership. Owned and possessed by him.

“Over my dead body,” I spit at Nicholas right before my father leans over the desk and slaps me in the face.

“*Skýla.*” Him calling me a bitch echoes in my ears as the sting of the slap vibrates on my face. “Respect your husband Maya.” My father demands. “The wedding is Saturday at 3pm, you will be there and you will not embarrass me. Understood?” His eyes locked on me as I continued to rub the pain in my cheek.

“Yes sir,” fighting back the tears. *Don't show emotion. Don't cry. Stay strong Maya.*

“Go get ready for dinner, Nicholas will be joining us.” He ushers me to the door.

“Wear something nicer, wife,” Nicholas’ voice is filled with lust and I turn and catch the smirk on his face.

I make it to my room before I let the tears fall. The reality of what my life is and will be hits me as I hug my knees to my chest and fall to the floor beside my bed. Covering my mouth as I sob, so I dont alert anyone. Not that anyone would care.

Four days.



CHAPTER 3

Gabriel

After spending the morning going over all the security details, Giovanni and I drive down the pavement to the venue where the wedding is being held. Large overgrown trees light the pathway. The afternoon sun beams through the branches.

We pull up to a group of men standing outside the Greek revival style home. Tall white beams line the front of the house. Green vines cover the front of the house with large windows framed by the vines.

“Gentleman,” I say as Giovanni and I walk up to the group. “Why the long faces, it’s wedding day, let’s party!” I smile at the group and wrap my arm around the man next to me. He side eyes me as he looks to the men around him.

“Tough crowd,” Giovanni says as he taps my back. “Let’s head inside and find Dimitri to get our placement.” He starts to walk up the steps leading to the large back wooden double doors.

“See you later gentleman, you should smile more,” I laugh out, leaving them as I make my way through the doors. I see Giovanni through the small hallway under the imperial staircase.

I watch him and Dimitri talk for a second until I hear a faint whimper. I walk to the left leading into a sitting room. Nicholas has Maya pinned to the wall, *again*. What is with this man and caging women into submission.

I watch as tears run down her face, her cheek red with a faint hand print. I don't know what comes over me but I make deliberate steps to him. I grab his shoulder, spinning him away from her.

With one swift move, I swing my hand and punch him right on his nose. His head flies back and he falls to the ground. “If you're going to hit someone, hit me fucker,” I look down at him, as he cups his bloody nose.

I look at Maya, who is frozen in place. Her eyes are the deepest of black. But sparkles of light fill them, as if they are stars filling a night sky. “Are you ok?” I grit out harsher than I meant to.

She nods at me as she looks down at Nicholas. “What did you do?” She finally asks. “I'm marrying him in a few hours, he can't marry me looking like that.” Hope masked in fear at the realization in her comment.

“I'll take care of him, you need to finish getting ready,” our eyes lock once again. I can feel the heat of defiance as she makes her way out of the room.

“You and I are going to have a little chat,” I look down at Nicholas as he continues to wipe the blood from his face. “I don’t know how your family handles your woman but if you continue to handle your future wife like that, I will find you and kill you, truces be damned.” my voice filled with venom as I shove my finger in his face.

“Fuck you, *kólos*,” he spits at me, covering my suit in his blood. My respect for him, what little there was, snaps as I grab at him.

“This suit cost \$5,000, *kólos*,” using his own words back at him. “We may have truces within our families but I’m not one for rules.” If he’s going to hit someone why not it be me. Or he can try.

Punch after punch his face continues to swell, almost unrecognizable. His body goes limp as realization hits me, my bloody fist inches from his face. Scanning the room, I notice a closet in the corner of the room.

I stand and drag his almost lifeless body into the closet and close the door, hiding him away. I take out a pocket knife out of my jacket pocket, jam it into the keyhole, and snap the knife, leaving it jammed into place.

Scanning the room, I notice the blood stain on the white carpet. Deciding to leave it, I make my way to Giovanni and Dimitri in the kitchen area. They are confirming security for the wedding and our placements as I walk up to them, hiding my hands in my pockets.

“I need to talk to you Gio,” I eye him, breaking their conversation. “Now!”

Giovanni looks at Dimitri and he nods at us as he makes his way out of the kitchen and into the backyard, where I’m assuming the reception will be held.

“That was rude,” Giovanni eyes me suspiciously.

“I fucked up,” I blurt out and take my hands out of my pockets, showing him my bloody hand. “I attacked Nicholas, the guy that’s marrying Dimitris’ daughter. He’s locked in the closet.” My word vomit, not letting me take a breath.

“You did what?” Annoyance and shock laced in his tone, a harsh whisper. “What the fuck G, why did you do that?”

“He was attacking her, he slapped her in the face, on her wedding day, what the fuck was I supposed to do?” I try to justify my actions.

“Yea, ok but what do we do now?” He looks to me like I have the answer to the problem I created.

“Fuck if I know,” my shoulders rise and fall in defeat. I know I fucked up. I need to fix the problem I created. I’ll find a way. “I’ll handle it, I promise.” I reassure him.

“You better! Fuck G, you can’t seem to keep your hands clean, can you?” His question is rhetorical but I answer anyway.

“No, my hands stay red,” trying to ease the tension between us.

He starts to walk through the doors leading to the outside and looks over his shoulder and says, “Fix it G. Now!”

Fuck! Double fuck, fuckfuckfuck!

I walk out of the kitchen back into the room with Nicholas stuffed in the closet. I lean on the door, trying to listen for any movement in the closet. *Nothing*. Either he’s out cold, or I killed the mother fucker. Either way, good riddance!

I make my way out of the sitting room and look for a bathroom. After a short search I find a washroom in the corner of the front of the house. I step into the small bathroom with a toilet and sink with a small oval shaped mirror above it. Turning the water on, I run my hands under the water. The water turns a familiar red color as it runs down the drain.

“What the fuck,” I say to myself in the mirror. Giovanni’s reminder to fix it running in my mind on a loop. “Fix it G.” I repeat to myself.

Then an idea pops to the front of my mind.

What if. No!

I couldn’t.

But what if I could.

What if *I* married her. What if I was the one she walked down the aisle to. I shake the ridiculous idea out of my head. Giovanni and Dimitri would lose their fucking minds. Dimitri would kill me, then Giovanni would bring me back to life just to kill me himself.

But what if. The voice in my head repeats over and over.

I spend the rest of the afternoon avoiding Giovanni and Dimitri. I'm on my fifth lap around the house scanning the area for anything out of place. Passing a few of Dimitris' men and ours that we brought in for back up.

"G!" Giovanni yells, breaking me out of the internal dilemma I find myself in. "Did you fix it, Dimitri is starting to get suspicious. He's been asking for Nicholas for over an hour now."

I nod at him, having made up my mind. "Yea, it's handled. I'm going to marry her." I say matter of factly.

"You're gonna what?" He holds up his hand on my chest. "You can't marry her, Dimitri will kill you."

"He wouldn't kill me at his event. He can't kill me after I marry his daughter," my tone is sharp and unmoving.

This might actually work. It has to work. I'm a dead man either way.

"Are you sure about that?" Suspicion fills his eyes. "I was never going to arrange your marriage, you can find love, you don't have to do this." His efforts to change my mind go in one ear and out the other.

Arranged marriages are common in our world. Women are traded like paws on a chess board. Given away by their fathers to insure power and control.

This woman, Maya, has had no say in the outcome of her life. What if, by marrying me I can give her freedom. Give her

a chance to live the life she wants. Yes I'll be her husband but I won't control her.

She won't see it that way. All she will see is another man calling dibs on her. She'll hate me either way. Something in me needs to protect her from Nicholas and her father.

"You should have seen how he manhandled her, she was scared, whether she wants to admit it or not, that *man* doesn't deserve to marry her. She'll be safe with me. He can rot in that closet for all I care." My defense of her and my action shocks the both of us.

"O.K. brother, but know that Dimitri will do everything he can to stop it." Giovanni's hand lands on my shoulder, his attempt at reassuring me. "I've got your back when shit hits the fan after her father sees you up there."

One of Dimitris' security men comes around the corner, alerting us of the wedding about to start. Giovanni's eyes land on mine as we turn and make our way to the ceremony area.

As we walk down the aisle with white wooden chairs on either side of us, Giovanni takes his seat next to Angelica, in the back row. He grabs her hand and kisses her on the knuckles. She leans into his touch and kisses. Even after all these years they are more in love than ever.

I make my way further down the aisle, taking the place next to the priest. Confusion in his eyes as I stand up a little taller. More guests start to make their way to their seats. I look to Giovanni for reassurance. Angelica says something into his ear, trying to make sense of the situation I'm sure.

A soft melody fills the outdoor place, signaling the start of the ceremony. No going back now. I fill my lungs with as much air as possible. I blow out the breath just as Dimitri and his wife make their way down the aisle.

If looks could kill, I would have died the second Dimitri's eyes landed on me. As he walks further down the aisle, closer to me, I can all but feel the heat radiating off of him. He leads his wife to the front row as they take their seats. His gaze never leaves mine. I can feel the sweat beginning to build on my back.

A different melody starts to play as everyone stands and faces away from me. With everyone's attention off of me I take a second to fill my lungs with air. I see a figure come out of the double door and begin to walk down the grassy aisle.

Her hair is set in dark tight curls that frame her sun kissed skin and smaller curls along her forehead. A golden leaf and pearl crown sits atop of her head. Then I noticed her dress.

It's not the way the dress hugs her curves, or the lace detailing running down her arm that catches my eyes. It's the color of the dress, black. She's wearing a black wedding dress, I don't read too much into that symbolism.

This may have been Nicholas' wedding, but to her, it was her funeral. The end of her independence, of her own life. I silently promise myself that what she wants for her life, I will be the one to give it to her.

Cool it Gabriel. You don't even know this woman.

Our eyes lock as she slowly continues to make her way down the aisle. When she finally makes her way to me on the opposite side of the priest, she looks up at me. It's not confusion I see, it's wonder.

"Hi," I smile down at her. She's at least a foot shorter than me.

"Hi, what are you doing?" She whispers her question, not wanting to draw attention to the obvious. Too late. I did that for the both of us.

"I'm marrying you," stating the obvious. "I can go get Nicholas if you'd rather marry him." I lean away from her, pretending to walk away.

"No!" She grits her teeth as she grabs my forearm and pulls me back into place. Her touch sends a warm feeling straight to my heart. A faint twitch of my dick hits the lining of my pants.

I look to the priest, signaling for him to start. He starts his speech, bringing everyone's attention to us. I don't hear anything for the next few minutes, I am completely lost in her eyes.

I don't move my gaze off of her, even when she looks anywhere but at me. I get lost in the darkness of her eyes. The fullness of her lashes framing her as if her irises were a priceless piece of artwork.

A iridescent shimmer of her eyelids come to life as she blinks. Her long black hair, almost a purple color lays over her

shoulders. A sharp feeling of ownership hits my chest as I unapologetically continue to stare at her.

I hear the priest clear his throat as I'm completely lost in the woman standing in front of me. I turn to him, reluctantly as he says, "repeat after me sir."

"I, Giovanni Costello, take you, Maya Galanisi," My heart pounds in my chest as I continue my vows. As I finish, the smile is on my face, saying the words I can't.

I won't hurt you, you are safe with me.

The priest looks to Maya and has her repeat the same vows to me. I know her vows are said out of obedience but I take them to heart, wanting her to hear herself saying them. Willing her to believe them.

The priest pauses and looks out to the crowd. I keep my eyes on Maya, knowing what's coming. I can see her body tense at the realization that we have to share a kiss.

"You may now kiss the bride," the priest says. He seems to understand the gravity of the situation as he takes a few steps off to the side. Out of the line of fire, figuratively and literally.

"You will not!" Dimitri stands and shouts at me. His outburst takes me back. I would have thought he would let it play out for the sake of everyone watching. But without hesitation, I pull my gun from my back and point it right at him.

"Try and stop me." I look at Maya with my gun still pointed at her father.

“Do it,” two simple words, whispered from her plump lips. A hint of a smile on her face.

Do It. Does she mean, shoot her father or kiss her?

Without a second to think, I grab her at the waist with my free hand and pull her into me. The softness of her skin sends a spark from my hand down to my dick.

“With pleasure,” I say and press my lips to hers. I hear the gasps of the guests but it’s her father that is screaming in Romanian. He dare not move with the gun still pointed at him.

I take my time playing with her lips. Her body objects for a few seconds until she parts her lips ever so slightly. I take the opportunity to slide my tongue through the opening and invade her mouth. She tastes like sweet addictive honey. I begin to lose myself in her. Her soft lips. The curves of her body as I pull her closer to me. Her full breasts pushed into my chest. I say a small prayer that she will allow me to kiss her again.

What feels like not long enough, I pull away and open my eyes to watch her still with her eyes closed. An involuntary smile fills her cheeks. She opens her eyes ever so slowly and we lock eyes. Wanting to break the tension and awkwardness I smile down at her and say, “hi,”

What is this woman doing to me? I have lost all self control since laying eyes on her this morning.

The priest takes a few timid steps back beside Maya and myself and says, “Ladies and Gentleman, it is with great pleasure that I announce Mr. and Mrs.,”

“Costello,” I answer him, not leaving Maya’s gaze.

“Mr. and Mrs. Costello.” The priest finishes his announcement. I take hold of Mayas’ hand and lead her down the aisle and way from the cluster fuck of a wedding. We pass her father who is still yelling at his wife, who is trying to calm him down.

I lock eyes with Giovanni. All the emotions I am feeling are written on his face.

I continue to lead Maya through the aisle and into the house, avoiding everyone’s confusing looks. We walk through the kitchen and into a spare room across the hall from where Nicholas is stuffed in the closet.

The room is filled with dark furniture, a large couch lines one wall, while the opposite wall houses a fireplace with a large landscape painting above it.

I turn to Maya as we stand in the middle of the room. “Hi,” I say for what feels like the hundredth time. I’m unable to think of anything else to say, my brain is fried being this close to this woman.

“Hi,” she answers back at me. “Who are you, where is Nicholas, why did you do that?” She spits questions at me one after another.

“I’m Gabriel, Nicholas is most likely dead in the closet in the other room, because I wanted to.” I say answering every question she throws at me.

She starts to pace back and forth in front of me, having an internal battle with herself as she tries to rationalize the situation we find ourselves in. I take a step closer to her, bringing her out of the trance she was in.

“Why?” she asks again. I can see the fire in her eyes. Then like a spark, the realization of our situation finally hits her. She stops mid step and turns to look at me. I slowly step closer to her, taking my time to take in every detail of her body in her dress.

“Your dress is black,” stating the obvious as I attempt to avoid the question that I can’t seem to find an answer for.

I continue to make my way to her. Heat building between us. “You look beautiful.” I state but I see the denial in her eyes. Her chin falls for a second at my compliment but rises just as fast. I can see the internal battle she’s having with herself.

“You are safe with me,” I lean into her with only our breaths between us as I cup her face with my hand. She turns her face away from me and her body tenses. Her father may be powerful but he can’t touch our family. He wouldn’t dare.

“Am I?” She questions not taking her eyes off of me. The shock is starting to wear off, being replaced with what I can only presume is anger. “I’m never safe when it comes to my father. He’s going to kill you and then me for what just happened.”

“You are safe with me.” I repeat myself, needing her to believe me.

“I was supposed to marry Nicholas. He is my fathers second in command.” She finally says as she steps out of my grasp. “I need to find my father and make things right before-” she stops mid thought as if she’s realized something I haven’t.

“Your father won’t touch you, I promise. You are safe with me.” Stepping toward her, I grab at her wrist trying to pull her back into my hold.

“Don’t touch me.” She jerks her hand away from me before leaving me in the room alone.

An ache hits my chest as I watch her walk away from me. I shouldn’t feel this ache. I don’t know this woman, and yet we’re married. Husband and wife, till death do us part, and all the other bullshit the priest talked about.

And yet something in me wants to make this sham of a marriage work.



CHAPTER 4

Maya

I make my way back out of the house down the courtyard to the large tent area where the reception is being held. Guests throughout the tent are gathered, mingling with one another.

The area is filled with round tables with white table cloths. White and gold plates line the table for each guest. In the middle of the tent, there's a large white dance floor, with the DJ stand positioned at the back, and music echoing throughout the space.

A typical bride would smile at all the hard work that was put into making her dream wedding come true. But I am no normal bride, and this isn't a normal wedding. This is a power move for my father.

Power he thinks he's owed. The extravagant centerpieces, the gold accented plates and glasses lining the tables, and the \$1,000 plates of food. Even down to the wait staff passing around flutes of champagne. To my father, it's all about dollar

signs and power. I am just a small piece of the puzzle for his reign of terror.

As I make my way into the tent, everyone's eyes seem to land on me. I force a smile on my face as I make my way to my father, who is seated at the table with my mother and his men surrounding him.

His eyes land on me and he stands and makes his way to me. Without shame his hand goes up and hits my cheek before I have time to say anything.

“You are an embarrassment. Do you know what you've done?” He spits at me as he grabs my forearm. He begins to pull me to his table, but we don't get far before Gabriel comes up behind me. I feel his presence before I see him.

“Get your hands off of her!” He yells, his deep voice all but vibrating throughout the space. If everyone's attention wasn't on us before, it is now.

Gabriel steps behind me, his muscular chest pressed against my back. Hot lava raises up my spine and a warm wetness fills my panties.

“She is my daughter!” My father stands taller, still a whole foot shorter than Gabriel.

“That may be true, but as of thirty minutes ago, she is my wife.” Gabriels' hands go to my hips, pulling me closer into his chest. I will my body to step out of his hold, but my body won't move. A sense of security fills my chest as if my body knows something my brain doesn't.

“I won’t allow it.” My father’s men come up behind him with their hands on their hips gripping their guns. Another man that looks like Gabriel but with darker features comes to stand next to him.

“Alright, everyone calm down,” the man next to Gabriel says.

In the moment, the music goes silent and gasps fill the tent. We all look at what everyone is looking at. Nicholas is walking through the tent, his face almost unrecognizable from the dried blood and swelling.

“*Îl vreau mort!*” Nicholas yells to my father as he steps to his side.

“Nicholas, enough!” My father’s tone is firm but full of anger. “I have been embarrassed enough for the day. Go sit down.” He points to the table.

“It’s mine!” Nicholas eyes me and then Gabriel as he starts to walk away, a filthy smirk on his face. Like a good little soldier he walks to the table. His swollen eyes locked on me.

My father’s attention snaps back to me. “Maya, go sit down with your Nicholas.”

“She won’t be going anywhere she doesn’t want to,” Gabriel steps from behind me and into my father’s face. “And she isn’t yours to threaten anymore.” His arm goes around my waist again, bringing me to his side.

“She will do what I say, I am her father! Maya NOW!” He screams. My body involuntarily pushes further into Gabriel

and his grip tightens on my hip.

“No father, I won’t.” I look to him, pleading with him to end this. I don’t want to fight with him. I don’t want to cause a scene. I have no more fight left in me with my father.

My father’s eyes go between Gabriel and me before he turns and walks away without a word, his men at his side.

I’m frozen, shock pulsing through my body. Gabriel must sense my change in emotion as he turns my body away from my father. He lifts my chin slowly with his index finger. I blink trying to push away the tears.

“Dance with me Maya,” a plea more than a command. His whisper sending a shiver down my body. His hand held out in the space between us, waiting for acceptance.

His touch is soft on my fingers as I place my hand into his. He walks me to the center of the dance floor. He nods at the DJ as a soft melody fills the room. Our eyes lock as he looks down at me and places one of his hands at my hip and cups the other.

Our bodies start to sway back and forth and the music picks up. I get lost in his eyes as we dance our way around the dance floor. His blue eyes, the color of the sky on a cloudless day. I feel weightless as I lose myself in his hold, soft but possessive.

As the song slows and comes to an end, our bodies continue to sway, lost in the moment. Unwilling to come back to reality, I pull into his hold. His hands pushing on my back.

Gabriel stops mid step as we lock eyes once again. There is something dark but warm in his eyes. “Do you want to stay or leave?”

His questions make me misstep. It’s not that he’s asking me, it’s that *he’s asking me*. I lived 25 years under my family’s control. My father’s way was the only way, and my mother and I dare not question.

To be given an option I find myself taking full advantage and answer him without hesitation, “I want to leave.”

We make our way to the table with his brother and a group of his men I don’t recognize. They must have come with him. Gabriel doesn’t let go of my hand as he talks to the group at the table, letting them know he and I are leaving.

My heart starts to pound in my chest knowing I will need to say goodbye to my family. I turn my head to see my father and Nicholas staring at me. I can feel the anger coming off of them from across the tent.

“We’re leaving, brother. I’ll take the car if you’re able to get you and Angelica home.” Gabriel says, bringing me out of my haze.

“Go, we’ll get home safe. Call me or Matt if you or your new bride need anything.” Gabriel’s brother smiles at us.

I smile at the men at the table, a tall and thin woman at Giovanni’s side is wrapped around his arm. I assume that Angelica. Her bright smile is the first thing I see, the huge rock on her finger is the next. She stands and makes her way

to me. Before I know what she's doing, her hands go around me hugging me.

“Hi, I'm Angelica, it's so nice to meet you.” Her laugh is almost contagious.

“Hi,” my nerves get the best of me as I return her sentiment. She pulls away as she holds my shoulders.

“Yall go enjoy your honeymoon and we will have lunch soon,” her eyes going between Gabriel and I.

I can't help the nervous laugh that escapes me as she pulls me into another hug. My eyes search for Gabriel as I catch him talking to his brother on the other side of the table. His brother's worried smile reaches me as he whispers something into Gabriel's ear and they hug.

Both men make their way back to us. Giovanni's hand goes around Angelica's as he kisses her temple. Gabriel's hand wraps around my waist. I always avoided Nicholas' touch but something about Gabriel's warmth has me leaning into him.

“We need to go say goodbye to your family.” Gabriel pulls me into his arms and I lean into him. A warmth starts to build in my chest. A warmth that feels unfamiliar. That feels comfortable. That feels safe.

We make our way to the opposite side of the tent, Nicholas sees us coming first and stands abruptly from the table. My father notices and his eyes land on mine with a scowl, I feel his hatred piercing me.

Gabriel must sense my fear the closer we get to my father because Gabriel grabs my hand, interlocking our fingers, and squeezing. The slight pressure, a reaffirming gesture, gives me the confidence I was pushing down the whole day.

“You can do this, no one can or will hurt you ever again.” Gabriel leans down and kisses my temple as we walk up to my father. I’ve known this man for a few hours and I feel more compassion from him than I have from my family my whole life.

I want to believe him, when he says no one can hurt me, but he doesn’t know how much power my father has. How much he is willing to sacrifice to keep that power.

My mother’s eyes land on me with the most disapproving stare. I have never been able to gain her love or her approval. I learned at a young age that whatever I did, it was never enough for her or my father.

I find a spark of courage as I stand a little taller once we’re in front of my father. “Good night Mother... Father. We are leaving for the day.”

Without a word my father stands, side eyes Nicholas, pats him on the shoulder, directing him to sit back into his chair. My father slowly makes his way to us without taking his eyes off of me.

“I will not let this continue. She belongs to Nicholas. You will return her to me.” His eyes pierce me with disgust. Even standing pin straight my father is still a whole foot shorter than

Gabriel. The smirk that lifts on Gabriel's face is devilish as he says, "You can try."

"You will not leave with this man Maya!" My father's eyes snap back to me. His confidence is growing now that he's looking at me eye to eye and not up at Gabriel.

Fear starts to rise up my spine as I feel myself begin to shrink at his stare. As I've always done. He was always good at making me feel small, worthless, less than the dirt on his shoes.

"She is not yours to demand anything from anymore." Gabriel speaks up sensing my fear. My father's eyes never leaving mine as Gabriel leans into our hold.

"Remember you are only good for what you have to offer. That prize belongs to Nicholas. Do not do anything foolish with it until that day comes." He grits through his teeth.

"Goodbye Father. Mother," looking over my father's shoulder to the woman who has sat there in silence the entire time. Emotionless, cold, void of life. My mother. Was she always like this or did my father make her this way.

I look up to Gabriel, who has sympathy glazed in his eyes. We turn and begin to make our way to the exit of the tent.

We walk through the open backyard and make our way through the house. The workers rush around but stop as we make our way to the front door. As Gabriel goes to open the door, I notice the blood stain in the room where Nicholas was attacked.

Without a word to Gabriel, I make my way into the room and kneel at the large, crimson colored stain in the pure white carpet. My hand involuntarily runs along the edge of the dried splatter of blood.

Memories of Nicholas come to mind. Him caging me in our kitchen when my father first promised me to him. His hot breath on my neck, whispering disgusting things in my ear. Him watching me in my bedroom as I got ready for bed countless times. Even the numerous times I've caught him watching me shower.

I feel Gabriel's warm touch on my shoulder as he comes up behind me. A small trail of tears run down my cheeks as I stand. Without thought, my arms go around Gabriel's body.

"Thank you!" my voice breaks. I feel his hands run up and down my spine in a soothing motion.

"This day may not have gone to plan, but Maya, I promise you are safe with me." His hand goes out to mine and I take it without hesitation. We make our way outside. Together.

The sun has begun to set, pink and red hues peaking through the tree line as Gabriel leads me through the lines of cars parked along the curved driveway.

He pulls his phone out and begins to text someone as he opens the passenger car door for me. The smooth leather of the seat is cold on my open back as I finally let my body relax. I watch out the window as Gabriel weaves in and out of traffic. "You live in the city?" My tone, almost a whisper.

The silence rings in my ear as Gabriel drives through the city. He's either concentrating really hard on driving or he's ignoring me. I take it as a sign and lean my head back onto the head rest and for the first time all day, I close my eyes.

I let the chaos of the day overtake me.



“Maya, we're here,” His soft voice comes into focus as I'm woken up.

“Where are we?” I ask, bringing my attention to his hand on my thigh. The warm feeling of his fingers as they rest on my thigh, sends a spark of heat to my core.

“It's my apartment.” He answers and I instantly feel the loss of his hand on me as he shuts the car off and exits his side. Leaving me to myself for a second before my door opens and he reaches out with his hand.

He leads me out of the car and walks me to the elevator in the corner of the parking garage. His SUV is one of five cars parked. He takes his wallet out and scans a black card on the reader. Instantly the elevator door opens and we step in, his hand never leaving mine.

As the door closes, I notice a black sports motorcycle parked in the far corner of the garage. That's a nice bike, wonder what it feels like to ride it.

“Thanks,” he whispers and nudges me. Not realizing I said anything, I looked at him in confusion.

“That’s my bike, it cost me a fortune, but she’s worth it.” he clarifies.

“That’s your bike?” I questioned him.

“Yea, she was my first big boy purchase after my brother and I took over,”

The rest of the elevator ride is done in silence. The ping of the elevator, signaling we’ve made it to our floor is the only sound to echo through the small enclosed space. “PH” in big red pixelated letters right above the now open door.

Gabriel holds out his hand leading me out of the elevator into a large open area. I know luxury. My family didn’t spare any expense to make sure the world knew we had money. The best food, the finest clothes. Anything worth having, my father paid for.

I’m not too blown away from the wealth that is being presented to me. The large open space is lined with black and white marble. A large kitchen sits nestled in the corner to the left. White cabinets and black counter tops. Every appliance is stainless steel and I’m sure the latest model.

My head continues to scan the open space. The large floor to ceiling windows bring in the natural light even after the sun has set. The living room is sectioned off with a large black sectional. It’s big enough to fit a large group. A flat screen TV sits center on the wall opposite the sectional. To my right is a long hallway leading down to a few doors. I assume that’s where the bedrooms are.

It's then that the reality of my situation hits me. This is Gabriel's home. Where am I going to sleep? Where will my things go?

"If you could call me a cab, I can find a hotel to stay in." I turn and notice Gabriel isn't around. I spin once, twice trying to find him. I take a few steps into the space and watch as he walks out of the double doors at the end of the hallway.

He's changed his clothes. When did he have time to change? He's wearing a pair of gray sweatpants and a skin tight white t-shirt.

Holy mother of God.

I'm once again frozen in place. I watch as he makes his way to me. It's as if he's walking in slow motion. Every part of him vibrates with every step. I have to force myself to blink as he gets closer.

"I'm sorry, I had to get out of those clothes, I was suffocating." He smiles at me. His smile is soft and warm.

"We can go get your things from your parents house tomorrow but for tonight you can borrow something of mine to change into. If you want." I can tell he's straining to not look me up and down.

"I would love a shower actually. A change of clothes would be nice." I answer him as I'm still trying to slow my heart rate down from the muscular godly man in front of me.

"Great, I can show you where everything is." Without another word, he turns and starts to walk back down the

hallway. Realizing I'm once again left alone, I start to walk and follow him through the double doors that he came from just a few minutes ago.

A large black framed bed sits in the center of the far wall with gray silk sheets. A large gray rug takes up 90% of the room. The marble flooring from the front of the apartment is the same in this room. I stand at the door frame as Gabriel walks over to a tall dresser. He opens the second drawer, taking out a white shirt and a pair of black sweatpants.

"I know they will be too big, but I think they will do for the night." He says walking back to me and holding the clothes out to me. I take them and he walks away again. This time to a door on the wall to the right. I don't dare move.

I hear water running as Gabriel makes his way out of the room. "I have the shower running. You'll need to use my shower, I'm having some renovations done to the guest bathroom." He holds the door open for me and I begin to take small slow steps holding the clothes close to my chest.

My heels hit the flooring in the bathroom. The same color scheme from his bedroom is used in this bathroom. Gray countertops on the double vanity with large back lit oval mirrors. A clawfoot tub in the corner opposite a small room, which I assume, is housing the toilet.

The shower to the right has frosted glass from floor to ceiling. "Thank you." I turn to Gabriel as he leans against the door frame just watching me.

“You’re welcome. Take your time. I’ll be in the kitchen.” He smiles through his words. A dangerous, panty soaking smile. Using every fiber of my being, I try to make it not affect me.

“Maya?” His voice snaps back to reality.

“Huh?” I don’t hide the fact that I missed everything he’s been saying for the last minute.

“I asked if you were hungry,” he leans off the door frame and stands straight, causing our height difference to be more obvious. The man is a muscular giant, taking up almost the door frame from side to side.

“Anything is fine.” My voice breaks as I answer.

Smooth Maya. Real smooth.

“Alright, you take a shower and I’ll go put something together.” He turns and walks out of his bedroom. I don’t move until I hear the door close. Even then I take a second to make sure he’s as far as he can be before I start freaking the fuck out!

I walk over to the double sinks and set the clothes he gave me down on the edge. I grip the edge of the countertop with my hands until my knuckles are white. I hang my head and take slow deep breaths.

I raise my head and look at myself in the mirror. My black dress in full view. I take a step back and do a twirl taking my whole dress in. Even though today has been a cluster fuck of a day, I can’t help but feel beautiful. From the crown I made that

is still on my head, to my shoes I bought for myself, after I returned the ones my mother got.

I can hear my mothers voice in my ear when she gave them to me.

“Maya, you need to wear these flats. You need to appear small. You don’t want to challenge Nicholas.”

Only my mother can turn a pair of shoes into something so demeaning. So I did the only thing I could think of. I took them, hid them away until I could find the time to exchange them.

Did I mean to get the largest heels they had in stock in my size, no but it just happened. Even with the four inches of extra height, both Nicholas and Gabriel towered over me.

I unclasp the buckles on each shoe and remove them and set them in the corner of the vanity. Reaching behind me, the zipper of the dress loosens the form fitting material, allowing it to fall off my shoulders and pool at my feet.

I can still feel the sting of the slap both my mother and father gave me after they saw what I did to my dress.

“Curvă” my father yells as his hand hits my cheek.

I have learned to not flinch after my father hits me. If he sees any emotion from me, he hits me harder.

I unclip the crown from the top of my head and set it on the countertop. After what feels like eternity I’ve removed a handful of bobby pins from my hair. It’s firmly still in place

from the hairspray. I take a second to look at myself in the mirror. Fully naked.

My fuller body figure was something Nicholas would make known would need to be changed after we got married. He would take every opportunity to call me any name he saw fit.

It was never his words that hurt. Small bruises throughout my arms and chest catch my eye. Most of the bruising has healed but a few continue to linger. Strong memories of my father using his fists to beat discipline into me.

The few times he decided to use objects have left scars. My hands run over a three inch scar on my hip. The first time my father decided his hands were not effective anymore. He used anything he could reach in his fits of rage.

The memory comes floody in.

The book on the end table in the living room comes flying toward my head. I instinctively duck and avoid being hit. Which makes father angrier. He makes his way to me and begins to swing his cane at me.

I fall to the ground in pain but he continues. Over and over until I am in the fetal position. I plead with my father to stop. Trying to not cry. Then with a hard final hit he swings his cane, hitting my hip. The sharp edge of the dragon's horn on the handle sinks into my flesh, ripping my skin.

Everything scar on my body has been at the hands of the man that gave me life. The man that by all standards should

love me. Should protect me. In a daze I spin in place taking in the other bruises and scars throughout my body.

I try to settle my racing heart rate as I make my way to the shower. The steam has begun to fill the room.

My body instantly relaxes as the overhead shower head covers my body in the hot water. I let my body relax for a minute before I begin to reach for the shampoo bottle that's nestled into the hole in the wall.

I had to roll Gabriel's sweatpants a few times for them not to drag on the ground. I could have gotten away with just wearing his shirt, seeing how it hits the bottom of my thighs.

But I decided against it seeing how I have a bruising throughout my legs. My father took it upon himself to kick me to the ground because I was walking too slow in front of him. And that is not a conversation I need or want to have with the man in the other room. My husband, who I just met a few hours ago.

The aroma from the kitchen takes over my senses as I walk back into the open living space. Gabriel is in front of the stove with his back to me. I stop mid step and take a minute to watch him.

All too soon he turns around with a hot pan in one hand and a spatula in the other. He stops at the island. Our eyes lock. Neither one of us is moving.



CHAPTER 5

Gabriel

She's in my house, in my safe space. Better yet, she's in my room, in my shower. Naked.

Of course she's naked Gabriel you idiot. What person do you know that takes showers fully clothed?

My logical internal thoughts are finally kicking in. I know nothing of this woman and yet she has taken over every thought of mine in less than 24 hours. And yet she's in my house, in my shower, naked.

And she's your wife. Officially!

There goes that logical thinking again. Reminding me of the situation I have found myself in. Why couldn't I just let the situation be. Why did I have to beat Nicholas to a bloody pulp?

Because he was abusing her.

Yea but did I have to almost kill the guy. And what the hell was I thinking about marrying her. I had no business saying those vows. I will make this right. We will go down to the

court house tomorrow and annul the marriage. I will help her escape her father. Give her money, a flight to anywhere she wants. I will not make her stay married to me.

Snapping myself out of the internal battle I am fighting, I busy myself making dinner. I decided on something quick and simple. Grilled cheese and tomato soup.

Taking out a pot and pan from the cupboard and setting them on my glass stove top. I make my way to the refrigerator and pull out all the supplies I need. American cheese, the only choice in my opinion. I stop by the pantry and take out the half loaf of bread and a large can of organic tomato soup.

I make a mental note to ask her what foods she likes to eat so I can stock up.

Why? She won't be staying. You're going to let her leave. Remember?

Fuck! Why the hell am I thinking long term with this woman.

I know why.

Because she is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. From her shoulder length curly hair. To the deepness of her eyes.

Images of her full body come to the forefront of my mind. Her under me. Her bent over the kitchen counter as I pound into her. Her full breasts bouncing wildly as she rides me on the couch.

“Snap out of it Gabriel. Fuck!” I say to myself as I begin to put the sandwiches together and hear the sizzle of the oil in the pan.

I move around the kitchen for a few minutes getting the plates and cups out for us. I take the pan with the grilled cheeses in them and begin to turn to place them on the plates. In the corner of my eye I see a figure. Looking up I see Maya standing at the edge of the hallway. She’s wearing the clothes I picked out for her. *My clothes.*

A feeling of pride and ownership hits me. She’s in *my* clothes. The clothes do nothing but hide her figure, engulfing her. My shirt hits the bottom of her thighs and I’m sure she had to roll up my sweatpants a few dozen times to make them fit more naturally.

“I hope you don’t mind grilled cheese and tomato soup.” I break the deafening silence.

She doesn’t say anything as she begins to make her way to the bar stool on the opposite side of me. A soft smile frames her face as she says, “that’s fine, thank you.”

I place the last grilled cheese from the pan onto a plate and place the pan on the now turned off burner. Taking the plates in my hands and I make my way around the island. I set the plate in front of her.

“What would you like to drink?” I ask as I set my plate down in front of the seat next to her. Her eyes go to my plate then up to me.

“Water is fine, thank you.” Her voice, a faint whisper. I can’t help but think of what she would sound like when I drive myself into her over and over.

Trying to calm my heartrate and my dick down, I turn and make my way over to the refrigerator to grab the pitcher of water and some glasses out of the cupboard. I take what is deemed too long to pour the water in the glasses.

With a semi clear head and semi hard dick, I make my way back to the island. We spend the next 30 minutes in utter silence. Neither of us talking, neither of us looking anywhere but down at our grilled cheese and tomato soup.

It’s her that breaks the silence when she asks, “would you mind showing me where I will be sleeping, please?”

I push against the counter causing my stool to stretch against the flooring. The echo fills the awkward silence between us. Neither of us says anything to the other. We don’t know what to say or talk about. Or at least I don’t. We are strangers stuck together because one of us couldn’t mind his own damn business.

“I’ll show you,” I start to walk out of the kitchen when I turn and see she’s still sitting at the island. “What’s wrong?” I ask.

“I’ll need to clean before I go lay down first.” she says as she continues to look down at her food.

“You won’t need to clean, I’ll get the dishes put up. Plus my cleaner comes in the morning.” She refuses to look at me with every word I say. What has her family done to her?

After another awkward silence she finally says, “Ok, thank you.” She starts to stand but loses her footing. Before I know what’s happening, I have her pressed against my chest.

Her full breasts pressed against me. Her arms wrapped around my shoulders. And it’s then I see them. Scars and bruises, healed and unhealed. My eyes focus in on each and every one from her shoulders down to her wrists. A fiery rage starts to build in the pit of my stomach.

“Did your father do this to you?” I ask as I stand her up right and run my hand along a few of the scars on her bicep.

She refuses to look at me. She hangs her head low, as if she is ashamed of herself. Lifting her chin with my pointer finger, I make her look at me while I ask again, “Did your father do this?” I ask slower as I try to calm my rising heart rate.

I keep her head tilted up, our eyes locked on each other, unmoving until she finally responds with a head nod. In the same second, my hand releases her chin and her head falls once more.

A woman’s father is supposed to be the one man to never let her down. He’s her protector. Not a man that beats and batters her then gives her to a monster like Nicholas. All for power. I begin to think of a million and one ways on how to make him suffer like he has made her suffer.

“Let’s get you in bed and we can start fresh tomorrow,” I say, stepping toward the hallway. I can feel her behind me, following me. As we make our way down the hall, I point to

each door and explain what each room is. My office, a guest bathroom, a small gym, and then the two guest rooms.

As we step toward the second guest room, I subconsciously chose the guest room closest to my room. I don't read too much into it as I open the door.

It's not much, a standard guest room. A king sized bed sits in the center of the right wall. White curtains line the wall furthest from us, covering up the windows showing the skyline of New York. A small walk-in closet opposite the bed. Furniture scattered filling the room.

"You can sleep in here. This can be your room as long as you want it to be. This will be your space. I will not come in unless asked." Trying my best to make her feel safe with me. I need her to know she's safe. She's not going to be treated like her father treated her.

My brother and I may be heads of the Italian Mafia, but we draw the line at abusing women and children. But we did learn that not all families operate like us.

I turn back to see her standing at the door frame, hesitant to walk into the room. "Alright well then, I'll leave you to it." The awkwardness can be cut with a knife. I walk back toward the door, stepping closer to her. As I do, I don't miss how her body begins to fold in on itself. She's protecting herself. A survival mechanism, I'm sure.

"Good night, Maya," I say as I make my way back down the hallway to the kitchen. I turn to see her still at the door frame. I can see her brain running 100 miles per hour. I decide to not

bother her the rest of the night as I begin to clean up the kitchen.

As I place the last of the plates in the dishwasher, I have come up with a plan for tomorrow. I will talk to Giovanni and come up with a reasonable plan on how to handle this situation I have found myself in.

Then we will go pack all of Maya's things. That is when I will speak to her father and make sure he knows how I feel about him and his methods of discipline. And Maya's future.

The rest of my night is spent on the couch with a glass of bourbon in hand. Taking the last sip of my third glass I decide to make my way to my own bed. I make my way down the hall and stop at the door to where Maya is sleeping.

I know I shouldn't but I lean my ear into the room to see if I can hear any movement. It's then my heart drops. I hear a faint cry. Maya, she's crying. I stand with my ear glued to the door until the crying stops and I don't hear anything. She must have literally cried herself to sleep.

My chest tightens and I look down to my hands, which are white from the lack of blood flow from how tight I'm holding them in fists. I step away from the door, take in a few full breaths, and make my way to my room. Today has been hard on both of us because within a few minutes I am passed out.

Tomorrow is a new day. A new start



With a few hours of restless sleep under my belt, I swing and hit the punching bag hanging from the ceiling in my personal gym. It's nothing impressive. Just a few dumbbells stacked in the corner, a treadmill, and a punching bag.

Hit after hit, I can't seem to get the vision of Maya and all the scars out of my head. I have lost my sense of reality when it comes to her. I shouldn't feel this protective of her. It's not normal. She isn't anyone to me. So why am I feeling like this?

With one last hit to the bag, I'm unwrapping my hands and making my way out of the gym. As I walk toward my room, I once again stop at Maya's door. I knock on the door and slowly open it.

"Maya?" I say as I open the door wider. I see her sitting on the edge of the bed with her head hanging low and her hands in her lap. "Hey, I'm going to head over to my brother's house a few blocks away in a few. Would you like to join me?"

As if she's shocked at my question her head snaps to me. Confusion written on her face. "Will that woman be there?" she asks.

"What woman?"

"The woman he was with at the wedding?" Her head drops back down at the mention of the wedding.

"Angelica? His wife, yes she should be. He doesn't let her out of his sight most days." I joke trying to lighten the mood. Once again her head snaps to me. "Not in a weird way, well

maybe weird to normal people, but they love each other,” I began to ramble trying to explain their relationship to her.

But who can explain that the head of the Italian Mafia stalked a woman for months before marrying her? To any normal person that sounds crazy but for Gio and Angelica its their story.

“Like I was saying, she should be there. I can call him before we head over and ask to be sure, if you’d like.” It’s as if asking her for her opinion is a confusing concept that she looks at me like I have six heads. She doesn’t say anything but simply nods her head in agreement at me.

I take out my phone and shoot Giovanni a quick text confirming if Angelica will be home when I come by. “There I texted him,” I say right as his text saying she’ll be home with him and the kids when we come by. “And he says she and the kids will all be there.”

Her eyes go wide in shock. “Kids?” Her voice is shaky and her eyes are laced with fear.

“Yea, they have two, a boy and a girl. You’ll get to meet them as well.” Her head drops again. I can’t help but get upset.

I walk over to her and lift her chin up so our eyes lock. “Don’t do that.”

Her eyes land on me and narrow, not in defiance but in sadness. “Do what?”

“Hang your head. You have nothing to hide from. You are safe.” I want to say she’s wanted. I want to hold her. My heart

is screaming to hold her, but my body is frozen. I remove my hand from her chin. I see the fight in her eyes as she keeps her gaze on me.

“There you are.” I keep my eyes on her, giving her a soft smile. And for the first time in the last 24 hours, the corners of her mouth lift up. The whites of her teeth peek through her plump lips. I can’t help but just stand in place and stare at her.

“Beautiful.” I assure her. “I’m going to need you to do that more.”

Confused by my comment she asks, “do what?”

“Smile Maya, don’t hide your smile or happiness from me,” I know I’m scaring her with my affection and compliments. I know I should stay away from her.

We don’t know each other. We were brought together because of my stupid idea. But now that she’s in my house, in my space, mere inches away from me, I can’t help but want her. I need my brain to catch up to my heart and dick.

“We can head out as soon as I change.” I begin to step back, not wanting to overcrowd her.

My size doesn’t escape me. I know how much room I take up in any given room. In my line of work, it’s a good thing. The bigger I am, the more my victims fear me. But when it comes to being in the same room as Maya and knowing how she reacts to me, I have a desire to be smaller. Be less intimidating.

“Do you want to take the bike or a car to Giovanni’s?” I turn before exiting her room.

“We can take the bike?” I don’t miss the slight joy in her tone. At that moment, I promise myself and her that I will do what I can to keep that joy in her voice. My dick must have heard her as well because it comes to life.

“Yea, I just need to take out an extra helmet and gear out of storage.” Without another word I turn and make my way to my room. Praying she didn’t see my whole body react to her smile and happiness.

The ride down to the garage is spent in silence. With neither of us having anything to talk about. Her probably out of fear. My reason is a bit more selfish. I spent the better part of my shower with my dick in my hand and a vision of her smile in the forefront of my mind.

As the elevator door opens, I lead her out toward my line of cars. As we make our way toward my bike, I stop by the closet in the corner and unlock it. I take out a helmet and a leather biker jacket.

“You’ll need this,” I hand her the black jacket. Her figure is still hidden with the large shirt of mine she’s wearing. As suspected, the jacket engulfs her even more. But I’d rather her be safe while riding than be exposed to the horror of a motorcycle accident.

I stand in front of her and her head lifts, without me asking. Her eyes peeking through those long full lashes. I plead with

my dick to settle down as I feel it push against the fabric of my jeans.

“This might feel a little tight,” I warn her as I start to push the helmet over her head. I make sure it’s secure before I open the visor. Her eyes show the smile that’s hidden by the helmet.

I’ve never had a woman on my bike before. Most women are too scared or throw their noses up at it. But there is an adventurous fire in Maya’s eyes.

I can’t help but smile back at her. “I’m going to get on first and I’ll show you where to place your legs, ok?” Her simple nod sends me into motion. I set myself onto my bike and set the key into place, but not turning it on.

“Swing your leg over, set it on this bar,” I point to the metal bar next to my leg. She does as she is told.

I can’t help but praise her. “Good girl.” I instantly feel the tension in her body build at the simple praise. Turning the key in the ignition, the bike roars to life and the vibration flowing through my body.

“Oh,” I hear her say.

“You ok?” I ask but I know what she’s reacting to. She doesn’t answer me and not wanting to embarrass her, I don’t acknowledge it. I kick up the kickstand and balance the bike upright.

“You’ll need to wrap your arms around me while we ride.” I turn my head to meet her eyes. “When I lean you’ll need to lean with me. I won’t go too fast.” I try desperately to reassure

her. Riding a bike can be scary the first time. All she does is nod in agreement. I take my helmet off of my handle and set it in place.

“Ready?” I yell out through my helmet, making sure she heard me. Again another nod. Revving the engine to life again, I kick off and start to glide out of the underground parking lot.

As we make our way through the New York streets, the feel of her arms wrapped around me feels right. She tightens her hold on me with every turn we make. Her body is glued to mine the entire ride. I can feel her pounding heart from my back.

It's when I turn into the garage to Giovanni and Angelica's apartment that I miss her hold on me. My ribs may hurt from the pressure of her hold but the emptiness of her hold being gone feels wrong.

I tap her thigh to signal to her that it's safe to get off after I've parked the bike next to the elevator. I remove the helmet from her head, and can't help but laugh.

“I'm sorry, I don't mean to laugh but you look so cute with biker hair.” I smile at her. Her faint smile isn't like the one we shared at my apartment but I jot it down as a win in my book.

Setting the helmets on both of the handlebars, I lead her to the elevator. “So, how was it?” I ask not wanting to spend another elevator ride in silence. “Did you like it?”

She looks up at me and smiles, *another win*. “I did,” her shy voice echoing through the elevator. I can't help but look away

from her the rest of the ride up. As the door opens to the penthouse, I see my brother and Angelica standing at their door waiting for us.

We step out of the elevator and make our way to them. My brother and I share a hug and I step toward Angelica and say, “I see his stalker tendencies are starting to rub off on you.” I lean in and kiss her cheeks.

“What can I say, he’s very influential.” she laughs out and she sets her attention to Maya. “Hi Maya, I’m Angelica, from your-” her eyes lock on mine as she tries not to offend either of us.

Before Angelica can finish, Maya steps in and says, “the wedding from hell.” Giovanni, Angelica, and I stare at each other in shock not knowing what to say.

“I mean what wedding do you know of the bride set to marry one man then marries another man who beat the first man to a bloody pulp?” She laughs out. It’s a laugh someone lets out when they realized what a fucked up situation they are in.

Giovanni, Angelica, and I can’t help but laugh along with her. The hallway fills with laughter as I look to the most important people in my life. My brother who took on the impossible, running the Italian Mafia. His wife, who has become his life line and essentially mine.

But now in the impossibly short time I’ve had with Maya, a sense of protectiveness comes over me. The same feeling my father had for our mother, and Gio has for Angelica. Ok, maybe not to that stalker, hide in the dark, kind of way.

Angelica allowed herself to be loved and taken care of by Giovanni and I hope I can make Maya feel even a small part of that. For however long she'll let me.

I can't help but look at her in awe. Her strength to survive not only the harsh life with her father but the unimaginable circumstances that led to her almost marrying Nicholas.

Giovanni and Angelica lead us into their penthouse. With my hand on Maya's lower back, we make our way into the open space. I can't help but think how our bodies seem to fit together. Her body presses perfectly into mine. I feel my dick harden in agreement as we walk toward the living space.

Before Maya and Angelica have a chance to sit down, Angelica suggests that her and Maya go out on the terrace. "Let's let the men talk, shall we?" Angelica nudges Maya on the shoulder and winks at Giovanni and me.

I watch as Maya follows Angelica through the glass door and sits on the outdoor couch.

"She really is something." Giovanni says as we both watch the two women who have taken over our lives.

"She really is," I shamelessly agree as Maya and I lock eyes through the glass. I can see the nervousness in her eyes.

"So, how's married life?" Gio's sarcasm brings me out of my staring contest of one. I can't seem to look away from Maya as she settles and is talking with Angelica. "You sure have it bad, its like you think this marriage is real." His comment brings me fully back into the conversation.

“And what if I do want it to be real?” I argue back at him.

“Gab, you’ve known her for all of two days, don’t expect something out of nothing.” I know what he’s doing, he’s talking to me rationally. But I haven’t been able to think rationally since Maya came bursting into my life.

“Ok mister let me stalk my future wife.” I joke back.

My brother is the last person that can say anything about relationships. He stalked Angelica for months before she even knew who he really was. He’s told me everything. From stabbing the guy at our club that one night to him breaking into her apartment while she was asleep. The man even had cameras installed in her apartment building to watch her. But *I’m* the irrational one.

I refuse to blame him. I never knew why he would have done those things for a woman. I’ve always been one to share the love. I never say the point in settling down with one person. I wasn’t made for just one woman.

But when I saw how Maya reacted to Nicholas at her fathers house and then at what was meant to be their wedding, I couldn’t help but want to protect her.

“Did Angelica drive you this crazy?” I finally say. I push back my hair with my hands. Trying to fill my lungs with the air it desperately needs from thinking about Maya.

“When doesn’t she,” he jokes.

“I’m serious man. I know nothing about her. And yet she has taken over every thought in my head in the past 48 hours.” I

plead with him to understand where I'm coming from. I need someone to explain to me what I'm feeling because I'm going crazy.

“Gab, when I first saw Angelica walking that night, something awoke in me. And I'm not talking about my stalker tendencies. That was just my way of making sure she was safe and taken care of,” he tries to make light of our conversation. “I was there for Angelica when she needed me, and some moments she didn't. Maybe just be there for Maya, for whatever she needs.”

“But what if she wants to leave and never see me again.” I drop my face into my hands in frustration.

“Then you let her go man, never make a woman do anything she doesn't want to. Even though I did some crazy shit to get Angelica.. Everything we did, we did together and willingly. It may have been fucked up but that was the way I knew to love her.”

“Her father and Nicholas beat submission into her. I'm assuming she's learned not to fight anything any man in a place of authority says. I mean fuck man, Nicholas was all but beating her on their fucking wedding day.” I remind him and myself of why I'm in the situation I'm in at the moment.

“Help her,” he blurts out. “Help her find herself. Be there for her. Build her up into the queen every woman deserves to be.”

“Is Angelica your queen,” I joke, knowing the answer. But I have loved watching my brother fall in love. His complete and

utter devotion to being a husband and father. I see our father in him every time I come over.

“Angelica is my reason,” he turns and looks out to the two women sitting on the terrace.

While Gio looks in awe at Angelica, my eyes watch Maya. Her body has become comfortable, she’s laughing about something Angelica said. She moves a loose strand of hair behind her ear, exposing a small section of her neck. I can’t help but to think what my lips would feel like as I kiss that sensitive flesh.

“That woman of mine out there is why I wake up every morning. Why I deal with the bullshit of the mafia day in and day out.” he continues as we both shamelessly continue to stare at them. “No matter how you met her, if Maya brings out something in you, you need to protect it at all costs.”

I slump back into the cushion and stare at the ceiling.

I am so screwed.



CHAPTER 6

Maya

I've caught him staring at me every time I look at him through the glass door on the terrace. Those crystal blue eyes are mesmerizing. I shouldn't feel this comfortable with a complete stranger.

A stranger that held my father at gunpoint on my wedding day. My wedding day, I was meant to marry an evil corrupt man. I should be thankful but I know how mafia men are. My father and his men don't hide the kind of monsters they are.

So what makes Gabriel and his family any different? I have been shown nothing but kindness while I've been around them. Gabriel has been gentle and given me space. Unlike Nicholas who I know would have had his way with me then thrown me to the side. I am something to be owned in his eyes.

When I look at Gabriel I know he doesn't see me as something to own but to befriend and maybe love one day.

Love.

I'm sure my parents loved me at some point, or at least I hope. But since I was old enough to understand, my father made it known that I was to be married off. I was trained to stay silent and never to say no. I was told to submit to the man and never question him.

“So, how's married life?” Angelica's soft voice brings me out of my internal haze.

Angelica is a beautiful woman. She is thin and tall. Her black hair is almost the same shade as mine. Where mine is curly, hers is pin straight. My hair barely hits my shoulders, and hers falls to the middle of her back.

I can't help but look to Gabirel to try and gauge if they can hear me. I don't want to say anything to offend him. He's slumped deep into the couch staring at the ceiling. I watch as his brother hands him a glass of a dark liquid.

Great he's going to get drunk. Which means I need to avoid him at all costs. When Nicholas would be over at the house, he would get drunk. His hands would shamelessly wander, no matter who was watching.

“I will own you one day Maya. You are mine to do with as I please.” His vile words on repeat, ringing in my ears.

I look over at Angelica who is sitting in the chair across from me. I know she's waiting for me to respond but I can't seem to find the right words.

“Gabriel has been nothing but kind to me.” It's not a lie but I don't want her passing along any rude comments I make to her

husband. Which would end up getting to Gabirel, then he would discipline me.

I would stand my ground anytime Nicholas would be around. But my father made sure I learned my lesson each and every time. Nicholas never dared lay a hurtful hand on me, that was my fathers job. But I know, had the wedding gone as planned, I wouldn't have survived long.

“You can be honest,” she leans in and places her hand on my knee. I can't help but flinch at her touch. Not out of fear of Angelica but habit.

I can see the shock in her eyes as I pull away and cage myself with my arms around my waist. “I'm sorry, I didn't mean to startle you,” she leans back into her chair, giving me space.

“It's ok,” I know I sound emotionless, but I don't know how else to be. I haven't been allowed to be myself. I was raised to be a piece of my fathers game and pawn for Nicholas to use. A woman in my father's eyes is never seen or heard unless they are wanted by the men they serve.

It's why my mother is the way she is. I can't help but feel sorry for her, but she has found a way to survive under my fathers rule. I just wished she would have protected me, as a mother should have.

“Maya, I'm sorry with how everything has gone the last few days,” her voice brings me comfort. “Gabriel may look mean, but he is a giant teddy bear. He is the greatest uncle to my

kids. He has a huge heart. I hope you allow him to show it to you.”

I can't help but stare at her. I hear what she's saying but I can't seem to believe it. I've spent my whole life around men who are cruel with their actions and words. It's the norm with mafia men. Their hearts turn cold and callus.

“I know this marriage, or whatever this is to you and him, started off in a strange place, but please know he has never looked at a woman like he looks at you,” she continues.

Now I'm the one that's confused. “How does he look at me?” I question.

“It's not necessarily love, but it's affection. He knows he feels something toward you and I can bet you feel something toward him. It's up to both of you to figure it out and find a happy medium.”

“I don't know him, he doesn't know me,” I argued back.

“That may be true but maybe all you need right now is a friend. Gabriel is my best friend,” she laughs. “But don't tell Giovanni, he's very territorial when it comes to me and the kids.” She even has a perfect laugh.

I have no words, I just sit in silence and listen to her. I can't respond, I don't know what to say. Can I be friends with Gabriel? I feel something toward him, not sure what it is but it isn't the same as it was with Nicholas.

“Your father has been calling Giovanni all day yesterday and today.” The mention of my father has my throat closing and

my chest tightening. “I don’t normally listen in on Giovanni’s conversations but when I heard your name, I couldn’t help myself.”

“What did he say?” I plead with her.

“Giovanni reassured him that you are safe,” the laugh that escapes me is unintentional. My father doesn’t care about my safety, he cares that I am untouched, for Nicholas’ benefit. “Giovanni has refused to *return you*, your fathers words not his.”

Return me, like I’m a piece of property. No less than a missing package.

“Maya, please know you are safe with Gabriel and you are safe with us. If you don’t want to go back to your father, we will do anything we can to help you.” Her words are meant to reassure me but I know who my father is. He doesn’t take well to being embarrassed and what Gabriel did yesterday was the ultimate embarrassment to my father *and* Nicholas.

I just nod in agreement because she can’t know what my father is capable of. Her husband is the leader of her world. She is safe. I am nothing to Gabriel. He won’t protect me when it really comes down to it. His priorities are his family and his life, not me.

We hear the sliding glass door open and both Angelica and I stand. Giovanni walks over to her and embraces her. If she wasn’t glowing before, she sure is now.

Gabriel doesn't move from the door frame but his eyes are locked onto me. A hint of a smile lifts in the corner of his mouth.

"Will you be staying for dinner?" Giovanni questions, with Angelica still in his arms.

Without taking his eyes off of me, Gabriel says, "No, we need to make a stop at her dad's house to pack her things. I'll need to barrow Matt if that's alright until I get permanent protection for Maya."

With his comment, I break our staring contest. "My what?" my voice isn't louder than a normal tone but I feel as though I'm yelling so I lower my head.

"You can have him and take Patrick just in case," Giovanni tells him.

"She can't leave looking like that." Angelica says as she takes a few steps between us. Her arm goes around my shoulder and she brings me into a side hug. "We'll need to find her something else to wear." We share a look. There is no way anything this woman owns can fit me.

Gabriel doesn't say anything, just nods in agreement. A second later, I am being dragged up the stairs toward a room.

Angelica opens the double doors at the top of the stairs. She leaves me in the center of the room as she makes her way to what I assume is the closet.

She's gone for no more than a minute before she comes out with a pair of jeans and a shirt in hand. "Try these on, there is

no way you can go to your dad's wearing Gabriel's oversized clothes.”

It's at that moment I take in what I must look like. An oversized shirt and baggy sweatpants. “Thank you,” is all I can say.

She turns around in her place. Is she expecting me to change right here and now? “Go ahead,” she says. Well I guess that answers my question.

I slowly take off my clothes and step into the jeans. The material is soft and fits tight but has enough movement to not feel suffocating. The shirt is the same, a little tight around my breasts but falls loose.

“All done,” I say before Angelica turns back around.

“Much better.” She compliments me.

We make our way back down the stairs and see the two men waiting in the kitchen. Gabriel's eyes once again land on me. I can feel heat rising in my stomach as he watches me with every step I take.

His brother pats him on the shoulder and leans into him and says something. Both of them smile.

“Much better, wouldn't you say Gabriel?” Angelica says as she pushes me closer to Gabriel.

“Much.” He can't seem to take his eyes off of me. “Shall we, Matt and Patrick, are outside waiting for us.”

As we make our way toward the front door, I reach for the jacket I was wearing but Gabriels' hand stops me. "You don't need that, we're riding in a car. I'll send for the bike later today."

He opens the door and leads me through it. Giovanni and Angelica stand by the door and watch us walk to the elevator. I turn to smile at them. They are leaning into each other. I can feel their love toward each other emanating off of them.

A short elevator ride later, Gabriel guides me into the underground garage where a large SUV is waiting for us. His hand on my back as we walk toward the car feels warm. I want to lean into him but I stop myself.

The ride to my fathers house is long, his house is outside the city. The large over the top house is meant to show just how much money my father has. And yet, it isn't a home.

"Patrick, you will take Maya to her room and help her pack her things, Matt stay with me as back up when I talk to her father." Gabriel says as his hand takes mine in reassurance.

We make our way out of the car and up the stairs toward the front door. Before we have a chance to knock, the door opens.

My fathers live-in house keeper is standing before us. Her eyes go wide when she sees me and the three men behind me.

"Hi, Carlita, I'm here to get my things." My voice is shaky. Yet again, I feel Gabriels hand on my lower back. I can't help but stand a few inches taller under his touch.

“Ma’am,” her thick romanian accent comes through as she steps to the side holding the door for us to walk through. As soon as I break the threshold, I hear my father in his office yelling.

I’m sure Gabirel and his men don’t understand him, but I know every word, because I have heard every word he’s saying through me.

“Whore, bitch, no good.”

We stand in the foyer and Carlita walks over to my fathers closed office door and knocks. She walks in and tells my father I’m here with Gabriel and two other men. But before she can finish, my father rushes out to us.

His round face is beet red with anger. His chest has a sharp rise and fall from him yelling so much, I’m sure.

“Maya, to your room,” he says. His tone is demanding and stern. Without thinking I start to move, but it’s Gabriels’ hand around my wrist that stops me.

“She is not here for you to command anymore.” he says, stepping next to me. His hand slides off my wrist and takes my hand into his. His hand is firm but soft.

“She is nothing to you,” my father spits.

“That may be true for you but not to me.” Gabriel’s voice starts to rise. “She is here to pack her things and come back home.”

Home. The word is so simple but holds so much meaning.

“You can not have her, she belongs to Nicholas.” those words again. *Belongs to Nicholas*. Will my father ever see me as more than something to own? A sad sinking feeling starts to rise in my chest.

As if Gabriel can sense it, he tightens his hold on my arm. “Patrick, take Maya to her room and help her pack,” Without another word Patrick to my right springs into motion. I instantly miss the feel of Gabriel’s hand in mine as Patrick leads me up the steps to the second floor.

I look over the banister before walking to my room. Gabriel hasn’t moved from his place in the foyer. My father is used to being the power in any room. But I know he must feel helpless with Gabriel standing in front of him. He is almost a foot taller than my father.

I walk into my room with Patrick on my heels. My safe place. My home inside this hell house. Not knowing where to start, I grab a few suitcases from under my bed and start taking my clothes out of the dresser.

Within thirty minutes my clothes and a few personal items are packed in four suitcases. Empty drawers throughout my room. My walls that once held my photographs are empty with faint dust outlines all around the room.

I walk over to my closet which houses all my photography equipment, as I pack them into their bags. My whole life packed away in four suitcases and two bags. Without a word, Patrick and I make our way back down stairs. Gabriel and his

man haven't moved an inch, but my father is nowhere to be found.

“Is that everything?” Gabriel questions, almost unbelieving that one person can fit their whole life in so little bags.

“Yes,” I answered. He motions for his men to take the bags from me. I hold tight to the bag that holds my camera, not wanting anyone else touching it.

As the men leave to go back to the car with my things, Gabriel reaches out to me and says, “Your father is in the kitchen with your mother, do you want to go say goodbye?”

My eyes can't help but drop as I answer, “No, thank you.”

And without questioning me or trying to change my mind, Gabriel walks to the front door, holding it open for me to walk through.

“You will never have to justify your actions to me Maya.” He assures me as we walk to the car.



Gabriel hasn't said much to me since we got back to his house. He has left me alone to unpack and give me space from the eventful day we have had.

My camera equipment is layed out all over the bed in my room. I hear a knock on the door as I set the last few pieces of clothing in the dresser.

“Maya?” Gabriel’s voice is soft. I turn and catch him opening the door wider. He stands unmoving at the door. “I had take out brought in, is Chinese ok?” If only he knew it was my favorite.

I can’t help the smile that forms at the edges of my mouth as a simple nod.

“Ok good,” he says as he goes to close the door and walk away.

“It’s my favorite,” I blurt out before the door closes and he steps back into the room.

“It is?” he questions.

I don’t know why I had the urge to share that random piece of information, but I felt as if he needed to know.

“Yeah, well technically I love sushi the most but a good bowl of fried rice and beef is the second best.” I am in an oversharing mood as I can’t seem to stop talking. Feeling embarrassed I close my mouth and step back into the dresser.

“That is good information to know, thank you for sharing.” His smile seems to be working over time because I start to feel a warmth build in my lower belly and a wetness between my legs.

“It should be here any minute if you’re finished unpacking.” Without wanting to embarrass myself anymore than I have I simply nod and walk toward him at the door. The front door swings open with one of the men that helped me at my fathers house earlier walks in with both arms holding take out bags.

“Maya, this is Patrick, he will be your bodyguard. He will be with you and keep you safe if or when I am not around.” Gabriel says as he pulls out a chair for me to sit at the island.

As Gabriel and I sit at the island with the containers open for us in silence, Angelica’s words from earlier come to mind.

“Gabriel is my best friend.”

If I’m going to live here, under his roof, maybe I should at least be friendly.

“Thank you for everything today.” I blurt out, breaking the silence in the room. His head snaps over to me. I can’t help but get lost in those eyes of his. I feel smaller than I know I am anytime he looks at me.

“You’re very welcome Maya.” His voice is smooth and laced with something I’m not too familiar with. And with that we are back to silence.

It’s his turn to break the silence when he asks, “was that all your camera stuff on the bed?” There are those eyes again. Looking at me as if nothing else around exists.

“Yes, it’s a hobby of mine.” I want to tell him I hope to become a professional one day, but that dream sailed away when I was told to marry Nicholas. I dared not dream it again.

“Are you any good?” I don’t know if he’s joking or sincere, but I can’t help but defend myself.

“I believe I am, I hope to one day be able to sell my pieces. I plan to take photos for any occasion.” There’s that dream of mine, creeping in again. Of course Gabirel isn’t going to help

with that. Sharing this part of me feels foreign but he seems genuinely intrigued.

“Can I see some pictures you’ve taken?” I’m taken back by his request. He wants to see my photos? Why? No one has ever asked to see, other than that couple I photographed their surprise engagement.

I’m reminded to get those pictures edited and sent to them soon. Maybe I can work on that a little tonight before bed. A part of me wants to hide this part of myself from him, to keep it safe. But something about Gabriel has me opening up to him.

“I can show you some if you want to see them.” Part of me is terrified that he will think my photography is horrible and a waste of time. But another part secretly wants him to like it.

“Yea, show me after dinner.” He smiles and stuffs a fork full of fried rice into his mouth.

After dinner, I help Gabriel clean up the dinner mess. He’s setting the last plate into the dishwasher as I finish wiping down the counter. This feels normal.

“Ok so,” he says, turning off the faucet. “Let’s see those pictures.” The fear of showing another person my passion and having them judged is keeping me frozen in place as he and lock eyes.

He walks out of the kitchen and into the living room and falls into the cushions. He looks over to me and smiles. “I’m

ready,” he says with a teeth grinning smile. He’s like a kid on Christmas, impatiently waiting for his first gift.

I set the cleaning bottle on the counter and throw the wet rag away in the trash. I make my way to my room and return back into the living room to Gabriel still on the couch, waiting for me.

With my laptop open, I open a file of the unedited photos from that engagement shoot to show him. “I took these of a couple in the park while I was on a walk,” I explain. “But they aren’t edited so they aren’t any good yet.” I try to defend myself and my photos.

He doesn’t say a word but is staring at my computer as I click through each photo.

“Go back,” he blurts out and leans closer to me to see the picture better. It’s one of my favorites that I took of them. They are both on their knees, his face is being held between her hands. Both of them smiling fully at each other. You can see the faintest tear running down her cheek.

“I like this one,” Gabriel says as he looks at me. “The emotion you were able to capture. It’s amazing Maya,” he praises me. I’m taken aback for a second and look back at the picture.

“It’s why I took it from the angle I did,” I start to explain. “From this angle you can see each of their faces in the moment. The way his eyes are looking at her, her emotion. Their shared warmth in their embrace.” I continue to talk through my vision for this one picture.

Gabriel isn't saying anything, he's just staring at me as I continue to explain every detail of the picture.

The next hour is spent on the couch with me scrolling through edited and unedited photos. Gabriel has been vocal with every picture. Somehow I have ended up underneath his arm with my laptop between my crisscrossed legs.

As I'm showing him the finishing touches of a photo I've been editing for the past fifteen minutes he leans into me and kisses my temple. "You're amazing," he whispers.

His praise sends me into a fog. Unable to do anything, I save my edits, close my computer, and jump to my feet. I regret my reaction instantly as I miss the warm feeling of his embrace.

"You ok?" the worried look on his face makes me sad.

"Yea, sorry. It's getting late. Should get to sleep." I blurt out and without another word I made my way to the room he has designated as mine. Even though it physically hurts me, I need to protect myself in this fucked up situation I'm in with Gabriel.

Knowing he wont walk in with permission, I close the door behind me and fall onto my bed with my laptop wrapped in my arms to my chest.

"Way to go Maya," I scold myself.

I hear a knock at the door a second later. "Maya, I'm going to head to bed, have a good night." Gabriel's voice sounds hurt and vulnerable. I'm afraid to say anything as I continue to just gaze at the ceiling.

First sleepless night keeps me up as I replay the day in my head over and over. I internally yell at myself for ruining a good night with Gabriel. I plan my apology as I finally drift off to sleep.



CHAPTER 7

Gabriel

The ceiling fan goes round and round. My mind is running a million miles an hour. I can't get Maya out of my head. The way she lit up when she was talking about her photography. It's nothing short of magic what she can do to a photo to make it amazing.

But it's the way her body fit against mine while she was working on the computer. The way the vanilla scent of her hair invaded my senses. Imagining what her midnight colored hair would look like twisted in my hand. How she would feel under me.

But I can't think like that. She may technically be married to me, but I have no right to her. She isn't mine. Until she tells me otherwise.

I can feel myself drifting into sleep when my phone on the night stand pings. I want to chuck it at the wall, but my phone only rings this late for one reason.

Giovanni's name pops up on my screen with a text telling me that we had a situation with a shipment.

"Fuck!" I grumble. Another sleepless night ahead of me. I shoot him a text back telling him I'll be there as soon as I can. The fucker who is making me lose sleep will die nice and slow when I get there.

Making my way to my closet, I put on a plain black shirt. If I end up getting blood on me, I don't want it to be seen. It would most likely freak Maya out.

Maya.

She's sleeping in the spare room. Debating with myself if I should wake her and let her know I'll be leaving. But I don't know how long I'll be, what if she wakes up and I'm not here. She'll probably freak out regardless.

I decide I'll tell her, but I won't tell her why.

With my dark jeans and black shirt on I make my way out the door and grab a pair of sneakers. My shoes in hand, I stop at the door where Maya is sleeping.

Slowly, I open the door. And there in the center of the bed, as if she's being cocooned by the moonlight, Maya is sleeping. The thin cover has been kicked off and is only covering her legs up to her knees. Her back is to me, but I can see her body rising and falling with every soft breath she takes.

Against my better judgment, I just stand there watching her. Watching her, secretly wishing I was laid up in that bed with her.

After a few long seconds, I make my way around the bed and kneel in front of her. Her hair is wildly layed on the pillow. Lightly tapping her on the shoulder to wake her, I watch as her eyes flutter open.

“Maya, wake up please,” I whisper, not wanting to startle her.

“Mhmm,” her voice vibrates. The sound sending an alert straight to my dick.

“Maya, I’m sorry but I need to take care of something at work,” my voice is barely audible.

This time she moans and I’m done for. As she opens her eyes fully, the moon light from the window lights up her face. It’s in the moment I notice that her dark eyes have a hint of gold. Like little fireflies in the night.

Her eyes fly open at the realization that I am in her space. She shoots up into a sitting position. She scoops the covers at her feet and quickly covers herself. I can’t help but smile.

I go to stand, trying my damndest to high my semi hard dick. “I’m sorry I woke you. I got a call and need to take care of some business. The house is yours to roam freely. I’m not sure when I will be back.”

With the covers all but wrapped around her body, her hands gripping the covers under her chin, she simply nods at me.

Not knowing what to say I simply apologize, “I’m sorry I woke you. I didn’t want you to wake up to an empty house.”

“It’s ok,” her soft voice seems to echo in the silence of the room.

Without another word, I make my way toward the door. Before leaving I turn to look at her just one more time. One last smile from her sends me out the door and toward the elevator.

I grab the keys to my Aston Martin DB11 from the drawer in the kitchen island and make my way to the elevator.

The drive to the Cage is short. Pulling up, I notice my brother and another man standing at the front door. As they shake hands, the man starts to leave.

Parking my car, I make my way to Giovanni. “Hey brother,” he says with sleep ridden eyes. “Didn’t mean to ruin your beauty sleep,” he jokes.

“Shut up fucker,” I punch him in the chest. “Why am I here?” I question.

The Cage is used for worst case scenarios. When we are desperate for answers. So whoever is in there must have something we want.

“We have a cargo ship coming in a few weeks.” Giovanni simply says.

“And,” I’m slowly starting to lose my patience.

“And we’ve gotten intel that it’s a container full of women.”

What the fuck! Weapons and drugs, fine i’ll deal with it. I might even want to profit from it. But whoever this fucker is,

he will find out soon enough what I think about them trafficking woman.

Our family has owned most of the ports here in New York since my great grandfather came to America. Anything and everything that comes into New York has to be approved and vetted by us.

Whoever is trying to get this shipment must have a big set of balls thinking they can get it past my family.

“Do we know who the shipment is for?” I question.

“That’s what I need you to find out.” Giovanni turns and opens the door to the dated warehouse.

The familiar scent of bleach overwhelms my nose. I haven’t had the pleasure of killing someone in this room in weeks. It’s like coming home after a long vacation. Nothing has changed.

The same large yellow tinted bulbs hang from the ceiling. A small round table and a group of chairs sit in the corner right as you walk in. Normally where I would have a man hung up by his arms, a table is placed.

A young man, no older than 18 sits at the table with his hands tied in front of him. His head hangs low.

“That is Roman,” Giovanni informs me. “Smith was able to catch the import report for the shipment that was scheduled. He wasn’t familiar with the name that was attached to the report. So he flagged it.”

Whoever is trying to hide isn’t doing a good job. This kid has no idea what’s in store for him if I don’t get the

information we need.

“Once Smith flagged it, he was able to track the shipment to Roman there.” Giovanni continues to break the situation down for me.

I just simply listen as I watch how this kid is reacting to being tied up in a warehouse in the middle of the night.

“I think it’s safe to say, Roman is being used as a scapegoat. We need him to give up whoever is paying him so we can stop the shipment.”

“Agreed,” I nod, not taking my eyes off this kid. I can see a small pool of sweat starting to build at his temples. His head slowly rises and falls the second our eyes lock on each other.

I can see him fighting to look unintimidated. But I’ve danced this dance before. I always get my answers. If not, he’ll die slowly and painfully.

I make my way over to Roman who hasn’t taken his eyes off of me. I can physically see his heart racing as his chest rises and falls with every breath he takes. The vein in his neck is pulsing, letting me know that he knows how truly fucked he is in this situation.

“Roman,” I say, not bothering to sit in the chair across from him, but standing behind the chair with my hands gripping the back. He doesn’t bother saying anything.

“So, this is how this is going to work, I will ask one simple question,” I pause for dramatic effect to make sure he knows

I'm serious. Even though I find this whole situation almost comical.

“You,” I point to him, “are going to give me an answer. If I like your answer, you will be free to go and die from someone else's hands. If I don't like your answer, well I think we both know how this ends.”

The fear in his eyes show me a glimmer of hope, letting me know he knows how serious I am.

“Ready?” I simply ask. His head bobs up and down rapidly, indicating he understands what I'm asking of him.

“Why would you attempt to smuggle in a shipment of women through my family's port?” My voice is flat and emotionless. “And remember don't lie to me Roman.”

As I wait for him to answer, I slowly tap the edge of the metal chair with my fingers. The tapping of my finger in rhyme to a metaphorical time bomb.

He finally breaks eye contact and says, “It's not mine.” His voice is almost childlike. As if he was caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

“Well then, who does it belong to?”

“I can't say,” he begins to shake violently.

“Can't or won't?” I joke, knowing I'm going to get my answer one way or another.

“He will kill me,” he starts to weep.

“And what do you think I will do to you for making me get up in the middle of the night?” I can’t help my sarcasm. I make my way over to him on the other side of the table.

I take his tied up hands and hold them between mine on top of the table. I apply a hard pressure and I whistle over to Giovanni who is standing by the door still watching me.

“Knife brother, I need a knife.” I say to him as he reaches into his pants pocket and takes out a small pocket knife. As he makes his way over to us, he starts to flip the pocket knife through his fingers.

My brother, the showman. I remember the times he would come to the Cage and take care of business. It was like watching Picasso paint. A true craftsmen. But he had to go and fall in love and have a family.

My thoughts go to Maya. She probably is still in bed back asleep. Visions of her body laid out on the bed come to the forefront of my mind. All her curves and how they would feel in my grasp.

I shake the thoughts out of my head, needing to stay focused on my task. “Thank you brother.” I say to Giovanni as he hands me the pocket knife.

I open the knife and stab it onto the table, inches from Romans hands.

“Roman, did you know that there are 27 bones in a human hand?” I ask rhetorically. His body starts to shake uncontrollably.

“I’ll ask again, who does the shipment belong to?” I remove the knife from the table and hold it on top of his hand, applying the slightest pressure.

“Please don’t,” he cries out. I love when they beg. I love knowing their life is literally in my hands. “Answer, now!” I firmly ask.

His head falls and now he’s in a full on crying fit. My patience is starting to run out when I ask once more. And once again he doesn’t answer.

I have no mercy when I lift the knife up and forcefully stab it into his hand. Blood starts to gush out. His scream rings out in a roar. I remove the knife from his hand and wipe it on my shirt to clean it the best I can. The blood stain is hidden slightly on my black shirt.

I’m fed up with this kid. I have wasted my night here when I could be at home.

With Maya.

I grab him by his shirt and lift him off of his chair. “See Roman, now I’m pissed. Now you find out what happens to people who waste my time.” I hit him once in the stomach and he falls to the ground.



God damn it, it’s 7am before I walk into my house. I must be losing my touch because I didn’t get much out of the kid

before I got fed up and killed him. I texted Smith to look deeper into the situation and find who the shipment belongs to.

Trafficking women is the line our family will never cross.

As I make my way into the kitchen to wash off the now dried blood off my hands, Maya stands in the living room. Her face falls when she sees what I must look like.

Blood on my hands and face. Shirt is all but drenched in blood. The human body only has on average 1.5 gallons of blood. It doesn't seem like a lot but when your being stabbed and mauled to death, that amount of blood gets everywhere

I stand a few feet away from her not saying anything. Her eyes look worried and hurt. Without a word she starts to walk toward me. Her body is wrapped in the same blanket from her bed when I left her.

“What happened?” she asks as she stands mere inches from me, looking up into my eyes.

“I needed to handle some family business.” I don't want to give her all the gruesome details.

“Where is your first aid kit?” her fear turning into concern.

“The guest bathroom down the hallway.” I nod my head toward the hallway.

She takes my hand by the wrist and starts to lead me down the hallway. Oh, what we must look like. A woman wrapped in a blanket dragging a bloodied man around.

I stand in front of the door as she walks into the bathroom that isn't anything special, just a small shower, toilet, and single sink vanity.

She opens every cabinet and drawer looking for the first aid kit.

"Left drawer in the back." I can't help but laugh. My body is tense but all the blood is mostly from the now dead body.

"What is so funny?" She's trying really hard to sound stern. As she finds the kit and sets it on the counter. "Sit," she says, pointing to the toilet.

I do what she says and sit on the toilet. I watch as she dumps out the contents of the first aid kit all over the counter. The small counter is covered with first aid supplies.

As she shuffles through the items, setting aside the things she thinks she'll need, I notice a few antibacterial wipes, bandaids, and wraps. She even goes as far as to grab the only pair of latex gloves in the kit and puts them on.

"I need a rag," she says as she stops and looks at me.

"Cabinet on the right. There should be a small stack." I answer wanting to see this plan of hers through. She opens the cabinet and pulls out a small rag, turning on the sink to soak the rag in the water. Once the rag is soaked, she turns the water off and rings out the water from the rag.

I can't seem to take my eyes off of her as she walks over to me and stands in front of me. The bed sheet that was wrapped

around her falls to the floor. Her body on full display in front of me.

A white shirt covers her body just above her knees. As my eyes run down her body, I notice the cuts and bruises that were once there are fading. Thank God.

She takes my bloody and bruised hand into her and starts to dab the warm wet rag onto my knuckles. Her brow is furrowed as she concentrates on her task of cleaning me up.

The dried blood is soaked up by the rag leaving the fresh cuts underneath to be exposed. She sets the now crimson stained rag onto the counter. She grabs some antibacterial wipes and bandages and starts opening each pack.

My heart starts to warm watching her as she cleans me up. I haven't needed to lean on anyone for anything most of my adult life. I would normally just clean myself off with soap and water and call it a day.

But watching Maya as she wipes my cuts clean and places the bandages down warms my heart. Pride and wonder start to build in the pit of my stomach as she sets the last bandage on my pinky knuckle.

“Thank you,” I say as I go to stand.

“I'm not done,” she says as she pushes me back down by the shoulder onto the toilet.

“Yes ma'am,” I laugh out loud. Her lips flatten and her face squints in the cutest way.

She then takes the roll of gauze and starts to wrap my hand over and over, securing the bandages in place. When she's happy with herself she steps back and looks between me and my now wrapped hand.

I can't help but jump up, and without warning, I take the few steps between us. Out of shock she steps back until her back hits the wall behind her. With her body pressed against the wall and now me, I lean down grab her chin with my wrapped hand and lift it ever so slightly.

Our lips are millimeters apart. Our eyes locked on one another.

"I'm going to kiss you," I whisper.

Her tongue peeks through her lips and runs along the bottom lip. She simply nod and that sets me in motion.

I can't help myself as I slam my lips onto hers. She tastes of sweet candy and my tongue glides along her lips. When she slightly opens her mouth, I take full advantage and invade her mouth.

I run my wrapped hand along her hip and up her side. When I get to her shoulder, I continue along her neck to the back of her head. My fingers weave through her curly hair.

As we continue to devour each other I push my hip slightly further into her. I want her to feel what she does to me. My dick has no shame as it's proudly standing at attention under my pants.

I take my other hand and grab her ass and start to lift her off the ground. Without being told, she wraps her legs around my hips. I shamelessly start to grid myself between her legs at her opening.

Testing my limits with her, I grab at her ass with my hand. A soft moan escapes between our lips. I want to take her right here and now but I hold back. I know she's a virgin. It's the whole reason her father married her off.

Not wanting to think of him, I remove my hand from the back of her head and set her feet back on the ground. I regrettably remove my lips from her. As I force myself to stop, I watch as her chest takes in deep breaths.

I lean my forehead onto hers and say, "Maya."

She doesn't look at me. Embarrassment written all over her. "I want to, you have to know that. But not now, not here. You deserve so much more."

She kneels down, grabs the bed sheet off the ground and storms toward the door. But before she leaves, she turns and looks at me with all the hurt and sadness of the world.

"Why do you get to decide that?" Her tone is emotionless.

I've fucked up. I know that. She was in the moment, she wanted me just as much as I wanted her. But I refuse to take her in that way for the first time, in a fucking bathroom.

"Maya," refusing to let this monumental moment between us be ruined. I go after her and watch as the door to her room slams shut.

I take the few steps to her room and knock on the door.
“Maya, can I come in?” I ask.

“Go away Gabriel!” She yells out to me.

“Talk to me, please.” I lean my forehead onto the door, my hand on the door handle itching to turn it and walk into the room.



CHAPTER 8

Maya

Men are fucking idiots. There's no other explanation for what just happened. We were in the moment, I was going to let him take me right then and there. So why the fuck did he stop.

"Maya," he yells through the door.

Now he's the one that can't take a hint. Why doesn't he just go away.

"Please let me in," he begs. I envision him on his knees in front of me begging and trying to explain himself. A smile laugh escapes me as I can't help but laugh at the thought of Gabriel on his knees for anyone.

"What's so funny?" he says behind the door separating us.

"Nothing," I answer, trying to hide my amusement. "Go away."

"I need to explain." Explain? Explain what?

How he left a woman in his house to go probably kill someone then comes home all bloody. Explain how the woman he left bandaged him up and when they were in the moment he had to go and ruin it.

“Fine, come in,” I say, bracing myself for the worst.

The door slowly opens and he stands there with his blue doe eyes focused on me. I’m sitting on the bed with my legs crossed. The shirt I’m wearing covers most of me but at the right angle he would be able to see right between my legs.

I see his Adams apple bob up and down with a hard gulp.

“I’m sorry,” he says as he walks into the room. I just look at him, trying to hide the fact that the moisture that was building in the bathroom is now a pool between my legs.

“Maya, you have to know that I didn’t want to stop but,” he pauses.

But I don’t want you like that.

But I can’t imagine having sex with you.

But I’d never find you attractive enough to sleep with you.

“But I would never force you into a situation you didn’t consent to.”

Frustration builds in my chest, “you want consent?” I blurt out.

“I know you’re a virgin, and your first time needs to be with someone you want it to be with. Not someone that pushes themselves on to you.”

I stand from the bed, causing him to take a few steps back. “Ok Gabriel,” I say folding my hands in front of me. “You want my consent, fine.” I take a step towards him.

He doesn't move.

“Gabriel, I consent to you fucking me. I consent to you taking my virginity. I consent to you making me moan and scream out in pleasure.” With every sentence I step closer and closer to him.

I am now in his space. I lift my head to meet him eye to eye. “Fuck me, Gabriel.” I say. I don't know where that confidence came from but I want to see how he reacts.

“Maya,” he says hesitantly. He's fighting it. Whatever this moment is for us, he is doing everything he can to stop it.

“Gabriel, I was almost married to a man that would have taken it with or without my consent. So either you fuck me, or I can leave and have him do it.”

That does it, something in him snaps. His blue eyes turn pitch black as he grabs me with both of his hands and slams his lips to mine. I wrap my legs around him. He removes his hands from my face and holds my thighs up and walks us both over to the bed.

He lays my body on the bed as he continues to kiss me. I feel his body pressing into mine. Not wanting him to leave again, I grab him by the back of his neck and push him further into the kiss.

I can feel his dick thicken as it presses between my legs. Our lips break as he starts to kiss down to my neck. I can't help but moan as his tongue runs along the pressure point on my neck.

"We'll go slow Firefly," he whispers into my ear. That nickname sending a shiver down my spine. As he goes to lift my shirt up my body, I stop his hand on my stomach. I don't need him seeing my body.

"Shirt stays on," I say hoping he listens.

"Whatever you say Maya, this moment is for you." He stops kissing my neck and looks me in my eyes. He continues to kiss me as the hand on my stomach works its way down once again.

His hand glides further down and starts to rub my pussy through my panties. "Oh Maya, you are soaking wet."

His hand continues to work my clit through my panties. I'm helpless and have nowhere to run. As one of his hands works my pussy, the other starts to knead my breast through my shirt.

I can feel the build up of an impending orgasm in the pit of my stomach. I can't help but close my eyes and let my body and mind be in the moment.

The high of my orgasm is right on the edge when Gabriel suddenly stops. My eyes shoot open and find him, over top of me with a shit eating grin on his face.

"What the hell?" My voice is laced with frustration.

"I want your eyes on me when you come. I want your eyes to burst in ecstasy. I want your body to quiver when I own

your orgasm.” His words only start the build up to the stalled orgasm.

My head nods rapidly, not daring to argue in this moment. Instead of his hand continuing over my panties, I feel his fingers run through my folds. Spreading my pussy lips as his fingers start to rub my clit and my opening at the same time.

Over and over he works my pussy. I try my damndest to keep my eyes open. Fighting the urge to close them. My vision starts to blur and in an instant my back is arching off the bed. My legs begin to quiver, chest heaving trying to catch my breath.

But I keep my eyes on Gabriel whose head is now between my legs. I can see the hint of a smile lift at the corners of his mouth. As I ride my high I feel the emptiness from him removing his hand.

But it’s not long till he leans into me and kisses my pussy. His lips are full and warm against me, but it’s his tongue licking me from bottom to top that I don’t expect. The roughness of his tongue makes my legs push closed as they lock him in place.

“If you want my tongue, you just have to ask,” he lifts his head up ever so slightly and looks at me. I can’t help but smile at the sight before me.

“I’m going to stretch you, get your pussy ready for my cock.” There is no shame in his words. He is confident in his abilities. From the feel of his dick through his pants, I’m not doubting his abilities either.

His tongue continues to work my clit as another orgasm starts to instantly build. The pressure on my clit subsides when he pushes his tongue inside me ever so slightly.

With his tongue continuing to push against my clit, he slides a finger into me. The slight pressure instantly stiffening my spine.

If this is just one finger, what will his dick do to me!

One finger then two. Feeling like I can't take anymore, I look down at him with his head still between my legs.

"Oh Firefly, watching you take my fingers is the sexiest thing I've ever seen." He hums between my legs sending a vibration to my core.

It's when he slides a third finger inside me that the room begins to go dark. I feel as though I'm spinning. My body is weightless as I soar through my second orgasm.

He rises from between my legs and stands above me at the edge of the bed. "You look marvelous when you come," I can't help but hide my face with my hands. I shouldn't feel ashamed, but being so exposed as he stands above me has me hiding myself.

"Maya," his voice low and demanding. I don't move, my hands covering my face. "Maya," he raises his voice and it has me moving my hands from my eyes down to my cheeks. "Never hide from me. Remember?" He reiterates his earlier comment.

I nod my head in understanding as I fully remove my hands from my face and place them at my side.

“Now, I need to know if you want me to wear a condom or if me being bare is ok?” he stands unmoving. I lean onto my elbows to really see him and understand what he’s asking me

He’s asking me. I never in my wildest dreams thought a man would take the time to ask. Nicholas would just do as he pleases. Gabriel is not like any man I’ve met, certainly not like Nicholas.

“I’m clean, and have my test results on my phone if you’d like to see them.” He starts to pull his phone from his back pocket.

“No it’s ok,” I stop him. “I believe you. I’d like for you to use a condom please.” I don’t know where my confidence in this conversation is coming from. Gabriel is making me feel as though my opinion in this situation matters.

“Nothing happens without your consent Maya. Nothing!” I have no words for this man as I just shake my head up and down. “We go at your pace, at your say so.”

Without another word, he walks out of my room and returns a minute later with a box in hand. An unopened box. Did he buy it specifically for me, did he have it saved for other women?

Not wanting to have *that* conversation, I continue to watch him as he walks to the side table next to the bed. He opens the

box, removes the roll of condoms and rips one off. He makes his way back over to the edge of the bed in front of me.

I can't help but be in awe of this man. He is nothing like I thought he would be. His dark exterior is overshadowed by the lightness of his heart that I'm witnessing in this moment.

My heart starts to pound in my chest at the realization of what is happening. Sex. I'm about to have sex. With Gabriel, the man that married me just a few days ago out of... Sympathy?

In one motion Gabriel grabs his waistband and slides his pants and underwear down together. It's not his rock hard abs that have my attention. Or the deep V shape of his hips.

It's his massive cock that's standing at attention that holds my gaze.

A single ring pierced through the head of his dick. A small line of precum runs along the rim of the piercing. I know what I must look like. My eyes wide, unblinking, my mouth falls open ever so slightly.

"It's called a prince albert," he says, but I can't seem to look away. I'm unashamedly gawking at his dick and his piercing.

I don't know if I'm in shock or just stunned with amazement. Thinking about what that ring must feel when it's inside me has me finally swallowing that air that was stuck in my throat.

He grabs the condom off the bed where he placed it earlier. Taking the latex condom out and with one hand covers his

dick, leaving just the tip of the condom hanging off. The simple act of a man putting a condom on shouldn't affect me like this. But when Gabriel does it without taking his eyes off of me, I'm sent into over drive.

“Ready?” He asks as he hovers over me with his hands on either side of my head. He swipes at my curly bangs with his fingers and smooths them down the side of my face. My eyes are glued onto him.

The blues of his eyes have turned pitch black. I can see the lust in his eyes as he reaches between us and sets the tip of his dick at my entrance. The slightest pressure has me tensing instantly.

“Relax Maya,” Gabriel's voice is soft as he pulls away and runs his tip up and down my pussy. “It's going to hurt at first but the more relaxed you are the faster the pain turns into pleasure.”

I shouldn't be this wound up. How stupid it is to fret over my virginity. What a stupid idea of purity. The idea of my virginity being worth so much that my father would practically sell me off to any man willing to pay.

I can feel my reality shift. My whole life gets flipped on its axis. My virginity only means something to the men in my life that put value in it. I am more than my virginity. I am more than the value of my body.

“Do it,” I lock eyes with Gabriel. This moment is more than me losing my virginity. I am sending a big middle finger to my

father, and in turn to Nicholas. Screw them and their bullshit understanding of what a woman is and what she's worth.

I think Gabriel can see something shift in me as he stops teasing my clit with his dick and slides deep into me. With one full push he is fully inside me. The fresh sting of pain rushes throughout my body. I've been ripped in half, I just know it.

I shut my eyes as I let the pain of him inside me sink in. I don't dare move. My hands are gripping the bedsheet. Gabriel doesn't say anything, I know he's letting me adjust.

"You ok?" his concern settles my nerves. "Do you want me to start moving?"

"Yea," is all I say before he leans closer to me and puts our lips together ever so softly. I can feel his pushing in and out of me. The pain of him inside turns into something else. Something... pleasurable.

He has taken over all my senses. His mouth on mine. His hands roaming freely on my body, over my shirt. And his dick is stretching me more than I ever thought possible. I can even feel the coldness of the metal ring.

He starts to pick up his pace. Over and over he seems to push further inside me, reaching where my own hand has never been able to go.

"Maya, you feel amazing. You're choking my dick," he whispers behind my ear.

I can't help but moan in pleasure as a tightness starts to form in my stomach. My eyes are glued to the ceiling as it starts to

blur when I feel my orgasm start to build once more. “Gabriel,” I moan out.

“My little Firefly is already moaning my name. I can get used to that.” One thrust after another, over and over. “You there?” he asks with a firm grip of my breast in his hand.

I can’t seem to form words. I have lost all my senses in this moment and so I frantically nod my head. Screaming yes without saying a word.

He removes his hand from my breast and takes my clit between his fingers and squeezes it. Without time to think, I am set on fire with pleasure. The ceiling above us seems to crack and I begin to soar.

He continues to push into me through my orgasm, until I feel his dick twitch inside me. He rolls off of me and lays on the open space on the bed beside me. My body is still on fire but I feel an emptiness inside me that wasn’t there a minute ago.

Another second goes by before Gabriel is sitting up and walking out the door. A sting of shame creeps into my chest. Thoughts of being used fill my head, but I banish them as I sit up and start to look for my panties.

When I can’t seem to find them I walk over to the small dresser and put on a fresh clean pair. I flinch when I feel a slight sting between my legs. Deciding I need to lay down and sleep it off, I make my way back to my bed.

“What are you doing?” Gabriel says standing by the door. He himself has changed into a pair of shorts. His shirt and

sweatpants still gathered on the floor by the bed.

“I’m tired, I was going to get some rest.” I answer with a bit of annoyance in my voice. Regretting my tone, I turn to him and say, “sorry, it just hurt more than I thought it would and I’d like to rest.”

“Well maybe a nice warm bath would help,” the blues of his eyes have returned. The tenderness of Gabriel has returned.

“A bath would be nice.” I answer.

“Good because the tub in my bathroom is filling up as we speak.” he steps to the side leaving some room for me to walk past him by the door.

As we make our way to his bathroom, I’m hit with the scent of lavender and vanilla. The tub that’s in the corner is half way full with water and bubbles. I turn to see Gabriel standing a few steps behind me.

A child-like smile fills my face as I say, “thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” he walks up and past me, taking me by the hand and leading me to the tub. He holds my hand out as I step into the tub. The hot water slightly stings my nerves. I turn back around to face him when the realization that I need to take my shirt off hits me.

I don’t want him to see me and my scars. I don’t want him to look at me any different. “Can you turn around?” I ask, holding my shirt. I can’t have him see the broken woman underneath this shirt.

Without a word, he turns and faces away from me. I remove my shirt from my body and let it fall out of my hands to the floor. I look down and see the scars laid through my body. Small and faded, they still serve as a reminder of what a monster my father can be.

I sink into the tub and let the mix of water and bubbles cover my body. "Ready," I say to Gabriel. He turns around and I can see the fight he's having inside himself. Whether he should join me or leave me be.

I want him with me. I want his body against mine again. The feel of his hands holding me. "Join me," I look up at him from across the bathroom.

He slowly makes his way over to me. I slide to the other side of the tub to make room for him. Making sure to keep my front covered. He removes his shorts and steps behind me. As he leans on the back of the tub, he grabs my shoulders and leans me against him.

"Thank you," I lean further into him and lay my head onto his chest. I can feel my body relaxing from the after sex tension.

His hands start to run down my arm and under the water. As his hand starts to creep closer to my stomach I can feel my body tense. He must not sense it because his hand is at my belly button. Unmoving, I start to take shallow breaths. My heart rate starts to pick up. His hands glide up toward my breasts.

As I'm about to relax ever so slightly, I feel his right hand run over a scar at my hip. His hand freezes. He runs his finger over the thin raise of skin.

“What is that?” he questions when he sits us up.

I don't want to answer. I don't want to have this conversation. He knows my father is mean. How much father talks to me. But he doesn't know what my father is truly capable of.

How he can use his words to be mean, but his fists leave the physical scars. What would Gabriel do? Would he judge me? Would he look at me differently? Or worst of all, would he pity me?

I could handle my fathers harsh words and his physical pain. I can handle people looking down at me. But pity is something I never want from anyone. I survived.

I've known Gabriel less than a week and he has made me feel safe and wanted. That all can change once he knows what I've been through. He wouldn't want a broken and abused woman as his wife. He'll send me home to my father. I know it.

“It's a scar,” I try to hide my break in my voice as I hold back my tears. I prepare myself for the rejection surely to come.

“Scars from what? When were you hurt?” the tone of his voice vibrates the room. The answers to his question seem simple but they are framed in hatred.

“My father, when he would get angry with me for not listening or doing as I’m told.” My father is the monster, he did this to me. I will find a way to make him pay. Whether Gabriel helps me or not. I won’t go back to him. I won’t be subject to his cruel ways any longer.

“What?” Gabriel’s voice is full of anger. His body turning hot as he turns me around to face him in the tub. “What do you mean your father?”

“He treated me as a troubled child. I wasn’t the son he wanted. So he would make me *strong like a man* with his words then his hands.” I tell him of the cruelty of my father. How when he got too weak to hit me himself, he would throw things. “The scars and bruises you’ve seen aren’t the worst of them.” He’s seen the minor ones. The ones I choose for people to see.

Bravery overtakes me as I go to stand and step out of the tub. Bubbles stick to me as I stand next to the tub. I wipe away some of the bubbles and show the largest scar. Right at my hip.

“I got this one when he hit me with his cane. He was angry at me for whatever reason, I don’t even remember anymore.” I can’t seem to look Gabriel in the eyes. It’s not shame of what I’ve been through, it’s fear of what he looks like looking at me.

I hear the water splash around as he walks over to me. He stands in front of me and drops to his knees. I can’t look away

as he runs his hand over the large scar. I hold my breath as I watch him lean into me and kiss the scar.

“I’m so sorry, Maya,” he looks up at me. When I look at him, I don’t see pity, I see sympathy. Understanding. A sting of vulnerability covers me as I realize I’m standing naked with Gabriel in front of me. But I also feel free.

Years of hiding my abuse, someone finally sees me and isn’t disgusted. He isn’t running away. He seems to be leaning closer into me and his hand continues to run along the scar.

“If you tell me to, I would kill him. Just say the word.” He says with his eyes not leaving the scar.

“You can’t, he’s untouchable.” My father has had many attempts at his life. He is invincible. Bullets can’t hurt him. He will live forever reigning his terror on me.

“All you have to do is say the word Maya.” He repeats his sentiment. A dark cloud fills his eyes and I know he’s serious.

A second passes as he stands and cups my face. “Are you hungry?” he says, abruptly changing the subject.

My stomach answers for me as it rumbles in agreement. He walks over to the shower and grabs the hanging towel.

Walking back over to me, he wraps me up and says, “go get some clothes on and we can have a late lunch.” He kisses my cheek and shoos me out the door of the bathroom. I do as I’m told and make my way to my bedroom.



CHAPTER 9

Gabriel

What the actually fuck! Her own father hitting her. Abusing her. Leaving scars on her perfect body. If I didn't want to kill him already for making her marry that scum bag Nicholas, I sure as fuck do now.

I can feel the anger growing inside me as I grip the bathroom counter. My heart pounds in my chest as I try to calm my heart rate. Her own fucking father, the man that is meant to protect her. What a fucking monster.

Memories of my own father flood my vision. How he stepped away from his life as a mafia boss to protect Giovanni and I. He wanted to protect his family. He wanted to let us live normal lives. And yet here we are. Giovanni and I back in the life my father wanted to protect us from.

“Well dad, this isn't what you had in mind, did you?” I speak into the empty room. “But I hope I'm making you proud.”

Even though this life wasn't meant for me, here I am. The right hand man to my brother. The man meant to protect

everything we work for. It's all on us. *It's all on me.*

I turn the faucet on and splash some cold water on my face. After, I make my way back into my room, and into my closet to grab ark jeans and a tucked blue polo shirt. Casual but still fitting for a mafia leader.

As I sit on my bed and lace up my shoes, I hear Maya open and close her room door. A spark of hope hits my chest hoping she comes into my room. And yet, her footsteps sound further and further away with every step she seems to take.

“Calm down Gabriel,” I whisper to myself. I need to get a grip. I've known the woman all of a few days. Why has she been able to take over my whole life these past few days. What is it about her that made me do what I did at her-*our*- wedding.

I know the answer.

It's her eyes; her deep midnight eyes. I could get lost in her eyes. The deep sadness in them makes me want to burn the world down for her. Her wild curly hair, framing her face perfectly. Her full figure, how she seems to fit perfectly against mine.

“Stop it,” I say running my hands through my hair. I stand in a rush and adjust my semi hard dick in my pants. As I make my way out of my room and into the kitchen, Maya's back is to me. She doesn't seem to notice me.

I'm inches away and can see over her shoulder. I shouldn't be snooping as she scrolls through her phone. It's then I notice

what she's looking at, me. It's a search page of me. Or what I was before I became what I am.

Picture after picture of me with women around me at events for work. I start to remember some of the events, but not the women. The world was at my figure tips. Giovanni and I had the world in our hands. Women swarmed us anytime we were seen out in the city.

Maya zooms into a picture of me and a woman in an embrace. Her body is pushed against me. A drink in my hand as her and I share a kiss.

I can feel Maya's body tense as she continues to stare at the picture. I want to tell her that isn't me anymore. I want to tell her that those women don't mean anything to me. I'm not the man in those pictures, in more ways than one.

But she doesn't know me. She doesn't know who I was. All she sees is a man with woman after woman. I know what she's thinking, I'm thinking it as well. Would she even believe me even if I explained myself?

I take a hesitant step back and walk around her. "I was thinking we could do lunch in the city today. What do you think?" At the sound of my voice, Maya closes her phone and sets it on the counter face down.

Her eyes are filled with what I can only describe as shame. Shame for being with me, or shame for me, that I can't place.

"Sure," is all she says.

She goes to stand and I get a full view of the outfit she's decided to wear. In this moment, I'm thankful that we went and got her things from her father's house.

The jeans she is wearing hug her thick thighs. A few rips throughout the legs expose her flesh. Her white shirt is more loose fitting, but it's tucked into her jeans just in the front. Damn her for hiding her curves from me. Her combat boots are laced up tight finishing her look. She may not be meaning to, but the sight of her is making my dick grow painfully hard.

My body and mind are reacting to her as if I'm a teenage boy. I can't remember the last time a woman has gotten this reaction from me.

She slides her phone into the back pocket of her jeans. Damn it. The phone pushes against the outline of the pocket as it presses into her ass. Her firm, round ass. I silently thank god above that she can't see me unapologetically staring at her.

I adjust myself just as she turns around. She grabs her camera bag, zipping it up and throwing it over her shoulder.

The elevator ride is spent in silence but my mind is racing with visions of her under me. The firmness of her body under me. Her moans as I pushed inside her and took her virginity.

At that realization, I turn to look at her. "Are you ok?" I ask, breaking the silence. My voice coming out louder than I intended. Her head snaps up at me. Confusion written all over her face.

“From earlier?” I clarify. “From me-” I’m unable to finish my sentence. I’ve never been the one to take a woman’s virginity. What Maya must think of me after that and seeing those pictures of me and all those women.

Her brows narrow and her eyes squint. “I’m fine.”

“If I hurt you,” something in me wants to apologize. But it would be a lie. I loved watching her body react to mine as I pushed inside her. As my hands roamed her body.

“You didn’t hurt me, you took something I didn’t want. So now that it’s done, my father can’t hold anything over my head anymore.” Her words feel like daggers stabbed into my chest. Did she have sex with me out of revenge? Out of spite for her father? What the actual fuck.

The elevator doors open and we walk out toward the row of cars. I push the auto start on my key and bring my Range Rover to life.

Maya is mere inches from me as we walk toward the car. The desire to touch her aches in my hand. Deciding against it, I reach for her car door instead. Watching her settle into the car, the seatbelt pressed into her chest.

As I make my way around the front of the car, I can feel her eyes on me. I concentrate on every step I take. How is this woman so capable of affecting me like this?

I settle myself in the driver’s seat, lock my seatbelt, and put the car into drive.

I can see Maya in my peripheral as she plays with her camera. She scrolls through picture after picture. “What’s your favorite thing to photograph?” I ask as I adjust in my seat.

“People,” she finally answers after taking a minute. Has no one in her life taken a liking to her passions? To her needs? To her?

“What about people?” I ask more for her to talk about something she loves rather than me wanting an answer.

“I love catching people in their natural state. When they know the camera isn’t on them.” I watch her as she sits straighter in her seat. A smile begins to form in the corners of her mouth. The light in her eyes returns. The same light I saw when she was showing me her photos on her computer.

In this moment, an idea comes to mind.

The car ride to one of the newly renovated restaurants Giovanni and I opened, Taste, is spent with me listening to her talk about her love of photography.

She must not realize I’ve parked the car in front of the restaurant because she is still scrolling through her photos on her camera. She’s talking about the golden hours, *whatever that is*. How the sun light is just perfect at certain times of day. How the angle of a photo can change the look of a photo. I don’t have the heart to stop her as she continues.

A soft tap on my window stops her mid sentence. I silently curse the fucker at my window. I roll down my window as the valet says, “Mr. Costello, your table inside is ready.”

I grit my teeth as I thank him and open my door. Handing him my keys, I make my way to Maya's side of the car. Another valet begins to reach for her car door. It's when our eyes lock that he steps back, I can sense the fear pumping through his veins.

I take Maya by the hand and lead her toward the front entrance of Taste. The black metal doors open wide as two men dressed in black pants, a white dress shirt, and black jacket hold them open for us.

Taste is the newest addition to my brother and I's resume of running the family business legitimately. We may be the heads of the Italian Mafia but that doesn't mean we can take advantage of the people of this city.

Do we run shipments of illegal guns and drugs? Yes we do. But we also pat our money with legitimate businesses throughout New York. We have countless clubs, restaurants, and shops scattered all over the city. Many of the new generation of leaders within the families have started to legitimize their wealth the mafia provides.

It's one of the main reasons Giovanni moved his family to the city. The main reason being for Angelica's dance studio but also to be closer to the heart of the companies.

Taste is accented in whites and blues. Bringing out the Greek color palette to compliment the menu. Authentic Greek food. All the ingredients are flown in from Greece. Bright hanging lights throughout the restaurant. A small bar sits in the far corner.

It's run by the son of a family friend that had business with my father. When Giovanni and I took over for our uncle, we promised each other to keep most of the relationships he and our father made.

It's one of the ways I've decided to make my father proud. This isn't the life he wanted for us, but here we are. It was the mafia that took my father from me, it's up to me to change it for the better.

The hostess behind the desk is wiping down menus when she sees us walking up. She is about to speak before Theo the owner comes walking up behind her.

"Gabriel, thank you for coming in. Your table is ready." I reach out to shake his hand. Grabbing two menus from our hostess, he leads us toward the center of the restaurant. Lines of tables scattered around the open space.

Ice water is waiting for us as we make our way toward the table. Theo sets the menus down in front of each chair and goes to pull out a chair. I stop him with my hand on his shoulder.

Without a word, he steps to the side with a small knowing smile. I pull out the chair for Maya to take a seat. She hangs her camera bag on the back of the chair. I push her closer toward the table and make my way to my seat.

"Thank you for having us Theo. How has business been since opening?" I ask as I pretend to scan the menu. I know every appetizer, entrée, and dessert on the menu. We spent months perfecting it. Days were spent taste testing each plate

on the menu. There is nowhere in New York that has the best authentic Greek food.

I watch Maya look over the menu. Her eyes grow in size when she, what I assume, notices the prices. Great authentic Greek food doesn't come cheap.

"Everything is well Gabriel, we have a six month waiting list." I don't miss the joy in his voice. Theo is the third generation to own Taste. His father and mine had a great relationship. My father helped keep his family afloat. My father's heart was always bigger than the mafia's money. It was his downfall in the end.

We are finally, this year, starting to make profit from Taste.

My chest grows with pride as I look up at Theo who is smiling ear to ear. A man's family is everything. If he can't provide for his family, what kind of man is he?

Theo's father didn't want to go to my father for help, but my father saw how he was struggling and didn't take no for an answer. He did what he could to help. Years of planning were stopped after my father's death.

When Giovanni and I looked over all of the family business our father took in, we decided to continue helping. It's how we've been able to keep such great relationships with the families here in New York and other mafia families.

"Good," I simply answer. "We will start with," I look at Maya as she's watching Theo and I interact. "What would you like to drink?" I ask her.

Her soft eyes land on me. The light handing over our table brings the golden sparks in her eyes to life.

“Just a water is fine,” she simply states as she goes back to looking at the menu.

“Theo, bring out a bottle of red and white merlot. With four glasses please.” I can’t help but smile at Maya as one of her eyebrows raise.

As Theo leaves to grab our wine, I look at Maya, the soft curls of her hair framing her soft plump skin. I shake the memory of the feel of her hair in my hands from earlier.

“The best Greek food in all of New York.” I simply state.

“Oh yea?” she jokes with a soft smirk.

“Everything is imported from Greece every month.” I can’t tell if I’m bragging or defending the restaurant.

“Oh yea,” she says again but now she’s starting to laugh.

“What is so funny?” I ask with an eyebrow raised.

The softness of her laugh sets a fire in my chest. It’s as if her laugh is awakening something inside me. The warmth continues to build as her and I continue to stare at each other.

She doesn’t answer as Theo brings over two bottles and four glasses and sets them on the table. He begins to open the bottles, Maya and I not breaking eye contact.

“Brat,” I whisper at her.

She must be taken back from my comment because the smile is unfading from her face. It’s her eyes that change. They

darken with my comment.

I shouldn't be testing my limits with Theo still at the table, who's now pouring us each a glass of red and white wine.

"I think I'd enjoy you being a brat," I wink at her. Her cheeks instantly turn a crimson shade. She looks up at Theo who hasn't taken his eyes off of the wine glasses. She lowers her head.

Without breaking eye contact with Maya, I give Theo our order and send him on his way to the kitchen.

"No need to be embarrassed." I say with my hands interlocked on the table in front of me.

"I need to go to the bathroom," she says as she rises from her chair abruptly, causing the table to shake.

I can't help my smile as I watch her tense body fight against itself. Her thighs are pushed together as she stands in front of me. The fullness of her body on full display for me. I shouldn't be eyeing her the way I am, but I can't seem to help myself.

I turn my head toward the front of the restaurant and look toward the restroom sign hanging in the distance.

Shamelessly, I watch as she gets further and further away from me. The length of her legs, the sway of her hips, and even how her arms swing from front to back. I laugh at myself as I try to remember the last time a woman affected me like this. I'm like a love sick puppy.

Everything about Maya seems to send me over the edge with lust, something no other woman has been able to do. The woman in my past knew what they were getting when they laid in my bed, never more than once.

But Maya, the thought of having her in my bed sends my pulse pounding in my chest. The thought of me spending the rest of my life with this woman creeps into the back of my mind. She wouldn't. I couldn't. We can't. But what if?

Maya comes back to the table a few minutes later. The idea of us staying married is still firmly on my mind. What if we made it work? What if we made it look like we were happy and married? For her sake and mine.

“Maya,” I finally speak as she sits back into her chair, “I need to ask you something?”

Her face turns ghost white. I can see her heart pounding in her chest with nervousness. Not knowing how she would react to my proposal, I decide to have this conversation in private.

Thankfully I'm interrupted by Theo as he brings out our food. I can see her relax into her chair. The fear of the unknown washes away as easily as it came.

Lunch was spent talking and getting to know each other, as most couples do before they get married. We have some catching up to do.

I've learned that Maya's favorite color is yellow. Which comes as a surprise to me seeing how she doesn't wear much color. Somehow yellow seems to suit her just fine.

She hopes to one day travel the world and photograph her travels. I instantly started planning trips. Spending a good part of the year traveling the world with her, exploring and having adventures.

She informs me that she's an only child because her mother was abused by her father after giving birth to her because she wasn't a boy. Her father just keeps getting worse and worse the more I get to know him.

Giovanni and I haven't done much business with him. Where we want to legitimize our families money, Maya's father will do anything to make money. But at the risk of starting an unwanted war, we have played nice.

I watch as Maya takes her last bite of her salad. The earth stops spinning as I watch her slide the fork out of her mouth. Her plump lips gliding along the metal. Her eyes close for a fraction of a second, taking in the flavors.

Who knew eating a salad could be so erotic. It seems most things she does have awakened the primal beast inside me. Can I share those primal needs with her? Will she be willing to explore them with me? Only time will tell.

I know I'm staring but I can't seem to look away as she chews her last bite. My eyes trail down her throat. *Oh, what my hands would look like around it. Feeling her pulse.*

My eyes continue downward, the fabric of her shirt stretched from her full breasts. Though her lower half is hidden from view, I know she's pressing her legs together as she sits straighter.

I have no shame as my eyes make their way back up her body. My eyes lock onto hers and we once again stare at each other. If it wouldn't embarrass her, I would strip her bare and pound into her on this table right now. I would let everyone know in this restaurant who she is to me. Mine.

Settle down Gabriel.

I go to stand and reach for my wallet that's in my back pocket and take out a few hundred dollar bills and set them on the table.

Maya stands as I take the few steps between us. She slings her camera bag over her shoulder and I reach out my hand and take hers into mine. We leave the restaurant hand in hand. A true couple.

As we walk down the busy street, Maya takes her camera out of her bag and starts snapping pictures. I can't tell what she's taking pictures of as we continue to walk, but she is in her element and I won't stop her.

A few steps further down the street, a small panic starts to rise inside me. Maya isn't next to me. I turn to see her a few steps behind me holding her camera up to her face. A small flash goes off. The realization hits me, she's taken a picture of me.

She pulls the camera away from her face, looks down at it. A shy smile lifts at the corner of her mouth as she starts to walk back toward me.

"Can I see?" I ask as we start walking down the street again.

“No,” her answer is firm.

“Why not?” My voice is playful as I slightly nudge her with my shoulder.

“I need to bring it to life,” she smiles up at me.

As we continue down the street, click after click her camera stays raised to her face. One photo after another. A sting of pride hits my chest. Knowing what she’s capable of, I know whatever she’s taking pictures of will turn out amazing.

We pass a small coffee shop with two women talking. *Click.*

A couple standing outside of a corner bookstore. He’s holding a large stack of books for her. As she places another on top of the pile. *Click.*

One scene after another. The mundane everyday tasks of people, she snaps picture after picture. A bright and radiant smile set firmly on her face.

As we pass a large tech shop Maya stops walking, causing me to back track. As I walk back toward her, I notice her walking toward the corner of the window to look at whatever caught her attention.

“What is it?” I ask. It seems to be a display of a camera, stand, and computer. All connected. A small tv in the center is advertising what the camera system is capable of doing.

As the video plays, Maya doesn’t look away. Her full attention is on this system.

Without a second thought, I grab her hand, lead her away from the window and through the doors of the shop.

It's a modern interior. White walls, marble flooring. Table after table of different devices. From phones, to computers and in the back, cameras.

"How can I help you?" A gentleman with a yellow shirt with the shop's logo on it asks us as he walks up.

"We would like the camera system that's displayed at the front window," I say as I look to the corner where the display is.

"Oh yes sir, that is our newest camera with a new software," he explains the specs of the camera and software. I don't understand much of what he says but Maya's full attention is on him.

Maya asks a few questions which leads them to talk some more. A few minutes later, he leads us to the back where the camera was displayed.

As Maya and the man continue to talk, I can't help but let out an irritated cough. They both stop talking and look up at me.

"We'll take it," I say, hoping he doesn't miss the annoyance in my tone.

"Gabriel, you can't." Maya stands next to me looking up at me with a mixture of shock and worry on her face.

"I can, and I will," I say to her and look back at the sales associate.

“Yes sir,” he nods and makes his way through a set of doors to the back of the shop.

I lead Maya toward the large check out area where another man is standing and typing on the computer. As he looks up, his eyes land on Maya first. He stands a bit taller the closer we walk up.

“Hello ma’am,” he says with that stupid fucking smile plastered on his stupid fucking face. A rage builds deep inside the pit of my stomach. I want to rip that smile off his face.

What seems like a lifetime, his eyes finally land on me. The smile fades into fear.

I love watching people’s faces change once they notice me. I’m no small man. I know my power and my influence. I stand almost a foot taller than the average person in every room.

So when I see him and the fear in his eyes, I can’t help but smile, but my smile isn’t friendly. It isn’t calm. It’s a raging storm. A smile that claims Maya as mine.

As if Maya can sense my anger, she turns around and looks up at me. Oh how I can get lost in her eyes. My tension instantly eases as she says my name. My eyes snap to hers.

“Gabriel,” she says in a whisper. Her voice is like honey. The sweetness seeping into my bloodstream. It covers my wounds, scars, and utter darkness of my life in the mafia world.

As I look back to the guy on the other side of the counter, my body relaxes knowing he isn’t a threat to me. A voice

comes up from behind him, “here Jack, these are for them.” The sales associate from earlier sets the boxes on the counter.

I watch as he scans each barcode and places them in the bag that’s laid out. “Will there be anything else sir?” He asks, his voice is shaky and I can see the sweat starting to build between his brow.

“What would you recommend?” I toy with him, wanting him to sit in his fear. It’s when I am most comfortable, watching the prey beg to be put out of their misery.

His Adams apple gets stuck midway down his throat as he forces a breath down. I can see his pulse quickening and his pupils go needle thin.

I place my arm on Maya’s shoulder and run my fingers along her collarbone.

Mine.

I know I’m acting irrational. Like a child on the playground claiming his favorite toy, but damn it I can’t seem to help myself.

He shoots off a list of items that he thinks work best with the camera. A back drop, a ring light, stands. Over and over a list of items. He looks at me again and I know he’s waiting for me to respond. I can see his mind working overtime to make sure he isn’t forgetting anything.

“We’ll take it,” I say simply.

“What item sir?” He looks confused with my response.

“All of them, do you deliver?” I ask, looking between the two sales associates.

“Oh well, not normally sir,” the sales associate from earlier chimes in. I can’t help but show the disappointment in my face. “But we can make an exception,” he quickly adds.

After giving them my address, I take out my wallet from my back pocket. Maya looks at me in shock as the sales associate reads out the total, “\$7,865.94,” he says.

“Gabriel, you can’t,” Maya stops my hand as I hand him my card.

“Watch me,” I reach my hand closer to the sales associate to let him know to run the card.

After running my card he hands it back and I set my wallet back into my back pocket. I take Maya’s hand in mine and lead her out of the store.

We walk back toward my car hand in hand. I can’t help but run my thumb along hers. The feel of her hand in mine just feels right. She fits into my body perfectly.

Thoughts of what life would look like if she stayed as my wife. Getting to wake up to her in my bed. Watching her work in our home. Her world collided with mine in the most unconventional way, but she fits perfectly.

My father tried his damndest to keep his life together as the leader. His job and personal life clashed and it cost him his life and the life of his wife. Could I have it all? With her?

Can I have Maya and keep her safe? Do I dare test my luck?

Maya spends most of the ride, telling me about the photos she took throughout the city. How she plans to edit them and make them perfect. I don't miss the fact that she scrolls past the one photo of me.



CHAPTER 10

Maya

I can't believe Gabriel. I can't believe he spent that kind of money on me. A feeling of guilt washes over me. How I am going to repay him? Does he expect me to repay him?

"I'll find a way to repay you Gabriel," I say as we walk into his penthouse.

I have to find a way. I can't be in debt to a man in the mafia. I can't be in fear of my life from two men. I'll never make it out alive with my father promising me back to Nicholas and owing Gabriel money.

"No, you won't," he says as he walks over to the kitchen and grabs himself a glass of water.

I want to argue. I want to promise him i'll find a way. I want to run far far away where he or my father will never find me. But like my father, Gabriel is capable of finding me, I just know it.

His eyes land on mine. A single brow raises from his face. I don't dare argue.

“Is it alright if I go to my room and work on editing my photos?” I ask not wanting to move to offend him.

“You live here Maya, you don’t have to ask permission to move around the house. And you especially don’t need to ask to be alone,” he states as he sets the now empty glass on the counter. “I’ve got a few phone calls to make, let’s meet back here for dinner.”

He wants to have dinner with me? Are we going to go out again? I don’t know if I can handle that much interaction with the world. It sounds exhausting.

My father kept me caged away from the world. Never letting me go out with friends.

What friends Maya?

My life was kept at a distance from everything and everyone. Until I was told I was marrying Nicholas. That’s when the dinners, outings, and appearances started. I was a prize for Nicholas. A prize he was going to tarnish.

“I invited Giovanni and Angelica over, hope that’s ok,” he says as he makes his way around the island.

A small sense of glee creeps up my chest as I think about hanging out with Angelica. She’s a sweet heart. She’s kind and warm. Giovanni intimidates me a little but not like Gabriel.

He doesn’t stop as he walks past me and to his bedroom. I try to ignore the warmth that’s starting to build up inside me.

The memory of his hands all over me comes to the forefront of my mind. His touch was soft and gentle. His lips trailing

kisses all over my body. The feel of his dick inside me sends a shiver down my spine.

Oh that piercing! The feeling of the metal ring as it rubbed inside me.

Realizing i've been standing in the hall way for far too long, I make my way to my room.

The next few hours are spent editing the pictures from today. One after another, the editing comes easy. A few light presets, editing out blurs and objects. I'm happy with how each and every one turned out.

The dream is to have the photos hung in an art show or even better, being sold to someone. A dream I have put in the back of my mind.

My father would never allow it, and Nicholas would beat me senseless for even suggesting it. He was always cruel to me when he saw me working on my camera or computer. I've had to throw away a few computers because he destroyed them.

"What a stupid waste of pussy," he would always say. "No one would buy your photos." Over and over his insults come creeping into my mind.

I want desperately to prove him and my father wrong. But what am I to do? I don't dare share my dream with Gabriel. What if he sees it as a waste.

I'm staring at the picture I took of Gabriel as he was walking. His body takes up most of the frame. His shirt is tight

around his body, his muscles stretching the fabric. Power and lust in one photo.

Undecided on what I want to do with his photo, my fingers stay frozen above the keyboard. My eyes stay glued on the photo of him.

An idea finally comes to mind and I get to work.

A knock on the door brings the room back into focus. “Maya?” Gabriel’s voice behind the closed door has me slamming my laptop down and jumping off the bed.

As I open the door slightly as if i’m hiding something behind my back I ask, “Yes?”

“Giovanni and Angelica will be here in just a few minutes.” He tries to peek into my room.

Even with our circumstances, Gabriel has been respectful of the space he has given me. Always knocking on the door before coming in, never invading my space unless I allow.

Oh what I would give for him to invade my insides again.

I look up at him in his ocean blue eyes and say, “of course, I’ll be out in just a minute,” and without a word he backs away and lets me close my door.

Leaving my computer where it is, I walk over to the dresser. I tend to wear clothes that hide not only my scars but also my figure. Today, I decide on a flowy dress. It’s $\frac{3}{4}$ sleeves with golden colored swirl detailing. The fabric is gathered around my waist and falls to the floor.

As I leave the safety of my room, I can hear voices in the living area. I hear Angelica's soft voice greet Gabriel and I watch their interaction in the darkness of the hallway.

Gabriel's brother, Giovanni, stands next to Angelica with his arm around her waist. As Angelica leans into Gabriel for a hug, Giovanni's hand doesn't move from her waist. Giovanni's face reads as pure hatred as Gabriel and Angelica laugh at him.

Angelica told me a little bit of how she met her husband. He stalked her for months. Left roses everywhere for her to find. How she ended up marrying her stalker is beyond me.

Coming out of the hallway I walk into the open living space. Their conversations stop as all their heads turn and stare at me.

Giovanni and Angelica smile at me but it's Gabriel's eyes that I can't look away from. They are piercing into me. I can feel them taking my body in. Lava spills down my spine as I just stand in front of them.

Heat is building up my body and more notably between my legs. I squeeze my legs together hoping no one notices. Next thing I know Gabriel is taking slow but deliberate steps toward me, without taking his eyes off of me.

"Hey firefly," he whispers into my ear as his hand goes around my hip and he pushes my body into his. As he walks me toward Giovanni and Angelica, I don't miss the wink Angelica sends my way. I can't help but blush, from Gabriel's touch against me and the pressure pulsing between my legs.

Angelica leans out of Giovanni's hold and reaches for me in a full body hug. "Get used to it," she laughs into my ear. As she pulls away I give her a shy understanding smile.

"Nice to see you again Maya," Giovanni stands next to Angelica again and reaches his hand to me. I take his hand and he embraces me into a hug. I'm unmoving in his embrace.

"How's it feel brother?" Giovanni laughs as he lets go and steps away. Giovanni lets out a laugh but I can hear Gabriel audibly growl.

"Don't ever do that again," Gabriel says with a firm threatening voice. I can understand Giovanni possessiveness for his wife, but Gabriel shouldn't feel the same way toward me. I may be his wife on paper and for everyone, but I'm sure Giovanni knows the circumstances of our situation.

"Alright boys, put the sticks away," Angelica breaks the tension between the two brothers. Gabriel hangs on to my hip as he leads us to the island. It's covered with trays of food.

"Martina made the dinner and had us bring it over," Giovanni says as he grabs a plate and starts to scoop up a portion of each tray. When the plate is full, he hands it to Angelica and tells her to go sit at the table.

"What do you want?" Gabriel asks me. I look up at him then back down at the food.

A tray of spaghetti with what looks like meat sauce, a whole tray of meatballs, garlic bread, a salad, and a last tray with fruit salad.

“Little bit of everything I guess. ”I watch as he himself scoops a spoonful of everything, setting it on a plate for me.

“I can do it,” I try to stop him but he continues scooping.

“Just because you can doesn’t mean I’ll let you,” he answers as the spoonful of fruit salad lands on the plate.

I should demand I do it myself. My father had me feel powerless and worthless when I tried anything on my own. His words made me feel small and weak. But something about how Gabriel doing the simplest act of plating food for me makes me feel taken care of.

“Now be a good girl and go sit with Angelica,” he holds out the plate between us. My eyes snap to his. He winks and the corner of his mouth lifts. I’m frozen in place from his praise. I will my legs to move, and as I do I feel the wetness pool between my legs.

“Like I said, you’ll get used to it,” Angelica smiles at me as I sit next to her at the table.

“Giovanni always like that?” I joke, knowing the answer. From the few times I’ve been in the same room as him I’ve seen how possessive he is of her.

“Always,” she laughs out as she takes a bite of her fruit salad. “What I didn’t see coming is how Gabriel is reacting toward you.”

Confused by her comment, I ask, “what do you mean?”

“I mean Gabriel isn’t one to be so possessive with his women.”

I don't miss the mention of more than one woman. Now I'm the one feeling possessive. But I have no right to be. He has a past before me and he will have a future with someone else. Our marriage is only for looks. He'll let me leave soon and then I'm on my own.

"But it's comforting to see him so enthralled with you," she adds. "As you know most mafia marriages are arranged for the betterment of the family. I assumed that's why we were at your wedding."

I nod in agreement. Just thinking about being Nicholas' wife sends a cold chill down my spine. Everyday I spend away from that man the better. I'm not looking forward to the day I'm sent back to him. Gabriel and I won't be able to play this game for too long. There will be a day where he sends me back. That is the day I die.

"Giovanni told Gabriel early on that he would never force him to marry someone, he would always have that choice. So when Giovanni told me how he ended up married to you, I was just as shocked as everyone."

"Tell me about it," I let out a smile. I can't help but look over at Gabriel who is standing at the island. Our eyes catch each other's gaze. Gabriel continues speaking but his eyes don't move from mine. We are just far enough to not hear each other's conversations.

"See what I mean?" Angelica nudges me.

"Yea but I'm sure he'll let me go soon, it was a rash decision that I'm sure he didn't think all the way through. I'll leave

soon and he can find his real wife.” A sadness takes over me as I envision Gabriel giving me back to my father.

Me all alone, trying to find peace and hide from my father and Nicholas. Maybe I can get my hands on a fake ID and passport and leave New York. Start a new life outside the mafia. Away from the fear I live with every day.

“I’ve never seen Gabriel look at a woman the way he’s looked at you these past few days. Did he rush into this with you, yes, but what if you two can make it work?”

Make it work. The idea settles in my mind. Would he stay married to me? Could he?

“What are you ladies talking about?” Giovanni asks as he sets his plate across from Angelica. Gabriel comes behind him and does the same but across from me.

“Oh just girls stuff,” Angelica lies and I don’t miss the wink she sends toward Giovanni.

The dinner is spent eating and talking. I don’t miss the small touches I’ve gotten from Gabriel under the table. I catch myself leaning into him, into his warmth.

Angelica talks about her dance studio and how she’s having it remodeled. They have a dance showcase in a few weeks. Gabriel and Giovanni talk about the flow of the many businesses throughout the city.

I take the last bite of spaghetti as Angelica asks me, “So, you’re a photographer?”

I look to her with a mouth full of food, willing it down my throat before I answer, “Nothing professional, but yea.”

“She’s really good,” Gabriel praises me and I feel my cheeks begin to redden.

“I’d love to see some,” Angelica chimes in. “Would you mind?” I don’t know if I’ll ever get used to people asking to see my photos. I’ve held my love for it hidden away.

I simply nod and Gabriel says, “go get your computer and show them.” His smile has me on my feet and halfway to my room.

I grab my laptop off my bed and make my way back toward the group. The table has been cleared from the plates of food as I set my computer down and open it.

My editing software pops up with the photo of Gabriel unfinished. I close it out hoping no one saw it. Gabriel and Giovanni come around the table and stand behind us as I open up my finished photo folder.

I click through each photo. Praises fill the room as I continue to show my photos. I sit a bit taller the more photos I show the group.

“Oh I love that one,” Angelica points at the computer.

It’s of a ballerina walking in a group of people. Her tutu is sticking straight out. The busyness of the world around her is blurred as if she’s frozen in time.

“Oh my god, you have to come photograph my studio, please,” Angelica pleads. “I’ve been meaning to get some

updated art made and hung on the walls. You would be perfect.”

I look at her then up at Gabriel who’s standing behind me with his arms on my shoulders. His simple nod in agreement has me saying yes.

“Amazing!” Angelica yells out and squeezes me into a hug. “Can you come by tomorrow? All the dancers will be at the studio practicing. Giovanni please,” Angelica looks up to Giovanni. It’s as if he literally can’t say no to her as he leans down, kisses her forehead, and agrees.

“Gabriel and I have some work to look into so you ladies can have fun for the day.” Giovanni looks knowingly at Gabriel.

“Great,” Angelica laughs out.

“Great,” I nervously agree.

A few hours later, the darkness of the night shines through the open windows. Gabriel and Giovanni share a handshake and hug before saying their goodbyes.

Angelica and I hug as she says, “I’ll come by tomorrow afternoon and pick you up,” her smile beaming. I can’t help but smile back at her. Nervousness sits at the pit of my stomach as Giovanni and her make their way toward the door to leave.

The door closes behind them and once again I am left alone with Gabriel. I turn to walk back into the living space and walk straight into his hard chest. My hands go out in front of me. I feel the firmness of his muscles through his shirt.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” I begin to apologize as I look up at him.

The darkness of his eyes beam down at me. The heat radiating off of him isn’t out of anger but what looks like lust.

But it can’t be, he helped me with my virginity situation because I basically yelled at him. But now that it’s handled, he and I can both move on.

“Never apologize for touching me firefly.” That’s the second time he’s used that nickname tonight.

“Why do you call me that?” I go to step back but he only steps forward toward me.

“Because every time I look into your eyes, the golden specks in your dark eyes remind me of fireflies illuminating the night.” My chest constricts at his confession.

“We need to talk,” he says as his hand goes up to my chin and cups it.

This is it, the moment I’ve been waiting for. He’s going to tell me to pack my things and leave. I’ll need to ask for a time frame so I can maybe get myself settled in another city. Maybe I can stay here until I find a place.

I mentally add, look for an apartment, to my list of to-dos.

“About what?” I ask, knowing the answer, but not wanting to have any doubt about where he stands.

“Us,” he simply says and he takes my hand and leads us to the large couch in the living room.

I'm settled into the corner of the couch and bring my legs into a criss cross position. My arms wrap around my waist. Subconsciously protecting myself from him. I watch him position himself next to me, his elbows on his knees as he runs his hands through his hair. I can see the nerves building inside of him as they do inside me.

"I know your wedding didn't go as planned," he pauses and looks at me. Those light blue eyes turning dark.

Here it comes, I brace myself.

"What would you say if you stayed here, and we stay married?"

His suggestion takes me back. The inhale of air I take in gets lodged in my throat. I can't help but let out a harsh cough. He wants me to stay, he wants to stay married?

"Why?" is all I can get out at the moment. My heart is hitting my chest a million times a minute. I can feel my palms getting wet. I can't help but hold myself tighter.

"You need help with your father, and I need," he pauses and I can see as he tries to get his words right. "I need to show the rest of the families that I am capable of having and keeping a wife."

Now it makes sense. This marriage would be for show. So he can show my father, and the rest of the families how powerful he is. It always comes down to power. Gabriel is no different than any other leader. Only out for one thing. Control.

Well fuck that. I won't stay in this marriage. Just because Gabriel is gentle with his words doesn't mean I want to stay in this marriage just for show. I'm better off alone. He can find some other girl to marry if that's all he wants.

But my reality comes crashing around me, "you need me and I need you," he says leaning closer to me. I can't help but push my body deeper into the cushions. I want to jump off this couch, tell him to go fuck himself.

But I don't, I'm frozen and trapped on this couch. I have no words, I don't know what to say.

"What do you think?" he asks, smiling at me.

He has the fucking nerve to smile at me. Does he think this is a fun conversation to be having with someone? Does he find joy in humiliating me?

"For how long?" I can't see him wanting to fake this marriage forever. It's good to set a time frame. That way I can have time to start a new life elsewhere. Prepare myself for a world away from my father and Gabriel. And the mafia all together.

He looks confused at my question. He adjusts himself on the couch as he turns his body more toward me.

"Six months?" I say, not giving him a chance to say anything.

That should be plenty of time for me to find a way out of New York. Find a small town to hide away in and start a new

life. Maybe even get a change to kick start my photography business.

He nods in agreement, but I see a hint of sadness in his eyes.

“Great,” I say as I uncross my legs, causing him to scoot away from me. It gives me just enough room to stand. And without a word I make my way to the dining table, grab my laptop, and head to my room.

My room. Won't be for too much longer.

In the safety of my room, I set my laptop on the side table and fall onto the bed. I let the stillness of the night drift me off to sleep. I dream of a life outside of the one I have found myself living, a life outside of the mafia.



CHAPTER 11

Gabriel

As I watch Maya make her way to her room, I can't help but feel as though I did or said something to upset her. The day was going great, until I mentioned staying married.

Does she not want to be married to me? I could send her off with her things and some money to make sure she makes it to where she wants to go.

I have six months. Why she chose such a short amount of time is lost on me. But I've got six months to change her mind. Six months to will her to stay in this for the long run. I'm jumping head first into this and won't let her go without a fight.

As I make my way to my room, I stop inches from her door. I lean into the door, hoping I can hear her. Confirming that she is most likely asleep, I make my way to my own bed.

Not having the energy to shower and promising myself that I'll do it in the morning, I make myself comfortable in my bed.

I toss and turn all night, checking the time on my phone that's set on its charger throughout the night. Hour after hour I watch the time tick away.

The sunrise peaks through the windows, alerting me that a new day has begun.

I groan as I make my way out of bed and into my bathroom. I start the shower, to get the water warmed. I strip out of my clothes I didn't even bother changing out of last night.

Replaying our conversation over and over in my head all night. I offered to stay married to her. I offered to keep her safe here. She was the one that put a time limit on it. She set the end date. If anyone needs to be upset, it's me.

As my compassion starts to turn into anger, I step under the hot water of my shower. Letting my muscles relax as I work my body wash throughout my body. The vision of her face as she walked away last night comes to mind. She seemed upset, on the verge of tears. But when I walked by her room, I didn't hear crying.

My morning wood is on full display as the soap and water run down my body. Deciding to relieve some tension I wrap my hand around my dick and start to work myself.

A tightness begins to build in my balls when I think of Maya.

Her lush body. The fullness of her breasts. That tender spot on her neck that had her withering underneath me when I took her virginity. How her body was so responsive to mine.

Over and over I work my dick. It grows thicker in my hand.

Her wild raven hair, wrapped in my hand. Her plump lips against mine. Our tongues intertwined together.

I feel my release coming as my hand pumps up and down my shaft. The water hits the back of my neck as I hang my head.

Pleading for my release to come, I imagine what Maya would look like as she takes my dick into her mouth. Her lips wrapped around my shaft as she takes me to the back of her throat. The vision of her on her knees before me is what sends my cum shooting out. Pump after pump the cum falls to the shower floor. Running my thumb along the metal ring at the tip of my dick as my head clears and I come down from my euphoric high.

I leave the shower and make my way over to my closet with a towel wrapped around my waist. I decide on black slacks and a white button up. I roll the sleeves of my shirt up to my forearms. Deciding to keep the first few buttons undone as I make my way out of my room and into the living space.

It's 6am, the sun is just over the horizon of the city as I lazily walk to the kitchen and make myself a hot cup of coffee. I decide to check my emails before starting my day.

Today Giovanni and our team will be meeting to get a handle on the unclaimed shipment that's set to arrive in a few months. Someone is using our port to smuggle in supplies, and that will not do. We need to track down who and stop it.

As I respond to my last email, I hear small faint footsteps. My eyes land on Maya as she stands at the end of the hallway. She's wearing a large t-shirt.

My shirt.

She slept in my shirt. Her eyes are a bit puffy and red. She has been crying. A sharp pain hits my chest as she walks into the open kitchen, around me, and pours herself a cup of coffee as well.

Without a word, she takes her cup and makes her way to the couch. I can't help but watch her as her body sways back and forth with every step she takes. The shirt is too big for her but it doesn't hide the fullness of her thighs.

Oh what they would feel like wrapped around my head as I work my tongue on her pussy.

I watch her for a second longer until my phone rings, breaking my concentration. I answer it, "Gabriel."

My brother's voice is on the other line, "good morning to you too," he must sense my foul mood. I have a half naked woman in my house, a dick that's growing harder with every minute that passes, and I haven't slept. What does he expect?

"What?" I growl at him.

"Just calling to remind you that Angelica will be over in a few to pick up Maya for the shoot at the studio."

"Fine, I'll leave here soon after." I hang up not wanting to entertain his joyous mood.

My day is going to shit. I slow my pounding heart before I say, “Angelica will be here soon to pick you up.”

“Thank you,” is all she says. Without even looking at me as she continues to drink her coffee and scroll on her phone.

The fucking nerve of this woman. I marry her, I give her my home, I open my heart to her, I offer her freedom, and she repays me by being a brat. I watch as she takes one last sip of her coffee, pushing her head all the way back, exposing her neck. Oh what her neck would look like with my hand wrapped around it.

She makes her way off the couch and into the kitchen. She doesn't say a word as she walks over to the sink, washes out her cup and sets it in the dishwasher.

And I'm left alone, yet again. The size of my home comes crashing around me. All these years i've had everything at my fingertips. I've made something of myself. I am feared and respected by everyone in our world.

But watching as Maya walks away from me, yet again, sets a deep loneliness in my chest. I busy myself with more emails until I hear the intercom system come to life.

“Hey G, its Angelica, I'm downstairs. Can you send Maya down?” Angelica's sweet voice echoes throughout the house.

I tell her she'll be down in a minute as I make my way toward Maya's room. I knock, then open the door ever so slightly.

Maya is on the floor, laying flat on her stomach with her legs bent at her knees and crossed. She's wearing a faded pair of black jeans and a pair of converse. Her computer is in front of her as she continues to type. She must not have heard me when I knocked so I knock again, adding a little more force.

This time, her head snaps back at me.

“Angelica is down stairs waiting for you,” I say, watching her rise to her feet.

I get the full display of her outfit. The black jeans are faded around the thigh area. Her shirt is tighter than she's normally worn. Tight around her whole chest and tucked into her pants, with a gold belt.

As she bends down to close her computer I shamelessly stare at her ass. If I really wanted her mad at me, I'd bend her over her bed and spank her ass red. But I withhold my desire.

She grabs her camera bag and slings it over her shoulder leaving her computer on the edge of her bed.

“I'll walk out with you, I'm heading to meet Giovanni.” I hold her door open for her to walk through.

“Thank you,” she graces me with a meek smile.

As I'm opening the door, Angelica is standing on the other side with a smile beaming ear to ear.

“Hey guys,” she all but shrieks out. “Maya, I'm so excited for you to work. Thank you so much for doing it.”

“I'm excited to! Can't wait to see your studio.”

Angelica has been here for less than five minutes and has more of a conversation with Maya than I have all morning. The fucking nerve of these women.

They don't bother saying goodbye as they walk toward the elevator. "I'll bring her home safe," Angelica says as the door closes with them inside and heads toward the garage.

Deciding I need to blow some frustration out, I grab my keys to my bike. My bike always seems to calm me. I weave in and out of traffic making my way to Giovanni's place.

Giovanni, Matt the head of our security, and Smith our tech genius are all sitting around Giovanni's desk in his office as I walk in. Tossing my helmet onto the sofa in the corner, I make my way to them.

Giovanni's scanning through the papers laid out all over the desk. Smith is typing furiously on his laptop, and Matt is on the phone with someone.

Smith is one of those people that keeps to himself. His first name is Warren but he prefers us using his last name. Something about keeping his personal and professional life separate. Matt on the other hand has lived this life with us from jump street.

"What have I missed?" I ask as I make my way next to Giovanni.

"Nothing much, we've had to go back into our backlog and see if we've missed other shipments." He must think they've attempted this before and gotten away with it.

“I got something,” Smith stops typing and says to the group.

We all surround him. The computer screen is nothing I’m able to understand so I just wait for him to explain it. He taps a few more keys on the computer, then he finally says. “38779B.” He waits for us to respond as if we know what that means. We all just look at each other confused.

“Oh my god, it’s the crate that’s being shipped. 38779B. Now that I have that I can pin point where it’s coming from. Once I do that, I can maybe get an ID on who paid for the crate,” he explains.

“That’s great, how long do you think it’ll take you to do all that?” Giovanni asks as he walks over to his mini bar in the corner of his office. He pours himself a glass of dark liquor. “Anyone else?” he asks.

I hold my hand up, telling him no. “No thanks, I drove my bike, need to stay clear headed.” As if that’s at all possible with my situation with Maya at home.

“Yea I noticed, don’t go throwing shit around my office fucker.” Giovanni says as he downs his second glass.

I give him a look that says fuck you and make my way over to the pile of paper work on his desk. Page after page of shipments going back decades. Before Giovanni and I even took over. How are we going to sort through all this and find the person who’s smuggling merchandise through our port?

My eyes scan page after page looking for a clue. Then I see it.

38779B.

It can't be a coincidence. Can it? Would whoever is doing this be stupid enough to use the same ID and crate number more than once?

Setting that paper aside I continue, hoping to find it written again. And as luck would have it, I find it on four other statements.

"Hey, I think I found something." I grab the papers and lay them next to each other, on top of the whole pile. "These five statements have the same crate ID number, 38779B. That can't be a coincidence, can it?" I point to the crate number that's in bold font at the top of each page.

"It looks like they are shipments that come in once a year around the same time." Smith chimes in.

August. Each shipment comes in August. That's in three months. We have time to intercept and stop it. Also to find out who's behind it.

"Smith, can you cross check the dates and crate number to our yearly shipments and maybe narrow it down to who it could possibly be?" Giovanni asks, as if he doesn't pay him a shit ton of money to do his job, and do it well.

"On it," is all Smith says as he starts typing on his computer again.

As Smith does his thing, I take a minute to walk over to the sofa and get comfortable. Having no idea how long this is

going to take, I take out my phone and start answering more emails.

It's a never ending cycle. The more power you're given the more bullshit you have to deal with. Email after email. Our businesses giving us updates.

I notice an email from a future investor. He has plans to open up a club downtown. He specializes in the kink variety and he's looking to open his first club soon. I'm never say no to a business opportunity, no matter what the business is.

I shoot him a response asking to meet and go over his plan. Just as I'm about to get comfortable on the sofa, Smith shoots up out of his chair. His chair goes falling to the floor and it makes a loud crash.

"Oh my fucking god," Smith says. His eyes go wide.

"What?" I shoot up and take the few steps back over to the desk.

"The shipment, I know what it is!" his hands grip the edge of the desk. Knuckles turning snow white from the force of his hold. We wait for him to elaborate.

"It's women," I can see his face turning green with disgust.

Mother fucker. Someone using our port to smuggle drugs or weapons is one thing. But to use us to smuggle women, is a new level of fuck around and find out.

"Who is it?" Giovanni says through gritted teeth. I can see his face turning red hot from his anger.

Smith's eyes land on me from across the room. The look of pure terror written clearly in his expression.

"What is it, spit it out!" I'm getting fed up with his back and forth.

"Dimitri," is all he says before I round the desk and stand next to him. The bile in my stomach rises as my eyes land on the name on the screen.

Dimitri Galanisi

Maya's father is a trafficker. Does she know? There's no way she could have known. She's innocent. *I hope.*

"What the fuck," Giovanni breaks me out of my downward spiral.

"Dimitri Galanisi, Maya's father. Looks like he's been trafficking woman for the past 30 years, at least." Smith reads off of his computer.

Could our dad have known? Our uncle? Did they allow this to continue? Were they working with Dimitri? Bile starts to build up in the pit of my stomach at the thought of my father being complicit in a sex trafficking operation.

"Ok so we know who, we know about when, so what do we do?" Matt asks as he starts to type on his phone.

"We'll figure out how to stop the shipment and save the woman. Is there any way we can find out who the women are?" Giovanni says.

“Well he was stupid enough to add what looks like first names. Each shipment has more women than the last.” Smith adds. The fucker got cocky.

The fucking idiot had the audacity to attach their names. How did our family miss this? Again the thought of my father playing a hand in this comes to mind. Our father never hid anything from our mother. She would have stopped it had she known.

Hours go by before we have a set plan to stop the shipment. A mountain of papers and blueprints of our shipyard laid out on the table. Our plan is set. Giovanni leads Matt, Smith, and I out his door.

But as we leave, he says, “Hey G, just a heads up Angelica and Maya are on their way up.” I stop in my tracks and make my way back into his apartment. Thinking i’d be easier to take her home from here than wait for her at our house.

“So, how’s married life?” Giovanni asks as we go to sit on his couch.

“I offered to stay married and she gave us six months.” I utter with anger in my tone.

And just as I’m about to word vomit my frustration to my older brother, the front door swings open. Maya and Angelica come in hand in hand, laughing.

I watch Maya beam with happiness as she makes her way into the penthouse. Her hands are full with shopping bags.

“What’s all this Angel?” Giovanni asks taking the shopping bags out of her hands and setting them on the stool at the island.

I mimic his actions and go to take Maya’s bags from her. Her demeanor changes when her eyes land on me. She’s reluctant to hand over the bags as I take them and set them next to the pile of bags from Angelica.

“Maya is amazing!” Angelica praises her. “She took some amazing shots. She said she’d edit them and send the finished photos over.” Angelica continues to gush about Maya’s talent. My eyes are glued onto Maya as she watches Angelica and how animated she is when she talks.

I go to stand next to Maya and place my hand around her waist, bringing her body into mine. I’ve missed the feel of her body next to mine. How her body molds perfectly into mine.

“I’m proud of you,” I whisper into her ear. I need her to hear me. Whatever I’ve done to upset her, I need her to know I’m sorry. I pray she’s listening.

Her smile is tight in a thin line as she says, “thanks.” I’ve upset her somehow and I need to figure out how to fix it.

“So we were thinking,” Angelica says as she takes Maya away from me. I instantly feel her loss. She is inches away from me, but my body feels as though she’s on the other side of the world.

“Thinking what Angel?” Giovanni asks, eyeing me as if he knows what’s coming. He knows whatever she’s thinking, he

doesn't stand a chance. Angelica has him wrapped around her finger and he knows it.

"I want to take Maya to Whiskeys," I can physically see Angelica bat her eyes at Giovanni. If he would ever say no, it would be this request. Ain't no fucking way i'm letting Maya go to Whiskeys so she can be eyed by drunk me.

Even though Whiskeys is one of our many businesses, it doesn't help that's it's just a bar. A high class bar, but a bar none the less. Sexy women mixed with drunk men is never a good combination.

The memory of Giovanni telling me about him stabbing a guy in the hand for touching Angelica when he was first with her. I can only imagine what I would do if someone touched Maya. It wouldn't be just his hand I would stab.

I try my damndest to convey my displeasure at the idea. Giovanni eyes me, smiles his evil smile, and says, "I think that's a great idea, Angel."

Mother fucker. I ball up my fists at my side, fighting the urge to sock him right in his stupid fucking face.

"You ladies go get ready, Gabriel and I will wait out here." Giovanni says as he slaps Angelica on her ass. She yelps as she grabs the bags with Maya and they make their way up the stairs toward the bedroom.

"You mother fucker!" I push him on his shoulder. Giovanni lets out a laugh, tears practically running down his face.

“You are so fucked brother,” he goes around his island and pours himself a glass of liquor.

“Don’t you think I know that!” I mutter. “Pour me one, I’m going to need it.”

An hour goes by before Giovanni and I hear commotion at the top of the stairs.

“Gentlemen, your ladies have arrived.” Angelica says. She’s wearing a mini red dress. Her hair is in a top bun with a few loose pieces. I watch Giovanni as she makes her way down the stairs. He is unmoving, frozen as she walks up to him and kisses his cheek.

As soon as they start to kiss, I turn my attention to the stairs waiting for Maya. As if she can feel my impatience, she appears at the top of the stairs. Her hand glides down the railing as she all but floats down the steps.

Her dress is black with all over sequins. It catches the light with every step she takes. It hugs her curves as if it was form fitted to her body. The dress stops just above her knees.

My eyes continue to take her in. Her shoes are red, with thin straps wrapping around her ankle. I imagine what she would look like with just those shoes on while I fuck her senseless.

Her hair falls to her shoulders in those tight curls. One side is pinned back with a hair accessory that looks like a shooting star. Her makeup is dark and smokey. But it’s her lips I can’t take my eyes off of. Red and plump. What her lips would look like after I mouth fucked her.

She goes to stand next to me and I can see the nerves seeping through her body. I can't help but touch her. "You look stunning," I lean down and whisper into her ear. With her high heels she is almost at eye level with me. Just a few inches short.

"Thank you," she looks up at me shyly. "I don't normally wear things like this."

Determined to change that I say, "you should." I wink down at her and bring her into my side.

The drive to Whiskeys is short from Giovanni's penthouse. We skip the line and go through the back entrance. I haven't let go of Maya's hand since we left the car.

Whiskeys is your typical New York club. A dance floor in the center, tables scattered throughout. A fully stocked bar sits against the wall toward the entrance. We make our way up the stairs in the back corner to the VIP balcony.

It's still early, so there isn't much of a crowd, yet.

Giovanni sits on the leather armchair and pulls Angelica into his lap. They have a private conversation. Even in the dimness of the club, I can see Angelica's rosy cheeks as Giovanni whispers something in her ear.

Maya and I take the two person leather couch next to them. Maya sits with her legs closed and her hands in front of her. She seems to be out of her element. I see our personal waitress coming so I lean into Maya and ask, "what would you like to drink?"

She must have been in her head because her head snaps to me a little confused. I repeat my question as the waitress walks up asking for our drink order. We give our order, with Maya only asking for a water.

The music begins to pick up as more and more people crowd the dance floor. Angelica jumps up, setting her three empty glasses on the table and yells out, “lets dance!” She grabs Maya’s hand and begins to pull her up. Maya looks to me as if to ask for permission.

“Angel,” Giovanni looks to Angelica as the girls start to walk away. “Behave. I’m not in the mood to stab anyone tonight.”

Giovanni told me about the first night she saw Angelica here. She was dancing and a guy tried to dance with her. Giovanni ended up stabbing the guy in the hand.

“Yes sir,” Angelica winks at him and starts to pull Maya toward the stairs. My eyes unapologetically land on her ass as it sways side to side. My hand tightens, wanting desperately to grab a hold.

The girls disappear down the steps and I look at Giovanni with an eyebrow raised and all he can say is, “what, don’t judge me.”



CHAPTER 12

Maya

A crowd has formed at Whiskeys. Swarms of people on the dance floor, at the bar and the tables. Drinking their night away. Angelica pulls me along to the center of the dance floor.

Gyrating bodies all around me as Angelica turns around and starts to sway her hips back and forth. Her slim figure is any mans wet dream and I can't help but judge my body compared to hers.

I can notice different mens' eyes watching her. How her body moves. I just stand there watching her. In awe of her self confidence and free attitude.

"Come on Maya, dance. Put on a show for your man," she lifts her head up toward the VIP section where Gabriel and Giovanni are leaning on the railing watching us.

Gabriel raises his glass of dark liquid to his lips but I can feel his eyes on me the whole time. Angelica places her hands on my hips and starts to move them for me. My body starts to

awkwardly move with the help of Angelica. My body is tense trying to find the beat.

“Just like that,” she says, releasing me and I continue to sway back and forth. I watch as Angelica begins to dance again. Her hands raised and feeling the music.

I close my eyes and begin to feel the beat of the dance music. I spin in circles and let my body relax. At that moment I realize this is the first time since before my wedding, or probably ever, that I feel free. My mind goes blank, losing myself to the beat.

Song after song, Angelica and I continue to dance, laughing and enjoying our night. That’s when I feel a set of large hands on my hips. I freeze from the fear of having someone’s hands on me.

The firm hands pull my ass into his front. Our bodies pushed together. Everyone around us unbothered by the display. I can feel his hot breath on me as he leans into my ear and says, “I couldn’t take all these men looking at what’s mine.”

Gabriel’s voice sends a sense of relief over me. I couldn’t imagine what would have happened if it was a man I didn’t know. I don’t know how to defend myself. I could have easily been taken and there wouldn’t be anything I could have done.

I go to pull away from Gabriel but his firm grip prevents me. Our bodies begin to move together. My ass pushing against his front. When he senses I won’t walk away, his hands start to roam freely over my body. Up and down my arms, his touch sending hot lava down my spine.

We continue to dance through the end of one song and the start of another when he pushes my hair off my shoulder and starts to kiss me. His lips are warm. A shiver rolls over me and he kisses me from my shoulder up to my ear.

Not meaning to, I let out a moan. Lost in the moment, the room goes dark, he and I are the only ones here. It's then that I feel his dick twitch against my ass. I go to turn to face him when he says, "oh my sweet firefly, look what you've done." His gaze is molten as he looks down at me. The heat radiating off of him could start a wildfire.

Before I know what's happening, Gabriel has me over his shoulders. I look at Angelica and Giovanni dancing and sharing a smile as they watch Gabriel take me away. Everyone around us are in their own world as Gabriel takes me off the dance floor.

I want to apologize, to excuse his wild behavior, but I just hang my head in embarrassment when he finally stops. We're in a hallway. It's dimly lit, the walls are painted a dark color. He presses my body into his as I slide down and land on my feet. I feel light headed, weak almost.

His hands are on my cheeks, cupping my face as we stare at each other. The wild look in his eyes tells me he has one thing on his mind.

My eyes leave his and land on his parted lips. Taking it as a signal, his lips smash into mine. His tongue takes over my mouth. He tastes of alcohol. And I take this act as a drunken kiss of passion.

Why would he possibly be kissing me in this dark hallway, knowing we have an expiration date. But I don't fight him. I let him overtake me. Our mouths begin to mold together and our tongues fight each other.

His hands leave my face, grabbing my ass, and my back is pushed into the wall. I'm sandwiched between the wall and his body with nowhere to go. I can feel my dress creeping up my hips. My legs are on full display for anyone that walks by. My legs must have a mind of their own as they wrap around his hip.

He pulls away from our kiss. An internal whine builds up inside me at the loss of contact. His chest pulsing as he catches his breath. His eyes are pitch black as he runs his thumb along my bottom lip.

"One day very soon, I'll know what your lips feel like around my dick." His vulgarness should be off putting but it does the opposite. I chalk it up to the alcohol talking but that doesn't stop the pool of wetness building between my legs.

He must sense it as he runs his hand along my thigh and between us to my pussy. His thumb runs along the top of the fabric of my lace panties.

I need to put a stop to this before he lets the alcohol lead him to do something he'll regret in the morning. "Gabriel, you're drunk, we need to stop."

His hand stops moving and his eyes snap to mine. "I am anything but," he says, then his hand goes back to rubbing my pussy. His thumb presses into my clit and I can't help but lean

into it and moan. Over and over the pleasure begins to build. I look up at the ceiling as he works me to the edge.

“You only come if your eyes are on me.” Not wanting him to stop, I lower my head and meet his gaze. The blueness in his eyes turn black as he works me. Without warning, he slips a finger inside me.

“That’s it baby, coat my finger.” He slides another finger in, then another. Stretching me more and more. My body is his to use. I am overtaken with lust for this man that I would let him lead me anywhere.

“Oh my god, yes. Please.” I moan.

“My wife is so greedy,” his voice is deep and animalistic. I can feel him hook his fingers and as he does it sends me into overdrive. Like a freight train, my orgasm hits me. My body becomes jello in his embrace. I feel weightless as my orgasm takes over.

He continues to work me as my body floats back to reality post orgasm. I open my eyes and catch his eyes glued on me.

“There’s my girl,” he says, pulling his fingers out of me, and I watch in awe as he opens his mouth and sucks on his fingers with my cum all over them. “A man could get addicted to the taste of you.”

He drags his fingers out of his mouth and pulls me off the wall. I unwrap my legs and go to stand. My legs are buzzing as I stabilize myself.

‘Any man.’ I say as a dig at him and our situation. We both know this will end. He and I both need to move on when the time comes. He will surely find someone to replace me faster than I will.

There is no replacing Gabriel Costello. He is ingrained into my memory. Any man that chooses to come after him will fall short. I just know it. But I need to start distance myself from him. These intimate moments can’t keep happening. My heart can’t take it. The feelings I have grown for Gabriel in these past few days will take time to get over.

“No. Not any man Maya,” Gabriel’s stern voice shocks me. I run my hands down my dress setting it back in place. “Just one man,” he adjusts his pants trying to hide his dick. “Me.” His tone is demanding.

Without another word, he takes my hand and leads us out of the dark hallway. In that moment I notice a line of women against the wall, waiting for the bathroom. All of their eyes on us as we continue down the hallway.

Have they been there the whole time? How much did they see? Shame starts to creep up but I don’t allow it. Instead I hold my head high as Gabriel leads us out of the hallway and back onto the bar floor.

Thinking Gabriel is taking us back onto the dance floor, I’m surprised when he leads us back up the stairs toward the VIP section. His brother and Angelica have made their way back up as well. He sits on the couch and pulls me into his lap.

Angelica shoots me a look. A look that says, been there done that.

“Stab anyone lately Gabriel?” his brother asks as if he too knows what we just did. Giovanni is smiling but Gabriel’s face stays stern.

We spend the next few hours back and forth between the VIP section and the dance floor. I feel a sense of happiness I haven’t felt, well ever, being out with Gabriel and his family. I’ve laughed and enjoyed myself all night. Is this what freedom feels like? What a normal life is? Will I be able to have this once I’m back with my father?

Sadness creeps into my chest at just the thought of what my father will do once Gabriel’s sends me back to him. My father hasn’t called, messaged, or sent anyone for me. Does he care and has he given up on me already?

“You ready to go Angel?” Giovanni asks Angelica. She takes her margarita glass, tipping it back taking the last sip of alcohol. She sets it down on the table and nods at him.

I look to Gabriel who’s running his finger over the rim of the glass in his hand. I can feel his eyes roaming my body. He stands and walks over behind me.

“Time to go,” he places a kiss on my bare shoulder.

The men lead us out of the club into the cold New York night. A black SUV is parked at the curb, a valet walks over opening both doors. Gabriel and I take the back row whereas Giovanni and Angelica take the middle row.

The car ride back to Giovanni and Angelica's penthouse is spent laughing and reminiscing. Angelica and I are clearly drunk while the men are not. Party poopers.

"I'm really going to miss you," I drunkenly admit to Angelica.

"Where are you going?" she giggles and looks at me with a drunken sadness.

"Gabriel is getting rid of me in a few months, then I'll go back to my father." My drunken admission silences the car.

It's when the car pulls over and the door is open that I realize Gabriel spent the whole car ride with his hand on my thigh. I miss his touch instantly as he leads me out of the car.

We say our goodbyes on the sidewalk. Angelica pulls me into a hug. Her steps are wobbly, clearly drunk. Giovanni is having to hold her up as she pulls out of our hug.

"We had an amazing night," she slurs.

"Goodnight, you guys," Giovanni says. "I've got to get home and show Angelica what happens when she drinks too much." She did have a lot to drink tonight. I must miss the meaning as he and Gabriel share a knowing look.

Gabriel leads me through the front door of the building and we make our way to his penthouse. Unable to make it to my room, I fall onto the couch and drift into the darkness of my drunken sleep.



I'm woken up to multiple footsteps throughout the penthouse. My hangover hits me as the bright sun beams through the windows. In that moment I realize where I am. I'm not in my room, I'm in the living room. I jump off the couch and wrap the blanket that was laid over me around my body. When did I get up to get a blanket? I was passed out within minutes of coming home.

A group of men walk throughout the house. They don't look at me as they walk down the hallway. I watch as they go toward my room, then into my room. I rush over to see why these men are going into my room. I stand at the door as they walk around the now empty room.

The furniture is gone. The room is empty. The flooring has been ripped up, the closet doors of their hinges. A pain hits my check.

Gabriel is moving me out. He's realized that I don't need to be here. I fight the tears building in my eyes as I hear Gabriel ask, "coffee?" He stands behind me and holds out a cup of coffee in front of me.

Refusing to take the cup, I turn and face him. Oh what we must look like.

"Where are my things?" I ask. My fear of being kicked out turns into anger. How dare he do this to me. I thought we had

an understanding. Six months. I have six months to get my life in order.

“The furniture was removed last night while we were out with Giovanni and Angelica,” he says calmly.

What the actual fuck! He had the audacity to start moving my things out while we were out. Anger turning into rage, I fight back the urge to slap him.

“My camera, laptop, my clothes?” I’m yelling, I know I am, but I don’t give a shit.

“All packed away,” his calm tone is starting to irritate me. How can he so calmly be kicking me out? “In my room.”

His room. My things are in his room. My adrenaline crashes at the realization. “Why are my things in your room?” I ask as I work to settle my racing heart.

He doesn’t answer. He just looks at me. The asshole has the gaul to sip his coffee. I want to take the cup and smash it into the wall. How fucking dare he. I am too hungover to be dealing with this, this early in the morning.

“Where am I going to go Gabriel? I have nowhere, no one!” I yell out. I know I’m making a drunken scene but I don’t care at this point. I won’t be here much longer for anyone to remember the crazy drunken woman. I can feel the men behind me watching us without even turning around.

Gabriel’s eyes snap up just over my head, “back to work!” he growls. He looks back down at me. I feel foolish. How

stupid could I have been to believe he really cared enough about me to help me with my father and Nicholas.

I'd fare better just taking the beatings from Nicholas everyday. At least with him I know he's a monster. Gabriel hides his monster behind his eyes. His ocean blue eyes. Eyes that now are looking at me as if I was the one that's done something wrong.

"Come with me," he says walking away down the hallway and to his room. He walks into his room and holds the door for me with his foot.

I storm to his room and past him. As I walk in, I see boxes at the edge of his bed. I make my way to the boxes and notice that they do in fact have all my things in them. My clothes folded and packed away.

A smaller box sits on his bed, and I see my computer and camera bag. My heart settles knowing my things are safe. I may not have a bed to sleep on but at least I have my camera.

I turn to him as he sets the two cups of coffee on top of his dresser. He's so calm and it's once again making me angry.

"Why are you moving me out?" I ask, wanting him to answer me. Wanting a reason as to why he's breaking our deal.

"I'm not," he simply says as he walks over to the boxes on the floor. He picks one up and walks over to his closet. He sits the box down and comes over picking up another box. He sets box after box of my clothes into his closet.

“What are you doing then?” I’m fed up at this point. He needs to explain himself.

“I’m moving you in.” The calmness in his voice is irritating me as I try to understand what the hell he is talking about.

“I was moved in, I had my space.” I drop the blanket around my body to the floor. In that moment I realize I’m still wearing the dress from last night.

He stops a few feet away from me. His eyes roll over my body. I zone in on his Adams apple, watching it rise and fall harshly.

“Gabriel, where am I going to sleep?” My frustration is getting the best of me. I’m fed up with his back and forth. He’s sending so many mixed signals. The touches, the intimate moment in the hallway. Then out of nowhere he’s uprooting me, just as I was getting comfortable with being here.

“My bed, Maya. You belong in my bed,” his tone calm and cool. “That’s where *you* will sleep. In *our* bed. Next to me, where you belong.”

I am taken aback at his answer. He can’t mean it. He doesn’t.

Utterly confused, I ask, “why?”

“Because you are my wife. A wife sleeps in the same bed as her husband.”

His wife. Her husband.

He walks over to me and leads me to the bed. I sit, looking up at him. My whole life seems to be in limbo. I need him to

explain because I have no idea what is going on and I don't like it.

"I need to explain." he says as he drops down so he's eye to eye with me.

I don't say anything, I just look at him waiting for him to justify turning my whole life on its head.

"There seems to be a misunderstanding."

Yea, there sure is. I thought we were ok. I thought we had a plan. I thought I was given time to find my own way.

"You said you'd give me six months." I say, calming my racing heart. I need him to know how hurt I am. How misleading he has been since our last conversation about this.

"No Maya, *you*, gave yourself six months." I can't hide my confusion at his words. I try to replay the conversation on the couch. Then it hits me. I was the one who offered six months.

Yea, it was me, but I only did it because I knew he and I wouldn't and couldn't last. He married me out of pity. I agreed out of fear of what was waiting for me at my fathers house.

"You put an end date to this. When I didn't ask for one." He places his hands on my bare knees. I really need to change. I need to get out of this dress.

I can't seem to find my words. Yes, I did offer six months. But he agreed. "You agreed," I state.

"I did, because you didn't give me time to argue. When you stormed out mid conversation, I dropped it because I saw how

it affected you.” I can feel his fingers running along my knees.

“So what now?” I ask, needing to know what his game plan ends.

“So, we stay married. I keep you safe from your father, as I promised. I know we rushed into this but something feels right now that you’re in my life.” His words send a storm of emotions throughout my body. My heart beams with affection, but it’s the feeling between my legs that has me clenching tight.

As if he can sense it, he raises an eyebrow at me.

“We are on your timeline. Whenever you say this ends, it ends. If that’s six months from now or 60 years, I will be here with you. Maya, you’ve awoken something inside of me that I thought was long dead after my parents died. I will keep you safe. I will be there for you. If you let me.”

His confession hits my chest like a freak train.

“What happened to your parents?” I ask, wanting to know. He eyes go soft, worrisome. I can feel his pain without a single word. “You don’t need to tell me, if you don’t want to.” I don’t want to push him to tell me anything about his family.

He explains to me that his mother and father were killed in an accident after his uncle took over. He and his brother were sent to live with his aunt and uncle shortly after. It was when his uncle got sick that Giovanni was given the role. Meaning Gabriel had to step in as second in command.

My heart hurts for him. I can't imagine the pain he must have felt losing his parents. I might not be able to imagine it, but I can see it written all over his face as he finishes his story and tells me, "it's why I am who I am. I need to make him and my mother proud."

I watch as he fights back tears. A single tear falls down his cheek and I lift my hand and wipe it away with my thumb. I cup his cheek and say, "thank you for sharing that with me." I can't help but softly kiss the corner of his mouth.

He leans into my kiss. I wrap my hands around his shoulders. We stay embraced together. Our breathing synced to one another. I can't help but run my hands through his hair.

He lifts his head off my shoulder. Cupping my cheek, he leans in and kisses me. His kisses are hard and passionate but this one, this kiss is something else. Soft and warm but at the same time overpowering and passionate.

Something is shifting between us. And I send out a prayer whatever it is, that it's for our good. He pulls away, our foreheads connected as we take in the silence of the room. I don't want this moment, whatever it means for us, to end.

He stands from his kneeling position and pulls me up with him. "Go change, those men out there have seen enough of you in this dress." He kisses me once more then pushes me toward the closet.

After changing out of my dress into something more comfortable, a pair of jeans and a dark floral shirt, I make my way out of Gabriel's room.

My room?

As I walk past the commotion of my old room, I notice the progress they've made. A black desk and chair with a white fluffy rug sit in the center of the room. Dark colored bookshelves line the far wall. I see rolls and rolls of vinyl stacked in the corner.

What is he turning this room into? It's very feminine for him to use as an office.

"What are you turning my old room into?" I ask Gabriel who's sitting on the couch, typing away on his phone.

As he sets his phone away, he answers, "it's your office now."

My office?

He must see the confusion on my face as he elaborates. "For your photography. So you have somewhere to work. The supplies we ordered from the photo shop came in while we were out yesterday."

I hear him, but I'm not understanding. So I just stay in place, still confused.

"I saw you laying on the floor working and I decided to turn your room into your office," he continues.

"But why? I was just fine with our situation." I wasn't ok. I wanted to fit into his life. I wanted to a part of it. And he's giving me that chance now. He's finding ways to fit me in.

He stands and walks over to me, “because the only time I want you on the floor is if I’m fucking you ten ways to Sunday. Got it?”

My brain is on overdrive. I can’t do anything but just stand there in awe at his comment. He steps away again and says, “now are you hungry? we’ve got some errands to run.”



CHAPTER 13

Gabriel

My bike was parked for me in our garage after taking it to Giovanni's last night. Maya wanted to take it out for the day again. I didn't know I would want to have a riding partner. Having someone pressed against me as I moved through the streets. Her body was molded to mine. Perfect.

Now that she's gotten more comfortable with riding, I tested her limits. Waving through traffic, making tighter turns, and even making sharp stops, in order to have her body pressed into mine a bit more. It feels good. It feels *right*.

Lunch was quick. She decided on a fresh salad at the small café she pointed out. It wasn't near our final destination for the day but I didn't want her to not have what she wanted. The urge to give Maya the world has taken over my every thought.

Her happiness. Her well being. Her dreams. At all costs.

Now we're back on the bike, stopped at a red light. With my feet planted, I let my hands roam free. Reaching backward, I

run my fingers along her thighs. My fingers running through the torn fabric of her jeans.

My heart is pounding as we sit here waiting for the light to change. What I'm about to do will set our situation in place. There is no turning back after this. Is it unnecessary? Probably not, but I can't fight it anymore.

My family and hers know our reality, but the rest of the world better get ready. The light finally turns green and I make it the last couple blocks and park in front of our last stop of the day.

Maya stands straight and removes her helmet. Her hair is wild as she tries her best to flatten it. As she sets her helmet in place, I do the same.

I watch her, wanting to gauge her reaction before I say anything.

Big black and gold lettering above the glass doors should be a dead giveaway of why we are here but I can see she still needs a little push to why we're here.

I take her hand and lead her into the store.

Sparkle and Shine is one of New York's finest jewelry businesses. They put together Giovanni's ring that he gave Angelica. So I knew when the idea popped into my head that I would be coming here.

The store is modern in design. Glass cases on either side making the center a bit of a runway with black and white

marble flooring throughout. A few couples are scattered throughout the store.

Franco, the owner, and another family friend come walking out behind a case, meeting us halfway.

“*Bellissima*, Gabriel, so wonderful to see you,” his Italian accent so thick. I take his hand in mine and we share an embrace. He looks to me and then Maya, who is looking everywhere but at us. “And this must be her,” Franco says as he steps in front of Maya and takes her by the shoulders.

“Franco, this is Maya, Maya this is Franco.” I look between them as Fraco kisses each of her cheeks and takes all of Maya in. His eyes roam from the top of her head down to her toes. I’d put a bullet in his brain if he was anyone else. So I just watch their interaction.

Maya’s shy smile tells me she is still lost as to why we’re here.

“This way you two love birds.” Franco leads us to the last case of the store.

As Maya and I step to the case, I see in her eyes as it finally sets in. Her eyes shoot up at me. “Pick one,” I simply say. Her eyes go back to the case and I watch as her eyes take in all the diamonds. Fraco and I watch her as she points out a few rings. She tries each one on.

A small round diamond set in yellow gold. *Too small*, I think to myself.

A bigger oval diamond set in platinum. *Better but still not enough.*

“Do you have anything bigger, Franco?” I ask. Franco nods and makes his way to another case on the opposite side of the store.

Maya’s eyes are glued to the case as she tries to take it all in. “You don’t have to do this,” she says looking up at me.

“I sure do. The world will know that you are my wife.” I say. Unable to stop myself, I cup her chin, my thumb running along her cheek. Her nervousness written all over her face as her cheek turns a blush tone.

Franco comes back a few minutes later with two large trays of rings. More diamonds set in simple bands. Maya makes her rounds with this set of rings. As she tries on that selection, I decide to look for myself. I leave Franco and Maya to discuss the rings and make my way to another case.

It’s in that moment that I see it.

A black emerald shaped stone in the center with a few diamonds clustered on either side. Set in a thin platinum band. “Franco, this one please,” I look to him. He leaves Maya to continue to try the rings and comes over to me.

I tap the top of the glass and point out the ring.

“What stone is that?” I ask

“That is a four carat black diamond.” he says, reaching into the case and letting me hold it. I walk it over to Maya who is still looking over the diamond rings in the trays.

“How about this one?” I ask, holding it out between us.

Her eyes go wide at the ring. I reach out but I see her talking herself out of touching it. I take her hand and slide the ring on her finger. Call it fate or destiny but the ring slides on like a glove. A perfect fit.

She holds out her hand taking the ring in, in all its glory. I know this is the ring, she needs to know it as well.

“Gabriel, I can’t,” her comment shocks me. Why the fuck not. I’m standing here, wanting her to have this ring. Showing her how much this means to me.

“Maya,” I step closer to her. Her outstretched hand lands on my chest and I hold it in place with my hand. She looks up at me with those darkened doe eyes that I would burn the world for. “You can and you will.” I state matter-a-factly. “Please.”

She simply nods and a smile grows on her face. Shock turns into glee and she finally accepts our reality. She is now officially my wife.

“What about you?” she asks.

“I had Franco set aside a ring for me before we got here.” I state. Fraco comes up holding a box with a mens ring inside.

My ring is a simple gray metallic tungsten band. I give her the box, wanting her to set the ring in place. As if we are having our own personal ceremony in the middle of the jewelry store.

Without hesitation, I lean down and take her lips into mine. Wanting to seal our new life all over again. Her wedding day

might not have been how she ever imagined it but I am determined to correct it in anyway I can. She needs to know this is it for us.

“Lets go, I have the sudden urge to fuck my wife and I cant do that with all these people around,” I whisper into her ear after I break our kiss.

Her eyes are full of mischief as she says, “why not.” My dick twitches at the thought of bending her over one of the glass cases and fucking her till she screams, but I fight against it.

We check out in a rush and the next thing I know were fumbling through the front door of the penthouse. Her hands fighting with my pants button. I rip off her shirt over her head, unable to control myself.

I pull away from our kiss. Leaving her standing in the openness of the room. I walk over to the couch and sit at the edge.

“Take your pants off.” I instruct her and without hesitation she follows my command. “Good girl.” With her shoes and pants in a pile at her side and her ripped shirt behind her, I take her in.

She’s standing in the openness of our living room, half naked. My breath is stuck in my throat. I can’t help but adjust my growing painful dick. She isn’t covering herself in shame as she was a few short weeks ago.

Thank god the bruises from her fucking father are all but faded. The scars are her battle wounds but I don't know what I would have done if I had to look at the bruises another day.

“Crawl to me Maya,” I firmly say. I'm testing how far she's willing to go for me. I want to watch her on her hands and knees for me. Watch as her hips sway as she walks to me on all fours.

“What?” She's stunned and I know I'm testing her limits. I'm pushing us to the unknown in this marriage but I can't seem to help myself. I want to explore her body in all new ways.

“That is *my* ring on your finger. When I say crawl to me, you be a good wife and crawl to your husband.” My tone is light but firm. If she does this one thing, I'll know I can explore with her. Be my true depraved self in our bed with her.

We stare at each other, both of us unmoving. Seconds go by and then I see it, her knees begin to bend. In slow motion, she falls to her knees. Her eyes never leaving mine. She makes her way to me as I lean further into the couch. The way her body moves hardens my dick more than I thought possible.

Far too soon, she's kneeling in front of me. I can't help but run my hand through her hair and down to cup her cheek. This woman is dangerous to me. How I feel about her in such a short amount of time is even more so.

“Stand,” my simple command is followed by instant obedience. This is how I want her. I want her following my orders without having to think about it. I want her trusting of

me to know I will take care of her. And oh how I plan to take care of her.

I run my hand down her shoulder, her arm, down to her hip. The scar from her fathers abuse is still so prominent. I lean in and kiss the line of the scar on her hip. Her body may have been battered and abused but she is still strong and beautiful. And I intend to show her just how beautiful she is.

I run my finger along her thin panty line to the other side of her hip. Trailing kisses along the way. Making it a point to stop at her scar and give it attention. Grabbing her panties, I slide them down her legs. As she steps out, I run my hands back up to her hips. The warmth and silkiness of her skin put my brain on overdrive.

My eyes land on the flesh between her legs, the wetness beginning to build. I can't help but lick my lips. I lean in and kiss her pussy. The instant sweetness that takes over my tastebuds has my vision blurring and my self control breaking.

I run my tongue along her pussy, spreading her lips apart. Her body leans into it and her head falls to mine. Her hands land on my hand as her fingers start to run through my hair. The shockwave that her touch sends to my dick is electrifying.

I eat her pussy like a starving man. Pushing her to the edge of insanity.

“Gabriel,” she moans. “I’m almost,” and being the devil that I am, I instantly stop, freezing her orgasm in time. I look up at her through her pussy, knowing how i’m driving her wild.

“Why did you stop?” Her breath is short as her chest rises and falls in rapid increments.

“I want to enjoy my meal.” I wink up at her as I lean my lips back into her pussy. My hands are tightly holding her in place as I drag my tongue through her pussy lips over and over.

Getting lost in the sweetness, I slide my tongue through her tight hole. And with one final tug at her clit, her body falls over my shoulders in pure bliss. My hand goes from her hip to her full ass cheek and I playfully squeeze.

As she comes back from her orgasm, I hear a small giggle from her. She stands upright and our eyes lock onto one another. The orgasm high still written all over her face.

I watch as she reaches behind her and unhooks her bra. The straps fall off her shoulders. Fighting the urge to take her breasts in both of my hands, I watch as the bra falls to the floor between us.

And there she stands, in all her naked glory. Her hands at her side, our eyes glued to one another. Neither one of us wanting this moment between us to end or go by too quickly.

“You are so beautiful,” I finally say. I need her to know. I need her to understand that though we didn’t expect this, whatever this is between us is where I want and need to be.

A shy smile lifts at the corners of her lips. I lean back and begin to undo my pants when she bends down and stops my hand.

“Let me,” she says as she pushes my hands away. I want her confidence, I want her assertiveness. I let her take the lead as I lean back into the cushions.

She works the belt loose then the zipper. My dick is throbbing underneath, ready to be broken free. I lift my hips allowing her to push down my pants and underwear all at once.

My dick is at full attention, hitting my stomach as it's broken free from the restraints of my pants. My cock ring is coated with precum. Without warning, she grabs my dick at the base and runs her tongue from my balls to the tip.

The feel of her tongue on me sends a shiver down my spine. My vision blurs for a second and I come down back to earth fighting the urge to cum all over her in that instant. Her tongue circles the tip of my dick giving the ring special attention. She hums around my tip and my hips jerk at the feeling.

“Maya , baby, I'm gonna blow if you keep doing that.” My voice is strained as I fight my impending orgasm.

Her lips lift at the corners with my tip still firmly in her mouth. With one full motion, she takes in my dick. Not fully, but enough to reach the back of her throat. Over and over she bobs her head on my dick.

“Maya, baby, you need to stop.” As she does her eyes peak through her lashes at me. “I need your pussy baby.” I grab her by her shoulders, lift her up so she straddles me. I feel her soaked pussy on my dick as she looks down at me.

“We need a condom,” I say, but I hope she agrees to take me raw. I need my dick to feel her without anything between us.

“No, no condom,” are her only words as she grabs my dick and lines it up to her pussy. She rubs my tip against her soaked lips. Teasing me and herself. Then without warning, she takes me in one fluid motion.

The warmth and tightness of her pussy has me grabbing at the sofa cushion with white knuckle force. “Fuuuuuuuck,” My head falls to the back of the sofa as I stare at the ceiling. The feel of her choking my dick is almost enough to have me coming inside her already.

“Are you ok?” Mayas sweet voice echoes in my ears.

“I’m great baby. You feel so good.” A gleeful smile rises at the corners of my mouth as I look at her. The smile on her face is pure but full of sinful delight.

As she starts to move, I can feel her walls gripping my dick, choking it from base to tip. Wanting and needing her to take control in this moment, I keep my hands tightly at my side. Her breasts start to bounce uncontrollably when she starts to pick up her pace. I run my hands up her legs to her hip, needing to touch her, feel her.

I make it a point to run my thumb along her scar again. The reminder to her and me, that she is mine and she is safe. My hands drag up her hip to her breasts. Cupping them, I begin to massage her nipples. I pinch one then the other between my fingers. Her head falls back.

“That feels so good,” she moans out. I take it as my cue to apply more pressure to her nipples.

I can feel her slowing her pace so I grab her hips and start to grind her against me. The new pressure hitting a new spot inside her, as her head falls back and I watch her eyes hit the back of her head. The feel of her clit rubbing against must feel good because her back arches and her head falls.

My firefly likes to be taken and used, her body for my pleasure.

The urge to have her body pressed against mine takes over as I lift her and lay her across the couch, without disconnecting us. Her hair is sprayed over the large sofa cushion, the dark curls forming a halo around her beautiful face. Our bodies move together reaching our own orgasms, together. I run my hand along her jawline and down to her neck, giving a slight pressure around her neck.

I watch as she involuntarily lifts her head giving me full reach of her neck.

My firefly likes to be choked.

Holding her neck in place with my hand, I bend down and begin to devour her mouth with my own. I can't get enough of her taste, it's addicting.

Breaking our kiss, we lock eyes once again, the golden sparks in her eyes light up as I feel my orgasm building.

“Come for me, my firefly,” I say as I continue our relentless pursuit to orgasm.

“I’m there,” she moans. The heaving of her breath sends me over the edge. I apply slightly more pressure to her neck and bring her with me. My dick twitches as I empty myself inside her. The warmth of her pussy is overtaken by my cum.

Reluctantly, I pull out of her. I look down at where we were connected and watch as our combined cum spills out of her. I run my finger along her pussy, picking up the cum and pushing it back inside her. Wanting all of me, inside all of her.

A thin coat of cum still on my finger, I lift it to her, and without hesitation she opens her mouth and licks my finger clean.

Oh fuck!

Dragging my finger out of her mouth, I become instantly hard again. I fight the urge to slam into her again as I lay between her and the back of the couch.

We lay there in silence, running my hand up and down her body, not wanting to miss the feel of her. Her breathing has evened out, letting me know that she has fallen asleep.

I slowly lift myself off her body and stand. Redressing myself, I grab the thin blanket at the edge of the couch and cover her still naked body. I watch her chest rise and fall with every breath she takes for a few minutes.

A part of me knows she’s safer with me. Another darker part knows her father and his henchmen will come for her sooner rather than later. Reluctantly I walk away from her and make my way to my office.

I need to find out what Dimitri is up to with this shipment. I need the answers before we decide what we are going to do about it. He won't get away with this. He won't live to tell the tale. He dies when we get our answers.



My eyes begin to blur from staring at my computer screen. I've sent email after email getting updates on our businesses throughout New York. A sense of pride builds knowing how successful Giovanni and I have been since taking over.

Our business background has been nothing but beneficial for our family. Revamping old businesses, starting new ones. There isn't anything our family can't do. New York is ours in every sense of the word. And yet, we are nowhere closer to getting answers with Dimitri's shipment.

It isn't until I hear a faint knock at my door that I lift my head away from my computer screen.

There in the doorframe, Maya stands covered in the thin blanket.

"Hey, hope I'm not interrupting but it's getting dark outside," she says, smiling at me.

I would burn the world down for that smile.

I look out the glass window, with the New York skyline and notice that the sun has in fact set. The busy New York lights giving off a glow filling the room.

I close my computer and push my chair away from the desk. I watch as Maya makes her way to me, still covered in the blanket. She stands between me and my desk as she runs her hand through my hair. “Take me to bed,” she says in her still sleepy voice.

And I’ll do just that, though neither of us get much sleep.



CHAPTER 14

Maya

Gabriel and I have found a rhythm. Being a married couple has been nice. We spend most of our time on the couch, him on his computer and me on mine. I'm not really sure what he has going on but I'm sure the mafia keeps him busy.

I've gotten to spend some days with Angelica, either at her house or ours. Today, Angelica is here with me. Her and I spend the day lounging around the penthouse while Gabriel and Giovanni are out.

"Has Giovanni told you what they have been up to?" I ask Angelica as we sit on the balcony with the city below us.

"Giovanni doesn't normally talk to me about the business and I don't normally ask." she says, sipping her red wine.

"Do you not care or just not ask?" Angelica hasn't been in the mafia life long but she has become the queen of the Italian Mafia. She holds more power than I even think she knows.

For Giovanni to not share anything with her, I'm sure it's to keep her safe but if it was me I'd want to know. But then again I grew up with bloodshed and the mafia life ingrained into my life.

"I don't ask, I've seen what the mafia is capable of doing and I trust Giovanni to take care of me and the family." Her wine glass is all but empty so I grab the bottle from the table between us and ask if she wants more.

I never wanted to know anything about how my father ran his side of the mafia. I never cared enough to ask. With the constant fear I had from my father, I kept my distance. And when he told me I was to marry Nicholas, I knew my life was over at that point. But Gabriel stepped in and saved me, in more ways than one.

"I'm just worried they will get into trouble," I say, setting my wine glass down and looking out into the busy New York skyline.

What would happen to me, if anything were to happen to Gabriel? Where would I go? Who could I lean on? A tightness in my chest begins to form as I come to the realization that whatever Gabriel is keeping from me might just in fact be the end of us.

Trying to lighten the mood, I look over at Angelica who seems to be lost in her own little world and ask, "how are your kids?"

She looks over at me and with a warm smile says, "they are my world, I don't know what I would do without them."

Motherhood isn't something I ever thought for myself. I'm sure Nicholas would have made me have children to grow his power, like my father did with me. But would I have loved his kids? Would I have been like my mother and been cold toward them?

“Do you and Gabriel plan on having children?” she asks.

I ask myself the same question. What would having children with Gabriel look like? Would he be a good father, would I be a good mother? “I don't know, we haven't had that talk yet. We're still new to each other still.”

“But you have been practicing, yes?” she smirks at me.

I feel my cheeks redden. Gabriel has opened so many doors for me sexually that I didn't know were achievable. The way he uses my body for his and my own pleasure. A part of me wants to give him full control and just let myself go with him but I don't know what he would think.

“We have,” I answer with a giggle.

“Details girl, I need details.” She shifts in the chair and turns to face me.

I shake my head, wanting to share but not knowing what Gabriel would think if he knew I was telling all of our intimate secrets.

“I'll share if you do,” Angelica winks at me. “And let me tell you I've got stories girl.” Well damn it, now I'm intrigued. I shift in my own seat as I face her, maybe one story won't hurt.

We spend the rest of the afternoon and into the evening exchanging stories of our lives. I'm glad I have a friend in Angelica. She's fun and easy to talk to and doesn't judge me.

We've made our way inside to avoid the cold chill of the night. As we continue to laugh, the front door opens. Giovanni is first to walk through the hallway. His shirt is ripped and what looks like blood stains his shirt.

My heart quickens as I wait for Gabriel to walk in behind him. Angelica rises from the couch and runs over to Giovanni.

"Oh my, what happened?" she asks, taking him in an embrace.

"We had a misunderstanding at the Cage," Giovanni says nonchalantly. As if misunderstandings happen all the time. What kind of misunderstanding leads to blood stained shirts?

As Angelica and Giovanni share a kiss, I look past the door and see Gabriel standing in the hallway with the door open with his foot, talking to a man in a suit. He points to the corners of the walls. They shake hands and say their goodbyes.

His shirt isn't ripped but it is stained as well. A large patch of crimson fills his chest. Is it his blood and was he hurt in this *misunderstanding*?

I'm unmoving. Afraid that if I move that this moment will become too real. That Gabriel being hurt and stained with blood is real. My eyes fill with tears as he makes his way over to Giovanni, pats him on the back and gives Angelica a kiss on the cheek.

In one fluid motion, he makes his way over to me. The aroma of metal fills my senses. I'm afraid to touch him. So I keep my eyes on him.

He runs his hand along my cheek and leans down into me. His lips are firm and unforgiving. I give him all of me in that moment. The fear of losing him hits me and I let him overpower me with his kiss. We lose ourselves in each other for a moment.

He breaks the kiss as he cups my face. Our foreheads connect and we lock eyes.

"I'm ok firefly," he whispers. His eyes are soft but unforgiving. I believe him.

"Is this your blood?" I ask, as my hand hovers over his chest, not wanting to touch him, just in case he is hurt.

"No, it's all his. We will talk in the morning about it but right now I need sleep." The blue in his eyes become the ocean of emotion I'm swimming in. I simply nod and he grabs my hand and walks us back over to Giovanni and Angelica.

We say our goodbyes, Gabriel makes sure to lock the front door, and we make our way to our bedroom. Skipping the bed, he walks us to the bathroom.

Gabriel's starts to undress as I turn the shower water on. Testing the temperature making sure it won't be too hot, I turn back around and notice Gabriel is in the middle of the bathroom, naked.

I don't know why I'm just now noticing the single tattoo on his chest. A crucifix. I refrain from touching him, even though everything in me is telling me to.

I can't help but run my eyes down his body, paying special attention to the metal ring on his dick. Bruises and dried blood stain his perfect body. But he stands tall, waiting for me to make a move, I'm sure.

I watch him watch me as I undress, one layer at a time, until we are both standing naked staring at each other. My body feels hot even before I step into the shower. I chalk it up to the steam that's starting to build inside the bathroom.

Gabriel is the first one to make a move. His steps are slow but steady. I can see the veins in his arms thicken with every step he takes toward me. I'm frozen in place, not from fear of what he might do but with lust of wanting it.

He's mere inches from me, our bodies all but touching. Our eyes unmoving from each other. I'm lost in the blueness of his eyes when I feel his fingers trail up my arms, sending a shiver up my spine.

"My Firefly, I can see the lust in your eyes," he whispers into my ear. He takes my ear lobe between his teeth and pinches, it opens the flood gates between my legs. But I've come to realize most anything Gabriel does has me feeling that way.

"How do you want me Maya?" I'm taken back by his question, but it's one thing I've become accustomed to with

Gabriel. He never takes, he always leads but with concern. I'm at a loss for words as I watch blue in his eyes turn sapphire.

Without missing a beat, he leans down and places a soft kiss on the tip of my nose. "Do you want to me to treat like the queen you are, or fuck you like a whore?" The air in my lungs is sucked out. Time stands still as I take in his words.

I should be offended at being called a whore. Nicholas treated me as one but as Gabriel stands in front of me his words mean something different.

"Fuck me, Gabriel," the words are strained as I say them. I can't help but hang my head almost in shame at my words. His fingers lift my chin and he makes me look at him.

"Say it again," he growls.

"I want you to fuck me. I want to be your whore." My confidence builds the longer we look at each other. I want to please him, I want to make him feel all the things he makes me feel.

Something in him must snap because he smashes his lips into mine. His mouth is warm, overpowering. He doesn't need permission because I am putty in his hands. He walks us backward into the shower. The water hitting my back before encasing us.

Our tongues tangle together. He tastes like mint and copper, with the stain of someone's blood still on him.

My back is pressed into the cold tile and we continue to devour each other, lost in our passion. I rise to my toes to

reach my hands over his shoulders and I feel his dick on my stomach. I can't help but run my hands through his hair. I'm over come with the need to feel him on me and more passionately, *in me*.

“Gabriel,” I moan out as he pulls away and starts to kiss me along my shoulders. He begins to trail kisses down my body, between my breasts lowering himself to his knees.

He stops between my belly button and my pussy, looking up through his lashes. A knowing smirk on his face when he suddenly runs his tongue down between my legs.

Without abandon, his tongue spreads me open. Eating me like I'm his last meal. His hands touching every part of my body. He runs his hands down my legs and without warning he lifts me and pushes my legs onto his shoulders.

Over and over his tongue invades my pussy. Getting lost in the feel of him, I lift my head and get blinded by the shower light. This must be what heaven feels like but if for some reason it's not, I'd rather be in hell.

The warmth of his tongue, his hands all over me, and the water around us is enough to send my body crashing into bliss. I feel weightless as my orgasm sends a current of electricity through my body. My back arches off the tiled bathroom wall, shooting stars overtake my vision. Complete bliss.

With one last tug of my clit, Gabriel sets my weak legs on the floor. I have to use him for support as I find my bearings again.

“Now that I’ve had my fill, get on your knees,” he murmurs into my ear. Without hesitation I drop onto the cold, wet floor. Without breaking eye contact he runs his hand along his thick cock. I notice the purple hued vein running along his shaft.

I can’t help but lick my lips in anticipation of tasting him. Precum coating his pulsing tip and the metal ring. It’s become my favorite accessory of his. The feel of the cold metal inside me is overwhelming as it hits its target over and over.

Gabriel takes his hand from his dick and runs it along my bottom lip. I drag my tongue along the side. I want desperately to taste him.

He takes his dick into his hand again, guiding it ever so slowly to my mouth. My mouth opens, waiting impatiently. I stick my tongue out, overcome with lust for this man.

The man that took me, saved me, and has freed me, in more ways than one.

I lean into his dick and he pulls away. I look up at him in desired confusion.

“Patients, firefly,” his evil smirk sends a current through my body. He’s toying with me and I can’t help but let him. “My whore takes whatever she is given and nothing more, understand?” I nod. The mixture of his praise using my nickname and his degradation of calling me his whore has my brain misfiring.

The feelings this man induces inside me would send anyone else into a mental institution. But the way Gabriel treats and

speaks to me has me wanting everything he gives me. Hopefully more.

He lines his tip back at my mouth. I slowly open my mouth but this time stay in place. I set my hands on my thighs, wanting desperately to touch myself, to end this tension that's building between my legs.

With one deep push, his dick invades my mouth, hitting the back of my throat. I can't help but gag in response. He just as quickly removes his dick.

Tears already starting to build at the corners of my eyes, he rubs his fingers on my cheek as he says, "get ready Maya." I nod, giving him permission, *as if he needs it at this point*, to take me.

Sliding his dick back in, slower this time, he holds my chin. The metal ring gliding along the roof of my mouth. I run my tongue along the bottom of his shaft. He hits the back of my throat over and over.

Air becomes a second thought as he continues to slam into me. I'm blessed with short spurts of oxygen every time he pulls away. Tears are running down my face, spit foaming at the corners of my mouth.

He picks up his speed and I have nowhere to go. I am his to use for his own pleasure.

"Play with yourself," he growls out looking down at me.

Something about his authority and demeanor has my hand running up my thigh and between my legs. I spread my legs

slightly and place my fingers along my pussy.

“Wider,” he says, tapping my knee with his foot. Again, I listen without hesitation.

As he works my mouth, my fingers work my pussy. My senses are in overdrive. Once again my vision starts to blur, a shiver starts to build at the tip of my stomach. A moan escapes me as his dick ruthlessly slides in and out of my mouth.

My second orgasm hits me just as I feel his cum hit my tongue. “Don’t swallow,” he commands. The salty taste of his cum sits on my tongue, trying my damndest to keep it there.

“Let me see,” he lifts my chin. I open my mouth and stick my tongue out. I *should* be disgusted. I *should* feel ashamed that I let him treat me like this. But I don’t. And I won’t.

“Swallow,” he closes my mouth with his fingers under my chin. I do as I’m told and remove my hand from my pussy. He takes me by the shoulders and lifts me to my feet. “Atta girl,” he says as his kisses me so softly.

The warm shower water has turned lukewarm. We quickly get cleaned and make our way out. After taking a quick nap, the rest of the day is spent lounging around the house, him taking calls, and me working on finishing editing pictures.

By dinner we’re sitting at the island and decided on take out from one of his restaurants in town.

“I’d like for you to teach me how to defend myself,” I blurt out as Gabriel takes a mouth full of food into his mouth.

He looks over at me suspiciously and cocks an eyebrow at me. “Why?” he asks, pushing the food down his throat.

“That night we were out with Giovanni and Angelica at Whiskeys, when you touched me, I didn’t know it was you. I felt scared of who it could have been and I realized I didn’t know how to protect myself.” I explain to him in one full breath. I start to play with the food on my plate, nervous of what he could say. “Never mind,” I add, regretting even asking.

“Hey,” he grabs my hand, “I’ll be here to protect you, but if you want to know how then of course I will,” his soft smile filling his face. God this man is amazing.

I smile back at him and we finish our dinner.

His bed has become one of my favorite places in the whole house, besides my new office that I have taken full advantage of. The night ends with him between my legs.

More than once.



Gabriel woke me up with his dick pressed into my ass. In my blissful sleepy haze, he takes me from behind.

Now we’re on his motorcycle gliding through the afternoon traffic. He told me today would be the day he shows me how to use a gun. When I told him I wanted to learn how to defend myself last night over dinner, I had envisioned him teaching me how to be physical.

He proceeded to tell me that he'd rather I learn how to shoot, so the assailant couldn't get too close to me. I don't argue because I know i'm small. I know anyone can overpower me, so being able to handle a gun is much more helpful.

He pulls his bike into a back alley of a sketchy looking building. The red brick is faded and parts are chipped away. No windows anywhere to know what is inside.

Gabriel parks his bike in a makeshift parking spot, takes me by my hand, and leads up to a door in the corner of the building.

The interior is nothing like the exterior. White walls throughout, case after case in rows filled with guns. Gabriel leads us to a gentleman in the corner behind a large counter.

"Gabriel," the tall muscular man says, reaching out to shake hands.

"Max, this is Maya. Maya, this is Max." Gabriel looks between us.

"Nice to meet you Maya," Max holds out his hand once again wanting to shake my hand. I go to release my hand from Gabriels', but his grip tightens around my hand. I smile at Max nervously. Max winks knowingly at me and Gabriel coughs at him.

"We need a booth, with four boxes of ammo, a Glock, Smith and Weston, and-" Gabriel looks to the wall of guns hanging on the wall, "-the Stag-15." Max takes out boxes of ammo,

setting them on the counter and places the three guns next to them.

Gabriel gives me the boxes of ammo to hold as he takes the guns into his hands and leads me through a set of double doors on the far wall.

We step into a larger room divided up into fifteen rows with walls dividing them. A few people scattered throughout the rows. The sounds of guns going off echoing throughout the space.

Gabriel walks us to the last row to the left. He sets the guns on the small counter in front of us. Further down our row, a piece of paper, an outline of a man hangs off of a clip. He pushes a button on the wall next to us and the hanging paper comes flying closer to us.

Gabriel explains where I want to hit on the paper. Center mass is most effective but if I hit the paper anywhere in the black figure, it should slow my actual assailant enough for me to get away.

The next few minutes is spent with him walking me through how to handle the gun. He explains that the Glock is lighter weight and doesn't have much of a push back once it's fired. Deciding that's the one I want to try out first, he lines me up in the center of our cubical.

He sets a pair of headphones on my ears and points down our row to the hanging paper. The paper seems so far away, I don't think i'll be able to hit it. As Gabriel is standing behind

me, his hands go up ovetop of me as i'm nervously holding the gun.

He lines my pointer finger over the trigger, "take a breath and then pull the trigger," he says through my headphones. My chest rises and falls and then I pull the trigger. My body gets pushed back into his chest. My fingers tingle and the bullet goes flying out of the gun.

The bullet misses the black outline, hitting the white negative space.

"Again," Gabriel says, raising my hand and lining up the gun with the paper.

Breathe in and out. Pull the trigger.

This time the bullet hits the black figure in the bottom corner. I can't help but feel proud. For the next hour, Gabriel and I take turns shooting off bullet after bullet.

When it's his turn he takes his Stag-15 and holds the end against his shoulder, sets his sight on the target and pulls the trigger. I watch as his arm muscles contract, veins running along the ridges.

I clench my legs together, praying to god that he doesn't see how he seems to be affecting me. Everything this man seems to do is the sexiest thing I've ever seen.

The piece of paper is shredded to bits as it comes flying toward us. He sets a new piece up on the clip and sends it back to the other side.

It's my turn again. I'm determined to hit my target. I line myself up, holding the gun in front of me. I breathe in and then out. Ready to pull the trigger, I feel Gabriel behind me. Well I feel his dick before I feel his body.

I freeze before pulling the trigger. This can't be safe. This must be frowned upon but holy hell does it feel good. He runs his fingers up my sides and along my arms toward the gun.

"Pull the trigger Firefly," he whispers. I can't seem to catch my breath, my heartbeat is pounding in my chest. I blink, trying to steady my breathing, and pull the trigger.

As the bullet goes flying, I feel Gabriel's touch hovering between my legs. The soft fabric of the dress he requested I wear sends a spark of need to the pit of my stomach.

I'm fixated on the bullet that's now hit the paper right in the center. He begins to pool my sundress up into his hand. He slips his fingers into my panties and cups my pussy.

"My wife needs a reward for hitting her targets," he whispers into my ear and he spreads my pussy lips with his fingers. If I wasn't a wet mess before, I sure am now. He wouldn't possibly do this with people around.

The feel of his hands on me has me grinding into him. His other hand takes the gun that's still in my hands and sets it to the side. As his other hand begins to quicken.

"Don't make a sound," he demands. In one thrust, his fingers invade my pussy. Overtaken by the feel of him, I lean down

onto the counter. I lay my head flat and look to him. He snakes his fingers through my hair and takes a fist full.

I'm overwhelmed with his touch, I can't help but let him take me. "If I didn't know any better, I think you want people to know what I'm doing to you right now," he laughs out.

The echoing of gunfire tells me no one can see or hear us at the moment. But I can't help but have a want for people to know. Having people hear and possibly watch sends me over the edge. I hold my scream in my throat as Gabriel hits my center with his fingers.

Catching my breath, I go to stand and flatten my dress. I run my hand through my hair trying to tame it and turn to face Gabriel just in time to watch him lick his fingers.

"You taste divine," he says with a wink.

Deciding that we're done shooting for the day, Gabriel takes us home. Everyday I've learned more and more about this man that's my husband. And every day I get closer to a feeling I'm unfamiliar with.



CHAPTER 15

Gabriel

I've enjoyed having Maya in my life. She brings an exciting calm everywhere she goes. Between the thriving businesses and dealing with the shipment issues with her father, I've enjoyed coming home to her in our home.

My bed finally has someone other than myself in it. Her body's warmth makes sleeping easy. Nightmares of my life before her have all but subsided. She is the calm in the storm that has been my life.

I haven't told her about the shipment issue and the realization about her father yet. Dealing with her father is something I want to avoid as long as possible. He's a crazy man that will do anything, every family knows this. How Giovanni and I missed this is another question I don't have time to answer at the moment.

Right now, I'm staring at Maya as she's working in her office. Every time we've gone anywhere she's taken her camera with her. I have loved watching her live out her

passion. But watching her in her element behind the computer screen has me wishing I could bend her over her desk.

“Maya,” I say in a calm tone. But the anxiety coursing through me has my chest heaving. “I need to talk to you, do you have a minute?”

I’m not prepared for this conversation, but it needs to happen. I can’t keep this secret from her. She needs to know what kind of monster her father truly is. I’m ready to break her heart and put it back together if need be.

Her eyes go wide as she looks up at me above her computer. She slams her computer shut and walks over to me. I keep my hands at my sides so I don’t take her in my arms and forget this conversation that I’ve been dreading.

We go into the dining room and sit across from each other. I watch as she nervously fiddles with her fingers. Her cute nervous tick has me desperately wanting to change the subject. But with the shipment coming in a few short weeks, I need to tell her.

If not for my own sanity but to keep her safe once shit hits the fan when we attack.

“It’s about your father,” keeping my voice low and calm. As if her eyes couldn’t go any wider with shock. Her head snaps to mine.

“What about my father?” she asks, her voice shaky.

I give her the details about what we found out about his shipments, deciding to give her all the information and not

keep her in the dark. “Your father has been trafficking woman and we found out that he’s been using our family’s port at the shipyard to do it.”

She’s unmoving and silent so I continue, “We’re going to stop this next shipment, and I need you to know that my brother and I are going to kill your father.” I’m not holding back. She needs to know what her life is going to become in a few short weeks.

Losing a father isn’t easy. I became a different person after my father died. I don’t want that for her. I want her to be able to overcome it and be better for it.

“When?” is all she asks as she taps her fingers on the edge of the table.

“In a few weeks. We’re going to stop the shipment, save the women, and kill anyone who attempts to stop us,” I answer. My own nervous tick starts to show as I rub my thighs with my hands.

“Can I be there?” Her question is a hit to the gut. She wants to be there when her father dies? No, absolutely not. I can’t have her witnessing that. I wouldn’t have her there and potentially get in the way.

“Please, Gabriel.” She reaches across the table and grabs my biceps. Her touch sends a warmth throughout my body. She can’t be there. I need her safe. I can’t have her there, I won’t.

“Ok,” I simply say. “Can I ask why you want to be there?” There has to be a reason. Does she really hate her father that

much that she would want to watch him die?

“I’ve hated my father my whole life. He’s done nothing but hurt me and lie to me. I want to witness it because once I see it, I know he’ll never be able to hurt me again.” Her hands are shaky and her eyes are reddening as she holds back tears.

Her confession breaks me. I’m too far away from her, I need her in my arms. Standing from the chair, I walk over to her and set her in my lap. I cup her face into my hands and can’t help but kiss her. A kiss filled with understanding, with a want to take her pain away.

“Ok, but you are not to get in the way, understand?” I ask, breaking our kiss and leaning my forehead onto hers. She simply nods and I can’t help but wipe her tears away with my thumbs. I want to take all her pain from her. I want her to know a life of nothing but love and compassion.

She stays locked in my embrace. I feel her heart pounding into my chest. Simply holding her calms the rage in me for her father. I will kill him. I will be the one to end his life. Maya will be safe with me. I will protect her.

After a few minutes, her breathing has calmed and she lifts her head off my shoulder. Her raven eyes are swollen and red from her tears.

“Don’t waste your tears on him firefly, I will protect you,” I say to her as I run my thumbs over her cheeks. I can’t seem to help myself from touching her. Her skin is warm silk.

She nods her head in my hands and gives me a weak smile. She goes to stand but before her feet touch the floor, I lift her in my arms. I walk us to our bedroom and place her on our bed.

“Why don’t you rest for a little bit while I go inform the men of our change in plans.” I kiss her on her forehead and simply walk out of the room. If I stay too long, she won’t rest and I wouldn’t get any work done.

Closing the door behind me, I take my phone out of my back pocket and dial Giovanni’s phone number.

“Hello,” Giovanni answers.

“Hey man, you got a minute?” I question.

“Yea, what’s up? We were just about to take the kids to the park.”

I have loved watching my brother become a husband and a father. He devotes his life to the family he has built. I know our father is looking down and is damn proud of him. I’ll admit I’m a bit jealous of him.

“We’ll need to find a safe area for Maya at the shipyard. She wants to be there when we intercept her fathers shipment.”

“Does she know what’s going to go down?” he questions.

I know bringing Maya along is a risk. I don’t want her in the crosshairs. I don’t want any of her fathers men to find her and take her. The growing concern in me wants to chain her to my bed until the job is finished.

But the more compassionate part of me wants to give her everything she asks for. If she wants to be there, who am I to stop her? Who am I to tell her no? She clearly needs to heal from her abuse and if watching him die helps her do that, then fuck it.

“It’s going to sound fucked up, but she wants to witness her father die.” Even as I say it, it sounds messed up. But Giovanni doesn’t argue.

“Ok man, we can stream her in via security cameras at my house and she can stay with Angelica.” His plan makes more sense. It would keep her away from the shipyard and away from her father.

“Let me see what she wants, but let’s work her in somewhere safe just in case.”

We end the conversation agreeing to have a final meet up in a few days to work out the final plans. I hang up and make my way to the kitchen. Grabbing myself a glass and my imported whiskey, I pour myself a glass. The warm liquid runs down my throat and fills my empty stomach.

I busy myself picking up around the house. The cleaning crew comes once a week but I still pick up around the house so they don’t do too much. Dishes are put away, laundry has been done, and work emails have been answered.

A noise at the hallway has me lifting my head away from the tv that I’ve been mindlessly channel surfing as Maya walks into the space.

Her hair is wrapped in a towel on top of her head and she's wearing a large white shirt. *My shirt*. Watching her stand there half dressed springs my dick to life.

She smiles at me as she makes her way to the couch. She decides to take the furthest corner on the couch. That just won't do. I make my way to her side, pick her up, and set her on my lap as I sit where she was.

She wiggles on my lap and I can't help but growl in pleasure. This woman has taken all my senses and put them in overdrive. She finally settles into my lap and I thank the gods above because had she kept grinding her hips into me, I would have needed to put her over the coffee table.

"What were you watching?" her voice does nothing to settle my throbbing dick. Either she's clueless or she feels it and is choosing to not say anything.

"Wasn't, I was channel surfing." I hand her the remote to let her decide.

This. This is what I have enjoyed the most with Maya. The simple, mundane acts of everyday life. A sense of calm and peace fills my chest. This must have been what my father fought for. What he left the mafia for.

Memories of my father and mother after he gave power over to our uncle fill my head. The days at the park, the family dinners, field trips at school. My father gave up everything so Gio and I could have a sliver of normalcy. And yet.

And yet, he and I are right back where our father didn't want us. I understand now. Why did he fought so hard. Why he left it all to our uncle. Why he gave up the security and comfort away for his family. But it didn't stop the corruption of the mafia to find him and take his life.

That's why I do what I do. Why I need to make him proud. He gave up everything for my brother and I. He lost his life shielding us from the evils of this world. So I do what I can to make our little corner of the mafia world a less corrupt and more thriving place. *For them.*

Maya finally settles on a channel. Avengers Endgame plays on the large hanging tv screen. It has been a long while since I've been able to just sit and relax, let alone watch a movie.

Her head settles into my shoulder as she sits cradled in my lap. I can't help but drift off into blissful sleep with her in my arms.



I don't know what's upset me more, having to leave Maya at home to deal with this fucker, or the fact that he decided to snitch on us to the feds. Whatever the reason, I'm taking it out on his body.

My fist uses the limp body hanging from his wrists as a punching bag. Punch after punch blood stains my knuckles, his blood or mine I'm not sure anymore.

“Remember this the next time you decide to rat us out to the feds.” I grunt out, breathless.

I motion for my men to come release and take him back to his owner. I’m ready to go back home to my girl. My wife.

As I’m walking in the door I notice all the lights throughout the house are off but the tv is still on. The tv glow shines a line on Maya who’s covered in a blanket in the corner of the couch, asleep.

I’ve been accustomed to being alone. The silence in my home became my safe space. But coming home to her feels right as her scent has overtaken every corner of the penthouse. Her laughter has filled each room. She fits perfectly.

I try to not make any noise as I turn the water on in the sink to wash my hands. My knuckles have a layer of callused skin over them but the warm water still stings on the cuts I’ve acquired.

I let my mind wander into nothingness when I suddenly feel a hand touch my shoulder. Jumping back, I turn and grab at whoever is behind me. With adrenaline still coursing through me, my hand goes flying around their neck. In the darkness I can’t make out who it is.

It takes me a second to realize what I’ve done and to who.

Maya’s eyes are large and full of shock. I can feel her pulse in my grasp around her neck. *And I like it.*

Our bodies are inches apart as I’ve pushed us into the bathroom counter. Her body slightly bent at the hip to

accommodate my weight on her. Her breasts are pushed up and she's losing her balance as she stands on her toes. I can feel her shallow breathing in my hand.

I go to move my hand and start to apologize for attacking her the way I did when her hand goes to mine and her grip keeps my hand around her neck.

Her eyes look to mine. I don't see fear or worry. I see want. I see lust. She gives me a small shake of her head and I crash my lips to hers. Our mouths clash as our tongues fight for control.

Her lips are warm and taste of lavender, with a hint of blood I'm sure is from me. *My new favorite scent.*

While my blood stained hand is around her neck, her hands fight with my belt. Her hand slides into my underwear causing my cock to spring to life. Her hand is warm as it starts to work me. She pays close attention to my tip as she plays with the ring protruding from it.

Once she has my dick rock hard, I spin her on the balls of her feet and lay her flat on the countertop. I run my hand from her hair, down her spine, and give her ass a firm squeeze.

She had fallen asleep on the couch for the night so she's still just wearing my t-shirt. I snake my hand under the shirt and invade her pussy with my hand. She instantly lets out a moan as she turns her head to look at me.

I am completely lost in this woman as I slide my finger into her soaked pussy. She begins to moan louder with every finger

I push inside her soaked pussy. Her back arches, from pain or pleasure, i'm not sure. With my other hand, I don't bother dropping my pants, I just grab my dick and spread her ass cheeks with my tip. Her body tenses for a second.

“Not tonight my sweet wife, but one day, very soon I will take your ass.” I slide my tip down past her ass and line it up with her opening. I remove my fingers and not giving her a second, I slam into her.

I pound ruthlessly into her, giving her body what it desperately needs. I drag my free hand along her slide up to her hair. Grabbing a fist full, I push her back into my front.

“That's my good girl,” I praise her. “Taking my cock so well.”

“More, please more?” she moans out. Her body is mine for the using and she seems to know it. I may have taken my frustrations out on the now dead man at the Cage, but it's resurfaced with Maya laid out on the countertop.

“That's it baby, beg for my cock.”

“Please Gabriel, I need more. Harder, please.” Her plea has me pushing her back down onto the counter. I've lost all sense of self control, I'm an animal devouring her willing prey.

I can't seem to touch her enough. I run one hand up and down her spine while my other hand works her clit. I can feel my balls tighten as a pressure starts to build in the pit of my stomach. I'm close but I need her to come first. I start working her clit harder and faster.

“Come for my baby,” I command her. Her pussy has a vice grip on my dick as her blissful scream echoes through the penthouse. Her arms draped at her side and her legs turn to jello.

Her orgasm pushes me over the edge as I spill myself inside her. I fall onto her back and we stay like that for a minute, each of us trying to catch our breath. I pull my hand from between her legs and interlock our fingers together on the countertop. I keep us here in this blissful state.

Lifting myself off of her spent body, I adjust myself as Maya stays glued to the countertop. I wrap my arms around her and carry her bridal style to our bedroom.



Waking to the sun beaming through the windows, I feel Maya’s body snaked around mine. Her head is in the crook of my neck, legs wrapped in mine. There is no better feeling.

Going over the events of last night in my head, I try not to wake her. We’re being ratted out to the Feds, which means we have yet another issue to worry about as we try to handle the shipment problem with Maya’s father.

The plan is set, we just need to wait him out. My heart sinks at the realization that Maya will be there in the crosshairs. But there was no telling her no. Though I don’t know how she will

react to watching her father die, I can't rob her of the closure that it will entail as well.

Unwrapping myself from Maya's body, I try not to wake her as I make my way to the bathroom. After a quick shower and dressing in my more casual clothes, faded jeans and a white shirt, I make my way to my office.

My morning is spent checking emails and approving shipments. I can't help but check in with Smith on the timeline of the trafficking shipment.

Smith is the best computer hacker in the business. There is nothing he can't find that's hidden. He keeps to himself but always comes running when called upon. His head is always on a computer screen.

One of our newest business opportunities opened up the door for Giovanni and I to give him more free reign. He'll be happy to hear that we will be giving him head of security at the new club opening later this year. If everything goes according to plan.

I hear a soft noise at the door as I pick my head up from my computer screen.

Standing in the door frame, in nothing but a towel, is Maya. Her curls are wet, from her shower I'm assuming. Water dripping to the floor.

"Oh baby," I growl out.

She starts to walk toward me on her tiptoes and my dick springs to life. I watch every slow step she takes, with a trail of

wet footprints behind her.

I turn my chair to face her as she walks around my desk and stands mere inches away from me. Fighting the urge to touch her, I lean my head up to lock eyes with her.

Her eyes are dark with need, but it's the gold flecks that I can't seem to ignore. She runs a feather like touch along the roughness of my growing facial hair.

“Does my firefly want to play?” I question her. I need to consent, I know her body must be hurting from how rough I took her last night.

A smile lifts at the corners of her mouth and she nods.

“Words Maya, I need you to tell me what you want.”

She leans down into me, causing the towel to fall off her body. With her mouth at my ear she says, “Fuck me, Gabriel.”

My needy little firefly. Without a second thought, I jump out of my chair, causing it to hit the wall behind us. I grab her by the hips, setting her on top of my desk.

“I was going to make breakfast this morning, but it seems breakfast came to me.” I fall to my knees between her legs. Determined to enjoy my meal, I run my tongue along her pussy lips.

My parents always taught me to never play with my food, but in this instance I can't seem to help myself.



After my early breakfast, I decided to treat Maya to actual food. With our bellies full of French toast and coffee, we're enjoying the New York life.

My bike weaves through traffic with Maya's hands around me. She's gotten so much more comfortable with riding with me. And I've enjoyed riding with her. I hadn't been able to ride my bike regularly but recently it's been our choice of transportation.

She says it's more fun. Which I won't argue with, it is fun. It's fun having her hold me. It's fun having her body pressed into mine. And as we sit at this red light, it becomes fun as I reach behind me and run my fingers with the fabric of her jeans between her legs.

I can feel her body tense and she looks around at the traffic. A couple is next to us, fighting about god knows what. The car on the other side is a guy sitting with his window down. He's watching us. Watching as I unapologetically make my woman feel good.

A smile lifts on his face, knowing what I'm doing. I nod at him in acknowledgment. I continue to play with her. I'm sure the friction is driving her wild. She tries her damndest to remove my hand, but I'm a determined man.

Determined to remind her who she belongs to, and determined to show the world she's mine.

I watch the traffic light turn from red to green and I slowly push off and glide down the street. Without removing my hand from between her legs, I slow roll it to our final destination.

And just as I feel her about to fall apart, I pull back. Pulling to the side of the road, I park the bike. As we stand on the sidewalk, I place my helmet on my bike and watch her do the same.

Her cheeks redden with need as she swats at me, “asshole, you could have killed us.”

I can’t help but let out a laugh. “Oh but what a way it would have been to go, don’t you think?” I wink at her as I grab her hand and lead her through the glass doors of my surprise.

She seems oblivious as it takes her a second to release where we are.

“What are we doing here Gabriel?” she asks as her head moves from side to side taking all the artwork in.

“It’s the newest art museum, it opened a few months ago and I wanted to bring you.” I answer as I walk us to the front desk.

The receptionist checks us in and informs us that all pieces are eligible to be purchased. Keeping that in the back of my mind, I walk us through the open archway.

The artwork is sectioned off by theme. Sculptures, painting, abstract, and even a section for photography. I have my card ready to go in my wallet.

Walking through the exhibit, Maya stops at almost every piece and admires it. One abstract painting seems to have caught her eye. It has bright colors throughout it. Some sections are raised above the canvas. It gives the painting a 3D effect.

Though I may not understand it, I watch Maya light up as she explains the use of colors and what they mean.

“It’s a Stephan Stevens,” she tells me. A sting of jealousy creeps into my chest as I internally curse whoever Stephan Stevens is. Jealous of a man I don’t even know. I’ve got it bad, and that is fine with me.

“He’s a rising artist. I’ve been following him for years. Seeing his work displayed is-” she pauses and I silently vow to kill this man, “-surreal.”

“Mhmm,” I grind my teeth together, trying to fight the urge to take her on top of this stupid fucking painting to show this Stevens who’s she is.

I realize how ridiculous I sound as Maya takes my hand and notices my pent up rage. “Is my husband jealous of a man he hasn’t met before?”

“No, I’m not,” I blatantly lie. She must sense my lie as she walks me through another archway into another section of the museum.

There’s not a feeling of wanting to kill anyone in this section, as Maya isn’t a fan of sculptures. We quickly walk through to the next section. And damn it, I know I’m in trouble now.

The walls are filled with photos. Some set in thick wooden frames, others on open canvases. A mix of portraits and buildings. Animals and inanimate objects. I release her hold on me as I watch her walk through the area.

She's like a kid in a candy store, not knowing where to look so she whips her head from one place to another. I can't help but smile as I watch her.

I watch as she walks over to a huge photograph of an open field. A single butterfly in the center of the photograph. I make my way to stand behind her and feel her tense as I place my hands on her shoulders.

"You like this one?" I ask. She simply nods at me. Sensing something is wrong, I step to the side of her. I watch as a single tear runs down her cheek.

"What's wrong Maya?" My protectiveness of her takes over my senses.

"It's stupid," she says as he wipes the lone tears away.

"Nothing you feel is ever stupid," I say, reassuring her.

"To be so free, to be able to go where you want without worry," her words are a gut punch. "I'll never know that feeling." Her saying that feels like a stab to my heart.

"Maya, baby," I turn her, needing her to look at me and hear what I'm about to say. "You are free. I will watch you soar if you let me. There is nothing in this world you aren't able to do or see. Let me help you fly."

I pull her into my chest, needing her to feel the words. Wanting her to know I meant every word. Though our union was rushed and against all odds, I haven't regretted a day I've gotten to spend with her. I will die before I break her heart.

The fear of losing her like I lost my parents fills my heart. But I won't let the fear of losing her stop me from loving her. She mine to have, as long as she wants me.

Pulling her lips to mine, we share a kiss. A soft kiss, laced with all the words and emotions I'm unable to express.

“You finish looking at the art, I'm going to run to the bathroom.” I smile down at her. She nods and I walk away from her, with my chest in knots.

Walking back to the front of the exhibit, I walk past the bathrooms and straight to the front desk.



CHAPTER 16

Maya

I am emotionally spent after the reaction to the photograph I had. I decided I need to clear my head so I'm editing my own photos. Or trying to. Gabriel was so understanding and let me be by myself for the day.

The utter gut wrenching feeling I experienced of that butterfly was unexpected. Try as I might, I have been staring at this one photo for over an hour. Unable to decide what edits it needs, I slam my laptop shut with a grunt. Now I'm sad and frustrated.

Just as I'm about to leave my office, a soft knock hits my door. Gabriel stands in the door frame with his arms crossed at his chest. What is it about this man that sends my endorphins sky rocketing.

Whether he's in a suit or jeans, like he is now, I can't help but want him in every way. The past couple of months being with him has been a saving grace. I thank the gods above for giving me to Gabriel. I can't, and really don't want to imagine a life without him.

The realization that I could be married to Nicholas sends an ice cold shiver down my spine. Gabriel has been nothing but kind and understanding with me. Allowing me to open my heart to him. I just pray his heart is as open to me.

I know it's too soon to tell him I love him, but I know that's what this feeling is that I have for him. He's kind, understanding, never demanding, *unless he's fucking me twelve ways to Sunday*. He's opened his home and world to me. A man I am forever grateful for.

The situation with my father is slowly taking over his daily life. He's been working well into the night, leaving throughout the day. I'm sure it's kept him busy on how to handle the situation. I've kept myself busy with my editing while he's been away.

I demanded to be there and I know that's put a wrench into their plan but something deep inside me needs to witness what happens. I have tried to love my father throughout his faults, but watching how Gabriel has treated me, I know the feelings my father felt for me was never love.

His reign over my life wasn't out of protection, but out of the need for power. I was his ticket to control. I was his way of gaining ultimate power. When Gabriel did what he did at my wedding, that threw my father's plans out the window. Whatever his plans are is anyone's guess. But I know one thing, my father won't ever stop.

I imagine the anger and hatred he has for me and Gabriel now. But a small bit of my heart wants my father to love me.

To be happy for me. To look at me with anything other than hate. So while Gabriel handles the situation, I will be watching and waiting for him to right his wrongs.

“What’s got your mind racing?” Gabriel steps into my office.

“Will I be in the way when you confront my father?” I ask. I need to know that I won’t stop him from doing what he needs to do. That I won’t be a distraction for him.

“We’ll have you stationed in an office a few yards away, why?” Walking over to me, he lifts me up and sets me in his lap as he sits in my chair.

“I don’t want to distract you, but I also need to be there,” I know I’m not making any sense. But this overwhelming feeling of need to give my father one last chance overtakes my rational thoughts.

“Let’s get two things straight,” his calloused hands cup my chin, “first, I have been overcome with worry for you since the day I saw you that day at your fathers.” He leans up and kisses my cheek.

“And second, I will do whatever I need to do to make you feel safe. If that means having you there as I confront your father, so be it.” He kisses my other cheek, “but please understand, your father is not leaving the shipyard alive.” His voice is emotionless with that declaration.

Am I prepared to witness my father be murdered? Am I emotionally able to live with the fact that I somehow played a part in his death?

“I understand, I trust you.” I want to say so much more but for now, I give him my trust. Even though my heart is already his.

“Now if you’re ready, I have a surprise for you in the living room,” I jump out of his hold. I run out of my office and down the hall.

“Maya, don’t run,” his voice has me slowing my pace instantly. “Good girl,” I hear him say behind me. As we make our way to the living room, I notice a large rectangular box. I turn to look at him, confused.

“What’s this?” I ask, eyeing the box.

“Open it and find out,” he walks over to the couch and falls onto the cushion.

Like a kid on Christmas, I frantically open the box. Whatever is in this box is wrapped in a thick layer of protective wrap. I peel away one layer at a time until I start to see peaks of color.

I’m stunned as I remove the last piece of protective wrap. I’m looking at the photograph of the lone butterfly in the field. I run my hands along the top of the photo, not wanting to touch it, praying it’s real.

“Gabriel, ohmygod,” I look up at him. “When did you get this?” I need to keep my emotions in check. I hold back the tears at the corners of my eyes.

He just smiles at me in that *I’ll never tell* smile.

Unable to control my self anymore, I set the framed photo aside and leap into his lap. My mouth invading his. Giving him all my emotions in this one kiss. Giving more of myself to him. More than I thought I'd ever give a man.

“Thank you,” I whisper into his lips.

“I'd buy you the world if you let me, firefly.” His nickname for me sends a swarm of warmth into my core. Just as I start to grind on him, the intercom comes to life with Giovanni's deep voice.

“Stop fucking and let us up.” Giovanni's voice echoes through the room. Gabriel and I grunt in unison.

“Raincheck,” he says as he kisses me once more and slaps my ass.

With a quick change into a form fitting blue dress, the group of us make our way to the waiting car on the curb. Giovanni and Gabriel take the front seats as Angelica and I share the middle seats.

Angelica has become a close friend in this whirlwind of a life. She's fun to be around, is always making me laugh and never judges me. Spending your life being judged and put down by the people around is hard.

But Gabriel and his family haven't done it once. If anything, they've allowed me to blossom and love myself more. Something I'll be forever grateful for.

“So, where are we off to?” I ask into the open space of the car.

Gabriel reaches his arm behind the seat and grabs at my exposed knee, “we’re going to check out the location for a new club that we hope to open up soon, then to Whiskeys for dinner and dancing.”

A new club. The amount of businesses these men finance or operate is astounding. How Gabriel is able to keep it all straight is beyond me. Yet, I have seen him overworked and fluttered by all the work on his computer.

Which brings an idea to my head. Maybe we can go on a vacation after the issue with my dad. Take that long awaited honeymoon that we technically never got.

“What kind of club?” I ask inquisitively.

“The sex kind,” Giovanni chimes in. I catch his soft eyes in the rearview mirror. Everyone in the car laughs but me. A sex club. Like a club people go to have sex? Ohmygod!

“It’s a club that one of our business partners is opening up, it’ll allow people to play out their sexual fantasies in a safe and secure place.” Gabriel reassures me as his hand continues to run along my knee.

His touch is everything.

I will never get over how his touch makes me feel. His hands are rough to the touch but send such warmth throughout my body. I shake my head in understanding. A simple touch to the knee has me wanting him to take me in the back seat of this car. Everyone else be damned, they can watch.

A short drive later, we're walking into the back door of what I assume is going to be the club. Nothing much to see as workers run around with supplies in hand.

The walls are black with gold accents. In the far corner sits a L-shaped countertop with shelves behind it, assuming that's the bar. Next to the bar is a staircase leading to a second and third floor.

Angelica grabs me by the arm as she walks us through the big open space. "You think you'll ever come here when it opens?" she laughs out. I can't help but look back at Gabriel who is talking to Smith, their tech security guy, whose name I have come to find out is Warren.

I don't miss the platform that looks more like a stage that takes up most of the front of the first floor. Soft red velvet chairs line the outside of the stage.

What would this area be used for?

I can't help but think people will be having sex on this stage while others watch. I should feel weary of people ever catching Gabriel and I in such an act. But a flutter of butterflies comes alive in the pit of my stomach.

Could we ever come here?

Shaking the thought way, Angelica and I walk the whole span of the club. As we make it back to the men, we hear Smith say, "it'll have state of the art security, excluding the upstairs rooms. I'll have an office here I can work from to make sure the day to day operates correctly."

My curiosity gets the better of me and I can't help but ask, "what's upstairs?"

Everyone in the group looks at me with mischievous smiles. Gabriel grabs me and kisses my temple.

"They are private rooms. Where people can go and fuck without anyone watching, unless that's their thing, then that's what the third floor is. A big open space similar to down here but it houses some toys and tools."

I can't help but blush at his curt answer. I may have been a virgin when Gabriel and I met, and he and I have had our fun, but something tells me we haven't done nearly as much as some people.

An hour goes by before we make our way to the VIP section of Whiskeys.

It's a Saturday night so the place is packed. Luckily we used the back entrance because I noticed the line around the building through the large windows.

A few groups crowd the VIP section. Gabriel leads me through the ropes at the top of the stairs to the last table. Angelica and Giovanni follow behind us hand in hand. The music is loud through the speakers hanging in the corners.

Drinks are already waiting for us as we make it to the couch. As I go to sit, Gabriel grabs me by the hips and positions me on his lap. I feel his dick already hardening underneath me.

"Not too many drinks tonight firefly, I want you lucid for what I'm going to do to you when we get home." His deep

voice vibrates throughout my body and settles between my legs. His hand lands on my thigh and he starts to run circles with his warm fingers. I don't know if I'll ever get used to his touch, it's fire and ice all at once.

Unable to look at him, I reach for my glass of water and chug it down. I need to cool myself, settle my heart, or I'll end up taking him right here in front of his brother and Angelica. He doesn't miss an opportunity to grab my ass through my dress.

I look over to Angelica and Giovanni to make sure they didn't see, but they are lost in each other almost as much as I am in Gabriel. They are having a full on make out session just a feet away from us, without a care in the world.

Will I ever be that confident? To be that intimate with Gabriel in front of people. Then the memory of what he did to me in the hallway just down stairs a few short months ago comes to mind. The way he made me cum, how he took my body for his pleasure.

The face of the woman that must have seen the whole thing as we were leaving, brings a smile to my face.

“What's got you grinning like a naughty school girl?” Gabriel asks.

I hope the dimness of the club lights hides my reddened cheeks. “Was thinking of what you did to me in the hallway downstairs a while ago.”

A mischievous smile creeps up on his face as he leans into me, “we can revisit that if you’d like.” His lips hit my shoulder and I feel his teeth leave a slight sting, of pleasure and pain.

Before I have time to answer, Angelica screams, “oh my god, I love this song, let’s go dance.” Worst timing ever.

She grabs my hand and leads me to the dance floor, leaving the men in their seats. I don’t miss the wink Gabriel sends me. The man knows what he does to me and he is unashamed of it.

We make it to the center of the dance floor, and unlike last time I was here with her, I’m more confident as I find the beat and let it take over.

Song after song, drink after drink, we have lost ourselves in the night life. Angelica and I make our way back to the men who are waiting for us. Gabriel is leaning back into the couch with his leg propped up on his knee.

Sex appeal is on overdrive and I notice him. He has unbuttoned the first few buttons of his shirt. His tattoos partly showing. His hair is slicked back, from sweat I’m sure. He and Giovanni joined us girls for a few songs until they permanently settled.

While I was dancing, I felt him watching every once in a while. His eyes digging deep into my heart. I love having his eyes on me. He gives me a self confidence I haven’t had before I met him.

“Time to go,” the men say in unison as they stand and toss some cash on the table.

The drive home is filled with laughter and gossip, more so from Angelica and I than the boys. I didn't miss the constant eyes on us as we talked the whole way to the house.

With our lips locked on each other, we crash through the front door of the penthouse. I kick my shoes off, not daring to break our kiss. He smells of whiskey and oak. A scent I have become addicted to.

Gabriel has a firm grip on my ass as he leads us to the bedroom. He throws me backwards onto my back hitting the mattress.

Propping myself up with my elbows I watch as he undresses himself. Slowly, methodically his shirt falls to the floor. The hardness of his body has me clenching my legs together, fighting the urge to come undone with just the sight of him.

His belt is next, but unlike his shirt, the belt makes a cracking sound as he flies through the loops. With one fluid motion he drops his pants and boxers. His deep eyes lock on me like i'm his prey and he is a starving predator.

Without missing a beat, he grabs my ankles and yanks me back to the edge of the bed. "Where do you think you're going my little firefly?"

I can't help but giggle as he pins me down with his hands. "There is nowhere you can run where I wont find you." He leans up, I take that as a challenge and make a run for it.

Leaping off the bed I run out of the bedroom and down the hall.

“Run Maya, because when I catch you, you’re mine,” his voice echoes behind me. With my heart pounding, make it as far as the couch before I’m grabbed by my wrist.

I’m spun around and slammed into his hard body. He’s fully naked while I’m fully dressed. There is something so erotic about it. I don’t have time to think before he spins me back around and pushes me over the back of the couch.

My dress is at my hips as he yanks my thong down my legs. “Open,” he says with the thin material at my mouth. I have no time to think, my mouth is open and the soft but wet material is in my mouth.

“That’s my good girl, so eager to please,” he says as he slams deep inside me. My moans and screams are muffled as he continues to slide in and out of me. The coolness of his metal ring slides along my walls and is hitting the most sensitive spot.

With every pounding thrust he gives, his hand lands on my ass with a firm smack. My senses are in overdrive. I feel him everywhere. Every touch of his hand, every thrust of his dick, even his grunts as he fights his own orgasm.

He runs his hand from the back of my head down my spine until he’s between my ass cheeks, resting at my back hole. My body tenses at the feel of his hand there.

“Relax my sweet girl,” his voice is sweet but full of lust. I let my body soften and give all my weight to the cushion beneath me. As I do, he slides the pad of his thumb along the rim of my asshole. It feels forbidden, too intimate but oh so good.

But with the pleasure comes the pain of his breaking through the tight hole. I give in to the feeling of being filled. The mixture of his dick and his thumb send me soaring. My orgasm hits me and I fight for air to fill my lungs.

Pleasure unlike I've felt, *ever* fills me. Stars fill my vision and I feel weightless. One last thrust and I feel him filling me full of his cum.

As I try to catch my bearings, I feel him take me into his arms and carry me to the bedroom. I'm weightless and spent as I drift off to blissful sleep.



CHAPTER 17

Gabriel

The thrill of chasing Maya around the apartment and taking her on the couch has me restless. What this woman has been able to do to me in just a few short months isn't lost on me. I knew marriage was in my future but I never knew what it looked like.

With Maya it has been easy.

Easy to love her. Easy to let her into the darkness of my heart. She makes my life easy.

But the true test comes when the sun comes up. The day has finally come. Giovanni and I decided to take the girls out one last time before shit hits the fan. With everything planned out, we have nothing to do but wait.

So that is what I do, I wait. After settling Maya into our bed, I find myself in my office yet again going over every detail. Every second planned for Maya's safety.

Everything has to go according to plan. Especially because Maya will be close by. My heart constricts knowing she will

be so close to the gun fight but I will not deny her the freedom of being out of her fathers fear.

Hours go by before I find myself walking back to our bedroom and taking a shower. The warm water hits my tight muscles and I instantly relax.

Protect Maya, at all costs.

I repeat to myself over and over. She will be safe and as far away as I possibly could have gotten her. She will be locked in the office, with a CCTV locked on every camera in the shipyard. I plan on giving her a gun just incase someone finds her.

A sense of pride washes over me just thinking about how far she has come with her gun training. She is a natural. But being a mafia princess, she's been around death and guns her whole life, so it was expected.

There is a fire inside of her. It burns with rage against her father. It has kept her alive. It has kept her going all these years. I run my hands through my wet hair as I remember all the stories she told me about the abuse she's endured. My firefly is strong. Stronger than anyone, including me at one point, knew.

I leave the shower and get fully dressed. As I walk out of the closet I see Maya sitting up in bed.

“Good morning,” I walk over to her and kiss the top of her head. She gives me a soft smile. I see the nervousness building

in her eyes. She knows what today is. She knows what must happen today.

With an understanding between us I say, “everyone will be here shortly to go over everything before we head out.”

She simply shakes her head and makes her way to the bathroom. The feeling of dread fills the room as she leaves.

Within hours, my house is full of our men ready for a fight. We’re stationed at the bar with the blueprints of the shipyard scattered. Pictures of all the men we are after lay on top.

As my men and I go over the final touches of the plan, I don’t miss Maya grab at the picture of her father.

Her eyes are full of what I can only assume is sadness. She sets the picture back down and I lock eyes with her. I was wrong. It wasn’t sadness, it was determination. She’s ready as she will ever be.

We break off as the men start stocking their guns and weapons on themselves. I walk over to Maya with a bulletproof vest. Setting it over her chest, I tighten the straps. My little warrior is ready for battle.

With a convoy five cars deep, we make the drive to the shipyard. To everyone else it’s business as usual. The bosses have come to assess the incoming shipments.

Some would call us crazy for doing this in the middle of the day, but better that than coming in blind in the darkness of night. As we drive through the front gates, we are waved through by security.

The last car with Giovanni in it stops to talk to the guard. We decided to shut the yard down, so no unwanted deaths occur. The less blood shed the better, we don't need innocent civilians getting in the crossfire.

I hear the closing bell ring out through the shipyard as our driver makes the final turn to where Dimitris' container should be.

Our car stops at the double wide makeshift office building, where Maya will be.

We exit the car and I lead her through the door. It's your typical security office. Dated gray carpet throughout and filing cabinets line the far wall. In the center is a large desk with multiple computer screens.

Every inch of the ship yard is covered. No matter where we end up she will be able to see. "You stay in this room, do not leave until someone comes to get you. Understood?" I ask her after showing her how to work the cameras.

She shakes her head in understanding. I give her one final look but I can't seem to help myself. I grab her face and smash my lips onto hers. A kiss of passion and of love. A promise that everything will be ok. It has to be.

We break the kiss and our foreheads stay connected. I memorize the golden hue in her eyes. The silkiness of her skin. Searing every inch of her to memory, just in case things don't go to plan.

"Do not leave this room," I reiterate again.

“Yes sir,” she says as I reach behind me and hand her my Glock. I need her protected and safe.

“If anyone but one of our men comes through that door, do not hesitate to shoot. Remember just how you trained.” With one final kiss to the cheek, I make my way to the door. Closing and locking it behind me, I leave half my heart in that office.

The other half is determined on revenge. Like I do every time I walk into the Cage, I center my breathing. Straightening my shoulders and letting the darkness in my heart overtake my vision. On a mission, I make my way back to the car.

We drive up to the rest of the convo that’s waiting for us. Giovanni, Matt, and Smith with a few other of our men are waiting in a circle.

“The guard informed me the shipment was dropped off this morning. So Dimitri and his men are already here.” Giovanni says, taking his handgun from his back. We all follow suit as we make our way down the long gravel road to find the shipment container.

Containers stacked five high block out the afternoon sun. We weave through the maze of containers and we hear some voices in the distance. We quicken our pace as we make our way to the sound.

There in the distance is a group of men directing women with their hands tied to a large van. A heated anger fills my chest. I want to run to them with my gun shooting, but I hold back.

I hear Giovanni's voice in my ear piece, he instructs us to split up so we can surround them and block them from driving off.

We all split up but I'm laser focused on the vile men in front of me. Then I hear a shot go off. In that instance, all hell breaks loose. Women screaming, their men running around with their guns pointed out.

Fuck it!

I start running toward them. They will not get away with these women. One of their men comes running toward me. I point and shoot, center mass, and he falls down lifeless. I kick his gun away from him to be sure and make my way closer to the group.

I catch Giovanni and Smith in the corners of my eyes fighting with two other men. Not worried that they can't handle themselves, I continue to make my way to the women.

As I turn the corner around a container, a hand goes out and clocks me on the chin. I'm thrown back with the force of the hit. Standing over me is Nicholas with a shit-eating grin on his face. His nose is off center, thanks to me.

"Gabriel, come to join the party?" he spits at me.

I rise to my feet and start swinging at him. He lands a hit to my rib cage but I get the better of him as I hit him across the face. He falls and now it's my turn to stand over him.

With my gun pointed at him I say, "We're saving the girls you filthy piece of shit. Where is Dimitri?" I hold him in place

with my foot.

“He’s with the girls, picking out my new wife. One that isn’t so defiant and won’t fight me when I fuck her.” His words are meant as a dig toward Maya and they do their job. Without thinking, I pull the trigger and send a bullet flying through his head. His lifeless eyes stare up at me.

Walking away, I make my way toward the van where I see Dimitri slap one of the girls. I notice Giovanni and Matt on the other side, waiting just like me. The fire in their eyes mimic mine.

“Dimitri!” I scream out as I walk around the shipment container. “That’s enough.” His eyes are lifeless as he looks at me. The woman he hit lays on the ground covering her face.

“Gabriel, my boy what brings you out here?” His tone mocking as if he doesn’t know what I just caught him doing.

“Give us the girls and walk away, your business with our shipyard is over.”

He laughs as if I said something funny. The way this man has been able to hide his trafficking business from us and still use our shipyard is sickening. I run through the files in my head. Trying to pinpoint when his shipments started.

It must have been before Gio and I. So either our father or uncle are to blame. But why?

Our father would never had done business with a man like Dimitri. My father has morals and a strong head on his

shoulders. He was the head of the family but he knew business had to be done right.

“You don’t see the bigger picture do you?” he questions. He leaves the girl on the ground and starts walking toward me. With every step he takes the grip on my gun gets tighter.

“What bigger picture?” He must have missed something in our files. There must be a reason why he’s using our shipyard and not the dozen others without the mafia’s control.

“Your father,” the mention of my father coming from his mouth has me pointing my gun right at him. A blazing fire hits the pit of my stomach. My father has nothing to do with this.

“Not another mention of my father,” I watch him through my gun. He lets out a laugh. I’d shoot him right now if I didn’t need the information he has.

“Your father knew better than to do business with me so I went to your uncle. I paid him to keep my shipments quiet and I promised him a cut of the profit.”

Fury fills my veins as he continues to walk toward me, “You’re lying,” I spit at him. There is no way our family would be in the sex trafficking business.

“When your father found out, your uncle came to me and told me he would handle it.”

What does he mean to handle it? My finger is itching to pull the trigger. But I hold back because I know he’s going to tell me more.

“With your uncle’s blessing, I sent my men out and we caused the accident. I’m the reason your parents are dead. I’m the reason you have what you have. So tell me thank you and let me go.”

“NO!” I shout. “My parents left the mafia, my uncle had control. Why kill them when you had my uncle in your pocket.”

“Oh, you naïve little man, there is only one way out of this life.”

My vision goes dark, I lose control. Dropping my gun, I run at him and start hitting. We both fall to the ground and I don’t let up. Swing after swing I hit him. Blood starts to cover his face. And mine.

He takes advantage of my weakening swings and flips us over. His hits land where intended. The smell and taste of copper invade my senses but all I see in black. The fury of knowing this man on top of me is the reason my parents are dead has new found stamina filling my chest.

Throwing him off of me, we both stand. I notice my gun is behind him on the ground. He takes his from his back and points it at me. He spits blood and saliva to the ground and stands tall as if he has somehow won.

Determination fills me as I adjust my stance, ready for a fight. I planned on killing him and that is still the plan but if I have to go down with him, so be it. Maya will be safe with her father dead and taken care of without me.

He must sense my thoughts of Maya when he asks, “where is my worthless daughter anyway?”

The way he talks about Maya sends bile down my throat. How a father can look at their child and not feel anything less than love is beyond me. My father and mother loved us boys enough to leave this life behind. And yet look where we ended up. Right back where they didn't want us.

“She is far away from you.” I spit the blood pooling in my mouth to the ground. I can feel my face already beginning to swell. Looking up at the security camera in the corner, knowing she is watching, I smile. She is far away and safe. Away from this man that calls himself her father.

“Oh, I'm not worried. She is weak, she is useless. I have women to replace her. Nicholas will be well taken care of.”

I can't help but fill with pride knowing, Nicholas won't be able to hurt any other women, let alone Maya. “He won't be doing much of anything anymore, his lifeless body is a few yards that way.” I point behind him.

There were so many things I wished I could have said to my parents before they died so my confession comes with the full understanding that I'm dying here today. “What you don't seem to understand is women are not to be owned. Maya especially. She is strong, fierce, and loyal. She is the blood that flows through my veins. My heart beats for her. To you, she may only be worth killing for, but to me.. to me she is worth dying for.”

His gun is directed right at my head, I'm watching his finger twitch with anticipation of pulling the trigger.

“It's funny you say your heart beats for hers because it won't be beating much longer. Either of you.” A gunshot goes off and I wait for the pain to take over. Ready to see my parents.

Maya

The small computer screen is filled with men running around. I watch as Giovanni and Smith gather up the women and Gabriel has my fathers attention.

They are fighting on the ground and I feel a sense of helplessness. I can't stay in here and wait for someone to bust through the door. I need to help Gabriel. Grabbing the gun at the end of the table, I hold it in my hand as I leave the office.

As quietly as I can, I make my way through the containers. Bodies laid out every couple feet, blood covering the ground the whole way. I make my way further down until I notice a familiar face laying on the ground.

Nicholas. His eyes are glassy, void of life. Blood pools around his chest. I look into his eyes and feel nothing. No anger, no pain. The monster is just a man. A now dead man.

Making my way further down, I spot Gabriel and my father still fighting. Until Gabriel pushes off of him and they stand a few feet apart from each other. I can see them talking but can't make out anything they are saying. But I don't miss my father calling me weak.

I am focused on Gabriel. His face is beaten and bloody. His body is beaten and bruised. As my father points his gun at him, I can't hold back the pain in my heart. I prepared my

heart to lose my father, the man that raised me to be weak and quit.

But watching him hold Gabriel at gunpoint springs me into action. I walk around the container that hid me. My steps are determined. With my gun pointed at my fathers back, I pull the trigger.

The loud bang of my gun going off has everything moving in slow motion. I stop moving as I watch my father fall to his knees then to the ground. Gabriel stands a few feet away with his eyes closed. Had he thought my father shot him? Was he preparing to die?

Gabriel's eyes open and land on me. We share a look as I walk toward my father. Standing over him, I watch as he fights for breath. My father, the man that ran the Romanian empire laying beneath me, dying.

I don't know what I should have felt in this moment. As I look into his eyes I see nothing. Not a loving father, not a proud ruler. I see a weak man. A man that had to use women and children to make himself feel big.

"I am not weak, father. I am strong and worthy of life. A life given to me by Gabriel." I look away from my father to Gabriel. We share a knowing smile. "You may have spent your entire life putting me down and beating me. But Gabriel, he has made me into the woman that stands over you, watching you die." With those final words, I watch life leave his eyes.

A cool summer breeze comes through and I fall to my knees. My body is tired, my soul hurts, but there is an overwhelming

sense of peace that rushes through me. I'm free. My father has no more control over me. I feel my lungs fill with fresh air for the first time in my life.

"Maya, baby," Gabriel walks up to me. His warm touch on my shoulder brings me back to reality. Looking back down at my father one last time I stand firmly on my own two feet and embrace Gabriel.

"Take me home?" I ask him.

Hand in hand, we make our way to the group that's huddled around the van full of women. Their eyes catch us, shock written all over their faces. Oh what we must look like.

"Business handled?" Giovanni asks.

"Business handled." Gabriel answers, bringing me into a side hug.

I look around at the group of men that risked everything for me and Gabriel. This could have turned out so much worse. I could have lost Gabriel. I knew looking into his eyes earlier that he was ready to die for me.

I notice most of the women in the van are covered in blankets. They are talking amongst themselves. But one woman in particular has grabbed my attention. She is small, thin. Her hair is braided on either side of her head. Though it's dirty, the redness in her hair peeks through.

She is standing next to Smith, she looks small compared to his build. She must feel protected and safe with him. Smith is

running his hand along her arm in a caring fashion. He eyes me and gives me a smile.

With a plan in place to get these women checked out and in a safe area before they are taken back home, we all gather into our cars and make our ways home. It's not until the smoothness of the car seat leather hits my skin that I let my body relax.

The busy New York streets flash by, without a care or understanding of what we just endured. If they only knew.

Gabriel carries me through the door into our bedroom. We are both covered in dried blood and dirt as he makes his way to the bathroom.

No words are shared as he undresses himself and me. His body is covered his growing bruises and cuts that I'm sure will turn into scars. A sting of pain floods my emotions as I look at the man in front of me. He gave everything to protect me.

I fill the silent room with my sobs, letting the emotions of the day take over. Gabriel doesn't say anything, he just simply takes me into his arms. I cry into his chest over and over. We don't move until I feel the last tear fall.

As my crying turns into a soft whimper, he takes me by the hand and leads me into the waiting shower. He grabs the shampoo off the ledge and lathers it through my hair. The soapy water running down my body.

The feel of his fingers massaging my scalp feels like heaven. Leaning my head back to rinse the shampoo away, I feel his

lips on my neck. A soft kiss.

“I am so proud of you firefly,” he says softly. The words I wished my father would have told me just once in my life, come so easy for Gabriel.

Setting the conditioner in my hair, he takes some body wash and starts to rub it into my body. The mixture of dirt and blood fills the floor of the shower. We’re sharing an intimate moment together. This isn’t about sex. It’s about being together in this moment of emotional need.

When he’s finished cleaning my body, he runs the water through my hair once more rinsing the conditioner off. I feel like I was run over by an 18-wheeler. My body is sore and spent.

He goes to grab the shampoo but I stop him. “Let me,” I say and he doesn’t stop me as I start to work the shampoo through his hair. I’m having to stand on my tiptoes to reach the top of his head. His hands are on my hips to keep me steady.

After rinsing him I grab the body wash, an urge to touch his warm body overtakes me. I run my soapy hands along every ridge of his muscles. I pay close attention to the deep cuts he sustained. Kissing each and every one, just as he did with my scars.

I turn his body around and work the soap into his back. This man has become the center of my world. He has given and given to me. He stepped in when he saw me hurt by my father and Nicholas. He has protected and loved me every day since then.

Unable to keep the emotions to myself anymore, I kiss his shoulder blades and say, "I love you." I feel the muscles in his back tense. We let the silence sit between us.

He turns back around and faces me. "What did you just say?"

"I said, I love you. I do, Gabriel. You saved me in every way. You're protected. You gave me a life I only dream of as a wife. I do. I love you with every beat of my heart."

He leans past me to shut the water off. Without a word, he leans down to me and takes my lips into his. His kiss starts slow but quickly turns hard and ravishing when I open my mouth to let him in.

Without breaking our kiss, he takes me into his hands and walks us to the bed. "What are you doing?" I laugh out when he lays me down onto the now soaked sheets.

"I'm making love to my wife," he says trailing kisses along my collarbone.



CHAPTER 18

Gabriel

She loves me. She said the words that have been swirling in my gut for weeks. When I look down at her sleeping face, I see an angel sent to save me. Save me from the darkness that was eating me alive.

I was filled with anger and demise for the world after my parents died. I had no sense of direction. Before Giovanni and I took over for our corrupt uncle, I was drifting in the world of finance. Who knew such a dark and bloody world could bring me someone's life. Maya.

I send a small thankful prayer to the heavens for sending her to me. I don't know who I would be without her in my life. She has become my anchor every time I feel the darkness of the mafia creeping in.

As I trail kisses down her body, I look at the woman that has turned my world on its head. And I am so thankful for her. Determined to show her just how thankful I am, I line my throbbing dick at her entrance and push in ever so slightly.

The pulling drag of my dick into her soaking pussy has my vision blurring. Her pussy is so tight it's become hard to breathe. I will never get sick of burying myself in her. She is my happy place.

"My wife loves me, is that right?" I look down at her. I run my hand down her face, wanting to feel her with every touch.

Her soft smile and simple nod fill my heart with joy. "Now is not the time to be quiet Maya, your husband asked you a question." I say with one hard thrust into her.

"I love you Gabriel," she moans out.

"I'll never get sick of hearing you say that." I kiss her. "Because I love you too my sweet firefly." and I do. From the moment I laid eyes on her, the woman who I saw as small and weak has become the fierce woman that lays beneath me now.

We share another kiss and lose ourselves in one another. I'm determined to give Maya the remaining pieces of my heart with every thrust. My thrusts are slow as I work her to the edge of forever with me.

Overcome with the need to see her, I roll us both over so she's straddling me. Her full hips on either side of me. I run my hand up her thighs and along her curvy hips. Wanting and needing to touch every inch of her, I run my hand up to her full breasts. I cup them in my hands and give them one hard squeeze.

"Ride my cock baby. Take your pleasure from me." I look up to her as she starts to slowly lift up off my hips. I remove my

hands from her body and lay them interlocked behind my head. Knowing my orgasm will come just at the sight of her, I enjoy the show she's putting on.

Her paces quickens and I'm mesmerized by her breasts bouncing uncontrollably. Her body is a masterpiece and I will spend everyday making sure she knows it. Her head falls back, a sign that her orgasm is on the horizon.

She slows her pace just for a second, so I take over, determined to get her over the edge. I grab her hips and start to run her along my pelvis. With the friction hitting her desperate clit, her moans fill the room.

"Gabriel, I'm so close," her voice a faint whisper.

"Come for me baby." As if she needs permission, her body tightens in my grasp as I watch the orgasm take over her body. Her head falls back and her hands grip mine in a hard hold. Her pussy is choking my cock. I impale her three more times before my own orgasm spills inside of her.

Her limp body falls into mine as we both come down from our high. And we stay this way for the rest of the night. Her asleep on top of me and me inside her.

I wake up with a stiffness and ache throughout my body. I look over at Maya who's fast asleep on the other end of the bed. I leave the bed not wanting to wake her. As I make my way to the kitchen for some water and a handful of pain pills, I hear my phone ping.

It's a text from my brother informing me that they have found a safe home for the woman until they are able to get them back home to their families.

Another text coming through telling me to take the next few weeks to recuperate. I send him a text telling him I plan to do just that. I pull up a map of Europe and plan the next three weeks with Maya.

Making my way back to bed, I decide tomorrow will be spent in bed with my wife.



Maya and I are sitting in our seats of our private jet heading on our honeymoon. Since we never got one I decided that with the fiasco with her father a few days ago, we both needed a get away.

Our hands are interlocked as we wait for the pilot to inform us he's ready. I watch her knee bounce nervously. "Nervous?" I ask.

She has a thoroughly fucked look on her face, as she should. I took her in the bathroom and our bed this morning before we even made it out to the car waiting for us. Even then as we were being driven here, my fingers didn't leave her pussy the whole ride.

"I've never been on a private jet before." she asks, looking at me with wonder in her eyes.

I take her hand up to my lips and kiss her knuckles. As the pilot comes over the intercom to inform us we are ready for take off, our hostess comes walking by to inform us to buckle up and hands each of us a glass of champagne.

I tip my glass to hers, “to us and all the place I’m going to fuck you for the next three weeks.” With her mouth open in shock I tap my glass to hers and tip the glass of champagne in one sip. I watch as she slowly sips on the champagne and the jet jerks us and sets us into flight.

Italy

The first leg of our trip we have spent touring Italy. Seeing all the must-see sights of the country. We started in Rome and got a private tour of the Colosseum. Our guide tells us all the historical facts of how it was built. When the earthquake destroyed it causing the large cracks.

Maya did not lift her head away from her camera, not for one second. But I wouldn’t expect her to. I made sure to pack her camera, a back up camera I bought her the day we left, and batteries to last her a lifetime.

My firefly has dreams of seeing the world, and I will make every last dream of hers come true.

After leaving the colosseum, we ended up at the Trevi Fountain. Swarmed with other tourists, we made our way to the front of the fountain. I take out the two coins I had in my pocket. I hand her one.

My wish is simple. A wish to spend every day like this, in blissful overwhelming love with Maya. Opening my eyes as I throw my coin I hear the snap of her camera.

“Was that one of me?” I ask as I watch my coin sink to the bottom.

“My favorite subject,” she smiles up at me.

“Make a wish firefly,” I nudge her. I watch as she squints her eyes closed holding her camera to her chest. I fall more in love with her in this moment. We leave the Trevi Fountain hand in hand, stopping at a small gelato shop on the way back to our hotel where I plan on fucking my wife on every surface. First stop the private elevator.

France

On our flight out of Italy, Maya told me she was most excited to see the Eiffel Tower at night. At that moment, mid-flight, I canceled our hotel stay and changed it to a private room with a view of the Eiffel tower.

What my girl wants, my girl gets. No expectations.

Our hotel room is on the fifth floor of the hotel. It's a large open space. The kitchen and small sitting area to the left and a living room to the right. A small room leads to a bedroom in the corner.

But none of that seems to matter to Maya. She is hyper focused on the open terrace with a small table and a set of metal chairs.

“Gabriel,” her voice is full of shock. Like I knew she would, she takes her camera from her hip and snaps some pictures of the view. The Eiffel tower center stage to our room.

“Did I do good?” I jokingly ask. Knowing I did more than good.

“You did amazing,” she turns and runs into my arms. I will never get sick of the feel of her body against mine but that isn’t what is making my dick harden. It’s the smile that’s been plastered on her face since we got on the jet a few weeks ago.

“Anything for you Maya,” I whisper into her ear.

We decided on a small dinner rather than sightseeing today. So we spent the day relaxing in our hotel room. When dinner comes around, I reserve a small table with a view of the Eiffel tower at a small cafe down the block.

I’m waiting in the kitchen with a glass of dark liquor in my hand waiting for Maya to come out of the bedroom. “Maya baby, we need to leave, we’re going to miss our reservation.” As soon as the words leave my mouth the double doors swing open.

There in the sunset light glowing around her, she stands in a full length black dress. Thin straps holding the form fitting fabric up. I can’t help but run my eyes down her lush body. I don’t miss the slit that’s in the dress right at her hip. It exposes her leg, leading to the red stilettos with a thin strap around her ankle.

She makes her way to me and I'm frozen in place. Overcome with lust I go to lean into her for a kiss, screw our reservation. I'll eat my dinner right on this counter.

Her lips reach my cheek as she walks past me. "Come on husband, we have a reservation." The little minx whispers at me as she looks back at me.

I fight the urge to ravage her body in the elevator on the way out of the hotel. God knows who will end up in here with us. It's bad enough she's wearing this sinful dress. My pocket knife that's stashed away in my jacket pocket might come in handy when I have to gouge out everyone's eyes.

Dinner is a block away from the hotel at a small French diner. With the Eiffel tower in the background, lit up with twinkling lights. We're taken to our outdoor table and given a wine list with a set menu for the night.

"Gabriel, it's beautiful out here tonight." She says as she sits in her chair and I push her closer to the table. I give the waitress our wine order and she walks away.

"Only the best for you my love."

Since we handled the issue with her father, the business has not slowed. Giovanni and I have been busy but he insisted on us taking this much needed getaway. And I'm so glad I took him up on his offer because looking at Maya and how she glows, there isn't anything better.

Dinner is spent enjoying the fabulous food and with a bottle or two of wine. We make a pit stop at the Eiffel Tower before

heading back to the hotel.

Spain

Our trip is coming to an end and I'm half tempted to call Gio and let him know we won't be coming home. Mafia brotherhood be damned.

I have been on the edge of my seat all day with anticipation with what's to come tonight.

With the small box in my jacket pocket I walk into the hotel room with bags in hand. I hear Maya singing in the shower. Her voice is soft and angelic. I have big plans for that mouth of hers. My dick twitches in my jeans in agreement.

Taking the bags into the bedroom and laying them out for Maya when she's ready. We spent the day relaxing and indulging in each other. I've taken her in every way a husband can. All except one but after tonight, I will own her in every way.

Laying out the outfit I bought for her, a new set of thin fabric the sales woman assured me was lingerie. I run my hands over the lace fabric of the bra, my fingers instantly tingle with need.

I set the new black stilettos on the ground at the edge of the bed and silently make my way out of the room.

I busy myself cleaning the already spotless kitchen and living room. After my second round of wiping the counters down, I finally settle myself onto the couch. Just in time for me to hear movement in the bedroom.

My fingers itch with need as I wait for Maya to make her entrance. My heart pounds against my chest making it almost hard to breathe. I watch as the door handle turns. And there in the door frame, baked from the moonlight beaming through our window. Is her.

I must look like a salivating dog as I lick my lips and take her full form in. The red fabric of her dress hugs her breasts and falls straight down to her knees.

“I decided against the thong,” her sinful smile goes straight to my dick. Damn this woman, if I didn’t spend all day planning this dinner, I would say fuck it and ravage her here and now.

Walking to her, I wrap her in an embrace and kiss her. Her cheeks flush with need and desire evades her irises.

“I have something for you,” I say into her ear. Her eyes light up with glee. I smile knowing that smile might turn to shock in a second or two.

Taking out the discreetly small velvet box from my jacket pocket, I hold it out for her. “Open it,” I command. She takes the box from me and opens it in one fluid motion. And I watch her eyes change from glee to shock.

“No,” is all she says.

“Yes,” I fire back.

“No Gabriel,” she spits back.

“Oh my sweet innocent firefly. It will bring me great pleasure.” I wink at her.

I want to watch her fidget and squirm during dinner in preparation for when we get back. Just the thought of having her back hole open wide for me has precum building at my tip.

Without another word I lead her, box in hand, to the couch.

Laying her across my legs, I hike up her dress, exposing her bare ass. I can't help but give her a soft smack. I take the box from her and remove the silver metal butt plug from it. "Lick," I command as her mouth opens for me.

As she's licking the plug I start to work her hole in preparation. That's when she starts to move. She can fight it all she wants but I know her body and this is going to drive her wild just as much as it will me.

Continuing to massage her hole, I take the plug from her mouth. I tease her back entrance with the dull tip. My girl starts to fidget on my lap, laced with anticipation more than fear at this point.

I take my time pushing the plug, making sure not to hurt her more than necessary. Her body goes stiff as the plug is set in place. Setting her dress back in place, I lift her to her feet. Tension written all over her face as her body adjusts.

Without saying a word, I grab her hand and lead her out of the room.

I can't help but look at her the entire time as we walk to dinner. Could we have taken a car, yes, but what fun would that have been. The small beads of perspiration building around her temples tell me just what I need to know.

She's enjoying it.

Dinner goes according to plan. The whole time we are eating and drinking, her body is adjusting to every little move she makes. I can't help but laugh and smile every time. Unable to wait any longer, I throw some cash on the table and we exit the restaurant.

With her hand in mine, I rush her toward a waiting taxi. Giving him the address, we reach the hotel within minutes. Within seconds, I have her undressed and panting up at me in our bed.

I have lost all sense of control. My vision is hyper focused on my awaiting prey. Leaning down between her legs, I take my fill of her pussy. She comes within seconds from the built up tension from the night. One orgasm down.

Without waiting for her to catch her breath I flip her body over, propping her up on her knees and hands. The butt plug exposed as I spread her cheeks apart.

"I'm going to fill your pussy with this plug in then I'm going to own this ass Maya," I don't hear her response as I line my tip to her pussy and slam into her with one full thrust.

Is she screaming or moaning, I can't tell. Unable to control myself I slide in and out of her in rapid succession. With my hands on her hips, holding her in place, she arches her back. Turning her head, she looks back at me, lust written all over her face.

As I grip the butt plug I say, “Come for me baby,” and without hesitation her pussy grips my cock. I slide the plug out of her ass and she screams her orgasm out. Her body tenses and falls to the soft silk linens. Her body is spent but our night is far from over. Orgasm number two of the night.

With teeth clenching determination I hold my own orgasm at bay. Wanting and needing to come in her tight hole.

“You’re gonna be a good wife and give me one more, then we can sleep,” I lean down kissing my way up her spine.

She is breathless, her body unmoving. She looks back at me as she says, “I can’t.”

“Wanna bet?” I joke but if I know anything, it’s that my girl can take my dick oh so well, no matter how she takes it.

Refocusing, I take a few deep breaths. I refuse to hurt her anymore than I need to. If not done right, anal penetration can cause permanent damage. I plan on taking her ass any chance I get.

“Relax baby, this might sting,” I warn her as I line myself at her back entrance. My tip slides in with ease but I stop, giving her time to adjust. Taking her at a snail’s pace, I invade her ass inch by inch. “You’re choking my cock baby,”

When I’m fully inside her I pause giving her a minute before I lose myself in her. “You ok?” I ask, needing to know before I continue.

“Yea but I need you to move now,” with her teeth clenched, she fights the pain of having me fully inside her. And so I start

moving, giving my girl exactly what she wants.

Grabbing a hand full of her luscious hair, I center myself. The tight feel of her around my cock is unlike anything I've felt. "You're so tight baby, choking my cock like a good little slut."

We had a long time about me degrading her during sex. With her trauma of being put down from her father and every other man in her life, I never wanted to belittle her or make her feel less than the queen she is. When she told me she had surprisingly enjoyed being called names, I ran with it.

Reaching around her, I grab her clit with my two fingers and start working her and myself toward our impending orgasms. "Come on baby, give it to me," a few more thrusts and pinches to her clit, she comes undone and I can't hold back anymore either.

My legs give out on me and I fall on top of her.

With a shared shower, Maya falls asleep with her body entangled with mine. Hours of thanking the gods above for this amazing woman next to me go by before I find rest.



With our luggage and shopping bags from our weeks long trip scattered throughout the penthouse, Maya and I are on the couch. I'm reading through the endless list of emails I refused to acknowledge while we were away.

Maya's legs are over my lap as she's on her computer, editing all the photos from our trip. She has had the same smile on her face everyday for the past few weeks. I watch her as she scrunches her face as she concentrates on the task in front of her.

“What would you say about having your photos in a gallery?” I ask her remembering that the artist open house at the art museum is coming up. I don't want her to miss this opportunity but I won't force it on her.

She lets out a nervous laugh, “I would say absolutely not.”

“Why?”

“Because my photos aren't that great, who would look at them anyway?” The way she talks down to herself has a small rage building deep in the pit of my stomach.

Grabbing her, I move her to my lap. Her legs on either side of my hips, I cup her face. I need her to hear me. To understand just how wonderful and amazing and talented she is.

“You are an amazing photographer. You have a true talent and the world needs to see it. There is an open house in a few weeks and I want you to show your art to the world.”

She smiles but her eyes tell me she doesn't believe me. “Your art will touch someone just like that photo of that butterfly that's hanging over our bed changed yours.”

“You're just saying that.” I take her lips in mine, breaking her train of thought.

“I won’t have my wife doubting herself, you’ve got this baby!” and with another convincing kiss, she agrees.



CHAPTER 19

Maya

“I don’t got this,” I let out a frustrated grunt.

Gabriel is sitting across from me in my office. He lets out a stupid laugh as he looks away from his computer to me.

“This is your fault,” I throw my pen at him, hitting him in the chest. He lifts his single eyebrow at me. The look on his face stiffening my spine.

“Does my wife need to relax?” he walks around my desk, turning my chair to face him. He’s on his knees in front of me, with his face between my legs. “I can help with that.”

And he does, he relaxes me with a mind blowing orgasm and I get back to work. With the open house just a few days away, my office is scattered with large prints of photos I’ve taken throughout the years. One last photo stands in my way. One I’ve been hiding from everyone, especially Gabriel. But I can’t seem to get it right.

I spend the rest of the day and into the night trying to perfect it. Gabriel interrupts me every couple of hours demanding I eat

something. He brings me plate after plate of food throughout the day, sitting and eating with me.

I know he's only doing it to make sure I actually eat, because who has time to eat when work needs to be done. Losing the fight to my exhaustion, I fall asleep at my desk.

A soft hand on my cheek wakes me. My eyes adjust to the bright sun beaming through the windows. "Someone shut the sun off," I grunt, hiding my face in my arms.

"Maya, baby, you need to get up." Gabriel's soft voice has me flying out of my chair.

With Gabriel's soft voice in my ears, I jump out of my chair, "what day is it?" I fall right into his arms.

"It's Thursday," he says, fighting a laugh.

I calm my racing heart realizing I still have time. This project Gabriel talked me into has brought a whole new sense of stress into my life. I can't blame him though. I agreed to this, trusting him when he told me my art needed to be displayed.

"Let's forget about work for just today. Let's have a you and me day," he takes my hand and leads me out of my office and the mess of papers scattered throughout.

"I don't have time, the show is on Saturday, I still have things to do," I fight his grip on my hand. It's no use, he's dragging me at this point.

Just as we make it to the living room, the intercom comes to life with Angelica's voice echoing through the open space. I

look to Gabriel, confusion written all over my face.

“She’s taking you out for some pampering.” I would fight him with all the work I need to get done for the show just a day away but I don’t. A day out with Angelica is just what I need to take my mind off of the art show.

I meet Angelica at the curb by a waiting car. She already looks relaxed and pampered. Her hair is in a twisted top bun, make up free. A blush pink flowy dress and a pair of flats.

Internally judging myself for the sundress I’m wearing, I hop in the back of the car. A woman sits in the front with the driver, Matt who I’ve come to know is the top security and driver for the family.

“This is Caterina, Giovanni’s cousin. She’s staying with us. Hope you don’t mind her tagging along.”

Caterina has long blonde hair set in loose waves. Her bright eyes look at me through the rearview mirror. We share a smile as we exchange hellos.

“Today is going to be so fun, I’ll definitely be getting a massage, my body hurts from the workout I had yesterday at the studio.” Caterina has a thick accent, giving away that she in fact is a part of the family.

I don’t miss the firm grip that Matt takes on the steering wheel. “No massages,” he grunts out. The girls and I exchange weird looks but can’t help but laugh. Matt pulls the car over a few minutes later in front of a small spa. The glowing pink sign reads, “Zen,”

As we make our way out of the car, Matt walks around and pulls Caterina off to the side and talks at a low whisper.

“Don’t pay him no mind, he’s harmless, unless your name is Caterina, then he becomes a possessive asshole.” Angelica informs me. I can’t help but look at the two of them. His face is red hot with anger but she is just looking up at him with a smile.

She leans up on her toes to his ear, whispers something, and walks away. I can tell she’s putting a little more effort into swaying her hips as she makes her way to us. Without stopping, she links our arms with hers and we walk through the front doors of the spa.

The interior has white marble floors, white walls with stream lights around the crown molding on the ceiling. A dark haired woman stands at the front desk typing on her computer.

“Welcome to Zen, how can I help you?” she asks with a bubbly voice.

“Appointment is under Costello,” Angelica says.

The next three hours are spent getting manicures, pedicures, and the best massage I’ve ever gotten in my life. With matching black matte nail polish on my nails and toes, the girls and I walk out of the spa.

I learned so much about Caterina. She was brought over by Giovanni and Gabriel a few years ago because someone back home was after her. The mafia life catches up to you anywhere you are.

She's been helping Angelica run the dance studio she owns. She teaches classes every month and performs for a dance company every chance she gets. She knows Matt has a crush on her and she plays with his feelings, knowing he can't do anything about it. Gabriel and Giovanni would kill him for touching their cousin.

With a renewed focus, I walk into the penthouse and head back into my office. Gabriel left me a note on my desk, letting me know he's out handling issues with the club with his brother.

Refocused, I open my computer and get to work. This photo has to be perfect, for everyone's sake, especially mine.



Pulling up to the art show, a swarm of butterflies fill my stomach. We are a few hours early, as all the artists are, to set up and give the final touches to their pieces.

Gabriel opens my door and leads me and my final photo that's covered in a sheet, through the front door. We are led through to a private hall for the event. A small section is roped off for each artist.

I find my name before we even make it to my little corner of heaven. "Maya Costello," in calligraphy on a small white poster board right in front of my section. A few of my pieces are already in place on the wall and on stands. But I surely saved the best for last.

I place the covered photo front and center on its metal stand. I make my way through each photograph, adjusting it and making sure the light hits it just right. Photos of before I met Gabriel and after show a stark contrast of how I saw the world. My story is shown through photos for the next three hours.

“Are you going to uncover this one?” Gabriel starts to lift the cover from the corner of the hidden piece.

I playfully swat his hand away, “not till I’m ready,”

He gives me a soft kiss on my cheek and leaves to go grab us some drinks. I’m going to need all the liquid courage to get through tonight.

While he’s gone I sneak one last look at the hidden masterpiece under the cover. I hope he likes it most of all. It’s the picture I’ve been working on perfecting for months now. The photo of him on the sidewalk with the busy New York landscape behind him.

Everything I edited with the photograph didn’t seem to do it justice, but it wasn’t until we visited Italy when I caught another photo of him where the idea struck me. It was hardest of all to keep it from him. When I knew it was perfect, I printed it that same day and had it shipped to the house.

Deciding that I don’t want to stand around while people look at my photos, Gabriel walks us around. The whole family came out to support me. Giovanni and Angelica are glued to each other the whole night. They are kid free for the night. Angelica is one of the sweetest people and mothers I’ve ever known.

Remembering what kind of relationship I had with my own breaks my heart. After the situation with my father, Gabriel made sure to take to me to go see my mother. We told her everything that father had been up to. Him killing Gabriel's parents, bribing their uncle to make sure he kept his shipments undercover.

Mother wasn't surprised. She seemed more relaxed when I told her that father was killed. She told me she can go back home now to her family, with her security guard of course. Whatever is happening with him, I'm happy my mother is happy. Even though she was cold and emotionless with me, I can't help but love her.

She took a flight back to Romania a few days after my fathers small funeral. Gabriel and I attended, him telling me it'll help me heal. And it did, it finally closed that dark chapter of my life.

The money she got from selling literally everything and the house was enough for her to live very comfortably for the rest of her life. She tried to give me a portion but I told her I didn't want a single penny.

Caterina keeps her distance from Matt but I don't miss the looks they share toward each other. I even caught them sharing a single pinky touch while they looked at a photograph of a sunrise over a mountain landscape.

Smith on the other hand doesn't hide the fact that he's with someone. I recognize her face though. Then it hits me, it's the same woman that was with him when we saved those women

from my father. I wonder if there's something there, there must be. What it is, I'm not sure, but they look cozy together.

As the group makes its rounds, we stop at my section. Gabriel's grip tightens around my hand as he sees what I've been waiting to show him. All the other photos fall in comparison to the picture in the center of my section.

"Maya," he grunts out. Oh no, does he hate it? I knew I should have asked him to use the photo. Exposing him like this, in front of everyone. I'm such a dumbass.

"Damn Maya," Giovanni says. I look around at everyone as they look at the photograph.

Gabriel in full gray scale with half of the foreground of New York and the other half of a busy Italian street. The streets are blurred slightly to show the busyness around him. But Gabriel is in sharp focus as he stands in the center of the frame. There is a soft golden glow framing his silhouette. Though he is dressed more casually, the power radiates through him. The muscles in his back are harsh lines in his shirt.

I look up at Gabriel, trying my damndest to gauge his feelings. "I'm sorry, I should have asked to use you in-" my words are cut off with him grabbing my face and slamming his lips to mine. The kiss is passionate and overpowering, but I let him take me over.

"I love it, my sweet firefly," he moans into my lips. "Thank you." Taking me into his arms, we just stare at the photo of him.

Hours go by as we continue to walk around. I asked Gabriel if we could purchase a few other photographs from other artists. I got to meet so many new artists, some of whom I exchanged information with.

One in particular is Becka. She's my age and she just recently started photographing full time. Her and her husband left their small town and moved here so she can start her career. She's been featured in a few other shows but nothing to this scale. We plan a day for her and I to meet up for lunch.

By the end of the night, I'd sold all my photos, including the one of Gabriel. I wonder who would possibly want that one. With my heels in my hands, Gabriel leads us out of the exhibit and into the coolness of the New York night.

He drives down the busy street holding my hand the whole way. "I'm so fucking proud of you Maya," he kisses my knuckles. His praises have my heart bursting.

I don't fight the tears that overtake my vision. "Thank you," I say, wiping away the tears from my cheeks.

"Where do you want to hang all your new pieces?" he asks as we pull into the underground garage.

Planning out where I see each piece, we walk into the penthouse with the pieces in hand. I'm too jittery from the excitement of the night to sleep, so Gabriel helps me set each piece in place.

A large horizontal aerial view of New York hangs in the dining room. A group of wild flower fields line each wall

down the hall of the bedrooms. By the end, almost all the walls are covered with a photograph. It brings a new life to the penthouse. A new life for us.

With one last photo remaining, Gabriel takes it and turns the large piece in his hands. Then I see it. My photo. My photo of him.

“You bought it?” I don’t hide the surprise in my voice.

“Of course I bought it, and it was worth every penny,” he doesn’t hide his pride as he stands in the kitchen holding the photo of himself.

“How much did you pay for it?” I ask. But he doesn’t answer as he walks away and toward his office. “Gabriel, how much?” I repeat my question but still no answer.

I watch as he walks around his desk. He moves the small painting of a standard hillside from behind his desk and sets my photo in place. He steps back to stand next to me. Taking me by the hip, he says, “perfect.”

“Gabriel, please tell me you didn’t spend too much on this.”

“How much is too much?” he jokes as he nudges my shoulder, not taking his eyes off of the photo. “\$15,000,” my veins turn ice cold. He can’t be serious. There is no way he could have spent that kind of money.

“Now what should we possibly do to celebrate,” he turns and leaves his office, leaving me and the photograph in the room.

Running after him into the living room, “Gabriel, you can’t be serious.”

“Worth every penny,” his voice is calm as he leans into the sofa cushion. He turns on the tv and starts to scroll the channels, so casually. Like he didn’t just spend a small fortune on a photograph that was going to come home with us anyway.

There is no winning with this man. I’ve more than learned that. He does what he does because he wants to, there is no stopping him. Giving up the fight, I sit next to him and we spend the rest of the night in each others arms.

With his body warmth engulfed around me, I succumb to the feeling of needing him. “Gabriel,” I look up at him.

“Yes,” he eyes catch mine. The crystal blue shade of his eyes catch mine.

“Take me to bed,” my heart is pounding in my chest. I hope I never lose this feeling. The feeling of being so overcome by him that I don’t hide my want or need of him.

“With pleasure,” I watch as the lightness of his eyes turn to a deep sapphire. He is overcome with love for me just as I am of him.

He stands and pulls me over his shoulder, carrying me to the bedroom. We spend the rest of the night in each other’s arms.

After more than a few orgasms shared between us, I pick up his button up shirt from the floor and make my way out of the bedroom. Gabriel is sound asleep and fully naked wrapped up in the thin blanket.

I wrap myself in his shirt and make my way through the house. The only light coming from the moon light beaming

through the large windows. I walk over to the sliding glass door leading out to the wrap around balcony.

The cool crisp New York air fills my lungs. As I stare down at the city lights, a scene of peace takes over me. Memories of my life before Gabriel take over my thoughts.

My toxic family. My fathers abuse. My mothers neglect. All the men my father put me in front of. I shiver at the thought of who I was back then. But when Gabriel saved me, he changed everything.

It changed the course of my life and his. Changed me down to the core of who I was and wanted to be. I hid my courage and voice from the people around me. But Gabriel helped me find my power. The woman I am today was hidden away. It took a man like him to let the spark inside me burn brighter than ever.

THE END



EPILOGUE: 6 MONTHS LATER

Gabriel

Opening night of Lush is upon us. It had been a struggle to get to this point. Lots of red tape to jump through. But Giovanni, Smith, and I kept focused and finally did it. Alexander, our partner, has been very happy with the progress.

The group of us are sitting in Smith's office in the back of the building going over all the final details. We have sent out all our friends' invites and membership information.

The front of the building is a simple black brick, with large gold letters above the wooden door. It's inconspicuous, you wouldn't know what you were looking at if you were just walking down the street. Just the way we want it.

Smith's office is large. It has to be to house all the computer screens that show every angle of the three floors of the club. Tv's line the whole back wall with a desk and keyboards from one end of the desk to the other.

We're sitting at a small round desk at the other end of his office. "We did it," Alex says, holding his glass of dark liquor

up. We clink glasses and share a toast.

Smith shows us the list of pre-registered members. It's a three page document. Some names I'm not familiar with but I smile at the ones I do. Business owners, political figures, and different mafia leaders fill the list.

We go over the list of daily operations; food list, drinks, and new employees, all of which signed ironclad NDAs for the members' protections. One form after another we finally finish with the list of our entertainers.

Though the club is for members to bring their guests and enjoy the amenities, we will have a well paid group of men and women for everyone's entertainment. Looking over the monthly calendar, with tomorrow's date circled in red for opening night, every day is filled with a special event.

Couples scheduled throughout the month to play out their fantasies, different teachers coming in to show how to kink responsibly. An excitement fills me looking at the date toward the end of the month.

We have a shibari expert coming in from California to hold a class to show everyone how the use of rope can be used in an erotic way. Memorizing the date, I want to bring Maya that night. A spark of hope hits my chest as I envision Maya tied up in knots.

The long list of to-does dwindle down to nothing. Just as we are about to end the meeting, the door swings open. A small figured woman with bright red hair comes walking in.

Her eyes are on the floor as she walks over and stands next to Smith. Without a word she kneels down and sets her hands on his thigh.

What the fuck!

Giovanni and I share a confused look. Smith doesn't acknowledge her but he simply starts to stroke her hair. She lays her head down on his lap as he continues to pet her.

We don't say a word as Giovanni, Alexander, and I say our goodbyes to Smith. He gives us a smile as he continues to handle the papers scattered on the table and petting this random woman. She looks vaguely familiar but I can't seem to place her.

I take the keys to my newest bike, a blacked out BMW M 1000 RR. Giovanni and I wave off Alexander as he walks to his waiting car. Business with him will be fun and lucrative for all parties.

“What the fuck was that with Smith and that woman in there?” he asks as I walk over to my bike and turn the key. The loud purr of the engine comes to life.

“I don't know dude, you know Smith, he's into some weird shit. Always has been.” I shrug not knowing what to say.

We grew up with Smith, when we opened our finance business we brought him in as our tech support. We couldn't leave him high and dry when we left the business. We needed his expertise.

But we never missed how he always would come to the office with different marks on his body. Giovanni and I never looked into it. As kids, he would always have a different girl under his arm. So we never thought anything of it.

But seeing how he's behaving with this woman has me thinking, we might have just found the perfect job for him. He'll be running security for the club but will also help with the day to day operations.

We share a smile as I set myself on my bike. "See you in a few days for opening night." He waves at me as I pull into traffic and go home to my waiting wife.

Life with Maya has been anything but boring. After everything that happened with her father; his treatment of her, her killing him, her mother leaving, I knew she needed an outlet.

Her photography has been picking up. She has the next three years planned out with shoots with clients. All thanks to the art show where her photographs sold out.

But she needed someone to listen to her, an emotional outlet. She agreed to start therapy once a week. We go together. She talks to her therapist about her struggles and I talk to mine. Sometimes we even have a joint session.

My time with my therapist is mainly spent talking about my childhood and what it looked like. What it meant to have my parents murdered. Finding out that my wife's father was behind it was a whole can of worms we had to work out.

Months have gone by and I'm happier and more clear headed than ever. The dark cloud that was over my life before Maya has gone. She brings a renewed sense of wonder and love into my life. And I thank her every day in the best way I know how.

Fucking her senseless on every surface of our house.

I walk into the house with music blasting through the speakers. Maya is in the living room dancing in nothing but a shirt. Her plump legs exposed as her hips sway side to side.

I lean on the kitchen counter and just watch. This is when I fall in love with her more than I knew possible. When she is carefree.

She spins in place. I must have surprised her as she stops dancing. She turns the music off and the silence rings out between us.

"Hello wife," I say, walking toward her.

She's frozen in place as I make my intentions very clear by dropping my jacket to the ground and I start to unbutton my shirt.

"Hello," is all she has a chance to say as I grab her by her silky legs and hoist her over my shoulder. Her laugh fills my ears but it's the anticipated moans she will be screaming that has me all but running to the bedroom.



Lush is packed. The bar is handing out drinks left and right. The stage in the center has a few of our entertainers dancing. Crowds of people throughout the first floor. A few tours of the second and third floors pass us by as Giovanni, Smith, and I lean against the railing in the back.

“We did it boys,” Smith yells out. The music is soft but it fills the space perfectly.

“We did,” Giovanni and I say in unison as we all share a toast.

Angelica and Maya accompanied us out tonight. They are at a standing table a few feet away drinking and laughing. Aphella, one of our entertainers, walks over to them and hands them a flier. A calendar full of events for the next month listed out on the front.

I watch her scan the flier and then her eyes go to me. A puzzled look on her face and she smiles at me. I wonder what date caught her attention.

The same woman from a few days ago comes up behind Smith and stands at his side. They share a look and Smith kisses her temple. “Gentlemen,” he says as he takes the mystery woman by the hand and leads her up the stairs.

Giovanni and I watch in wonder as he doesn't stop on the second floor, where the private rooms are. They continue up the second flight of stairs to the bigger open area. That's where groups can enjoy each other's company. Whether they join in or just watch is up to each couple.

“Enjoy your night,” I say to Giovanni as I make my way to Maya. I’m stopped by Alexander and he informs me that we have a list of over 300 newly signed up members.

With the basic package that just gets you in the door and access to the first floor only starting at \$1,500, I do the quick math and we share a knowing smile. Shaking hands I continue my pursuit of my wife.

She leans into Angelica and says something into her ear. They share a smile and Angelica starts to walk away. She makes her way past me with a smirk on her face and heads toward Giovanni.

I reach for Maya and kiss her deeply. “Are you having fun my sweet firefly?” I moan into her mouth. She nods as she tries to catch her breath.

“So what caught your eye on the flier?” I joke but I need to know.

“What is primal play?” her question takes me back. Though I’m a little disappointed she didn’t bring up shibari, another thrill courses through me as the fact that my little firefly wants to know what primal play is.

“It’s the more animalistic form of sex. Bringing out the carnal urges while pleasuring your partner. Lots of biting, scratching, and even chasing.”

Her eyes go wild with shock, but it’s the spark in her eyes that I don’t miss that tells me she might just want to give it a try.

“Is that something you’d want to try firefly?” I ask, damn well knowing the answer. She simply nods her head as she takes her almost empty glass to her plump red lips.

The dress she’s wearing tonight had me hyperventilating before we left the penthouse earlier today. It’s a form fitting emerald green dress. It hugs every one of her curves. But it was the fishnet stockings covering her legs that had me fucking her in the limo on the way to Lush.

We stand embraced in one another just watching the world around us. Groups of people engrossed in their conversations. Drinks being shared. Music filling the space. A good night for everyone.

“Do you want to go sit or explore?” I lean down to her ear.

“What’s on the second floor?” she questions. I love my inquisitive wife.

I look up to the second floor that has a hallway leading to a few rooms. Some rooms are for viewing and others are for playing. People walking in and out of the hallway with smiles throughout their faces.

“We call it the ‘voyeur hallway’, it’s where people can go watch others,” I answer, trying to keep my excitement to myself.

“Can we go?” she asks and without a second of thought, I’m leading her through the crowd and up the flight of stairs. Smiling at everyone we walk by, I notice a few people I recognize.

Mayor Henson is at the top of the stairs with his wife on his hip. We share a knowing smile. Our customers have no need to worry. We bill them under a discreet name so that it isn't flagged by businesses or the people in their lives. At Lush anyone can be and do anything.

I lead Maya through the hallway, opening each room. Each room is set with a one way mirror for people to watch the other side that houses a bed and all different kinds of toys.

The first room, a group of couples is watching a man with a whip in his hand as he plays with the woman that's tied to the bed posts. Maya and I take a minute to enjoy the show.

"Does this turn you on sweetness?" I lean down with my hands around her waist.

"Not so much," she says and I lead her out of the room.

The next room shows two men enjoying a single woman. They have her between them as they take her from either end. Maya doesn't seem to enjoy that either, so I lead her to the end of the hallway.

Something tells me she'll enjoy this one. A large crowd gathers at the window to watch the show.

A woman has a man at her feet, petting him like a dog. He has a collar around his neck which seems appropriate. The power that exudes from her is felt from everyone watching. Everyone's eyes are on her as she leads her male companion to a chair in the center of the room.

Everyone may be watching the scene play out in front of us but I'm looking at Maya next to me. Her full attention to the woman in full leather.

“Like what you see fireflies?” I whisper down at her. I don't want to draw attention away from the couple through the glass but the way Maya is reacting has me on edge. She nods her head not daring to miss a second of action.

I shift from standing next to Maya to being behind her. My hands run along her arms, to her breasts. I trail soft touches down to her stomach, past her belly button. I slide my hand under her dress, past her panties and between her soaked pussy lips.

“My dirty little wife gets off on watching, does she?” I nibble at her ear. Her head falls into my shoulder but her eyes are unmoving from the man who is down on his knees between the woman's legs. His head is hidden from view as he eats her pussy. The woman's face is a mirror image of Mayas. Full of lust and ecstasy.

Working Maya to her orgasm I notice a few eyes have landed on us. I share a smirk to the few people who are now watching me pleasure my wife. I want to hide her away and make sure no one is exposed to her pleasure but me.

So I continue my pursuit of her orgasm. Sliding one finger inside her, she pushes her hips further into me. I know she can feel my throbbing dick between the fabric separating us. I start to gently dig my teeth into her flesh, giving her a small taste of the primal aspect she so desperately wants to learn about.

The woman in the chair starts to jerk wildly as her partner brings her to her orgasm. Picking up my pace, I slide two more fingers into her wet pussy. I hit the special spot inside her with my fingers over and over as Maya herself starts to convulse in my arms.

Maya's eyes are shut as she lets her orgasm take over. The woman and Maya scream out together. Both of them lost in the feeling of pure bliss. A loud roar of applause echoes throughout the small room. "My little voyeur," I kiss her ear and fix her dress.

The scene in the room ends with the woman and man sharing a kiss and walking through a side door to a small room for them to change and come out of their play space safely. The room of watchers empties as everyone moves along to the rest of the club.

Maya and I leave the room last and make our way back down to the main floor. A photographer that we hired for the night comes along and I instruct him to snap a few of her and I together. I hand him a card, wanting some copies for myself.

We meet up with Angelica and Giovanni who are sitting in the sitting areas around the stage in the center of the room. The girls are chatting while Giovanni and I are going over some of the early numbers of the night. We both share a smile, knowing just how much money we're projected to make in this business.

With my drink in one hand and Maya's hand interlocked with my other I look over to the three most important people

in my life. This may not have been what our father had planned for us, but it's what life has brought us to and had it not been for that, Maya may not be in my life.

I look to the ceiling, sending an audible thank you to my parents for protecting us as much as they could, but also bringing Maya to me. The little spark of light that lights up my dark world.

COMING SOON

Smith's story is coming.

He is a computer genius with a secret.

She is the stolen victim with her own dark past.

They come together in the most unexpected way.

COMING 2024!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



AK Wear is a Bosnian American living the dream. She live in Texas with my husband and daughter. She is a lover of all things romance. Her love of reading started while she was learning the English language. But it wasn't until later in life that she found a love for writing. Like most, she found the book community in 2020 while being stuck at home. Through her love of reading, she is now living her dream of writing the stories of her heart.

You can find her on Instagram and Tiktok; Author AK Wear.