

# RADICAL

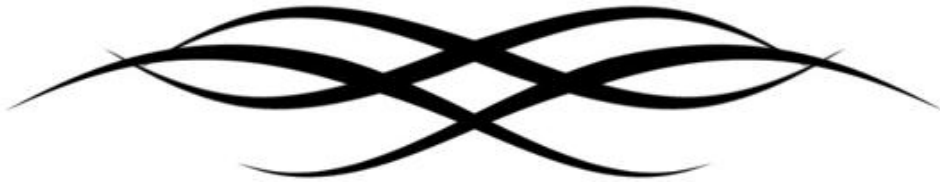
LOUISIANA DADDIES SERIES BOOK 2

# DADDY

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
LINZI BASSET

# RADICAL DADDY

*Club Rogue: Louisiana Daddies,  
Book 2*



A Later-in-Life Billionaire Suspense Novel

**By**  
**Linzi Basset**



Copyright © 2023 Linzi Basset - All rights reserved.

# **RADICAL DADDY**

Copyright © 2023 Linzi Basset – V11/9/23

Edited: Sandy Ebel

Proofreaders: Marie Vayer, Melanie Marnell, Charlotte Strickland, Cassandra Leigh.

Publisher: Linzi Basset & Cover Designer: Sweet Fifteen Designs

Warning: the unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by up to 5 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

Linzi Basset has asserted her rights under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work. All rights reserved. This copy is intended for the original purchaser of this eBook only. No part of this eBook may be reproduced, scanned, or distributed in any manner whatsoever without prior written permission from the author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

This book is a work of fiction. The names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the writer's imagination or have been used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to persons, living or dead, actual events, locales, business establishments, or organizations is entirely coincidental.

Warning: This book contains sexually explicit scenes and adult language and may be considered offensive to some readers. This book is for sale to adults only, as defined by the laws of the country in which you made your purchase.

Disclaimer: Neither the publisher nor the author will be responsible for any loss, harm, injury, or death resulting from use of the information contained in this book.

# Contents

[Author's Note & Blurb](#)

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Chapter Ten](#)

[Chapter Eleven](#)

[Chapter Twelve](#)

[Chapter Thirteen](#)

[Chapter Fourteen](#)

[Chapter Fifteen](#)

[Chapter Sixteen](#)

[Chapter Seventeen](#)

[Chapter Eighteen](#)

[Chapter Nineteen](#)

[Chapter Twenty](#)

[Blurb: Demanding Daddy](#)

[Books by Linzi Basset](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Stalk Linzi Basset](#)

## Author's Note & Blurb



Dear Reader,

Radical Daddy is the story of Tanner Wilde.

*Tanner Wilde*

Newly appointed U.S. Senator Tanner Wilder found himself kidnapped and at the mercy of a ruthless drug syndicate. Caught in the mire of political and mafia warfare, he was fighting for his life.

An unexpected ally from his past rescued him from the depths of hell he was in. Now, he owed her, but she represented the perfect Babygirl he had been searching for. How did he divorce his desire to turn her into his little girl from maintaining a professional relationship at the same time?

*Sera Brookes*

DEA Special Ops Recovery Agent Sera Brookes took her job seriously. She learned from an early age that she had to fight for her place in the world. Heading up the rescue mission for U.S. Senator Tanner Wilder was right up her alley.

Except, she was sidelined by old feelings resurfacing for the all-too-attractive man whom she had a huge crush on when she was a trainee at Quantico early in her career.

To exacerbate matters, she was appointed as his bodyguard... as his pretend fiancé. Keeping the dratted man safe was no easy feat since his magnetic presence sidelined her around every corner.

*Be prepared for a twist. Keep the tissues close, and I hope you'll enjoy reading their story!*

Warm regards,

Linzi Basset

# Chapter One



*An uninhabited island a couple miles south of Pilottown, Louisiana...*

“You don’t seem to grasp the seriousness of the situation you’re in, *ese*.”

The clanking of chains confirmed he was still strung up in a dark and dingy underground bunker, so Tanner Wilde didn’t bother opening his eyes. He knew all-too well who the whiney voice belonged to—Diego Ramirez, the oldest son of the leader of the Jalizio Drug Cartel.

In a twelve-month operation, the DEA, with the assistance of the LSU Police Department, successfully tracked down drug dealers linked to various Mexican Cartels. Their operations spread nationwide but were specifically active in New Orleans. Prior to Tanner’s recent election as U.S. Senator, he had played a key role as attorney general to set plans in motion to defeat the Siranoa and Jalizio Cartels.

To date, they hadn’t been able to find a connection between the two cartels and the Sanchigo Mafia group led by Salvatore Sanchigo, aka Carlo Coldero. However, Tanner suspected he was the mastermind behind the resurgence of drug distribution across Louisiana.

*The fucking bastard lost out on the banking scam, so now he’s back with a vengeance to stake another claim.* The thought sparked his anger. They had been so close to capturing



the mafia don. It was still a mystery how he had managed to escape at the time.

Tanner had been satisfied in his position as attorney general and originally declined the invitation to stand for the elections. In the end, the state legislature elected him by a unanimous vote based on his lineage, which he couldn't walk away from without dishonoring his family. He now held the distinction of being the only U.S. Senator preceded in office by both parents.

“And you're wasting your time. The new law imposes harsher penalties on gun trafficking and gives U.S. prosecutors a powerful tool to combat the illicit flow of weapons from the United States to drug cartels in Mexico and drugs across our borders. No one will agree to scrap it. The bill was passed by the Senate last month, and the House of Representatives approved it a week ago. Since I've been the recipient of your cordial entertainment for the past six days, I have no way of confirming this, but I'm relatively sure the President already signed the bill into law.”

“Ugh!” Tanner groaned as Diego punched him viciously in the stomach. He might be scrawny, but the strength behind the hit was undeniable.

“I'm not in the mood for a sermon, Senator. You will do what we ask, or your tenure will go down in the records as the shortest run ever.”

“Nah, in 1812, Jean Destrehan resigned before even assuming the position. I don't think anyone can beat—ugh, fuck!” His taunt was cut short by a hard kick against his ribs.

*I suppose I now have another couple of broken ones. Jesus, it hurts!*

“You think you're funny, *cabrón*?” Diego leaned so close their noses almost touched. If Tanner wasn't in so much pain, he might have given in to the desire to bite the tip and rearrange its shape. “But I like it. At least I have a reason to beat the shit out of you.”

“Chained as I am, I’m sure your bravery will be the talk of all the cartel whores.”

Tanner was renowned for his unwavering fearlessness. As the attorney general, he never used to just delegate orders. He actively engaged in frontline battles alongside the appointed teams. The day he became senator was indeed a sad one for the LSU Police Department, who he always assisted.

“C’mon, Diego, do the math. It’s too fucking late. The wheels have already started turning.”

The drug cartels were empowered by having weapons readily available, which they utilized to instill fear in local communities, defy state control, and extend their lethal narcotics business back into the United States. Tanner had no intention of being the reason such an important barrier to drug and weapon smuggling was overturned. As cliché as it sounded, he’d rather die first.

“With enough pressure, it can still be overturned, Senator, and that’s where you come in, *entiendo?*”

“You’re the one not getting it, *estúpida.*” The chains clanked as Tanner leaned forward to spit in his face. “It’s not happening.”

“For your own good, it fucking better.” Diego glared at his cohorts. “Remind the *maldito idiota* of the hopelessness of his situation. Maybe by the time I return, he would’ve changed his mind.”

“*¡A huevo!*” The three men choired their excitement at the order.

The resounding slam of the cell door marked Diego’s departure. Tanner suppressed a groan as he eyed the trio of burly guards. They were demons from another realm or, more fitting, patsies of the devil. Their sinister grins and anticipation swelling their chests didn’t bode well for him. He already knew they had no mercy and used their meaty fists with ruthless glee. The multitude of bruises and cuts covering his

body were a vivid showcase of their painful entertainment over the past couple of days.

“I don’t suppose it’ll do me any good to urge you to change the path you’re on?” Tanner ignored the voice in his head, warning him to shut up. He was fed up with being beaten up for hours just so they could show off to each other. If he could taunt them into shutting him up so that he passed out quickly, so much the better.

“We like the road we’re on, *cabrón*.” Brute, as Tanner had christened him, swung a meaty fist at his face, which Tanner just managed to avoid. “For one thing, I make more fucking money than you do.”

“Yeah, killing people so others don’t have to dirty their hands. So, how did you end up as a useless criminal prone to torturing strung-up men? Ah, wait, I know. You’re a big ass piece of muscle with no brain. All you know how to do is swing your fists because you’re too dumb to—ugh!”

The next strike connected with Tanner’s chin so hard, his neck made a sickening cracking sound as his head snapped backward from the force.

Ignoring the searing pain that shot through his jaw, Tanner smirked. The taste of blood lingered in his mouth, but the rush of adrenaline fueled his defiance. Forgotten was the desire to be knocked out. Now, he wanted to see just how far he could push the bastard. Fury glowed in Brute’s eyes, but a part of Tanner reveled in pushing his buttons.

“Is that all you got?” he taunted. “I’ve had paper cuts more painful than that. You swing like a toddler throwing a tantrum.”

Brute growled, and with his anger boiling over, he lunged forward again, aiming another punch at Tanner’s gut. This time, he managed to tighten his abdominal muscles just in time to lessen the impact, but the blow still knocked the air out of his lungs.

“Ugh.” Gasping, his vision blurred for a moment, but he managed to breathe through it.

“You talk a big game for a shithead hanging by his wrists,” Brute grumbled.

Tanner coughed, spitting out some blood before raising his head defiantly. “Yeah, my friends all say I talk too much, but since you’re nothing but a mindless thug with a false sense of power, I didn’t think you’d appreciate it. You don’t scare me, fuckwit. All you know is how to throw your weight around, and that’s the epitome of patheticism.”

The flash of evil in Brute’s eyes warned Tanner that he was dancing dangerously close to the edge. The same voice in the back of his head screamed at him to shut up, to stop provoking the man who had him at his mercy. But something had snapped inside him. He was tired of being the helpless victim, tired of watching these criminals take pleasure in others’ suffering.

Brute charged at him once more, but this time, Tanner was ready. He managed to twist his body slightly, causing Brute’s punch to graze his shoulder rather than landing a direct hit. It still stung, but it was a small victory.

Thoroughly entertained by the showmanship, the other men in the room laughed boisterously. Tanner’s provocation seemed to fuel their sadistic enjoyment. Despite his pain and exhaustion, he refused to back down.

“You’re all a bunch of pathetic losers.” Blood and saliva spat from his mouth. “You think you’re tough because you hurt people weaker than you? Well, newsflash, motherfuckers. Real strength is about protecting, not destroying. Then again, you wouldn’t understand that because you’re all just a bunch of cowards.”

He knew he was pushing his luck, but Tanner was past the point of caring. The world around him seemed to blur as a cocktail of pain and anger surged through him from the battering of fists, now landing one after the other.

“Time to shut you up, *gringo*,” Brute snarled as his face contorted with rage. He raised his fist once more to deliver a devastating blow, but before he could strike, the door swung open with a bang.

Tanner must be on the verge of passing out since Diego’s usual whiney voice filled the room with a commanding bellow.

“Enough.”

“No, *Jefe*. I’m just getting started,” Brute sneered as he pulled back his arm, ready to release another volley of hits into Tanner’s gut.

“If I wanted him dead, I would’ve said so. Get the fuck out of here and go skin a rabbit if you’re so desperate for blood. The fun here is over.”

Brute hesitated, lowering his fist reluctantly. “This is bullshit, *Jefe*.”

“*Vete a la mierda!* Out. Get the fuck out.” Diego glared at them with a gaze like daggers cutting through the tension. “Leave. *Ahora!*” The warning in his voice brooked no argument.

One by one, the men shuffled out of the room, leaving Tanner hanging there, battered and broken. He watched Diego warily. Over time, he had learned not to trust thugs, no matter how friendly or how much compassion they might show.

“So, are you going to break the ribs I still have that are intact, or are you going to aim for my nose?” Tanner smirked. “That might not be such a bad thing. Chicks dig a man with a slightly crooked nose. It shows I can handle a beating and don’t mind others knowing.”

Diego didn’t react with the violence he expected. Instead, he slowly circled him. The malevolent grin on his face awakened a sense of unease in Tanner.

“If there’s one thing I learned from my late father, may he rest in darkness, is to always be unpredictable. I must

admit, I'm surprised you're still alive after all the beatings and yet, here you are. That's an unexpected complication and an inconvenience that's wasting my time, *ese*. So, no. No more beatings to get you to do my bidding. Instead, I'm gonna do what guys like me do best. I'm going to hit you where it hurts the most."

*Fuck! Fuck-fuck-fuck!* Well-versed in how these bastards operated, he knew what was coming. Mafia and syndicates relied on fear and terror to achieve their sinister goals, not only against their adversaries but also to maintain control within their organizations. They employed similar tactics akin to authoritarian regimes to stay in power.

When they felt wronged or had specific demands, like in Tanner's case, they resorted to a surefire way of getting what they wanted—threatening to harm those you cared about. Once they reached that level of desperation, there was little hope left. The likes of the Jalizio Cartel didn't make idle threats. If they had already identified the people who mattered most to him, someone would already be in position to take action.

"I dunno, *amigo*. I don't think there are any spots left on my body that don't hurt like the motherfucker."

This time, Diego barked out a sinister laugh. "Ah, but there is one, *ese*. Your heart. You see, either you do what we want, or you're going to live with a bleeding heart, crying over the gruesome death of your little brother's brats and the guilt that you are the reason they died." His chest seemed to grow with pride. "Yes, I might be a useless criminal in your eyes, but I've got contacts, *ese*. High up, and even though your brother and his family live way up there in Iceland, I found them." He leaned closer. "Guess what? I already recruited very eager assassins in that area. Apparently, their home is quite secluded in the mountains. Perfect for what I have in mind."

"You fucking bastard!" Without thought to the consequences, Tanner slammed his head forward, disregarding the blinding pain that seared through his brain at the satisfying

crack resounding through the room of his forehead colliding with Diego's.

“Touch them, and you're a dead man!”

Diego staggered toward the door. The hit had been so hard he could hardly see straight and felt like he was about to pass out. Leaning heavily against the frame, his eyes flashed with dangerous fury as he glared at Tanner.

“You just made the biggest mistake of a lifetime, *ese*. Now they'll all die, but I'll keep you alive as a play toy for the boys. You will never walk out of here. From now on, you belong to me.”

## Chapter Two



*A week later...*

Tanner's body trembled, but the ground beneath him was stable. It was as if the world had shifted out of place, leaving him disoriented and confused.

“Fuck!” His voice reverberated, raw and raspy, in his ears. “Make that infernal noise stop!” The grating sound of metal scraping against metal threatened to tear his skull asunder. “Where the hell am I?” He surveyed the unfamiliar desert sprawled before him. A strange sensation enveloped him, as though his body were somersaulting upside down.

“Sweet Jesus, it's excruciating!” Pain detonated in his mind, and in an instant, everything vanished. The daylight, the sand—everything he had glimpsed upon awakening dissipated. Shivers racked his body as he attempted to move, yet his legs remained feeble. He felt as vulnerable as a toddler, and the incessant pounding in his skull sapped his strength, leaving him incapable of lifting himself from the ground.

“Motherfucker,” he croaked, his split lips barely forming the words. He inhaled deeply, only to choke on a putrid odor that permeated his nostrils and mouth. The stench was so repugnant that he couldn't quite identify it, save for the familiar hints of decaying food and dampness. Another noxious scent assailed him, filling his lungs and churning his stomach with revulsion. His gut spasmed violently, and he



expelled a thin, acrid liquid in a spray before he could draw another breath.

“To hell with that; I won’t succumb. I won’t die here.” Desperation fueled his battle against the encroaching darkness.

“That’s the spirit, Senator, but unless we get you out of here and quickly, you might just end up that way.”

Tanner strained to pry open his eyes at the sudden voice beside him. He squinted against the searing light that pierced through his consciousness.

“Who are you?”

“Special Agent John Douglas, at your service. DEA recovery unit. I’m the team medic.”

“Damn, it hurts,” Tanner groaned, reaching out to clutch Douglas’ shoulder as the agent helped him to his feet.

“Good Lord, Senator. What in the world did they do to you? With all due respect, sir, you look like shit.” Agent Douglas carefully assessed Tanner’s condition. “You resemble a coloring book,” he remarked, his concern evident as he observed the bruised and battered upper body. “Let’s hope there are no internal injuries that might worsen with movement.”

“Holy fuck!” Tanner cried out as Douglas prodded his shoulder.

“Your shoulder is dislocated.”

“No shit!” he exclaimed through clenched teeth. “Pop it back in.”

“It’s going to hurt.”

“Every fucking thing hurts like hell, Agent Douglas. Just... AWWW! Jesus!” Tanner cried out as Douglas adeptly realigned his shoulder. “You could have given me a heads-up.”

“No time. The lead agent is on my tail like hot tar. My ear is already burning up from her curses. Let’s go. We have a

small window to get back to the pickup spot. We can't afford for anyone to spot the helicopter."

Supporting Tanner with his shoulder, Douglas hoisted him upright. "Do you think you can walk?"

"I'll crawl if I have to. As long as I get the hell out of here."

"What's the damn hold-up? A vehicle is approaching, and you're moving too slow. We need to go. Now." Tanner blinked in surprise at the husky voice of the blonde woman who tugged her shoulder under his other arm and with a terse, "Move, Douglas. Now!" heaved him toward the stairs.

"An angel," he murmured as her azure eyes briefly clashed with his. "I'm being saved by an angel."

"Oh, for fuck's sake," she muttered under her breath. "Bag your charm, Senator. I'm not the kind of woman to fall for flowery words."

Tanner had suspected as much before he had uttered the words, but still, it was exactly how he felt at that moment. A calmness settled over him when her long fingers firmly clasped his bicep as they guided him up the stairs.

Once outside, they were surrounded by the rest of the recovery team, who moved like a well-oiled machine.

He was surprised to notice that they were at a rundown barn-like building surrounded by a thick forest. At what point he had been moved there; he had no idea since his last memory was of him being beaten to a pulp inside the compound of the syndicate.

"How did you find me?"

"Escape first, questions later. We need to move faster, Senator. Do you think you can keep up, or should we form a human stretcher for you?"

"No need. I'll keep up. All I require is one human crutch."

“Douglas, you’re it.” She stepped away as her hand circled in the air, one finger pointing forward. “On me. Let’s move.”

Tanner’s bravado was nearly his undoing. The distance to where the helicopter was waiting wasn’t that far, but with the headache battering against his skull like an angry bull with every step, it felt like a hundred miles.

“Fucking hard-headed ass,” the female voice growled next to him as suddenly she was there to once again offer her shoulder as a crutch. “At this rate, you’ll get us all killed.”

Swallowing his pride, Tanner graciously accepted her help and found himself unconsciously leaning heavier against her than Douglas. His strength was rapidly waning.

“I hope that helo is close,” he mumbled as the world began to tilt around him. “I can’t go much further.”

“Just hold on, Senator. We’re almost there.”

Tanner didn’t know if it was more than just his imagination, but her words sounded melodious as she cooed it into his ear.

“Tanner. My name is Tanner.”

“So, it is.” She grunted and tightened her hold around his waist as he stumbled.

“And yours? You look familiar. What’s your name?”

“Save the chit-chat, Senator Wilde. You need to preserve your breath. Two more minutes. C’mon. Breathe in and keep pushing.”

The gentle coaxing, accompanied by her fingers stroking his arm, kept the encroaching darkness that threatened to overwhelm him at bay.

“Agent Long. Get over here and help us get him inside the chopper. Move it!”

Tanner’s upper body had barely settled back on the floor of the helicopter before he succumbed to the inviting

obliviousness of unconsciousness.



“Good Lord! I don’t know how he’s still alive. I’ve never seen anything as bad as this. His entire upper body is one massive bruise.”

Agent John Douglas’ voice sounded far off, with her attention rooted on the injured man at her feet he was attending to.

“Is he going to make it?”

“His struggling to breathe is due to cracked or perhaps even a broken rib, although I don’t see any signs that his lungs have been punctured. With how badly he has been beaten up, I’m relatively sure he has internal injuries. What I don’t know is how serious they are. So, the honest answer, Agent Brookes, is that I don’t know, but he’s a very strong man. As long as we can get him to a hospital asap, he should survive.”

DEA Recovery Agent Sera Brookes took her job seriously. Heading up the team to track and recover, U.S. Senator Tanner Wilde had been right up her alley. It came at a time she desperately needed to get out of the city.

Except watching the difficulty he had breathing and looking at the purple bruises that stood as a visual graphic of the torture he had to endure brought back memories she had thought long buried. Her fingers curled into fists as the scene flashed through her mind in a monochrome movie reel.

*“Now see what you made me do, you despicable little brat!”*

*Sera shrunk back against the fury in her stepfather’s eyes as he turned away from the prone figure lying on the bedroom floor. Her trembling hands crawled over her chest to cover her mouth as she stared at her mother. Her chest heaved in irregular movements as she struggled to breathe, and with every breath, it seemed as though the small red carnation on her chest bloomed bigger and bigger.*

*“What’s wrong with my mom?”*

*“Your mommy got what she deserved and now that she’s paid her dues... it’s your turn.”*

*“R-Run, Sera. Run!” The desperate cry came in a near whisper from the bloodied lips of the woman attempting to lift her head from the floor to look at her young daughter.*

*The raw cry caused Sera to hesitate as her eyes flickered back to her. The pleading look in her gaze haunted the young ten-year-old girl so much she couldn’t move.*

*“No! I need to help you, Mommy.”*

*“No, baby. You n-need to run. P-Please, my brave girl. D-Do it for m-mommy.” A gurgling breath escaped her lips. “G-Go to Uncle S-Steve. Tell him... tell him, it’s t-time. Go. Go now!”*

“ETA, forty minutes,” the pilot’s voice penetrated the haze of memories and yanked Sera back to the present.

“Too long. You’ve gotta push it, otherwise he’s not gonna make it,” said Agent Douglas in a voice that suddenly sounded too urgent and serious for Sera’s liking.

“Has his condition worsened?” she queried as she leaned forward to place a cool hand against Tanner’s brow. A hiss escaped her lips at the heat emanating from his skin. “He’s burning up.”

“At a guess, my worst fear has been realized, Agent Brookes. I think he’s bleeding internally. If we don’t get him into an operating room fast, he’s a goner.”

Prior to joining the DEA, Sera had an impressive background as a former CIA Case Officer. A career choice profoundly influenced by the tumultuous upbringing in a violent environment. The scars of her past were a constant reminder, and she was determined never to let anyone inflict the same fate her stepfather had unleashed upon her mother.

Throughout her tenure in the Directorate of Operations, Sera showcased exceptional skills in tactical maneuvers and

firearms, earning her a reputation as a proficient and reliable operative. However, it was after her final assignment, and still haunted by losing the most precious thing in her life years before, that Sera reached a pivotal crossroads in her life.

Death had come knocking on her door too many times during the six years in the field. She had just turned thirty-two, and it was time for a change. In the crucible of war, Sera's unwavering courage gave way to a profound realization that there must be another way to make a difference in the world other than putting her life on the line every day. Putting herself in the line of fire would never bring back what she had lost. If she hadn't chosen this career in the first place, she never would've suffered that torment. Hence, she decided to step away from the frontlines and forge a new direction in her career, one that would leverage her expertise and experiences to affect change and leave enough room to pursue her personal dreams.

*In total, it's been fourteen years and I still haven't found what I'm searching for. At this rate, I might never.* Shaking off the negative energy terrorizing her, she caught the medic's gaze.

"We've come too far to lose him now, Douglas. Whatever it takes, keep him breathing." She looked at the pilot. "Step on it, Captain."

"This isn't a V12 Ferrari, Agent Brookes, but I'm gonna push it as fast as I can."

"Just get us there, stat."

She smiled wryly as another memory flashed through her mind.

*"Do you need help picking up that rifle, rookie?"*

*"No, sir, I can do it."*

*"Then get to it. You're holding up the entire class."*

*Sera grimly lifted the heavy rifle and settled it on her shoulder. With a deep exhale, she calmed her mind and started*

*jogging after the group of rookies. It was the second week of her training at Quantico as a field officer for the CIA. She had been doing very well... until HE arrived—special black ops operative Tanner Wilde. Ever since then, she had turned into a blushing, bumbling teenager.*

*Having a crush on your trainer wasn't very conducive to kicking off a successful career with the CIA, especially since it was colored by a memory of one night so very long ago. Every time he looked in her direction, her body exploded with lust, and she forgot all she had learned or was supposed to do. There was no doubt about it. If he as much as lifted a pinky in her direction as an invitation, she would jump at the chance.*

She dragged in a slow breath as she forced her attention back to the present. Staring at him, she acknowledged the truth.

*Hell, I still would. Yes, even beaten and broken, he still has the same effect on me. This is one seriously fuckable man.*

# Chapter Three



*Five weeks later... DEA National Intelligence Operations Offices, New Orleans...*

“Why me? I’m not a damn bodyguard. Besides, I’m knee deep in the investigation to track Salvitore Sanchigo. What good would I do babysitting a man with a chip on his shoulder?”

“I don’t think we’re talking of the same man, Agent Brookes. If there’s one thing Senator Tanner Wilde isn’t, it’s cocky or vain.” Deputy Chief Jason Scott regarded her with his head tilted. “No, something else is bugging you. Don’t tell me you’re scared you’ll fall in love with him?”

“Falling in love is highly overrated. Besides, I don’t have time for that shit, you know that better than anyone,” she snapped while desperately banning the vision of the tall, muscled man that had been haunting her dreams ever since she rescued him from her mind.

The harrowing death of her mother at the merciless hands of her stepfather had ignited an unwavering loathing for narcotics deep within Sera. With time, this profound aversion had seeped into the very core of her being, coursing through her veins like an indomitable essence. It had become her life’s purpose, akin to a sacred oath—a relentless commitment to hunt down and dismantle drug syndicates, sparing no effort to cleanse society of their insidious influence.

Driven by an insatiable thirst for justice, Sera made the momentous decision to depart from her role at the CIA.



Instead, she embraced a new calling as an SRT Operator within the DEA's Office of National Security Intelligence. Their mission to combat drug trafficking dovetailed seamlessly with her fervent pursuit, providing her with the ideal platform to actively confront the menace she vehemently abhorred.

Though haunted by the painful memories of her mother's demise and her own personal loss, Sera's heart was now a bastion of resilience fortified by her commitment to the cause. She channeled her grief into a potent force for good as she transformed her personal tragedy into a relentless crusade against drug traffickers and their vile enterprises.

"Nevertheless, you're the one I need on this."

"But Deputy Chief, what about Salvitore Sanchigo? You know how long I've been chasing that motherfucker? Playing bodyguard at this crucial point—"

"To the contrary. It's exactly why you're the perfect bodyguard for the senator."

"I don't follow." Sera straightened in the chair.

"I'm sure your team uncovered the latest developments in Sanchigo's portfolio while you were gone. Senator Wilde, along with Triple K Secure, played a pivotal role in uncovering the true identity of Sanchigo and his part in the recent banking fiasco."

"The foiled banking fiasco, you mean?"

"Exactly. At the time, Wilde was still attorney general and went deep undercover to infiltrate the group responsible. It was through his and the Frazer brothers' efforts that Sanchigo's identity was discovered." With a shrug, he settled back in his chair. "Unfortunately, he somehow managed to escape and disappeared into thin air. Since then, no one has been able to find the hole he's hiding in."

"So, if I stick close to Tanner Wilde..."

“Exactly. I’m hoping that Sanchigo, aka Carlo Coldero, would be gunning for revenge.” He tapped his fingers on the desk. “Just stay out of the line of fire, Agent Brookes. I can’t afford to lose more agents and I fucking refuse to stand next to another grave any time soon.”

“Always, DC.” Sera sighed heavily, a sign of acceptance of the mission. “I assume you already have a covert plan set up?”

“Of course, I do.” The smile curving his lips was Chesire-like. “Congratulations, Agent Brookes. You are Senator Tanner Wilde’s newly-acquired fiancé... and since his kidnapping and torture have been kept from the tabloids, also the reason why he has been gone for over two months. He went to woo you to accept his proposal after you ran off to Africa when he first asked you.”

“You have got to be kidding me.” Sera gaped at him as her mind scrambled to make sense of what was lying ahead with this piece of unforeseen detail.

“Better get some fancy clothes and heels, Agent Brookes. You’re going to become quite the socialite on the arm of one of the most beloved senators in the U.S. and Louisiana.”

“Like hell! I don’t wear goddamn heels. I have no intention of breaking my neck trying to balance on sticks while I run.”

“Run? Come now, Brookes. You’ll be wined and dined. No running for at least a couple of months.”

“If, as you said, he played a pivotal role in scamming Sanchigo, believe me, there will be a lot of running involved.” She grinned at the prospect. “And shooting. Lots and lots of shooting.”

Deputy Chief Scott was hard pressed not to roll his eyes. “You do understand the meaning of covert, don’t you, Brookes?”

Within her circle of peers, Sera had earned a formidable reputation as an indomitable force, a figure often spoken of with profound respect as the ‘lady of steel’—a title she had more than earned. Her armor was nigh impenetrable, a shield that most men found themselves powerless against. Fear was an alien concept to her, and she routinely positioned herself at the vanguard of every raid, showcasing an uncanny knack for detecting the minutest details that often eluded others.

Within her team, she was the embodiment of both fearlessness and unparalleled skill, her confidence unshaken in the face of any challenge that dared to cross her path. Sera’s presence was like an unyielding beacon, illuminating the darkest corners of every mission with unwavering determination and capability.

Except this operation involved a factor she was completely ill-equipped to handle. Okay, not entirely true. She could handle Tanner Wilde, but the added caveat of her libido going into overdrive whenever the sexy, almost silver fox looked her way? Now, that would play havoc with her self-control and keeping her guard up 24/7.

*Hell, and damnation, it’s going to be a serious challenge keeping my hands off the man.*

“So, you want me to turn into a Barbie doll?” She fluttered her eyelids. “Not exactly my MO, Deputy. If that’s what you expect, this op is going to be an epic failure before it even starts.”

“I don’t care what persona you take, Sera, but know one thing. You’re going to be stuck like glue to Tanner Wilde. He won’t be able to piss without you holding his hand.” A speculative glint sparked in Jason’s eyes, casting a flicker of intrigue across his features, while her cheeks underwent a transformation, flushing with a crimson hue akin to a sudden burst of vibrant red paint splashed onto a canvas. Her reaction was both rare and captivating, a response that left him intensely curious. “Now, that’s quite interesting,” he muttered,

his gaze narrowing as he subjected her to a scrutinizing examination. “Is there something you’ve been keeping from me regarding Senator Wilde, Brookes?”

“Like what exactly?” Her endeavor to retain her composure was evident as Sera shifted uncomfortably in her chair, attempting to mask her disconcertment.

“You tell me,” Jason replied with a raised eyebrow, his penetrating stare locking onto her. Known for his keen wit and perceptive nature, he left no room for her to believe that her reaction had gone unnoticed. A sense of disquiet gnawed at the edges of her mind as she grappled with the realization that he had not misconstrued her response. She cursed her imagination for conjuring an inappropriate scene of Senator Wilde, envisioning scenarios that her better judgment urged her to banish, especially one of him with his pants unzipped and caressing his hard—

*Focus, Brookes. Get your mind out of the man’s pants. It’s the last thing you should be thinking of!*

“There’s nothing.” She returned his stare unblinkingly. “I propose you spell out my mission. What exactly am I supposed to do?”

Jason’s tone grew serious. “You have one duty only. Keep Senator Wilde safe and alive. He played a vital role in crafting the new transportation law, designed to clamp down on the drug syndicates and the mafia’s freedom to smuggle drugs and weapons across our borders. The penalties are severe, and that’s precisely why they’ll stop at nothing to have the bill scrapped. Our intel indicates that Wilde wields enough influence in the Senate to prevent the bill from reaching the President’s desk, which, for some unknown reason, hasn’t happened yet. Until it does and it’s signed, your task is to keep him safe and out of the clutches of the drug cartels and mafia groups.”

Taking a deep breath, Sera absorbed the weight of the mission, knowing the stakes were high. Nodding, she got up.

“When is my mission a go?”

“It started the moment you walked into my office.”

“Then I better go and pack.” She stopped at the door. “Last I heard the senator was still in hospital. Has he been released since?”

“No. That’s where your mission kicks off, Brookes. The senator’s loving fiancé is going to take him home from the hospital in the morning.”

“Brilliant,” she mumbled.

“Oh, two more things. Before leaving, get your ass over to the basement. They’ve got your wardrobe ready for pickup.”

“My wardrobe? I can dress myself, thank you very much.”

“I’m afraid camo gear isn’t going to cut it this time.” He held up his hand. “It’s not a debate, Brookes. You’ll wear the clothes selected, end of story.”

Hands on her hips, she glowered at him. “And the second thing?”

“Ah, yes.” He grimaced as though he expected a volcanic eruption. “It’ll be up to you to explain your position in his life to the senator when you pick him up.”

“What? He doesn’t even know he’s been saddled with a fiancé?”

“As I said, it’ll be—”

“Yeah, I fucking got it.”

“Good luck, Brookes. Word has it that the senator isn’t in a good mood. He’s been chomping at the bit to go home for the past two weeks.”

“Wonderful. Trust me to be the one stuck with an unwanted fiancé and a grumpy one at that,” she snickered as she slammed the door shut behind her.



*The next morning...*

Sera strode purposefully down the neatly paved pathway leading to the hospital entrance. The click of her high heel boots sounded foreign to her ears. She was more comfortable in sneakers and lace-up boots, but due to the role she had to play, she was forced to dress up. Luckily the ‘wardrobe’ she was supplied by the agency was chic and comfortable. She looked effortlessly chic wearing designer jeans and a luxurious apricot cashmere sweater. The silky abundance of her honey-colored curls bounced gracefully as she walked, enhancing her poised appearance. Taking in her surroundings, she observed the orderly walkways bordered by green lawns and flanked by modern buildings of concrete and glass—a serene haven of peace and tranquility, far from the chaos of a bustling city.

“Well, here goes nothing,” she mumbled to herself as the glass doors silently slid open upon her approach. Having studied the hospital’s layout before leaving home, she knew exactly where she was heading. Stepping inside, she made her way toward the stairs, and climbed the four flights with quick, purposeful steps. Sera’s commitment to fitness and mindful eating kept her in peak condition, which was evident in the agile grace of her steps.

“Fucking hell, I’m not ready for this,” she whispered. Her stomach clenched in anticipation as she neared the private ward where Senator Tanner Wilde would be waiting.

This marked the first time Sera would come face-to-face with him since the rescue. After ensuring his safe delivery and care by the hospital staff, she had returned home. She was surprised as a sudden sense of guilt gnawed at her for not checking in on him since then.

Stepping into the intensive care ward, she noticed an immediate shift in the atmosphere. The air carried a fresh, perfumed scent, and the plush chairs exuded comfort.

Everything seemed meticulously maintained, with not a speck of dust in sight. Vases of fresh flowers and beautiful framed artwork contributed to the soothing environment. Nurses unhurried and gracefully making their rounds, added to the tranquil ambiance.

“Can I help you, miss?” Sera startled at the voice suddenly sounding beside her. She turned to face a friendly, petite nurse who watched her with a curious expression.

“I’m here for Senator Wilde.” The smile she offered was warm and friendly.

The nurse glanced at the clock above the nurses’ station. “Visiting time isn’t for another three hours.” Her eyes narrowed perceptively. “I haven’t seen you here before.”

“Oh! I’m Sera Brookes. Tanner’s fiancé.” She smiled broadly as she flashed the diamond ring on her finger. “I’ve been stuck in Africa since our engagement because of work commitments and could only get back here now. I’ve been so worried about him.”

“I see.” Her demeanor softened a bit. “Sounds like you and he have a romantic story to tell.”

Sera planted a playful grin on her lips. “Oh, we do. He’s such a gentle giant.” She wrung her hands together in pretend agitation. “May I see him, please? I’m actually here to take him home.”

“I’m afraid Senator Wilde is under protective guard. I’ll fetch the agent in charge to speak with you.”

“Oh, thank you so much.”

Sera refrained from rolling her eyes in exasperation as she watched the nurse trot off. “Enough with the ohs, Sera. Don’t overdo it. Be yourself as much as possible or this entire façade is going to blow up in your face.”

“Agent Brookes?” The deep voice behind her was wrought with surprise. Sera turned to face the agent in charge. “I have to admit, when they told me they procured a covert

bodyguard in the form of a fiancé for the senator, you weren't even on the list of names that popped up in my mind."

"So happy I could be a source of entertainment for you, Agent Farlow," she responded in a dry tone.

The burly man grinned as he started walking down the hallway. "I've been told not to say anything to him, so I assume the pleasant task of informing him he's going home with a ball and chain around his neck is up to you." His smile widened. "I can't wait to watch these episodes unfold, especially since he's been in such a shit mood for the past two weeks." He pointed to a closed door on the right. "In there. He might still be asleep."

With the utmost caution, Sera gently turned the doorknob, and slipped into the room with bated breath, her heart thudding with anticipation. Her eyes instantly fixated on the figure sprawled across the bed as she approached him, each step taken in silence. As she drew nearer, her breath grew laborious, the surge of adrenaline coursing through her veins akin to being in hyperdrive, ready to propel her like a rocket. Standing by his side, she couldn't help but be entranced by his presence, even in his battered state. Despite the discolored bruises that painted his face in an array of hues and extended down to his arms and—

"Oh, good Lord, I forgot how badly beaten up you were," she whispered to herself, her heart aching at the sight that lay before her. Carefully lifting the edge of the hospital gown, she peered at his chest, her eyes tracing every inch of his once unblemished skin, now marred by similar bruises and healing cuts. A broad bandage concealed his stomach, a stark indication of the gravity of his injuries. The desire to examine the rest of his body surged within her, but she quickly quelled it. She knew she couldn't risk being discovered by him or anyone else, especially considering the extent of his torment and the imminent danger he faced.

Sera found herself startled as her hands moved of their own accord, delicately tracing the veins on his hands, and



caressing the well-defined lines of his forearms and biceps, which subtly rippled beneath her feather-light touch. She momentarily froze when he shifted restlessly. Glancing at his face, she breathed a sigh of relief, seeing that he was still soundly asleep. Yet, she couldn't bring herself to withdraw her hands from his inviting musculature. A whirlwind of emotions swirled within her—a mixture of tenderness, concern, and an undeniable surge of desire. She knew she had to temper the latter given the circumstances. With reverent eyes closed, she savored another fleeting moment of his warm skin beneath her palm.

“Either direct your touch further south or remove your hands from my body. Sexual teasing becomes torment when a man is in a weakened state.”

“Oh!” Sera's eyes fluttered open at the guttural voice, but her hands remained as if glued to his arm. The stark contrast of the crisp white sheets against his short dark hair, sprinkled with silver, struck her as she gazed at him. The sight left her feeling slightly lightheaded, captivated by his attractiveness. “I... ehm...”

In a moment unlike any she had experienced before, she was rendered speechless as his unyielding gaze ensnared her own. Her eyes embarked on a journey, mapping the intricacies of his countenance, tracing every chiseled and distinctly masculine line. He embodied the sort of features that demanded recognition, a presence that compelled women to pause in their tracks and gaze in wonderment. An aura of strength, courage, and unwavering assertiveness radiated from him that left her momentarily breathless, caught in the thrall of his undeniable magnetism.

Her heart skipped a beat as his nose twitched and his full lips curved into an involuntary smile at her speechlessness. Despite his weakened state, he exuded a captivating presence, reminiscent of a modern-day suave noir hero, especially with the dark and neat beard that covered part of his face. Only slightly pale now, his naturally tanned skin seemed to accentuate his allure.

Her mind, a frenzied hive of thoughts, sifted through the fragments of information she had meticulously gathered about this man as part of her research on Salvitore Sanchigo. Tanner Wilde, a figure defined by resilience, a man who had stared down adversity's harshest blows and emerged victorious through sheer determination and an unyielding spirit. The reports had spoken of his unrelenting nature, his unshakable strength, yet also hinted at the softer contours of his character, the compassion and care he bestowed upon those who earned his regard.

“Need help in finding the southerly direction, miss? I'll be only too happy to assist.”

Sera snatched her hands from his arm and forced a deep breath into her lungs. “I was just checking if you were in a condition to be moved.”

“I've been ready to go home for weeks. If you think for a second anything you say will change me walking out of this goddamn hospital today, think again.”

With narrowed eyes he regarded her. “I've seen you before. More than once, I believe. Who are you and what the devil are you doing pawing me?”

“Ah, I see you found your fiancé, Miss Brookes.” The nurse Sera had met earlier arrived in the room like a welcome breeze.

“Fiancé?” Tanner's clipped question reached her ears in a hushed whisper.

Sera smiled brightly as she leaned over to place a brief kiss on his lips. Ignoring the warning flash in his eyes, she cooed in a honeyed voice, “Oh, yes. My honeybuns can't wait to go home so that we can finally celebrate our engagement.” She cupped his chin. “Isn't that right, honey?”

“Indeed,” he said, taking the warning flashing in her eyes to play along to heart.

“Well, before you go anywhere, I need to check your vitals and then Dr. White needs to examine you before he can

sign your release forms. He'll be along shortly.”

The nurse chatted non-stop while she performed her duties, unconcerned that the two people didn't respond to her chatter. The moment the door closed behind her; Tanner caught Sera's hand.

“Now, Miss Brookes, just what the hell is going on here?”

“I'm Special Agent Sera Brookes with the DEA National Intelligence Operations Offices. I led the team who rescued you from the Jalizio Cartel. I am your undercover bodyguard, Senator.” She exhaled slowly. “As your fiancé.”

Tanner stared at her as she continued to explain her purpose in detail. His gaze turned dark and then danced in different hues of silver-gray as he considered the possibilities of having a fiancé on hand.

“There is one very important aspect you and your deputy chief didn't consider when you came up with this... *mission*, Miss Brookes.”

“And what is that?”

“If you are to be my fiancé, you'll have to adhere to all the requirements I would have if it had been a real engagement. If you can't commit to that, you may just as well walk out of this room now.”

“I am already committed to this mission, Senator. Whatever your requirements are, they will be met.”

“Good. Then, from this moment forward you will call me Daddy when we are alone.”

## Chapter Four



*Salvitore Sanchigo's luxurious mansion at Mayan King Ranch, east of the Maya King Waterfalls, Santa Cruz, Belize...*

Salvitore Sanchigo commanded a room with an undeniable presence that could not be ignored. When he entered, a sense of anticipation filled the air, as if those who knew him were acutely aware of the potential chaos he could unleash at any moment. His tall, commanding stature and robust build were matched by his striking snow-white hair, contrasting sharply against his deeply tanned complexion. This unique combination gave him an almost mythical aura, akin to that of a character from medieval tales.

Sanchigo's sinister reputation spread like a shadow, casting fear over anyone unfortunate enough to cross his path. His influence was so profound that even those in positions of authority dared not challenge him. Chief judges, police chiefs, and a web of law enforcement agencies found themselves entangled in a web of secrecy and deception, all in a desperate effort to distance themselves from the illicit dealings tied to his extensive business empire. The crown jewel of his enterprises was the notorious Lloyd Gambling Group, a nexus of vice and intrigue that oozed with the scent of danger.

Much like the mobsters of eras past, Sanchigo ruled over the vibrant tapestry of New Orleans with an iron grip. He was a kingpin who operated on his own terms, unfettered by the norms of society. He stood as the embodiment of the malevolent power wielded by the city's criminal elite, serving

as a chilling reminder of the inevitable doom that awaited those who found themselves caught in the crosshairs of his ambitions. The city's nickname, 'The Big Easy,' seemed almost ironic in the face of Sanchigo's iron-fisted control, underscoring the harsh reality that his reign brought to those who dared to defy him.

Now, forced to escape the claws of the law, Salvatore Sanchigo found himself on the run, seeking refuge far away from the unwanted chaos that had consumed his life. The revelation of his true identity, and the subsequent exposure of his involvement in a thwarted banking fraud scheme, had forced his hand. For the past couple of months, he had sought solace on his recently acquired farm nestled within the lush landscapes of Belize. Or rather, for a man of Salvatore's stature, this was less about hiding and more about biding his time, for he was not one to cower before anyone or anything.

Carlo Coldero, his birth name, was a mere alias that he employed sparingly, a mask to obscure his true identity when dealing with the mundane matters of property and assets. It was under the name of Salvatore Sanchigo that he wielded true power—a name that sent shivers down the spines of those who understood the depths of his malevolence. One, that held the key to the dark terror he could unleash with a mere nod of his head.

"Where's my newspaper?" An air of authority clung to Salvatore like an invisible shroud as he walked into the opulent dining room. Despite the palpable power he exuded, his demeanor remained nonchalant, almost casual. His muscular physique was at ease, and his face betrayed no signs of the storm brewing within him.

"Next to your plate, as usual, sir." Bulldog, aka Fritz Danzig, stood sentinel as Salvatore made his entrance. A bodyguard and an expert assassin, he could read the intricacies of Salvatore's expressions like a well-worn book. He recognized the dangerous glint hidden behind the veneer of calm—a simmering anger and mounting frustration that threatened to erupt at any moment. It was a familiar pattern,

one that Bulldog had witnessed before. He knew that the explosion, when it came, would be cataclysmic, sparing no one in its path. Salvatore was not built for restraint; his very nature rebelled against any form of limitation. To confine him was to ignite a volatile force that would raze everything in its wake, much like a caged beast driven to madness by confinement.

“It seems my friend Diego failed to achieve success,” Salvatore grumbled irritably as he quickly paged through the paper. “Bah! *Stupido idiota!* I should’ve known better and just taken the matter into my own hands from the get-go.”

“Should I take care of it, sir?” Bulldog posed the expected question, knowing full well what the response would be.

“Don’t be daft. If it was at all an option, you would’ve already done the job. I can’t afford to be implicated so soon after the fraud fiasco. No, this time, we have to be more careful. I will not fail again. Tanner Wilde and those Triple K bastards fucked me over once. He’s not going to get away with it a second time. Making him pay is going to require proper planning, a foolproof one that would force his hand. Since we’ve been sequestered here, our business has taken a serious financial knock because I’m not there to keep my finger on the pulse,” he sneered around a piece of crispy bacon in his mouth.

“A more severe transportation law isn’t going to happen. Not on my fucking watch.” With a forceful impact, his clenched fist collided with the wooden surface of the table, creating a resounding echo as the breakfast cutlery jiggled in a clattering dance. The intensity of his anger was tangible, yet it stood in stark contrast to the composed countenance of his most loyal bodyguard. Seated across from him, he maintained an air of tranquility as he leisurely sipped from a steaming cup of coffee.

Bulldog held a unique place in Salvatore’s life—a position that transcended the boundaries of mere

companionship. He was the closest Salvatore would ever come to having a friend and for that reason he tolerated his seemingly indifferent attitude, though it was far from a façade. Bulldog's upbringing within a turbulent and unforgiving foster system had instilled in him an instinctive need to shroud his emotions, which he only revealed to the shadows of his past. Sometimes Salvatore doubted whether he had the ability to experience any kind of feelings whatsoever.

"I expected our guest to join me for breakfast." He waved toward the seat where another plate had been set.

"I assume the little chit is still asleep. I heard her crying late last night."

"Poor little mite. I suspect she misses her mommy." Salvatore smirked. "The sooner she adapts to her new home, the better. I will not tolerate tardiness, not even during a time of adjustment. Instruct the caretaker that she better ensure the little princess is present at all meals. She has five minutes to get in that seat."

"Of course, sir." Regardless of his size, Bulldog's tread was soundless as he ascended the stairs.

Salvitore's grimace deepened as his cell phone's incessant ringing broke the silence around him. Glancing at the screen, his eyes locked onto the name displayed. With an impatient sigh, he swiped his finger across the screen and answered the call. "About fucking time."

"Patience, darling. You're familiar with the adage, all good things come to those who wait." Anger ran through his veins like an ongoing roller coaster as the woman on the other end purred in a voice dripping with amused sarcasm.

"I don't have time for your fucking philosophies," he sneered. "Did you get it?"

"Such refined manners you've cultivated," she taunted in a tone sharpening with indignation.

"You're very brave with thousands of miles separating us, aren't you? Just remember, my dear, I'll be back on U.S."

soil soon.”

“Simmer down, darling. I was merely assuming you’d enjoy a little spirited banter amidst all the recent fuck ups,” she tried to backtrack, her attempts at damage control evident. Even in the criminal underworld, nobody was safe from Salvatore’s wrath when his anger ignited, not even a woman. She knew it, just as everyone else did.

“I’m waiting, Cruella.”

“Fuck you, Salvatore. You know how much I hate that name.”

“And you know how much I hate my time being wasted. Answer my fucking question. Did you get it?”

“Of course. I’m surprised that you even have to ask.”

“And? Was I right?”

“Oh, you were one hundred percent spot on. The little chit you have on your hands was indeed adopted as a newborn baby, and your suspicion about the identity of the mother was also correct. I have to tell you; it wasn’t easy to get the information. It was a closed adoption, which means—”

“I know what it means. The records of the birth parents are sealed and are also irrelevant since you managed to obtain it either way.”

“Not exactly.” A momentary hesitation crept into her response. “The biological father’s identity is unknown as it wasn’t recorded anywhere. Not even on the original birth certificate.”

“Not what I wanted to hear, Cruella. It seems your reputation is slipping. Do I need to procure a different resource to find what I’m after?”

“No need. I’ll get it, although it might take a little more time... and some gentle persuasion of the birth mother to disclose his name.”



“Use whatever means necessary, but she stays alive. She’s the reason my wife and kids were compelled to flee back to Sicily. If not for her interference, I wouldn’t have had to take such drastic measures to keep them out of the authorities’ grasp.” A humorless chuckle escaped him. “I’ve already figured out how she’ll pay. What better fate than to reunite the bitch with her daughter and then force her to watch the girl’s demise?”

“Oh! Can I come too? It sounds like fun.”

“Not until you have what I need. Now, get back to work. Time is of the essence.”

Ending the call, Salvitore drained the last dregs of his coffee and stood up to refill his cup. A faint movement at the doorway snagged his attention.

“Sleeping late is a bad habit. One I suggest you break immediately. I don’t have much patience for laziness. As part of my family and business, I expect you to pull your weight. There will be no favoritism. It’s not in my nature.”

“I’m not your family. I want to go home!”

“Sit down and eat your breakfast. We have a lot to discuss.”

“I don’t want your damn food. I want to go home to my mother!”

“Ah, your mother,” Salvitore drawled as he sat down and continued eating. His words sounded muffled around the food in his mouth. “Which one would that be, dearie?”

“W-What do you mean?” The teenager with sundrenched tresses stared wide-eyed at him. Her hands were clasped together so tightly in front of her that her knuckles turned white.

“I told you to sit down and eat your breakfast. Do not let me have to repeat myself again.” His gaze turned dark as he looked at her. “In this house my word is law. Either you listen and act or you carry the consequences of your disobedience.”

He waited until she was seated and with trembling hands dished up some scrambled eggs, bacon, and toast.

“Here, have some orange juice.” As cordial as if he was a royal host, he filled a glass and placed it in front of her.

“W-What did you mean about my mother?”

“Ah, yes. You wanted to go home to your mother. The question is, dearie, are you referring to the woman you’ve been calling Mom all your life, or the one who gave birth to you?”

“I... I don’t understand.” Confusion reigned supreme in the expressions traversing across her face. “I only have one mother.”

“Now, that’s where you’re wrong. You were adopted at birth.”

“Adopted? That’s not true! My parents would’ve told me.”

“They were sworn to secrecy, and for good reason since I suspect your biological grandfather was a man of influence.”

“No! I have only one set of parents.”

“Indeed, you did.” With a stoic expression, he locked eyes with her. “Until they died in an accident a month ago.”

“W-What accident? They’re on an excursion in the Amazon.”

“Also true, which is where they met with their untimely demise, unfortunately.”

“I don’t believe you. You’re lying. They can’t be dead! Someone would’ve told me. My aunt—”

“Your aunt was all-too happy to leave it to me to tell you the sad news. Of course, since you’re now my daughter, I am only too eager to comply.”

“*Your* daughter? That’s bullshit! I’m not a piece of furniture that can be shifted from one place to another.”

“Your aunt has been appointed as your legal guardian in your parents’ will. You know as well as I do, she doesn’t like you, and there is no way she’s going to give up her freedom to look after a bratty teenager. She was ecstatic to sign you over to me... at a very hefty price, of course.”

“No! She has no right! I’m fifteen years old. I have a say where I want to live.”

“Unfortunately, in this situation, it was either me as your newly adopted parent or the foster system—her exact words, not mine. The Judge agreed that you would be much better off with me.”

“I want to go back home!” Her voice trembled as tears traced glistening paths down her cheeks. Heart-wrenching sobs wracked her fragile frame. A turbulent battle between disbelief and shock raged within her. Her surroundings seemed to blur as her panicked gaze darted around, desperately searching for a lifeline, an avenue of escape from the overwhelming turmoil that encased her.

“For the time being, this *is* home. Soon, we’ll be going back to the United States. Until then, I suggest you get used to the idea of your new life.”

“No, you’re lying about everything! You kidnapped me. That’s what this is. You want to extort money from my parents.”

Salvitore laughed as he gestured around. “Does it look like I’m strapped for money, dearie?” His face tightened in a warning frown. “Enough. I don’t have the tolerance for stringing out intestines. I’ve told you the truth. I’ll give you a week to adapt and accept the change in your life. After that, your training in our business will begin.”

“Never! I’ll never accept you as my father.”

“Oh, you will, make no mistake about that.” Salvitore watched the young girl jump up and run toward the stairs.

“One more thing, dearie.” His voice darkened in warning. She halted to look at him.

“From this moment forth your name is Chiara Sanchigo... and when you address me, it will be as Father.”

# Chapter Five



*The Wilde Ridge Farm, Bunkie, Louisiana.....*

“I have to admit, I never pictured you as a farmer,” Sera mused, her gaze fixed on the picturesque scene below. Verdant fields stretched out, adorned with contentedly grazing cattle that dotted the landscape.

“I grew up on a farm.” A small smile tugged at Tanner’s lips as he observed her thoughtful expression. “It runs deep in my roots and is a part of who I am.”

Her curiosity piqued, Sera’s brows furrowed as she redirected her attention to the cattle. “What breed are those?”

Tanner’s amusement danced in his eyes. “You’re not familiar with them?”

“Would I have asked if I knew?” She retorted in a voice tinged with irritation.

“Seems you’re a true city girl at heart.” Delighted by her spirited response, Tanner looked out of the helicopter window over the sprawling expanse of his farm with pride evident in his gaze. With a casual shrug, he continued, “Those are Brahman cattle. They’re well-suited for Louisiana’s hot and humid subtropical climate, which we experience for most of the year.” He was surprised that she didn’t recognize the breed since the hump above their shoulders and pronounced dewlap made them quite distinctive.

Eyes sweeping over her lithe form, his heart constricted as she tossed her hair—buttermilk and moonlight woven together in the tresses that flowed and shimmered as the blonde locks ignited with life in the sun’s gentle embrace. She possessed a magnetic allure he found hard to resist.

She embodied a kind of beauty that seemed to radiate from the depths of her soul. Her authenticity was a rare gem, outshining the need to parade her stunning physique for attention. Watching her walking away from him as he had lain in the hospital bed, the term *femme fatale* came to mind. Bold and confident, her long strides beckoned every man she passed to sneak glances at her enticing legs.

Her full cupid lips curved into a subtle smile as their eyes caught, revealing an azure gaze that held an arresting clarity in its directness.

Confidence. The key to unlocking a man like Tanner’s wild inner beast.

A primal growl of attraction surged within him, a raw, visceral response he struggled to contain. Tanner, renowned for his bachelor lifestyle, approached his intimate relationships with meticulous sagacity, especially since he had a distinct kink and a specific dynamic he sought. To date, he had yet to find the one who resonated with his desires. A woman with the perfect balance of sass, class, and allure.

Sera Brookes ticked all the boxes. She had no idea which rabbit hole she had jumped into when she agreed to pose as his bodyguard under the guise of his fiancé.

“I can’t shake this feeling that our paths have crossed before, and I’m not just referring to the recent rescue,” Tanner’s perceptive words cut through the air. Legendary for his ability to decipher unspoken tells etched on faces, he spotted the faint twinge on hers. It was a subtle nuance, but it didn’t elude him.

“I don’t think...” Her response faltered as his gaze bore into her, an unmistakable focus that prompted her to

rethink the course she was heading. “Actually, wait, I recall now,” she hastily redirected her thoughts. “Weren’t you at Quantico years back? I have this vague memory of a Captain Wilde among the trainers.”

A shadow of a smile played at the corners of Tanner’s lips as her memory triggered his own recollections. “Indeed, I was. It was right after I chose to step away from the black ops team. A sort of recovery period, you could say, a respite from all the chaos and violence before I re-immersed myself in the realm of legality.” His unwavering gaze remained fixed on her, probing deeper. “Still, there’s something in me that suggests our association went beyond my role as one of the trainers.”

Sera responded with a nonchalant shrug and kept her eyes steadfast on his. “Nope, that’s pretty much the extent of it. Our worlds didn’t exactly intersect in those years. Being one of the few women on the team, I had to put in twice the effort to prove myself. I was buried in training the entire time I was there. There was no time to socialize with the guys or indulge in their revelries. I had my sights set on success, and getting wasted wasn’t part of the equation, thank you very much.”

Perception is nine-tenths of the law, a principle that had held profound significance in Tanner’s life in his legal career. Every fiber of his being sensed that she was concealing something. A notion that only fueled his determination to unearth whatever it was. Patience was his greatest asset. Once he had time to relax and allow his mind to methodically sift through the labyrinthine chambers of his memory, where an extensive reservoir of facts lay enshrined, he would remember.

“Very well. Let’s leave it at that... for the time being.” One thing he was certain of was, in some way, shape or form, their relationship in the past had consisted of more than him training her on the odd occasion at Quantico. The echoes of their shared history reverberated through his thoughts, each fragment waiting to be illuminated by the spark of recollection. He was determined to piece together the puzzle,

to weave threads of memory and perception into a tapestry that would reveal the truth.

“Thanks for arranging the helicopter,” he said as the pilot landed in the open field next to his imposing two-story Southern-style ranch house. “It made the trip much shorter than driving all the way.”

“Of course,” Sera smiled. “It was the safest route to get you out of the hospital without anyone the wiser.”

“However much I appreciate the DEA’s insistence to keep me safe, I assure you, I can take care of myself. For one thing, you will not play the hero if, for some reason, my life is in danger.”

“I trust you’re aware of the extensive responsibilities that come with the role of a bodyguard, don’t you, Senator?” Sera remarked with a hint of playful sarcasm and interlocked her fingers with his proffered hand as she gracefully disembarked from the helicopter. Keeping her hand clasped in his, he guided her away from the gusts created by the churning rotor blades, a protective gesture that spoke volumes even before he replied. In that fleeting moment, an unspoken understanding passed between them, a silent recognition of the uncharted territory they were venturing into. As they moved beyond the reach of the helicopter’s downwash, he met her jest with a knowing smile, a glint of amusement dancing in his eyes.

“Indeed, Sera. The intricacies of safeguarding are well within my comprehension, but in this case, the role you elected to play as my fiancé takes precedence. In case you’re unaware of the dynamics of an engagement, it’s the man’s responsibility to protect his woman. Since I am in the unfortunate position as a newly elected senator that forces me to always be in the limelight, you will not play my protector.”

Glancing sideways at her, he grinned. “Besides, my best friend, Kaden Frazer, owns Triple K Secure, and he has already set up an entire protection team on the farm, at my



office, and to covertly be in the background wherever I go. The only role you need to play is that of my loving fiancé.”

“Why didn’t you mention this when I arrived at the hospital and told you what my role would be?”

“Because, Babygirl, as a U.S. Senator, having a fiancé at this point in my life is beneficial to me. For one thing, it’ll keep the hordes of females gunning for the exact position out of my hair.”

“So, you decided to use me,” she exploded indignantly.

He stopped and looked at her with one eyebrow lazily crawling higher. “Much like you and your deputy chief are using me.”

Her shoulders stiffened perceptively. The slight flickering of her eyes gave her away, but she stood her ground. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Since we’re home, this is the perfect moment to set out the rules. Lies are the one thing I won’t tolerate from you. Not even a little white one you believe won’t hurt anyone.” He held up his hand when she opened her mouth to protest. “My house, my rules. I warned you before we left of the dynamics of our relationship, Sera. You accepted it, and now, you will carry the consequences. Every action will trigger a reaction. Lie to me, and your cute little ass will burn for hours. Keep doing it, and sitting comfortably will become a thing of the past for you.”

“What the devil are you talking about?”

“You will address me in the appropriate manner, Babygirl.”

“Babygirl? Oh, please! Can’t you think of a better pet name? And—hey! What do you think you’re doing? No! Let me go, you degenerate—oww! Fucking hell, stop that!”

“Get used to it. You’re my little Babygirl from this point on.”

*Crack! Crack!*

“Gaawd!” she cried as his large palm connected once more against her soft buttocks. The way she quivered was proof that this swat was much harsher than the first one. More surprising to Tanner was how her body reacted. His arm tightened its hold on her waist to keep her pinned down on his lap. The luxury of surprise when he had toppled her over was gone, and yet, although he knew she was capable, she didn’t attempt to escape on her own accord. It was as though she was waiting with bated breath for him to continue.

At the same moment, she realized what she was doing and started struggling to get up. Cognizant of the pinch in his side, courtesy of a cracked rib, he allowed her to jump to her feet.

“I have a name. It’s Sera. Most definitely NOT Babygirl,” she snapped as she stepped out of his reach.

With one step, he was against her and threaded the fingers of one hand through her hair, tilting her head back painfully, so she was forced to look up at him. Cupping the side of her head, he reveled in the shiver trailing through her form.

“To me, you’re Sera, my little Babygirl. I suggest you don’t tease a spitting cobra by defying me.”

“I am no one’s little Babygirl.” Sera frowned as the protest was released in a soft whisper rather than the assertive statement she had intended. “Let me go,” she demanded as she attempted to jerk her head away. “Ouch!” She froze as the hold of his fingers in her hair tightened warningly. “I said to let me go!” Once again, the intended demand turned into a breathless plea.

Tanner was hard pressed not to smile as her face exploded beetroot red, with her body shaking under his strict regard.

“You don’t scare me, Senator Wilde.”

Tanner’s smile was wicked as he traced her jawline with his free hand before cupping her throat. “I’d be a fool if I

thought you were, but you have just proven that you are afraid of what I make you feel.” His smile widened as the blush darkened on her cheeks. “More than that, you’re shit scared that you just might have bitten off more than you can chew by agreeing to my demands at the hospital.”

Sera swallowed as she returned his gaze as if mesmerized. “I’m not scared.”

He gave a slow, lazy smile at the spark of lust he could see ready to explode inside her. “What did I tell you to call me, Babygirl?”

“Goddammit, my name is Sera!” she said with a sharp glower at him.

Tanner was a firm believer in the potency of surprise. Leaning in, he placed a tender kiss on her unsuspecting lips, eliciting a startled gasp. The kiss, though short and chaste, was performed with the deliberate purpose of disarming her and perhaps kindling a burgeoning desire for more.

“I already told you... you are my Babygirl, so you might as well stop protesting. It’s not going to change anything.”

“I... you...” Sera was at a loss for words. By her furious expression, he would bet it was an unheard-of marvel for the very confident and assertive woman.

It filled him with joy. This was the validation he had been looking for—that although she was fierce and strong in her career, she was also inherently a submissive in search of a dominant to push her into a realm of pleasure only complete subjugation could offer... with him as her Daddy.



“Who am I, Babygirl?” he demanded as his gray eyes glowed like molten silver. For a moment, Sera forgot where she was as she became lost in his gaze. Worse! Her mind turned blank as the dark promise glimmering in their depths overpowered every thought forming in her frazzled brain.

“Daddy,” she whispered. “Shit!” she gasped as his eyes flashed, and she realized the word had inadvertently sprung to her lips. “Tanner. Senator Tanner Wilde,” she amended quickly.

Sera felt like kicking herself as the satisfied glow in his eyes turned them into heated embers of lust.

“That’s right, little one—Daddy. I suggest you don’t forget it.”

Sera didn’t understand the battle at war inside her. Emotions had never ruled her life. She didn’t have time for trivial relationships, and she had learned very early in life that love was an overrated phenomenon. All it brought was pain and mystery and the kind of path she had no intention of embarking on... ever again.

“Well, I don’t like it.”

Still, there was no denying that she was caught between a yearning so strong within her she had no way of countering it as she struggled to hold on to behaving in a respectable manner... the likes of which her career demanded... and her aunt always did, for that matter.

*“Forget it, Sera. It’s unrespectable. Do not forget who we are in this community. What your Uncle Steve represents. I’m afraid we can’t allow it.”*

Her aunt’s voice echoing in her mind brought back a memory of the darkest period in her life. A forgotten time which she had paid dearly for ever since... and one she had believed locked away so deep inside her memory banks, it would never be unlocked.

“Nevertheless, it’s what you will call me.” Tanner’s voice was a mere murmur as he drew her nearer, his lips once again claiming hers in a fervent embrace. This time, his kiss shed any semblance of chasteness; it was an ardent, all-consuming devouring that left no room for restraint. A soft, involuntary moan escaped her lips as she yielded under the commanding insistence of his mouth.

When he finally withdrew, a low whimper escaped her, a plaintive sound born from the longing for the connection they had just shared. A surge of desire coursed through her, leaving a trail of heated arousal that wet her inner thighs, an undeniable testament to the erotic power of his kiss.

“Let’s try this again, little one.” This time, there was no denying the command in his voice. “Who am I?”

“Daddy.” The word escaped her lips before Sera sent any instruction to her brain. She frowned angrily. *This kind of reaction is just not acceptable!*

“One more time, Babygirl,” he ordered.

“Daddy.” *Fucking hell! Grow some balls, Sera. Tell the man to go shit in the pond!* Her annoyance was short-lived as he smiled wolfishly, causing her libido to explode in applause as ripples of desire coursed through her.

“Good girl,” he growled as he lightly traced the fullness of her lower lip. “Now, let’s talk about the matter of you and your deputy chief using me.”

Sera suppressed a groan. She had hoped he wouldn’t pursue the statement he had made earlier. With a man like Tanner Wilde, she should’ve known better.

“No one is using you,” she hedged.

“No? I didn’t request protection, and when the Senate suggested it upon my return, I assured them Triple K Secure would take care of any I might require. Want to try again, Little S? And please, do remember my warning about lies.”

“Oh, good Lord. From Babygirl to Little S,” she said, somewhat miffed. “What next, pray tell?”

“Do not test my patience, little one. Believe me, the few swats you just received would be child’s play when my anger is sparked.”

Sera was no stranger to Daddy Dom kink. The hundreds of eBooks on her tablet of the BDSM genre marked her interest in the dynamics of couples practicing the lifestyle.

Except, no matter how reading their stories and envisioning herself into each scene excited her, to date, she had yet to personally dip her toe into participating.

The couple of swats he'd given her, however, had been a revelation. Reading how pain elevated lust was one thing but to have experienced it herself, was more than she had ever thought possible. Her mind played with the temptation to push Tanner, to see just how much leeway he would allow before he toppled her over his lap again. Now that she had a taste of sexual domination, she wanted the full enchilada. She was a strong woman and knew she would be able to take the pain, but more than that, she wanted it. A profound desire to feel the brunt of his heavy palm rushed through her.

Just how far could she be pushed before she completely lost all sense of reality?

*Good Lord, what is this man doing to me? From being a complete BDSM vanilla to dreaming about masochism? Shake it off, Brookes, or you're gonna lose it!*

"I don't like repeating myself, Sera. Start talking." His stern reprimand washed over her and yanked her back to the present.

"If you must know, my deputy chief believes that Salvitore Sanchigo is out for revenge, and he will come for you. I've been searching for that bastard for years. If there is a chance of catching him, I want to be at the forefront of the chase."

"So, you're willing to put yourself in danger just to make a notch on your bedpost?"

"No, Senator Wilde. I'm willing to do what it takes to put a vicious monster behind bars for good. Let me give you fair warning, sir. When he does appear, no one is going to stop me... not even you."

"We shall see, little one, especially since I've just decided your safety is of the utmost importance to me. I can't very well get married without a bride, now can I, and crossing

swords with Sanchigo? I'm afraid that's not in the cards for you. Not anymore."

"Married? Bride?" She stared at him aghast. "What are you babbling about?" Pushing the glittering diamond ring under his nose, she snorted acerbically, "This is a DEA asset, not an engagement ring and this entire scenario is fake. F-A-K-E. In other words, it's not real. We're not in love and we're not getting married, capiche?"

"No capiche, Little S. I've decided you're exactly the kind of wife I need. So, prepare yourself."

"For what?"

"Falling in love with me, of course."

Sera was still stuttering to form an appropriate response when he sauntered out of the room. The only words she eventually managed sounded forlorn but filled with wonder.

"Well... crap."

# Chapter Six



*The Triple K Farm, Bunkie, Louisiana.....*

“So, this is the future Mrs. Wilde.”

The words rolled off the large man’s tongue, accompanied by a hint of amusement that danced in his eyes. Sera wasn’t easily intimidated, yet the imposing figure before her with his intense gaze equivalent to a laser boring through her emotional armor, managed to send a shiver down her spine. It was as though he possessed an uncanny ability to peer deep into the recesses of her soul, unraveling the layers she thought were impenetrable.

“The far future, yes,” she murmured. Moments ticked by and as each heartbeat echoed in the chamber of her chest, Sera found herself wrestling with a sense of vulnerability she rarely experienced.

She had faced down challenges that would make even the bravest falter, yet this man’s enigmatic gaze stirred a storm of emotions within her that she struggled to contain. The silence of the group of people they had joined upon arrival at the cookout, seemed to stretch on. It was as if their acceptance of her depended heavily on his stamp of approval. Then she felt it—an invisible thread weaving between them, seconds before his stern countenance softened into a smile of affirmation.

With the burden of his scrutiny lifted, Sera finally managed to release a breath she hadn’t realized she’d been



holding. Her lungs greedily drank in the air as if tasting freedom anew. In that fleeting moment as the tension dissolved, she was perplexed by the inexplicable connection that had been forged between her and this stranger—a tie that transcended the realm of mere appearances and delved into the uncharted territories of mutual understanding. One that bound them to the man standing next to her, who had declared himself as her Daddy... and whom he had professed she would fall in love with.

“Sera Brookes, this is Kaden Frazer.” Sera’s lips formed a round ‘O’ of recognition as the sound of the name hung in the air like a whisper. This was Tanner’s best friend and also the man who had taken on the responsibility for his safety.

“Your name is well known in the hallways of the DEA,” she said as her attention struggled to remain tethered when Tanner continued the introductions.

Her mind raced through her knowledge of what she knew about him, connecting dots, and piecing together the puzzle that was Kaden Frazer. The tales of his ventures, triumphs, and the shadows of his past all painted a portrait of a man both formidable and unexpectedly benevolent. The whispers of his philanthropic endeavors, like hiring downtrodden veterans to rebuild their lives through Triple K Secure, added an ethereal glow to the image that was slowly solidifying in her mind.

“These are his brothers, Keith and Kevin,” Tanner’s voice guided her awareness back to the present, like a ship caught in a gentle current. Sera’s gaze flickered over to them, absorbing their presence—as formidable as the two older men.

“This lovely lady is Kaden’s fiancé, Sage Lewis.” Sera’s eyes settled on her—a vision of grace and beauty, the chosen one who had captured Kaden Frazer’s heart.

“Nice to meet you,” she lilted as she watched Tanner’s arms enveloping Sage in an embrace, sealing their connection with a tender kiss. A spark of unwelcome jealousy ignited

within Sera—an unexpected emotion that she struggled to suppress.

No matter her uncalled for reaction, she acknowledged that Sage had also played a major role in stopping millions of people losing every dollar they owned. It had been through her unyielding determination to uncover the rotten core that was responsible for the flare up of the banking fraud. Her unwavering resolve had chipped away at the layers shrouding Salvatore Sanchigo's origins and opened the hole from where the Mafioso had crawled out of. In the process, she nearly died but her actions had been what had put Sanchigo out in the open with a target on his back. Pity he managed to escape, though.

“I can't tell you how excited I've been to meet you,” Sage said as she hugged Sera. “The self-proclaimed bachelor suddenly announcing his engagement? I just had to see it with my own eyes.” Her smile was as warm as it was welcoming. For the first time since their arrival, Sera managed to relax.

The farm area hummed with the joyous energy of the cookout already in full swing. At its heart stood an ancient sentinel, an old oak tree. Its massive, gnarly branches stretched and twisted like sinewy arms, reaching out twenty feet into the boundless blue canvas of the sky above. The branches, weathered by countless seasons, formed a majestic canopy that cast a dappled mosaic of shadows where they were standing.

“Welcome back to the land of the living,” Kevin joked good-naturedly as he thumped Tanner on the back and handed him a cold beer. “Drink up, my friend. You've got a lot of catching up to do.”

Sera looked around and was amazed at the number of families and friends gathered. Their laughter mingled with the rustle of leaves above, drawing her in to fully embrace the joyous atmosphere. Picnic tables, laden with an array of delectable dishes, were arranged beneath the oak's benevolent branches. The tablecloths fluttered like vibrant sails, painted in hues that mirrored the colorful blossoms adorning the gardens

surrounding them. Tanner's arm settled around her waist as he drew her closer. It felt familiar... and to her surprise, she didn't mind the public display of ownership at all.

"I'm afraid two or three would be my limit for the day. Booze and the antibiotics I'm still taking won't mix well." Tanner's gaze became veiled as he looked at her. Dressed in a pair of white denim shorts with a red and white flowered shirt tied under her breasts, leaving her toned stomach bare, she knew she looked good. Her libido did an excited jiggle as his gaze slowly meandered over her curvaceous legs and hips, rounded and taut with the heart-shaped aperture that portrayed the enticing junction of her sinewy thighs and pelvis. He didn't even pretend; he ogled her openly, soaking in the view with the dexterous glance of a voyeur on the prowl.

"Stop that," she snapped in an aside while flashing a toothy smile at the youngest Frazer, who seemed just as invested in leering at her legs.

"Beauty has to be appreciated, little one. You have plenty to admire."

"Don't call me that in public," she berated him as she glanced around to check if anyone had overheard. Her gaze sharpened as his deep chuckle reverberated through her mind.

"Pay attention, Babygirl, you're not the only one here with a Daddy who cares for her."

"What are you talking about?" Surreptitiously glancing around, Sera couldn't identify anyone who acted out of the ordinary. Not that Tanner did either, but to her, his entire demeanor was one of domination, of hovering over her just in case someone overstepped an invisible boundary... whatever that might be.

"Come now, Little S, surely you're not that naive?" Tanner chuckled as her spine snapped into a straight line of indignation. "No need to get your panties in a twist, Babygirl, but correct me if I'm wrong. When I told you what my requirements would be for this engagement, you didn't even

flinch, which tells me you're not a complete novice to the Daddy Dom kind of lifestyle, or BDSM for that matter.”

“No, I'm not, but I don't have personal experience to fall back on. I've only ever been exposed to it via fiction.”

“Hmm, well, then today is the perfect time for a little introduction to all the intricacies of the lifestyle we'll live—including the pleasures... and pain, awaiting you.”

“Just because I read kink genre doesn't necessarily mean I want to live such a lifestyle. Pleasure and pain to me are two complete opposites and not the kind of contrast that excites me.”

“Never fear, little one. Before we fully embark on anything more stringent, we will have a long discussion about boundaries, safewords, and SSC. In fact, I think a visit to Club Rouge might just be what will trigger your inner submissive to unfurl inside you.”

“Club Rouge?” Sera racked her brain, trying to place where she'd heard that name before. She recalled it had popped up during the investigation, but there was a kicker—the place was registered under a closed corporation, making it a dead end to figure out who the big shots behind it were. “You mean that swanky club over in Baton Rouge, right? It's an exclusive BDSM club?”

“Yes, of which I am one of the owners.”

“A U.S. Senator as a part owner of a sex club? That's rather unconventional, isn't it?”

“It's a completely legal operation, Babygirl. We don't allow any hardcore scenes at the club and are very strict in regard to members adhering to club rules and protocol. All the necessary approvals were obtained prior to opening, and inspections are conducted on a quarterly basis to avoid any unpleasanties with the law.”

“Of course,” she intoned dryly. “As the previous attorney general, you would know all about that.”

“Do I detect a note of sarcasm in your tone, Ms. Brookes?”

“Looks like we’re getting a front-row seat to Tanner’s first lover’s quarrel with his Babygirl, huh?” Keith, the youngest among the quartet of men, chimed in with a chuckle. His voice resonated with a rugged and deep timbre. There was a hint of concealed power underlying his words that indicated an inner strength perfectly complementing his confident and no-nonsense demeanor, which exuded from his very being.

“You told them?” Sera exclaimed under her breath, glowering at him through her lashes.

“I didn’t have to. They are all aware of my sexual preferences, my dear, so they know I wouldn’t get married to someone who didn’t tick all the boxes.”

“I don’t tick *any* boxes. I’m a fake fiancé, in case you forgot,” she hissed while flashing a smile in the direction of the group who were watching them animatedly.

“Oh, believe me, Babygirl, you tick all the boxes... and then some.”

She faced him full-on. “What does that mean?”

“Time will reveal all, my love.”

“Oh, for fuck’s sake,” she muttered. “Stop the theatrics and just spit it out. If there’s one thing you need to learn about me, it’s that I hate riddles, so don’t waste your time, or mine, playing games. I won’t be your *little plaything*.”

“On the contrary,” he crooned, which managed to spike her irritation a notch higher. “You are exactly that... *my little*.”

The vellus hair at the back of her neck rose as his voice darkened ominously. “You were warned what to expect. You accepted my conditions. Now, we’re in public, with eighty percent of the people in attendance knowing I’m a Daddy Dom. I suggest you start acting like my little Babygirl... or I might just be forced to prove to you exactly what it is you’re secretly yearning for.”

Her eyelids lowered as her posture softened. She'd read about how someone's inner submissive reacted in the presence of a true dominant, manifesting as an intricate dance of emotions and sensations, a fusion of vulnerability and trust that intertwined in a unique dynamic. She was shaken that her reaction was immediate, unpracticed, and accompanied by a sudden heightened awareness of Tanner's presence—characterized by anticipation, respect, and an unexpected eagerness to yield control.

Within a second and noticeable to the eye, Tanner Wilde had morphed into a powerful dominant in every aspect of the word. With a deep voice and dark eyes, he managed to trigger an innate desire to please him, to form a symbiotic connection deep within their souls.

“Ah, nope, little brother. I think we just witnessed our friend's fiancé tapping all the way into her submissive self in a completely untethered reaction. Lover's spat or not, she's his Babygirl, whether she's ready to admit it or not.”

Sera involuntarily flinched as Kevin's words reached her ears like an unexpected jolt. A telltale rush of warmth spread across her cheeks in a vivid acknowledgment of embarrassment. Tanner's knowing eyes locking on hers was unsettling as it felt like he was stripping away the layers she had shielded herself with. Memories and emotions she had believed were buried deep within resurfaced, creating a whirlwind within her.

*Shit! I'm not prepared for this!* She mentally wrestled with the sudden shift in the direction her life was heading.

Within the span of a few days, the one man she could never forget, once again, held the key to her heart. This unexpected twist wasn't part of her life's plan, but fate had a way of throwing surprises.

*Well... crap.*

## Chapter Seven



Sera wasn't prone to running away and would vehemently deny that her little barn excursion to check out Kaden's prized Andalusian and Quarter horses had anything to do with avoiding Tanner.

"Well, who can blame me, right?" she cooed at the palomino Quarter horse that sniffed at her hair. "Yes, he gave me a couple of slaps on the day I arrived, but since then, he has been acting normal, but this..." One hand fluttered in the air, and she snorted, "This undeniable Daddy Dom vibe he just sprang on me—in public, mind you—caught me off guard." She pressed a kiss against the horse's forehead. "I'll be damned if I let him see just how much."

She had to admit though, the way he took control without even giving her a chance to react, was sexy as fuck. She was used to men who tried to take her control from her, but Tanner was a force to be reckoned with.

A shiver trailed down her spine at the slight breeze flowing around her legs as the door of the barn opened.

*Shit! He's here. I shoulda known he'd follow me.*

Sera did her best to pretend that she hadn't heard him arrive and continued to scratch the horse behind his ears. Her ears caught his light footfall as he approached, yet he remained quiet, just standing behind her, waiting for her to acknowledge his presence.

*No use pretending, Brookes. Face the devil. You know you want him, and this is the perfect opportunity to assert your*

*own desires. So, take the bull by the dick and get to it.*

Drawing a deep breath, she slowly turned around, her eyes meeting the dark, unblinking stare holding her captive.

Tanner Wilde was the epitome of a Southern gentleman and cowboy. The white dress shirt he wore was open at the throat, with the sleeves rolled up, showing off his muscled forearms. His dark hair sprinkled with silver looked tussled as he removed the cowboy hat and tucked it into the back of his belt. His black jeans fit him like a glove, outlining his lean, muscular legs. Black boots encased his feet that were planted wide apart, as if he were preparing himself to catch her in case she turned tail and ran.

“Hiding, Babygirl?”

“Do you know me as the kind of woman prone to hiding?”

“No, but the little subbie is.”

Desire flared in her stomach as his eyes moved over her. He stepped closer until only a couple of inches separated them. One hand lifted, his finger brushing against the side of her breast. Her nipple instantly hardened as his finger traced lower, pushing aside the shirt and exposing the creamy flesh to his scorching gaze.

The moment he reached her waistband, Sera tensed. The din of the guests filtered through from outside. What the devil was she thinking? Ready to do the horizontal tango with her fake fiancé in the middle of a cookout, where anyone could walk in on them?

With a yelp, she jumped back and grabbed the first thing her hand landed on—a hay fork. She waved it around with a threatening flourish.

“Oh, no, you don’t,” she warned. “Daddy or not, you’re not going all Dom on me in the middle of a cookout.” She pointed the fork at the door. “That little pow-wow out there? That’s not on, do you hear me, Tanner Wilde? You do not tell me when to act submissive or not.”



Tanner quirked an eyebrow and his lips twitched, his amusement triggering a low growl of annoyance from her.

“What are you planning to do with that, little one?”

“Who knows,” she snapped as she poked it threateningly close to his crotch. “Perhaps I should spike your nuts on it and barbecue them. Maybe then you’ll realize I’m not a meek little subbie you can order about whenever it suits you. Correct me if I’m wrong, but wasn’t it you who said you’ll go all Daddy Dom on me only when we’re alone?”

His hand snaked out, curling around her wrist. He tugged, and Sera yelped, her feet losing contact with the ground as he swung her against him.

“What the fuck, Tanner!” she exclaimed and promptly threw the fork down as the sharp point scraped by his cheek within inches.

“You’re acting like a brat, little girl. Do you honestly think I will just stand by while you threaten to serve my nuts as canapes?”

“Well, you should have thought about that before you got all Daddy Dom on me out there in full view of the entire community!”

The fire in her response had dwindled somewhat since she was struggling to keep her composure. His hard, muscled physique pressed so intimately against hers catapulted her libido into overdrive. It was becoming exceedingly difficult to remain distant when all she wanted was him to kiss her properly, then throw her down on the hay and fuck her into kingdom come!

“Hmm, I had hoped you would pay attention to how Sage responds to Kaden.” His fingers splayed around her throat. “Many a little subbie has conquered their dominant daddies with nibbles of sugar rather than vinegar. You should try it, Babygirl. Who knows what kind of pleasures you might invite with the right attitude?”

His fingers tightened around her throat, the pressure light but firm enough to have her swallowing heavily. Her lips parted, her eyes closing as he pressed a light kiss against her mouth.

“What would I gain with the right attitude, Sir?”

“Perhaps if you address me in the right manner, I might enlighten you,” he growled against her lips.

“Daddy,” she whispered, desperate to taste the full hunger and demand of his powerful dominance.

“Hmm, now that’s much better, little one.”

“Show me what I gained, Daddy,” she moaned as his tongue flicked over the pulpy fullness of her bottom lip. “Kiss me. A proper Daddy kiss.”

He smiled as he nipped her lip sharply. “Is that a way to ask me for what you want, little girl? Hmm?”

Sera moaned, the slight bite of pain sending a zing straight to her clit. “You’re such a bully, Tanner Wilde,” she huffed, her voice thick and raspy.

“Since you’re still not correcting your mistake but rather exacerbating it, I would assume that you like my kind of bullying, Babygirl.”

She whimpered, her hands lifting to wrap around his neck, but he caught them mid-air, shaking his head.

“Ask for what you want. Politely and in the correct manner.”

Sera gritted her teeth, her eyes narrowing as she looked at him in a direct challenge. “What if I don’t want to?”

The flare of desire that flashed in his dark eyes triggered a shiver of awareness. Sera gasped as she belatedly realized that her Daddy had a penchant for brats.

*Shit! I played right into his hands!*

“You should think carefully, little one, about challenging a Daddy Dom, especially in private, without the safety net of prying eyes to stop him from giving his naughty Babygirl the discipline she richly deserves.”

*Oh, damn. I'm so screwed. But God help me, I'm also so turned on!*

“Are you prepared to deal with the consequences of your actions, little girl? Because this is your last warning.”

Her mind raced, and she had no doubt her expression revealed the panic coursing through her. She could give in, or...

“Or, what? You'll spank me? Again? I'm not a child, Tanner Wilde. Perhaps it's time you realized it.”

His hold on her throat tightened, forcing her to go onto her toes. Her eyes widened as she realized she had poked a spitting cobra to come out and play.

*Holy shit! This is what I wanted... or is it?*

Suddenly, Sera wasn't so sure she was ready for the Daddy beast to be unleashed on her. He had spanked her a couple of times but those mostly ended up in erotic spankings. She wasn't so sure that was what was on his mind... not if the darkening glimmer in his eyes was anything to go by.

“You're not a child? Hmm, you're right. I won't spank you.” His thumb traced a light trail across her chin. “But I will show you the difference between a spanking and discipline. It's time, little one, for you to learn a very important lesson about teasing and taunting your daddy.”

His hold loosened, and Sera drew a deep breath, relieved that the storm seemed to have passed.

“Oh, no, you're not off the hook, Babygirl,” he censored as he noticed her look. “I'm not going to spank you, but I will discipline you.”

Before she could respond, his hand closed around her arm, and she found herself tossed face down across the wide

railing of a stall.

“What are you—nooo!” Her feet barely touched the floor as he lifted her hips, his hand yanking her shorts and panties down to her ankles.

“Daddy, noooo,” she shrieked. “You can’t spank me. There are people out there.”

“Indeed, there are, and as I already told you, I won’t spank you, so quit your screeching.”

“What are you doing then?” Her head whipped back and forth, watching him over her shoulder and keeping an eye on the barn door.

“As I already said, I’m going to show you the difference between a spanking and discipline, my naughty little girl.”

“Tanner, no. Let me up, please.”

“Be quiet.”

“Daddy, this is not funny,” she protested, her body tense, trying to wiggle her way off the rail. “Let me up now!”

“Don’t you dare move.”

The snap of his command had her stilling, her body trembling as the reality of her situation slammed into her. She was bent over a horse stall, her shorts around her ankles, her ass exposed. Her pussy clenched, juices trickling down her leg as she envisioned the picture she made.

“You need to understand that the game you’re playing has consequences. If you choose to push the boundaries, Babygirl, then be prepared to accept the punishments. In the past, your behavior was not of my concern, but now, you belong to me. So, I’m going to make it very clear. When you disrespect or disobey me, there will be punishment.”

“Daddy, I’m sorry, I won’t do it again.”

“You’re right, you won’t. After today, every time you feel the urge to challenge or disrespect me, you’ll remember

this moment.”

“Wait! Please, Tanner. Don’t,” she cried out, her breath catching in her throat.

His hand landed hard and fast. The sting spread like wildfire through her veins, heating her blood. She gasped, her body jolting forward.

“You can’t do this!”

“And yet, I am. This is the first step in your discipline.”

“Daddy, no.”

“Quiet.”

The flat of his hand smacked against her bottom. Sera bit down hard on her bottom lip, her hands digging into the wood as he spanked her.

“Please, Daddy, no more.”

“Do you understand why you’re being disciplined, Babygirl?”

“Yes.”

“Tell me.”

“I was disrespectful and challenging.”

“And do you think a spanking will curb your attitude?”

“Yes,” she was quick to reassure him.

“Good.”

“But I can’t believe you’re actually doing this. There are people out there.”

“If I were the one being punished, I wouldn’t be worried about that. Right now, the only thing on my mind is that you will remember this the next time you consider being a brat. So, you’d better get used to the idea that a spanking with an appropriate tool will follow any such occurrence.”

Sera's struggles increased as she watched him unbuckle his belt and with one hard tug yanked it from his waist. His large paw on her lower back kept her in place, voiding her desperate attempt to escape the snap of the leather he folded around his hand.

"No, please, not your belt."

"Yes, my belt. Your disrespect requires a much stronger punishment."

"No, no, no!" she sobbed, her shoulders trembling.

"You're not supposed to enjoy being punished, Sera, and your wet and glistening pussy is testimony that you have until this point. So, I will make sure you understand that being a brat comes with consequences."

"No! I haven't. For fuck's sake! My ass is on fire. Please, Daddy! I learned my lesson."

Her protests fell on deaf ears as his arm continued to fall with relentless slaps, turning her backside a bright, glowing red. The leather of his belt cut a swath across the middle of her ass, her skin burning with the repeated slaps.

"You know what I love about the belt, Babygirl? That the welts appear even after the spanking has finished."

"No! Don't you dare. No more. I'll be good. I'll be a good girl, Daddy. Please!"

The belt slashed against her ass.

"Owww! Daddy, please! I'll be good."

"Yes, you will." Another lash of the belt, followed by two more.

"Stop! Please!" Sobs tore from her throat as tears ran down her cheeks. "I hate you. How could you do this to me, with all those people right outside the barn?"

"Babygirl, if I had it my way, your bare bottom would be over my lap, being spanked with my hand so bright pink, you wouldn't be able to sit for a week, and then only use my

belt. I chose not to. Instead, I gave you a few slaps before moving to the cut of the leather. You should thank me instead.”

“No! I can’t take it anymore,” she wailed.

“You can. You will. You know why? Because when the spanking is over, you will be a good little girl.”

“I’m sorry, Daddy. I’m so sorry.”

“I know you are, Babygirl. It’s time for us to end your punishment.”

Tanner’s arm came down one last time, the belt licking against her buttocks and upper thighs. Sera’s legs kicked up as she screamed, her voice hoarse and breaking.

“Please, no more.”

“That’s it, baby. You’re done.”

The belt zinged as he put it back around his waist. Sera was now crying in earnest as his strong hands rubbed her back.

He lifted her into his arms and cradled her against his chest. Sera curled against him, burying her face in his neck.

“Shh, Babygirl. The worst is over. Daddy’s got you. I’m proud of you. You took your punishment very well.”

Sera sniffled as she looped her arms around his neck, properly chastised and contrite for the first time since she had agreed to his terms as her Daddy.

“I never got it,” she complained in a teary voice.

“Got what?”

“My Daddy kiss.”

“Ahh, yes, but if I remember correctly, not asking for it properly is what got you punished in the first place.”

Her eyes lifted, and he looked deep into them. She didn’t try to hide her feelings and allowed him to see her desire.

“Then perhaps my punishment isn’t finished, Daddy.”

“No, little girl. It isn’t.”

“Please, Daddy, give me what I want, what I need.” Her voice trembled with emotion. “Show me how much you need me.”

“With pleasure, my little one.”

Tanner’s mouth covered hers in a blistering kiss. Sera responded with a whimper, opening for his demanding tongue as his hands stroked her bare thighs. His fingers brushed against her mound and her hips instinctively thrust against him, silently begging for more. She was barely aware that he carried her into an empty stall and laid her down on a soft bed of hay covered with a blanket. Her sigh was blissful as he settled between her spread legs.

“Fuck me, Daddy,” she begged. “I can’t wait any longer.”

“Soon, little girl. First, I need to make sure you’re wet enough to take Daddy’s cock.”

Sera moaned, her head rolling back as he sank a finger deep inside her pussy.

“So, fucking wet, and such a sweet pussy. I can’t wait to bury my cock inside you.”

“Do it, Daddy. Do it now.”

He chuckled. “I like your enthusiasm, Babygirl. But Daddy needs you a little wetter, okay?”

“But I am wet,” she protested, desperately orbiting her hips to tease him into complying.

“Hmm, not wet enough.”

He slipped down her body, pushing her blouse up as he pressed his face into her crotch, inhaling deeply. His large hands covered her breasts, gently pinching and pulling on her nipples. Her hips jerked in reaction.



“Yes! Fuck, yes!” Her raw cry sounded carnal and wild.

“Fuck, you smell good, little girl.”

Sera whimpered as he lapped at her pussy, his tongue teasing her clit.

“Yes, that’s it. Give Daddy your cream, little girl. I want it.”

His words set her aflame. “Holy shit!” Sera cried out as his teeth clamped down on her clit, sending her crashing over the edge. Her entire body quivered, her hands tugging at his hair.

“Hmm, yes, I believe you’re ready now.”

He got up and slowly unzipped his pants, his eyes glinting as her hungry gaze roamed over his turgid length.

“Like what you see, Babygirl?”

“Hmm, it’s perfect, Daddy.”

Settling between her legs, he growled as Sera wrapped her legs around his waist when he drove his cock inside her, hissing through his teeth.

“So, fucking tight.”

“Daddy, please. More.”

He started to move, thrusting deep and hard, his hips grinding against her clit with each downward stroke.

“Tanner.”

“Not Tanner, little S. What do you call me?”

“Daddy. Daddy, I’m so close.”

“Hold on, my pet. Don’t come yet. I want this moment to last.” Sera’s mouth opened in a silent cry as her head fell back. “That’s it, baby, just like that. Take me, Babygirl.”

“I can’t hold back, Tanner, I’m coming!”

Her pussy contracted, her hips grinding against him as her orgasm crashed over her.

“Fuck, Babygirl, yes!” His shout rang through the air as his cock jerked and spurted inside her, the warmth triggering another smaller orgasm that had her crying out his name.

“Shit,” he growled, his head falling forward against her breasts.

“Oh God, yes,” she cried, her entire body trembling.

He lifted his head and looked deep into her eyes. His fingers stroking her cheek were confident and complimented the intensity of his gaze.

“You are so beautiful. You are mine now, Sera Brookes. Mine. No fake engagement. This, what just happened here, made you mine. Never forget that.”

“Yes, Daddy.”

Tanner’s mouth covered her, the tender kiss filled with possession and dominance.

“Now, let’s get you cleaned up and get back to the cookout before that cheeky little bugger of a Keith comes looking for you. If I find him leering at your naked ass, I’ll be forced to break his nose.”

Sera’s tinkling laugh came from deep within, a fervent validation of how happy and wanted she felt at that very moment.



# Chapter Eight



*Grand Isle, Louisiana...*

Beneath the looming silhouette of the Grand Isle State Park Fishing Pier, six figures huddled in the dimness of the night. Five men, cloaked in the obscurity of their intentions, and one lone young girl, who seemed completely out of place. The air hung heavy with palpable tension that was woven with concealed motives.

Chiara Sanchigo—God, how she hated that name—shifted her weight, uncomfortable to suddenly be the center of attention as the heavysset man in front of her bellowed, “Who is this chit, and what the fuck is she doing here?”

The cloudy sky veiled the moon, casting intermittent shadows that danced across the sand as they revealed glimpses of the five men in this clandestine meeting. The subdued glow of the hidden moon lent an eerie luminescence to the scene, accentuating the uncertainty etched on her face.

“That is none of your concern,” Salvitore Sanchigo’s voice drifted like a chilled breeze in the atmosphere. A warning to let it be, was wrapped in the steely resolve resonating in his tone.

Chiara did her best to remain untouched as the man glowered at her. The ceaseless rhythm of the waves was a haunting chorus that assisted her in the quest to mask an undercurrent of foreboding.

“Of course, it’s my fucking concern.” The sharp snap of the man’s voice turned the tranquil sound of the waves into

a haunting melody that accentuated his growing anger.

The faint creaking of the pier above them mirrored the tension. Chiara glanced up at the wooden columns stretching toward the heavens. Their dark forms were like sentinels guarding secrets of many other meetings just like this.

*How I wish I had magic slippers that could take me away from here with a click of my heels!* The whimsical thought was a steep contrast to the sea breeze whispering through the beams. Its eerie sound was a chilling reminder of the unpredictable forces of nature—so much like the frightening men surrounding her.

Her eyes darted between them, trying to decipher alliances and intentions. Albeit young and scared, Chiara had quickly learned over the past few weeks to keep it hidden. Salvitore Sanchigo was a hard taskmaster... a cruel man who showed no mercy, even though she was now his supposed daughter. So, instead, she radiated an aura of quiet strength, her gaze meeting each challenge he threw her way with an unyielding boldness.

No embellished language could capture the intricacies of this tableau—it was a symphony of power play conducted in silence. The night itself seemed to hold its breath, caught between the moon's longing for clarity and the clouds' desire for obscurity.

Chiara's breath slipped out in a silent exhale to minimize any noise that might shatter the delicate equilibrium she clung to. Her presence lingered like a fragile wisp of air, suspended beneath the shroud of darkness that concealed her. The precarious balance of her situation was all-too clear, a teetering act that demanded her utmost care.

In the murky ambiance, she held her ground, standing frozen in time as she waited for the scene to unfold. Her demeanor was a testament to her insecurities—a result of the complexities of human evil expanding its spider's web around her, ensnaring her within the intricate coils of a master

manipulator. Sanchigo's true goal lurked beneath the surface like a hidden predator ready to pounce.

*If only I knew what it was he wanted from me. Why he was so adamant that I be here tonight... except from some kind of lesson I'm supposed to learn once again. I'm so tired of his incessant lessons!*

Little did Chiara realize how her impending transformation had been forged by his hand. Their tangled fates, a collision of innocence and guile, were well-planned long ago. Her gradual metamorphosis was but a sinister evolution poised to unfold—a weapon to be used when the time was ripe.



Salvitore marveled at the intricacies of psychological games in the labyrinth of the mind. Bringing Chiara along had been a calculated move. A risk, perhaps, but still well thought through—a testament to his strategic acumen. He wanted Hank Brinkman unsettled before uttering a word. An achievement he had known would undoubtedly happen with the young girl's presence.

“Are we going to waste time playing trivia, or are we going to get on with the matter at hand?” In the darkness, Salvitore's subtle gesture of raising an eyebrow went unnoticed, but the chill in his voice cut through the gloom with a tenacity that held its own significance. Across the dim expanse, Brinkman, his bulk imposing in the night's obscurity, shuffled his weight restlessly in a physical manifestation of a mind teetering on the edge.

Manipulating a man so inherently driven by a thirst for authority was nothing short of ironic, if not laughable. Salvitore was the first to acknowledge that power could be destructive, especially if it became all-consuming—like it had with this man. Brinkman was being corroded from the inside as his true nature was devoured by it like a relentless fire. The

waiting game had paid off; it was going to be like taking candy from a baby.

“I don’t appreciate your tone, Sanchigo. I’m not one of your henchmen,” Brinkman sneered. “I suggest you don’t forget who I am and the power I hold. It’s my money that got you where you are today.”

“Your money? Hmm, it may have played a role in the banking scheme, but that one project does not define me. It never did, Mr. Brinkman. I was in this position of power long before you joined the game.” He leaned forward, his voice as sharp as a clap of thunder. “Do not forget that with one snap of my finger, all *your* supposed authority would be gone... money and all.”

Salvitore smiled as an indignant gasp exploded from his lips. Like a puppet master, he had set the stage and was poised for the drama to unfold.

Brinkman reacted exactly as expected and played the scene he envisioned in a theater of power dynamics where every move was a pawn in the grand scheme. The perfect set up for Chiara to learn a very valuable lesson—when pieces shifted on the game board of deceit, the final reveal of supremacy was inevitable as it set in play a choreography of minds and intentions aimed at reaching its pinnacle.

Soon, the matter of who was in charge of the reformed Golden Wizards would be settled... but not before some blood was spilled.

“Perhaps it’s time *you* stop overestimating your power over me, Sanchigo.” Brinkman snapped his fingers and pointed at Bulldog. “Once your muscle is gone, you might be more inclined to listen to reason.”

The two big men flanking Brinkman lunged forward in unison. They never reached their target—their swinging fists and hands grasped only air where he once stood. Bulldog, despite his giant-like stature, moved with the speed of a cheetah and countered with the might of a bear.

Before the two men comprehended their missed mark, Bulldog was already in motion. His movements, swift and unpredictable, were a dance of brute force and agile finesse. He weaved between their lumbering forms, using their own momentum against them. A sudden jab to the gut sent one man stumbling backward with his breath knocked out of him. Simultaneously, Bulldog's elbow met the other's jaw with a solid impact that left him momentarily dazed.

"Get the motherfucker!" Brinkman screeched, all but jumping up and down in frustration at their incompetence.

His order came to naught since the odds seemed to tilt further as Bulldog's relentless assault continued. His blows weren't flashy or elaborate, but they carried the weight of his raw power. He was a force of nature in motion, a whirlwind of brawn and swiftness that the two men struggled to counter. Bulldog's movements were efficient and economical, and every action was calculated to maximize impact while minimizing exposure.

"Yeah, pea brains, listen to your boss. C'mon, hit me!" Bulldog added a taunt to their disgraceful attempts.

With increased energy, the two men charged again, but they were outmatched. Bulldog's strength was undeniable, and his ability to anticipate their movements set him apart.

"Nope, still can't hit shit," he snorted as he ducked beneath a wild swing and followed up with a forceful shove that sent one man crashing into the other. Their collision was an accolade to his tactical awareness and his overpowering might.

"Set an example, Bulldog." The curt order came from an enigmatic Sanchigo who had been watching silently.

"It'll be my pleasure," Bulldog acknowledged the order. His muscles rippled as he moved, a testament to the sheer power contained within his hulking frame. The fight had been a symphony of controlled chaos, with Bulldog orchestrating every move to his advantage. He did so yet



again. This time, it was punctuated by a fleeting glint of light reflecting off the blade he wielded—the only warning offered to the man charging him.

With a single powerful motion, he thrust the hunting knife forward, driving it hilt deep into the man's skull. The lethal point veered its course and exited inches above the man's Adam's apple, a chilling reminder of how cruelly fate had intervened in his life's course.

The act was stark, a brutal punctuation in the midst of the calm sea. The second man, witnessing the swift and merciless demise of his companion, didn't linger to assess his chances. Fear propelled him to pivot on his heels and flee, his footsteps echoing a hasty retreat.

“Come back here, you coward!” Brinkman shouted as he shuffled back from the gory scene. His eyes bulged as he watched the sand turn dark with a pool of blood as the lifeforce of his bodyguard sapped from his body.

Sanchigo didn't indulge in watching the macabre pageant; rather, his regard remained steady on Chiara. A taut grin briefly etched itself onto his features—a momentary crack in the façade of his usually impassive demeanor.

“Why the fuck did you do that for?” Brinkman lamented. His demeanor had become placid and submissive with fear settling like a heavy cloak around his shoulders.

Sanchigo ignored him. The air was thick with tension, the charged silence speaking volumes. Chiara's widened eyes, and the stifled scream that caught in her throat, bore witness to the visceral impact of the scene. He was gratified by her reaction. Her training, the rigorous preparation under his guidance, had started to yield results. The fact that she halted the scream before it fully emerged was evidence that she was adapting and learning to control her reactions in the face of stark violence.

“Jesus! The man's wife just gave birth to their first child,” Brinkman wailed.

“His death is on your hands since you were the one who set him off against Bulldog,” Sanchigo dismissed his woeful protest with a negligent snort. “Violence ignites adrenaline and excitement that causes the brain to short circuit. Then, the human mind soaks in the danger of issuing threats, especially when faced with someone as powerful as me.” His voice lowered. “Are you ready to listen now, Mr. Brinkman?”

“Stop playing games. Say what you came here for,” he retorted mildly as he visually struggled to overcome his fear at being the next one whose blood would soak into the sand.

“Never overestimate your power, Mr. Brinkman, especially not in the world of crime. In the end, there can only be one king in a castle, and I have no intention of being the prince.”

“You’re talking about the Golden Wizards?”

“An institution with such a vast variety of powerful individuals can’t have more than one leader, Brinkman. It’ll never work.”

“It’s my money that reformed the group. Mine! I should have a say in how it’s run.”

“No, my dear friend, you’re slightly misinformed, which once again proves that you didn’t do your homework. Who was the one to approach you about reforming the group?”

“No more riddles. Get on with it, Sanchigo,” he snapped.

“Do you honestly think you were the only one who sweetened the pot of gold that is needed to keep the law off our backs?”

“What the fuck are you saying?”

“You, Brinkman, are one of many who invested in the Golden Wizards—recently registered as an Angel Investment firm. Yep, we’re one hundred percent legitimate now.” He barked a short laugh. “For all intents and purposes insofar as

the law is concerned.” He held up his hand as Brinkman opened his mouth to talk. “You have to choose what is most important to you. Achieving business success and having economic power with money to go with it, or to rule a dark underworld you have absolutely no insight into how much viciousness it entails and requires. You can’t have both.”

“Then what the fuck do I benefit from being a Golden Wizard?” Brinkman protested.

“Money. Lots of money. A monthly influx that you won’t have to lift a finger to earn.” Sanchigo leaned forward and continued in a grating voice. “I don’t play in your dollhouse, Brinkman. Stay out of mine if you know what’s good for you.”

“So, I must just believe and trust you? Without any guarantee? Why? So that, as before, I get fucked all over again and lose more money? No fucking way.”

“All the money you invested in the foiled banking scheme was never guaranteed. You were warned, along with everyone else that the venture came with risks. If you want to play with criminals, *nothing* is ever guaranteed. I suggest you remember that. Like all the businessmen who bought into the Golden Wizards, your role is that of a silent partner. All you need to do is keep a low profile. Be the king of the corporate world. I will do what I’m a master at and ensure your coffers are filled... but it will be done my way.”

“I’m not—”

“This meeting is over. A conclusion has been reached. If you don’t agree, Bulldog will—”

“There’s no need. I understand that you wish to play king. So be it, but I’m warning you, Sanchigo, if I don’t see a return on my investment very soon, fucking crime lord or not, you will learn that even corporate businessmen can play dirty.” That said, Brinkman marched off, mumbling as far as he went.

“Why did you bring me here?”

Sanchigo kept his eyes on Brinkman until he drove off before turning to Chiara. A Cheshire grin splayed on his lips.

“Violent rage, the hulk smash mode, if you wish, can be switched off forever by dependable love and a removal of the dog-eat-dog elements of our societies. It’s the world you grew up in and one that needs to be extracted from your memory banks.” He pointed to the dead man at his feet. “When the primitive brain takes over, when the prefrontal cortex is switched off, primal things happen with permanent consequences. Remember that, Chiara. Never act on instinct. Think, plan, and then act, but always within the short time span you have available.”

“A lesson? You brought me here, forced me to watch this cruel murder to teach me a lesson? And you call yourself my supposed father?” The despair and horror ciphered through her voice that thickened with tears as she realized his aim was to destroy every memory she had of her previous life.

“Only if you can tell me what the lesson was, my child. C’mon, I’m waiting. What did you learn here tonight?”

“That you’re fucking demented!”

*Crack!*

Chiara’s cry of pain was still floating toward him when she fell on the beach from the force of the slap.

“You will respect me, you little chit. The next time you talk to me like that, I will cut out a piece of your tongue.” With his hand fisted around her ponytail, he yanked her upright. “You’re in my world now, little girl. Best you remember that. I’ve been patient with you, but I will not stand for such an attitude. As my adopted daughter, you *will* respect me. Do you understand?”

“Yes! Yes, I understand,” she cried, clawing at the hand that cruelly yanked at her hair.

“The lesson, Chiara. What did you learn?”

“Never play all your cards at once.” In a soft, quivering voice she responded. Her eyes shimmered with unshed tears “There’s always one who is more deceitful than others. One who holds the ace card and has the power to be supreme overall.”

“Perfect. You see?” He patted her cheek as he released her hair. “It wasn’t in vain, this little journey of ours.”

With a satisfied grin etched across his face, he walked toward the waiting car. A sense of achievement emanated from his being. These sorts of situations would eventually chip away at the tender edges of his adopted daughter’s nature. Emotions that he considered trivial, like love and devotion, would slip away in due time. And when they did, she would morph into the very weapon he was meticulously forging her into.

In the months to come, she would evolve into a personal sword to create havoc and destruction as he sought his vengeance.

## Chapter Nine



*Club Rouge, Baton Rouge, Louisiana...*

“Welcome to Club Rouge, Babygirl. This is the entertainment chamber.”

Sera was overwhelmed by a wild jumble of knots tightening inside her stomach. Her fingers tensed around Tanner’s arm as he led her down the short set of stairs into a large open area that was already buzzing with members. Having read hundreds of books about BDSM clubs was one thing but to actually step inside one completely rocked her imagination. More specifically, the eclectic atmosphere drew her in as if she belonged there.

Glancing around, she was in awe to notice the stylish and elegant black, red, and silver theme she had admired in the foyer was continued throughout. The club’s interior portrayed a vision of indulgence, which was reflected everywhere she looked.

“I didn’t expect there to be this many people here already,” she whispered.

“The club is exclusive to members only, and the selection process is stringent to ensure every member is secure in the knowledge that their identity will remain confidential. It’s the last Saturday of the month, little one. It’s theme night, which is very popular with the members since it involves a little... how shall I call it... an alphabetical pleasure treasure hunt.” He patted her hand with an indulgent smile. “Relax, Babygirl. You’re clinging to my arm like I’m dragging you into a slaughterhouse.”

“Don’t pretend that you’re not taking pleasure in my discomfort,” she retorted snippily.

*Look at him, just look at that grin!* He seemed to be enjoying this moment a little too much. Worse yet, the torches’ flickering light lent him an almost devilish appearance. Not that it mattered. Her heart skipped a beat as she glanced at him. Tanner Wilde was unquestionably a specimen of masculine perfection. Clad in black leather and an open vest, he exuded a raw allure that could drive any woman wild. He looked good enough to fuck. *Eat! I meant to eat.*

The waves of confidence radiating from him were as potent as the power of his dominance, which was almost tangible. The wings of butterflies dancing around in her stomach awakened the most intimate parts of her body as his laughter rumbled through the air—an alluring yet slightly sinister sound that promised debauchery untold.

“In here, I’m known as Master Thor.”

“Master Thor? Wait, don’t tell me... because you swing a mighty... er... sword?” Sera snickered at the picture forming in her mind.

“No, because my thunder is as potent as my lust.”

“Gmphf,” she snorted, suddenly finding herself annoyed at the thought of him being someone else’s daddy. “I imagine there are many subs here who can attest to that.”

“Hmm, interesting.” His eyes glittered with mirth. “Somehow, I didn’t envision you as the kind of woman who would show her jealousy.”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Daddy. I most assuredly didn’t live the life of a nun all my life, just as you haven’t been celibate. It would be childish to be jealous of your previous lovers... or babygirls.” Her back snapped into a straight line as she stood eye to eye with him. “But you better know that for as long as I hold that position in your life, I will not stand for any other *little* playing in my pen.”

Satisfaction glowed in his eyes. Sera didn't have to wonder about the reason that sparked it. It was the first time she had called him Daddy without being prodded, but somehow, it felt right. In here, with his domination, awaiting her full submission, wrapped around her like an invisible cloak.

“I think I'm going to have fun tonight.”

His raspy voice resonated deep inside her. Sera peeked at him through her lashes, not entirely sure whether she was included in that statement.

His expression turned censoring as he caught her look. “No games tonight, little one. Only pure, unadulterated fun.”

*Nope, definitely not. I'm probably gonna be the one screaming and crying, bringing him immense pleasure. Yep, the fun part... for him. Asshole Daddy!*

She was careful not to let her thoughts reflect in her expression. Tanner was too observant and quick not to notice. One thing she wasn't going to do was invite punishment. Come what may, she was walking away from this club tonight with a silly grin of sexual satisfaction and overindulgence on her face. That it would, one way or the other, include some sort of BDSM activity excited her... as much as it scared the shit out of her.

“I'll take your word for it, Daddy.”

At home, he was the demanding Daddy and had spanked her twice when she opposed him, but other than that, he hadn't indulged in any BDSM play. Of course, it left her feeling confused, especially since she craved to experience his full mastery and dominance... like those she had read about in fiction.

“Hmm, indeed.”

Her bottom tightened and left a tingling sensation to thrill down her backside in response to him drawing closer. It was a familiar feeling. One that had started after that very first set of whacks on the day she had arrived on the farm. Since



then, she experienced it every time he pulled her against him. Up to this very moment, she had refused to acknowledge that it was anticipation for more rather than fear of the pain he inflicted with his huge paw.

His warm breath was a tantalizing whisper as his deep voice rumbled against her ear, “I like hearing that word fall so easily from your lips, little girl. Say it again.”

“Daddy,” she lilted in a sugary voice. That she was acting in complete contradiction to the kind of assertive person she was in her career for once didn’t bother her. To see the pleasure and lust explode in the depths of his eyes was all that mattered.

At this moment, what she felt was real. That theirs was supposed to be temporary and only a pretend engagement slipped from her mind. It felt right. Like this was where she belonged. With him, as her Daddy Dom.

“What’s an alphabetical pleasure treasure hunt?” she asked once perched on a stool at the bar.

“A rather pleasant activity, especially if the little sub finds the kind of letter her Daddy could really have some fun with.” Sera turned on the stool as Kaden’s guttural voice drew her attention. She smiled at Sage, who sat down beside her.

“It sounds suspiciously like all the fun is geared to the pleasure of the Doms,” Sera observed while she sipped on a strawberry daiquiri.

“That’s where you’re wrong, little one,” Tanner placed a lingering kiss on her shoulder. “A Daddy Dom only has one pleasure, and that is to give his little exactly what she craves and needs.”

“So, does that mean the little gets to decide what the scene would be based on the letter she finds in the treasure hunt?” Sera asked tongue-in-cheek since she was relatively sure what the answer would be.

The bellowing laughter of the two men, accompanied by Kevin and Keith, who had just joined them, was the

affirmation she expected.

“Of course.” Her tone was ambivalent as she winked at Sage. “How stupid of me to assume we had any say in our own pleasure.”

“How wrong you are, Master Thor’s little dove,” Kevin said. “Haven’t you realized yet that he already knows what pleases you most? That by watching you he knows every desire and boundary you have? Most of all, that he, more than you, knows exactly what you need to unlock the true submissive lurking deep inside you, to guide you in reaching the ultimate euphoric high you so desperately crave?”

“What is this? Gang up against Sera night?” she mumbled and hid her face by taking a long sip of her drink. Kevin had just verbalized what she had been struggling to comprehend up to this very moment since she had refused to accept that any man could hold such power over her.

“Believe me, little dove, when we gang up against you, you’ll know.” Keith winked at her. His eyes danced with wickedness. She suspected he was the naughty one of the Frazer brothers. The indulgent grin on his siblings’ faces confirmed her suspicion.

“We have a couple of club matters to discuss before the treasure hunt begins.” Kaden kissed Sage lingeringly. “You do not move from this chair, Babygirl. Got that?”

“Yes, Daddy.”

“Same goes for you, Little S,” Tanner said as he quickly chucked down the rest of his drink.

“I’m supposed to be—”

“In here you’re supposed to be nothing other than my submissive Babygirl. Do as you’re told, little one. Believe me, you don’t want to invite punishment while we’re at Club Rouge. I promise you, the spankings you got at home will be like bee stings compared to what you’ll receive for publicly defying me.” The hard kiss he placed on her lips was

passionate but much too short for Sera's liking. "I won't be long. Now, be a good girl for Daddy and do as you're told."

"Yes, Daddy."

"Hmm, now those two little words please me immensely, Babygirl."

Sera refrained from retorting with a sharp 'Gmphf' that sprang to her lips.

"It gets easier," Sage said as they watched the four men walk off.

"What? Bowing to his every command?"

"Yes, but only within the boundaries of his domination when you're here at the club and when you're alone. I learned very quickly not to fight my inner submissive. She's too strong and feisty to be denied." Sage's eyes turned dreamy. "Believe me, when you truly tap into your Daddy's domination and his needs, the pleasures you gain override any desire to be assertive or keep any modicum of control over your body and mind."

"That's exactly what I'm afraid of." Sera sipped on her drink as she mulled over what Sage had said. Her words reflected exactly what Sera had been struggling with. To just let go and allow the true woman inside her, along with her hidden desires, the freedom to come out of her cage.

"Fear is overrated in this environment, my friend." Sage squeezed her hand. "Trust and believe in your Daddy to do what's best for you. *That* will win the day. Believe me... you'll never regret walking down that path... or want to turn back and wander the other way."

"It does sound very inviting."

"Then take the chance, Sera. You won't be sorry."

*Except, this isn't real. He's not my fiancé. He doesn't love me. He's not my Daddy. It's all just an act.*

*Oh, really? Excuse me for thinking the lady doth protest too much.*

Sera ignored the taunt from her inner voice. It was the truth. There was no use denying it... especially to herself.



“Before we begin, Kaden, I need to thank you for being proactive when I was abducted by sending my brother and his family to a safehouse. When Diego threatened their lives, I almost lost it. If not for needing to get out of there to check if he did good on his threat, I would’ve given up.”

“Of course, my friend. That’s what we do, and since we live and breathe dealing with syndicates and mafia groups, we know exactly how they operate. It was a no brainer getting them to safety.”

Tanner nodded. “So, are we discussing club matters, or are we gathered to talk about who was actually behind my kidnapping and torture?”

“The notion that Diego acted unilaterally as the head of the Jalizio Drug Cartel doesn’t sit well with you, I gather?” Kevin deftly poured a round of single malt Macallan and distributed the glasses. The rich aroma of the whiskey mingled with the gravity of their discussion.

“While the Jalizio Cartel may command considerable influence in Mexico, Diego’s ascendancy following his grandfather’s reign has been marked by greed. He’s more interested in lining his pockets than to secure the exalted top-dog position. He doesn’t care who is the king, as long as he makes the most money.” Tanner paced contemplatively in front of the one-way window that provided a view of both the lively entertainment area and the dungeon below.

“Then he’s a fool,” Kaden interjected with sagacity. “Doesn’t he realize that the one with the most power and fear in the drug world makes the most money?”

“If you ask me, he’s lazy,” Tanner smirked. “He basks in sitting around the pool all day with whores hanging onto his dick, believing it’s the ultimate sign of his success and status.”

“In other words,” Kaden interjected, “you believe he was just a puppet whose strings were pulled by another master.”

“Exactly.” Tanner’s gaze hardened. “And we all know who that puppet master is.”

“Which puppet show are we discussing?” The entrance of Slade Lewis, Sage’s uncle, disrupted the discourse like a storm cloud rolling in. The lines etched onto his fatigued face was evidence of the endless responsibilities and pressure of his position as Deputy Director of the CIA. “Sorry I’m late. I was stuck in a meeting with the secret service.”

“On a Saturday? Don’t those bastards give you a break, even over weekends?” Keith’s incredulity punctuated the moment. “Macallan?”

“Fuck, yes. Make it a double.” With a weary gesture, Slade swept a hand through his hair, momentarily revealing the toll of the past months. The battle against criminal enterprises had grown more complex, expanding beyond the realm of violence into the intricate web of economic stability.

The recollection of recent events colored the air with tension. Sage and Triple K’s rapid response, coupled with Tanner and Slade’s covert collaboration with the commission investigating the resurfacing of an attempted banking fraud, had averted a financial catastrophe in the country. The collective effort had prevented the brink of what could have been the most devastating economic crisis the nation had ever faced.

“I assume you’re talking about Sanchigo?” Slade said in a composed tone as he savored the whiskey’s essence unfolding across his taste buds. The initial contact was a delicate dance of warmth, a soft embrace that spread through his mouth. Hints of oak and vanilla whispered on his tongue.

The woody undertones were a nod to time itself, a reminder that craftsmanship and patience yielded such refined pleasures.

If only patience was that easy to come by in his job, life would be so much easier.

Taking another contemplative sip, he looked around the room. “Sanchigo,” he repeated. “Did you find the bastard?”

“Not yet. That fuckface disappeared off the face of the earth.” Kaden shook his head. “My instincts warn me he’s somewhere strategizing his revenge. It was his first big failure playing in the financial playpen. Something that wouldn’t sit well with a man like him since it put him in a bad light with all the rich business investors who bought into the Golden Wizards.”

“But the group doesn’t exist anymore, right?” Kevin confirmed. “Everyone who was involved was caught and jailed at the time as conspirators intending to sink our economy.”

“True, but as long as Sanchigo is out there, who knows what he has up his sleeve.” Tanner finished his drink. “Take my word for it. He’s not skulking around licking his wounds somewhere. He’ll be furious that his brilliant plan was foiled. First on his list, we now know, is me. Not only for my ability to have the transportation bill scrapped but also because I managed to fool them as one of the investors. He’s known for acting with cruelty when he’s been opposed. True to his nature as a mafia crime lord, he’s going to hit where it hurts—family and loved ones.”

“So, that’s why you needed such stringent security on your farm. You’re worried he might get to Sera,” Keith said.

“Who’s Sera?” Slade, who hadn’t met her yet, looked confused.

“Ah, of course, you wouldn’t know,” Kevin interjected. “You’ve been galivanting around the globe playing Rambo

again. Our beloved senator over here got himself a fiancé. Gorgeous and feisty woman, as to be expected, of course.”

Slade looked at Tanner questioningly. “You got engaged? Overnight? Doesn’t sound like you, my friend. So, I call bullshit on that theory. What’s the real story here?”

“Shoulda known you wouldn’t be fooled.” Tanner scratched his beard and continued with a wry grin, “I suppose it comes naturally from never trusting anything at face value.”

“Hold on,” Keith frowned at Tanner. “You’re *not* really engaged?” His face lit up. “So, the little dove is actually free to spread her wings?”

“You’ll keep your paws off her if you know what’s good for you, you little shit,” Tanner growled as he looked around the room. “I never do anything half-assed—fake engagement included. For as long as she’s my pretend fiancé, she will act and be treated as such. Do I make myself clear?”

“Oh,” Keith saluted him with a satisfied grin spreading over his face. “As clear as crystal, Senator Wilde.”

“Fuck off, asshole.”

“So, if Sera isn’t a long-lost love you reacquainted and fell in love with in a recent Africa excursion, as you told us, who is she exactly and how does she fit into this entire fucked-up picture?” Kaden’s voice was harsh. He didn’t appreciate that Tanner, who was his best friend, had kept the truth from him.

“No need to be upset, Kaden. I was sworn to secrecy, but now that the cat is out of the bag...” He sighed as he sat down. “Sera is a DEA Special Ops Recovery Agent. She led the rescue team who found me on that godforsaken island. She has been investigating Salvatore Sanchigo for years.”

“So, the DEA planted her as your fake fiancé... why exactly?” Keith asked with a puzzled look on his face.

“Actually, she’s supposed to be my bodyguard. The engagement is the cover.”

There was a brief silence after Tanner's statement, then a choir of guffaws exploded from all around. He was hard pressed not to roll his eyes. In the end, an indulgent smile tugged on his lips in recognition of their amusement.

Tanner held a black masters' belt in both Krav Maga and Silat, which was why they found the need for a bodyguard so funny. As a youngster, he had started martial arts as an art form. Since he had grown up on Bruce Lee films, he had always dreamed of being as good as his martial arts hero. During the years of his training, he had been drawn to the beauty residing in each discipline he was taught. Watching him perform a kata was a privilege as every movement reiterated his absolute dedication and skill to his art.

"Break it down for us, Tanner. What the fuck is the DEA up to?" Slade's harsh voice cut through the laughter.

"Long story short, they're hoping Sanchigo will come for me. When he does, Sera is going to intervene and lock him up." Tanner suffered another bout of laughter.

"Or so she thinks," Kaden smirked. "Does she even realize the supposed fake engagement ceased to exist the moment she accepted you as her daddy? Or am I reading the situation wrong?"

"No, you're not. There's nothing fake about our relationship as a Daddy and his Babygirl. It was the condition I put out before even agreeing to the entire sham."

"Condition?" Slade took another sip of his drink, his eyes speculative.

"That the only way I would agree to her being my fiancé was if she became my Babygirl and fully embraced the lifestyle... with me as her Daddy."

"So, she's not a BDSM or a Daddy Dom novice?" Slade prodded.

"Actually, apart from the little she picked up in romance fiction novels, she was a novice. Although, I have to say, she is a very quick learner." Tanner got up. His eyes



drifted to the two women waiting at the bar. His cock twitched against his pants as expectation of the pleasures awaiting him with her tonight flashed through his mind.

“I think it’s time I introduce my little girl to a proper BDSM Daddy session. Let’s get this treasure hunt on the go, shall we?”

“Indeed,” Kaden said as they all trailed after Tanner, eager for a night of kinky fun.

“Kaden,” Slade held him back with a brief touch on the shoulder. “Having a bodyguard might sound like a joke but the talk on the streets is that the new senator has a target on his back. He needs protection. 24/7.”

“Already done. I’ve got rotating teams on his farm and office, as well as a covert team that shadows him and Sera wherever they go.”

“Good.” Slade’s expression turned pensive. “She might believe she’s here to protect him but being by his side puts her in as much danger as he is. Sanchigo is out for vengeance.” His eyes darkened. “Believe me, I’ve seen what he does to those who oppose him. Tanner made a fool of him. That’s something Sanchigo will never forget.”

“We’ve got this, Slade. No one is going to die under my watch.”

“I’m glad. Now... let’s see if this old geezer can find a sub in the mood for a little Daddy domination.”

# Chapter Ten



“Treasure hunt? Really, Tanner? Ouch!” she rubbed her arm where he had pinched her. “What was that for?”

“I have a relatively good memory and I do recall having told you what to call me here at the club,” he said unrepentantly.

“A gentle reminder would have had the same effect, you know,” she mumbled under her breath.

“Speak up, Babygirl. I don’t appreciate mumbling.”

“I was just pointing out that due to the nature of my work and skills as a recovery agent, I might have an unfair advantage over the other submissives...” The hesitation was marked. “Master Thor.”

“The only advantage you will have is to find your treasure list quicker so our fun can begin. This isn’t a competition, little one. It’s all about finding the right letter, so you can achieve utmost pleasure.”

She tilted her head. “So, which letter would you suggest I find, Daddy? I mean, since I’m no expert of BDSM terminology, I wouldn’t know if I’m searching for the best option.”

“Hmm, I’d say my favorites would be a, b, c, n, and p. Of course, you might not agree once I select one of the activities on the list.”

Sera quickly tapped into her database, listing the letters Tanner had chosen and cross-referencing the word from each

to the possible activities she had picked up on reading about it. The only two she could recall for the letter A were anal and abrasion, neither of which she believed she was ready for. The letter b could be bondage or blindfold, and c no doubt involved the clitoris. N could have numerous nipple play activities associated with it, and the letter p could be pussy whipping or public sex for all she knew.

Lord! How was she supposed to survive this night if all of those made her entire lower body throb with anticipation? Of course, fear also played its part. Some scenes could be torture for a submissive so close to the edge and already quivering with lustful thoughts. At least she would be able to predict what to expect.

Perhaps finding a completely different letter would be advantageous, like the letter x or z. Surely there was no scene starting with any of those? On the other hand, this was about kink, so one way or the other, she had no doubt every letter of the alphabet had something linked to it.

Her pussy had become a deluge, moisture seeping into her panties with no end in sight. With each second that ticked by, she felt more and more uncomfortable. The lace of her panties was beginning to chafe her swollen folds—not that Tanner noticed. His brow was creased into a scowl while he perused the page in front of him.

“Earth to Master Thor,” she said to draw his attention. “What is that? Another secret rule of the treasure hunt you forgot to mention?”

“No, this is the map of the area in play and where you will find the clues for the keys that will unlock the boxes safeguarding the lists. The best game plan is to decide upfront which one you’re going to search for and concentrate on that one. It’s the best way to get to it quickly before anyone else does. You don’t want to end up with the least popular letters available if you search blindly without a plan.”

“I’m an expert, Master Thor. I don’t need to be told how to find hidden treasures.”

“And I’m your master in the scene and your Daddy whose advice you should listen to.”

“As if you’ll allow me to forget,” she muttered. “So, when do we start?”

“Come, all the submissives are gathered at the bar. Once the bell is rung, the hunt begins.” He patted her on the chin. “I’ll be rooting for you, Babygirl. I’d be mighty impressed if you found me the n or c list. I might even give you an extra treat to show my appreciation.” With a quick kiss, he left her with the rest of the submissives. “I’ll be waiting for you in the corner overlooking the garden. Good luck.”

Sera joined the submissives. Their excitement was palpable and contagious, and she found herself itching to begin searching for the keys. She listened with half an ear to Keith rumbling off the rules while she studied the treasure map. It didn’t take much deduction to decipher it and by the time the bell rang, she had two letters she was chasing. Not surprisingly, it was n and c. She was off like a hot potato while the final chimes were still ringing in her ears.

The hunt was on!

Focusing on only finding the two letters she had decided upon, Sera was oblivious to the excited twitter and scattering around of the other submissives. Determination was etched on her face as she stopped at the entrance of the dungeon to study the map. The distinct smell of leather and wood filled her nostrils, inviting her to take a brief look around. The entrance hall into the dungeon was lush with the same coloring and furniture as the rest of the club. Tanner had explained earlier this was where Doms brought the submissives for aftercare, which was probably why it had a homey vibe.

A movement behind her spurred her on to continue her search. Now wasn’t the time to gawk at the enormous amount of pleasure instruments and benches she passed in her quest. When she walked past the torture chamber, she cringed at the chains and steel cages she noticed inside. The shudder running

down her spine was unmistakable. There was no way she was going in there for a closer look, even if she had time on her side. Not that it would happen, anyway. Tanner had set her mind at ease that no hardcore scenes were allowed at the club. Even so, a tinge of trepidation remained.

“Ah-hah! I knew it would be here.” Triumph flared in her eyes. Her fingers snatched up the golden key that was attached with a small chain to the Saint Andrew’s Cross in the far corner. “Now, where the devil would the box be?” Once again, she studied the map. “Hmm, I suppose X marks the spot, right?” She looked around and with another cry of victory, she spotted a small square black box with a bright red bow on a spanking bench. Her fingers had just closed around the box when a redhead submissive ran into the chamber.

“Ah, shit! I thought I would get here first,” she protested, but with a wave of defeat, she spun about and moved on with her search.

“Okay, I’m not supposed to open the box,” she muttered as she glared at it. “You damn well better be the letter c.”

With her precious treasure clutched between her hands, she walked back out of the dungeon to find her Daddy.

Tanner’s expression showed his surprise when Sera arrived so quickly where he was chatting with Slade and Kaden in the entertainment chamber.

“Aren’t you breaking the rules, Babygirl?” He raised an eyebrow as she placed the box proudly on the table before him.

“What rules? I had to find the treasure, not open it, and hand it to my Daddy.” She pointed to the box. “Okay, sorry. I put it on the table.” Snatching it up, she held it out to him. “Here you go, Daddy. I found your treasure,” she recalled the phrase she was supposed to say.

He studied the box. A smirk played around his lips when he nodded. “So, it would appear.” He patted his lap.

“Come here, Babygirl.”

Sera took her seat on Tanner’s lap and sighed in bliss when he gently rubbed her neck.

“I’m proud of you, my pet. You’re the first to have found treasure.” He removed the bow and gave her a sideways glance as he unlocked the box. “So, which letter did you search for?”

“I chose two. C and N.” She pointed at the box. “If I read the map correctly, that should be the C list.”

“Well, let’s see, shall we?” The twinkle of mischief in his gaze indicated his approval. Sera held her breath as he removed the lid. If it was the letter C, she hoped he would choose clit play. Just the thought made her little nub buzz and tingle with anticipation.

“Hmm, I’m impressed once again, Babygirl. It’s indeed the letter C. Good thing I came prepared.” Wiggling his eyebrows, he reached inside his pocket.

Her first thought was, ‘*Yasss, he’s a psychic,*’ when he pulled out two clamps that were connected at each end to a small ring by chains. Sera did a quick mental run through of everything she could remember of clit play, including clamping. She frowned at the tweezer-type of clamps dangling from the chain. It had a medium grip, and the ends were flat metal. It reminded her of a plier used for turning a screw and not at all an erotic form of clitoral clamping. Not when there were different types of clamps available such as clothespin style, metal ring type, and U-shape clamps with chain and rubber bands she had read about in BDSM fiction.

“Wh-What are those for?” She shifted on his lap, suddenly not so sure she was going to have any pleasure. “I thought the purpose of tonight was to teach me the pleasures of BDSM play.”

“Ah, yes, but there are many forms of pleasure-play, my pet. Including, but not limited to... clit and nipple clamping. Pain is known to spike your endorphins and more

often than not, results in extreme pleasure. Of course, it's my duty as your Daddy to ensure pleasure is the end aim." His voice was laced with humor, and her suspicion of his enjoyment was confirmed when he chuckled. "In short, since I already have your consent in lieu of our Daddy-sub agreement, all you need to do is to trust me to show you how delicious it is to experience a sexual adrenaline rush."

"Right. You're sure you're not just testing my endurance against a type of clit play I'm not at all sure I'd enjoy, rather than showing me what clamp-clit torture has to offer."

"I'll be testing your endurance, to be precise. You do remember we haven't actually completed the ceremony of trust. You still have some obstacles to overcome and today is one of them. You are holding back too much of what you truly need, my pet. I'm going to unlock that cage tonight."

"I'll have you know that you're no longer my prime motivation." She crossed her arms. "It's pure survival instinct to try to find a way to not succumb to my greatest fears. It always has been."

"Nothing wrong with that, Babygirl. If this was a normal scene, that would work, but I'd like to think what drives you is the wish to submit, to show your true submissive personality that hides beneath your sassy outer layer."

"In that case, you're right," she conceded. "All the above is true, except for the hiding beneath my sassy layer." She winked. "I'd rather describe it as the diamonds under the crust."

"You never fail to surprise me, my pet. For a sub, you are unflappable."

"Is that why you're insistent on training me, even though what's between us isn't real?"

"You've got it wrong, Sera. What's between us is real. Don't ever forget that." His stern expression underscored his words. "What motivates me is how beautiful you'll look when

you succumb to your true submissive.” His voice lowered as he rubbed her back. His fingers caressed her skin, warm and slow, sending shivers over her body.

“I’m not sure I agree but one thing I will admit is that I’ve grown fond of giving up my control.” She chuckled. “The way I look at it is, it’s rather frustrating and aggravating when your sole purpose is to be assertive and always in charge in your day-to-day job. However, that is exactly what has taught me patience, discipline, and resilience. So, here I am, willing to lay myself bare, and most definitely, take a step into a world filled with unknowns.”

He leaned his head back and gave a hearty laugh. “As I said before, you never fail to surprise me.” Placing her on her feet, he brushed a thumb across her lips. “Let’s go. The dungeon awaits.”





# Chapter Eleven



With his hand wrapped around her nape, he guided her to the dungeon. Trepidation soared through her as he stopped at a punishing bench in the whipping chamber. “Now, Babygirl, take your dress and panties off and lean against the table.”

“But I—”

“Your trust needs to be proven once more, little one.”

She reluctantly moved toward the corner of the room and slipped the black mini dress and panties off.

“Assuming the position is good, my pet, but you’re supposed to hand me those.” He crooked a finger toward the pile of clothes.

“Sorry, Daddy. I expected you to ask me to fold it and place it on the chair.”

“Never assume anything, little one. If you’re not sure, ask.”

“Okay, Daddy.” She smiled tentatively.

“I have set my mind on a specific scene, and I’m not inclined to delay the process because of one little mistake.”

“Thank goodness for that, I’ve been looking forward to a thorough fucking at the end,” she mumbled while she folded her clothes neatly. “Is this better, Daddy?” she asked, holding up the dress and panties.

“Much.” He accepted the items. “Leave your hands and feet free to move,” he commanded as she bent over the table, already donning the dominant mask of Master Thor.

With the strict tone and a reminder that he expected the highest regard and obedience from her, she turned on the spot.

A gasp escaped her lips when he brushed a finger over her exposed pussy. Her fingers clutched at the table. She tried to stand still and wait, but his soft, seductive strokes teased a path from her sex all the way up to her nipple and over her back. Over and over, he repeated the same move. Until he paused. A hard smack sounded in the silence.

“Oh dear God.” Sera’s jaw dropped at the unexpected pain scorching through her brain. She struggled to remain unmoving.

“Ground rule, subbie. A little fidgeting is allowed and perfectly normal in a new sub’s case. However, constant movement, like rocking from leg to leg, is forbidden and will result in consequences. A tap on your ass was merely a warning. Another instance of that kind will result in a harsher punishment.”

Sera stood quiet for a few minutes trying her damned best not to move, but the silence was more deafening than the sound of his palm smacking down hard.

“What’s wrong?” Tanner’s voice sounded dark and filled with warning. He had warned her not to hide her emotions and fears from him.

“Nothing.”

“That’s the kind of word I abhor. Scrap it from your vocabulary.” His voice turned guttural. “I can clearly see something is bothering you.”

“I’m trying not to move,” she hedged.



“No, that isn’t it,” Tanner said. Sera’s sharp mind refused to let go. “Ah, the silence bothers you,” he accurately deduced.

Sera looked up quickly with a surprised expression in her eyes. She was still staring at his face when his smile

faltered. Her eyes clouded, but not before he recognized the emotions that flickered within their depth. Doubt and a deep-seated loneliness formed a valley between her brows.

It tugged at his soul to know someone he wanted so badly, who filled a void in his soul, could ever doubt herself, that she wasn't enough. He shook the thought away. Sera had survived by hiding her emotions. An outsider could only see what she wanted them to see. The dominant person was forced to dig deeper.

His cock responded the instant her thoughts became clear to him. He was glad he'd ordered her to assume the position, because with her chest pressing over the top, her hips angled just right, and her feet spread as wide as the width of her shoulders, she was open. Ready for his touch. The quiver of the muscles at her thighs confirmed it, as did the shiver racing over her ass.

Her toes wiggled but didn't shift on the spot. As instructed, her body remained perfectly still. With a flutter of her eyelids, they dropped and closed the link between her thoughts and him. It didn't matter that he'd caught a mere glimpse; it was enough to understand why she wasn't always honest about her emotions. She'd lived half of her life alone. Of all the things he'd ever have to see, the thought of her all alone broke his heart.

Tanner's sole reward—or it seemed he could offer her—was to make sure that never happened again.

Their fake engagement just became real, in every sense of the word—at least, it did to him.

Forced out of his thoughts when Sera said, “Master Thor, are you all right?” Tanner offered an instant nod and wrapped his knuckles against her skin. The gentle brush of the back of his fingers over her ass stirred a frisson along her spine. She jumped from the electric current.



“This is going to sting.” His gravelly words settled into her mind as his fingers splayed over her ass cheek. His touch was gone too quick, and another shiver rippled, stronger, a breath later.

*Smack. Smack. Smack.*

Fire rained down on her ass in three evenly spread slaps. Sera tensed. A small squeal pushed its way past her tightly pursed lips, which quickly became a groan of agony. His palm connected again. Three times in the same spot. Then he moved to the other side. It felt as though she had walked into the jungle and got bitten by the resident cobra. Fire swelled and engulfed the spots where the spanking landed.

“I thought we’re doing a scene involving my clit,” she wailed as he followed his pattern—moving over one and the other side, as if he hadn’t changed it a bit, all the time soothing her skin with gentle rubs of his palms after each attack. The burn turned from painful to red hot, which soothed her. The same burning she felt inside.

“We are, but first I need to clear your mind so you can experience the full impact of the scene,” he responded between slaps.

“Owww,” Sera gasped, shocked at how well he could read her.

*This man... how did he do that?* It was as if he took every bit of her sadness, pain, and hopelessness inside and burned it up, replacing it with passion and excitement.

Tanner swatted harder and faster, using a slapping motion up and down her buttocks until he had struck the bottom curve of each ass cheek. Once that was done, he leaned forward and grasped a pair of the tweezer clamps from the table.

“Clamp the handles at the edge of the table, under your fingers and with just enough force to hold it steady.” Tanner directed as he knelt behind her. “It’s time to play with our letter of the alphabet.”

Sera was confused by the change of pace in his treatment. Her tense look, coupled with the small frown between her eyes, was evidence it was a new experience for her. One she needed in order to make a full revelation of her inner needs.

“The letter C,” he said softly as he pinched the clasp together around her labial folds. “For clamps.”

Sera mewled and cried out, squirming, realizing there was more in store for her than clit play. Clamps could be used all over the body... nipples and clit included. Heat exploded in red spots all over her body at the thought.



Tanner’s cock hardened at the sounds and the view of the metal clamps in the middle of her lips, distended to the edge, caught between her labia.

“Spread them so the pressure is not off to the sides,” he said, bringing his arm over her hip and to her sex. He manipulated the lips further apart so that both lips, upper and lower, were snugly pressed together.

“That’s it, my pet,” he whispered. Her teeth clicked as she pulled on the clips she was holding, pulling her labia further apart.

The sight was hot and arousing. “Perfect, now tighten it, slightly,” he directed and waited until she had both ends clenched between her nails and pressed them closed.

“Hmm, the contrast is lovely.” He traced a finger up to the clip at the top of her mound, the one that bit into the hood. It wasn’t set too hard. Just right. Enough that he knew if he pulled it gently with a single finger, her flesh would ache and spread, but not enough to pinch. A fine piece of titanium art.

A subtle tug on his end tested the tension of the clamp. He pulled. Not very much. Just a couple of inches.

“That is a nice view,” he remarked. His other hand caressed her side, from breast to thigh. The satin texture of her skin was familiar and warm, something he would never get tired of feeling.

“Hold it right there,” he ordered. “You look ravishing, Babygirl.”

There was just enough tension and pain that her cheeks had colored as she winced. Yet her mouth parted a bit as she concentrated on his voice.

“Fuck, ouch!” she cried out as he clamped her nipples. Unperturbed, he tightened clips over each nipple. Her expression was one of pain and discomfort, which he found strange, since they weren’t that tight. Perhaps he was reading her wrong.

He wanted to push her to find out.

Sera was a strong woman with no room for nonsense. In some situations, the ‘don’t mess with me’ attitude suited her best, and others, it made her look helpless.

But here, naked in the dungeon, it did the complete opposite.

He stepped closer, his leathers pressing into the back of her legs. With his right hand, he cupped her mound, allowing his thumb to brush her clit and yanked hard on the chain linked between her nipples. Her cries of ecstasy rang through the dungeon, and every Dom present turned to stare. Not that Tanner minded. They all knew that this scene was closed, and a real live example of a Daddy Dom and his little girl was in action.

There was something hot as fuck about a scene played in front of everyone at the club. It made them realize the significance of a Dom-sub relationship. There wasn’t any doubt, whether others believed in the dynamic or not, seeing his girl under such control, her blatant acquiescence to his power sent shivers of pride and possessiveness racing through Tanner.

He stroked her tenderly, just a brushing caress over the sensitive nub, as he trailed kisses over her ear.

“Let me see that pretty pink bud of yours.” With his finger, he tugged the clit clamp gently, which brought out a wail, but still didn’t dislodge the clip. “How does it feel, Babygirl?”

She struggled for words, but it came out choked as he palpated her tender clitoris.

“Numb... at first, but it aches, Master Thor. The pain isn’t piercing. It’s a pulsing throb.” She smiled bravely.

“Keep it right there, little one. You have thirty seconds.” He continued to play with her pussy while watching her squirm, waiting for her reaction to the burning stretch. “What’s your favorite part, my pet?” he asked with a smugness to his voice, indicating he already knew. “Is it the pulsating throb? Does the pulsing ache, the nip and the sting make your pussy purr?”

Her cries turned shrill as he once again yanked on the nipple chain.

“Ah, so fucking hot.” His body hummed with adrenaline as he slipped a finger past the clamp between her legs.

The sensation of her throbbing heartbeat around his finger and the memory of how aroused Sera would get by being naughty for him was everything. She would writhe and grind her crotch on his fingers or crook her knee against his crotch in search of release when he teased her mercilessly.

To take it to the next level, Tanner stood next to her head and stroked his cock. Slowly. He closed his eyes. Her tortured gasp brought him back with a jolt. His shaft was so hot, ready. It made him want to whip her and fuck her, so he could see that fear and the desire mingle in her eyes.

“Your clamp, my pet.” His words were guttural, lust filled. His fingers gently pried hers off the clamps. She cried



out and wriggled, her mouth round, her breasts pressed together as he pulled the chain as far as it would go.

“Owww, fuck,” she cried, her face contracted in pleasure-pain.

The abused flesh of her labia and clit had begun to redden. He pressed a finger into her swollen lips, dipping and teasing her cunt. Shiny fluid gathered between her pinkness, wet and silky. Her juices ran down his knuckles, proof positive his kitty liked the clips on her tits, and her body knew it, too.

He wiggled the chain, watching her, then with short, rough jerks, he yanked the clips from her nipples.

“Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!” Her squeak of shock became a hoarse gasp, then a strangled scream.

For a moment, he just watched, the view of her pleasure-pain sending his pulse soaring. He was enchanted by the sweat on her skin, the intensity with which she clung to the bench, and how her lips turned lax as the burn faded.

All of it filled his head. His stomach coiled tighter as she absorbed the bite into her flesh. He stroked his aching cock in an iron grip.

“Fuck, Babygirl, you’re so hot,” he hissed and smiled when her buttocks rose high as she wiggled her hips invitingly.

“Oh yes. Ride it, pet.” He sank a hand into her hair as he watched her press her clamped clit against the table’s edge.



Sera moaned. It was erotic, feeling a man take control and use her without her input. God, it felt good to let go, not just on the outside, but deep within her, the ache to break free of herself.

Warm air moved from her lips to his skin. Her chest rose and fell rapidly.

“I like how the clips make your skin look. Hot.”

“Master Thor...”

His response was swift and authoritative. “Quiet.” The scene was rolling now. Her cheeks started to burn as the hum of spectators registered. Everyone had watched her get her ass beat and witnessed the pleasure she experienced from the burning pain of the clamps.

She had squirmed under his palm, not in embarrassment, but with rising lust.

“Turn around.”

“Thank you, Daddy,” she whispered. “It was incredible.”

“You’re welcome, my darling pet, but it’s far from over. Look at the Doms watching your sweet ass with hungry eyes. I bet they’d love to have a taste.”

Her eyes widened. “What are you saying?”

“Where I belong is the top. I decide what pleasure your body needs. Understand that I want to be your protector, not just your dominator,” Tanner said softly, willing his breathing under control as he unzipped his belt, letting his cock free in a perpendicular arch. It wasn’t long before his thick length stood to attention.

Licking her lips, Sera gently and slowly lowered his leathers as she sank to her knees. “I understand, Master Thor. Your pleasure is mine. My pleasure belongs to you. There is no room for confusion.” She flicked her tongue out and licked his tip, exulting in his groan as she teased his length with teasing lashes before taking him inside her mouth, pushing and squeezing as she swallowed him down her throat.

“Your mouth is wonderful,” he managed. “And fuck, if you keep going, you’ll definitely swallow every drop.”

Her breath steamed, moist and hot, when she found her rhythm, one that worked for him and her, too. Her tongue danced on the tip of him, flicking over his sensitive spot as her other hand cradled his balls, weighing, stroking. She smiled around him, closing her eyes as the suction increased.

It made her hotter, deeper, tighter. She whimpered as Tanner braced himself when she flicked her tongue over the rim. Pleasure exploded inside her as she watched him tumbling over the precipice and into pure bliss.

“Swallow, little girl. Every last fucking drop,” he growled as he ejaculated, filling her mouth with his essence.

When he stopped spurting, she looked up. “Did you enjoy that, Daddy?”

“It was a-fucking-mazing.” Tanner wrapped his arm around her neck and hugged her fiercely. “I can’t seem to get enough of you,” he rasped, his hand stealing between her legs.

Sera gasped at the sensual pleasure his fingertips stroked inside her. Her hips rolled as her head lifted higher.

“Ouch!” She raised her arm over the crook of her neck, and pushed on her breasts, an automatic reaction when his stubble rubbed the bruising tips, leaving red welts across them.

Tanner ignored her as he pushed her onto the bench, spread her legs wide and with one hard thrust, plunged into her very core.

“Come on, little S.”

She whimpered as he ruthlessly fisted his hand in her hair, pulling it roughly while he nibbled and bit the delicate flesh as he pulled his cock out of her hot body.

“Give me those delicious fucking nipples, and play with my cock, slut.”

With a frustrated grunt, Sera replaced his hand with her own. She twisted, the light pressure of her fingers painfully pleasurable on his crown and along the hard shaft.

“Gaawd,” she cried out as he once again pushed his hard length into her. The force of his thrust was almost too much for her when his rough possession slammed her into the bench. His lips sucked hard on her sensitive nipples, spiking her lust higher.

“Aaah. Sorry, Babygirl, but Daddy needs to bury himself inside you. So deep, you won’t know where I end, and you begin.”

Sera clenched tightly, her muscles teasing the length of his shaft with all her might. Her moans mingled with his, surprised at how responsive her pussy was. She writhed on top of the table with his thick, rock-hard cock plunged to the hilt.

“Play with Daddy’s balls.”

He cursed as the sac of his balls brushed against her fingertips. With a primal growl, he pressed himself deeper, grinding and pounding into her.

“Fucking hell,” Tanner grunted as the table crashed to the floor, and he landed atop Sera. Ignoring the laughing and applauding crowd, he remained lodged inside her and didn’t stop his primal possession of her.



Sera moaned in exasperation when he teased her before thrusting with long, deep, controlled strokes. Unable to lie still, she mewled and bucked when his rigid length lodged again. She was on the edge, and he kept her there. Over and over.

“I need to come. Please, Daddy!”

Tanner grunted. His shaft thickened even more, throbbed even faster inside her, setting her aflame. Sera wrapped her thighs tighter around his waist and pushed upward.

“More,” she demanded. “Give me more.” She moved again to accommodate him deeper, faster, harder, moaning louder, whispering, pleading. His need for control faltered when her pussy accepted every inch of his thickness with each successive, agonizing thrust.

“Harder! I want the pain... the pleasure... the searing heat of you, Daddy,” she begged in a hoarse cry.

His fingers on her clit tugged, circled, and pinched with one goal—to bring her to the edge. She began to pant, and when she thrashed and bucked, his muscles clenched. A thunderous roar rippled in the back of his throat. Sera writhed, choking, groaning, screaming.

“Yes! God, yes!” Her lips trembled as a powerful orgasm rushed her to the top and pushed her over. The intensity of her climax yanked him right along with her as he also succumbed to the rush of pleasure.

For long moments, all she could do was cling to him, struggling to find her breath. Her emotions were floundering, threatening to drown her with waves of insecurities and yearnings she knew she could never give in to. This wasn't real.

It could never be real. Not with their history. Not with the secret she kept locked so deep inside of her.

Sera wanted to tear out of his grasp as the thought crossed her mind. That was the ultimate conundrum she was faced with. Yet the truth she couldn't deny was that this was what she had been searching for all her life. Her inner submissive craved the perfect Daddy Dominant who would always care for her and give her his best.

Now that it was within her grasp, it broke her heart that she could never have it.



Tanner had waited his entire life to find the right woman to share a special connection with and to guide her into the joy of learning to submit.

But Sera was different—so strong and beautiful, yet vulnerable and wanting. It was a potent combination. There was goodness and a quiet strength in her that drew Tanner, the way water attracted the thirsty and the dying.

This woman was going to make the ideal wife and mother to her children.

Tanner wanted to have both.

As a man, a Dom, and as Sera's daddy.

# Chapter Twelve



*State Senate Government Office, Tallahassee, Florida State Capitol...*

Senator Hank Brinkman wasn't a happy man. Until recently, his voice had carried the most weight during their Senate sittings. He was the one everyone looked to when deciding new state laws. No debate. No discussion. Done and dusted. Of late, before any decision was reached or a consensus agreed upon, one question was always asked... "What would U.S. Senator Tanner Wilde do in a situation such as this?"

Ever since the younger man had been elected, every state across the country sang his praises. It irritated the shit out of Brinkman. It wasn't as though Wilde had any say in their state legislation or could wield any power over any of them, but they all seem to think he's God's gift to all that's good and powerful in the U.S. Senate. What he said, they all wanted to follow, whether it was the right approach for their state or not.

"One would swear the bastard was hand-picked by POTUS," he grumbled as he bit into the scrumptious chocolate croissant—the third one he was gobbling down in less than ten minutes. The delicacy was his daily energy source when he arrived at the office. It didn't bother him that his secretary had to leave home before six in the morning, travel across town to his favorite bakery, and pick up his treat. As long as it waited for him, fresh and hot, on his desk when he walked in, he was happy... and her job safe.

"And the fuckface caused me to lose millions. For that, he's gonna pay. I will get my money's worth, even if it's only

in a pound of flesh.” Brinkman had a tendency to talk to himself. An age-old habit that had started when he was a kid when he used repetition out loud as a study method. Over the years, his own voice had become his most trusted companion when he was strategizing.

A deep frown drew his brows together. No one knew how the FBI had found out about the banking scheme. Someone on the inside must have ratted them out. How else would Wilde have known what they were planning?

“Exactly! I’d love to know how he found out about the Golden Wizards and that Jock Abrams was even involved with them.” He guzzled down the last of the chocolate pastry. “It’s time to start some digging of my own. Sanchigo is so focused on making Wilde and the Frazers pay, he’s lost sight of the fact we have a mole in our organization. One I’m relatively sure wasn’t caught when the banking scheme went bust. Perhaps it’s time to visit a good friend in prison.”

The chair creaked as he leaned his oversized body forward to press the speaker button on his phone. “Ms. Scott, please arrange a helicopter. I need to get to Tallahassee FCI... ASAP.”

FCI Tallahassee was located only three miles east of downtown Tallahassee, so he could easily go by car, but he preferred to make use of the benefits his position as senator granted him.

“The Federal Correctional prison?” Willa Scott was a fifty-two-year-old grandmother who took her job seriously, which included worrying over her boss’ safety. “Should I arrange bodyguards?”

“It’s a goodwill trip, so I don’t expect any trouble.”

“Either way, you know my philosophy, Senator. Rather be safe than sorry. You never know what could happen. Don’t forget the 2006 shooting incident at that prison. No one expected it to happen at the time, either.”



Brinkman smiled indulgently. It was no use snapping at her, especially since she meant good.

“That was a long time ago, Ms. Scott. Also, ever since then metal detector screening and bag searches of guards coming to work have been implemented and still enforced today.”

The unfortunate shooting and killing of an FBI agent and a penal correctional facility guard resulted when the FBI and Inspector General agents of the DOJ attempted to arrest six correctional officers. They were identified during a corruption investigation into correctional officers trading drugs and other contraband for sex with female inmates.

“No matter. I will ensure you have a protection detail waiting for you at the helipad.”



*Federal Correctional Institution, Tallahassee...*

Jessica Hewitt, ex Washington State Attorney General, winced as she recognized him when she was escorted into the interview room. Since the prison was low security, she wasn't cuffed or chained.

Brinkman waved toward the chair opposite of him. “Please sit down, Miss Hewitt, or am I supposed to call you,”—he peered at the number printed on the bright orange coverall—“Prisoner 77824 now?”

“Fuck off, Brinkman.”

“Now, is that a way to greet an old friend and colleague?”

“We were never friends, you asshole. What do you want?”

“Isn't it amazing how the mighty have fallen?” Brinkman leaned back. He grunted at the discomfort of the small chair. “I always find it amusing to see how someone

who used to be so meticulous with her appearance turns into a slob.” He smirked. “Prison life must be hard, I imagine.”

He prodded his memory for more details. Jessica Hewitt was a forty-something redhead. Feisty, beautiful, and super intelligent. Even prison life couldn't diminish those characteristics. Over her entire career, she had stringently followed the straight and narrow path. That she had turned corrupt and joined the Golden Wizards had been a surprise. If not for the value she added to the top rung of the group at the time, he would have opposed her appointment.

“Either get to the point, or I'm leaving,” she sneered. “You're wasting my time.”

“Of course, and you have so little to spare.” He laughed at her expression. “Very well.” His face morphed into seriousness. He had to tread carefully. Hewitt didn't know of his involvement with the Golden Wizards in the past or present, for that matter. His association had always been as a silent partner, and he had only dealt directly with Salvatore Sanchigo. Letting the cat out of the bag could be detrimental for him.

There was a desperation in Jessica's eyes that warned him off. She wanted out of prison and would use anything at her disposal to do so. He had no intention of swapping places with her. Not now, not ever.

His mind spun as he searched for the right route to take. Straightening his shoulders, he locked eyes with her.

“I'm involved with the commission investigating the banking fraud you were incarcerated for... and your involvement with the Golden Wizards, of course.”

“There's nothing I can tell you that I haven't told the investigating officers over and over again. If you want to know what I said, read the fucking transcripts.”

“See, that's where I disagree. I don't believe you told them everything. For one thing, how did the FBI find out what

you and Ben Whitmore were involved in? How did they even know of the existence of the Wizards?”

“Oh, for fuck’s sake. They received an anonymous tip.”

“Hmm, and none of you ever wondered where that tip came from? I mean, for someone to give the tip, they must have had concrete knowledge of what was going on, right?” His eyes sharpened as she looked away from him to glance to the upper right corner of the room—a signal of deceit or that she was grasping at a lie to spit at him. He chose to push ahead. “Don’t tell me it never came to mind that there was a mole in your organization—The Golden Wizards?”

“This is harassment. I have nothing more to say, Brinkman. I wasn’t a fucking leader of the group or the entire fiasco. I was as much a victim as the other fifty-odd people stuffed in jail cells all over the country for that fuckup. We believed the promises made by Sanchigo and Abrams of riches beyond our imagination.” She spread her arms wide. “And look where that got me.”

“Yeah, not ideal, I imagine.” The chair groaned in protest as Brinkman leaned his behemoth frame back and stretched out his legs. “Come now, Jessica. Give me something. Surely, you would rather spend growing old somewhere in the Caribbean than looking at the world through steel bars?”

“What do you mean?”

“Give me intel that would lead me to the mole, and I’ll make sure you are exonerated of all charges against you.”

“Pretty promises.” Jessica leaned forward, her eyes spitting venom. “If there’s one thing I learned in the world of power and politics, it’s never to trust a politician. All you’re interested in is pushing your polls up.”

“Granted, but I have proven to be one of the trusted senators over the years. I come with a clean record. All I’m

interested in is to stop another attempt at fucking up our country's economy.”

“Are you saying... hold on. Not everyone was caught. Is that what you're saying? Apart from Sanchigo, who I know got away, you're implying that there are others involved we didn't know about?”

“Investigations point to that, yes.” He forced an earnest expression to scroll over his face. “I know you fucked up, Jessica, but I have followed your career for years. I'm sure getting involved with the GW group was just a momentary weakness, a relapse caused by some trauma that directed you on the wrong path. Help me set right that wrong. You don't belong here. You know that as well as I do.”

“What guarantee do I have that you will have me exonerated?”

Glee exploded inside Brinkman, but none of that showed on his face.

“I have a reputation to uphold. One I'm very proud of. When I make a promise, I always honor it.”

“Even to a jailbird like me?”

“Even then.”

“Why are you so interested in this? It's not as though anyone in the Florida State Senate was involved. At least not as far as I'm aware.”

“Exactly. None of us know for sure. I want to keep my state clean, which is why I offered to be part of the investigation commission. If I can get to the mole, we can ensure that there are no Golden Wizards lurking around just waiting to strike again.”

“You might not like what I have to say.”

Excitement surged through Brinkman. Instinct had led him to Jessica Hewitt. Now, he would know who fucked him over. The wheel always turned, and for whoever the bastard was, the axle on his was about to crumble.

“I assure you, learning the identities of everyone who was involved in the first fiasco tore me in half. At this point, I doubt if anything would shock me.” He folded his arms over his chest, resting them on his bulging stomach. “I’m listening.”

“No. I’m not saying a word until I have a written exoneration from the Chief Judge, signed, sealed, and handed to me. I was fucked over once. It’s not happening again.”

“Jesus Christ, Jessica! You’re wasting time. Don’t you realize how important it is to catch that motherfucker? I made a promise and…” Brinkman realized his relay was falling on deaf ears. Ex-Attorney General Jessica Hewitt was too clever to fall for pretty words.

“Very well. I’ll be back in the morning.” His gaze turned glacial as he heaved his body forward to stand up. “I’m warning you, Jessica. Have your facts straight. If I find out you’re lying to me, I’ll make sure you’re transferred to a hellhole in Russia to live out your sentence.”

Brinkman stomped off, highly annoyed but secretly elated. He might not walk away today with the information he was after, but by tomorrow, he would have all the ammunition he needed to unseat Salvatore Sanchigo from the top-dog rung of the Golden Wizards. He was on friendly terms with the Chief Judge, and he would ensure he gave him more than enough proof to exonerate Jessica.

Once he got rid of the mole, every one of the revived Golden Wizard group would be too happy to crown him king as the one who ensured all their future endeavors would be successful and watch the money roll in.

Finally, he would have power. Not only as a state senator, but as a lord of the white-collar criminal world. A world that would ensure he would be set for life.

“Yes. Money will never be a problem for me. I’ll be able to retire in less than five years and live a life of luxury.”

If Jessica Hewitt knew what was good for her, she better not lie to him. He had enough contacts to make her remaining years a living hell... before he got rid of her for good.

Loose ends never bode well for someone playing on both sides of the fence.

“At least it was the one good thing I learned from Sanchigo.”

# Chapter Thirteen



*Mayan King Ranch, Santa Cruz, Belize...*

“Chiara Sanchigo. Chiara Sanchigo. CHIARA SANCHIGO!” The young voice rose with every uttering of the name. No matter how many times she said it, she couldn’t get used to it. In fact, she hated it more and more with each passing day.

Driven by fear that soon there would be nothing left of the young girl she used to be, Rose Martens, she refused to accept the name as her own. Of course, only in her mind. She didn’t dare say anything to her hated and newly adopted father.

“And I abhor this white hair!” Her voice sounded strained as she pulled at the short ends that kissed the collar of her sleep shirt. Gone were her long blond tresses—the color of the early morning sun, her mother used to say.

Chiara clung to visions of her adoptive parents, terrified if she didn’t, Sanchigo would obliterate every memory she had of her prior life. Suspicions that somehow, he was involved in their deaths kept gnawing in her mind.

“Oh, God!” She forced down a cry pressing its way up through her chest. It was probably true, but she couldn’t risk his displeasure. He demanded absolute obedience from her, and she had no choice but to comply. Not since she had witnessed firsthand just how cruel and inhumane he truly was.

With a sigh of defeat, she turned away from the mirror and stared listlessly around the room. Like with everything in the villa, this one was luxurious and opulent. Decorated in an earthy shade of white, the room had an almost clinical feel to

it. In an act of defiance, when Bulldog had taken her shopping a week ago, she had purchased bright purple and green scatter cushions and lamps to brighten up the room.

However, since her room was guarded 24/7, she had to keep her door shut, and the only ones who got to enjoy her efforts were the cleaning staff.

It was obvious Sanchigo knew nothing of a teenager's needs and wants. Not that she cared. The less she was forced to be in his presence, the better.

“Damn, my arms hurt,” she muttered as she sat down on the bed and rubbed her muscles. The past few weeks were spent training. Gruesome runs and exercises were forced on her by Sanchigo and executed by his trusted bodyguards. The last five days had been the worst. Forcing her to become lean, trim, and super fit wasn't enough. No, now she had to learn to fight with a knife. At first, she refused. Her fingers sought out the scab on her cheek. Defiance that had ended in pain and humiliation.

“Never again,” she promised herself, although even thinking that had her head shaking with a silent denial. “It's no use fighting what he wants... not if I want to live.”

A hard knock on the door shattered her introspection. She glanced at her watch. It was late—almost midnight, and she should've been asleep long ago, which posed the question of who would be bothering her this late. She was tempted to ignore it and pretend to be asleep, but another insistent knock warned her that she was testing the patience of whoever was on the other side of the door.

“I'm trying to sleep,” she called out. “Go away!”

“Get dressed. Your father wants to see you.” Bulldog's guttural voice caused her to cringe. It never boded well for her when he was sent to fetch her.

“It's in the middle of the night,” she protested. “Can't it wait until morning?”



“If you’re not out of this door in five minutes, I’m coming in. Do as you are told.”

Chiara’s shoulders dropped. “Okay, I’ll be down. You can go.”

“Don’t make me come back, little chit. I’m not in a good mood,” Bulldog warned.

She waited for the sound of his footsteps to fade as he walked away. After a moment’s delay, she got up and dressed in a pair of black yoga pants and a T-shirt with white sneakers. It was unlikely Salvitore would even notice what she was wearing, as his gaze was always locked on the sparkling red ruby ring he had given her on the night of the clandestine meeting with Brinkman. According to him, it represented a symbolic acceptance of her familial position. She hated the piece of jewelry as much as she did the man who gave it to her. It was ostentatious and made her feel like a fraud.

“Oh, Mom, I miss you so much,” she whimpered. For her fifteenth birthday, Chiara’s adoptive mother had given her a white gold bracelet, with fifteen charms that represented some of Chiara’s favorite things. Tears filled her eyes as she brushed her fingers over her wrist. It wasn’t there. Nothing of her old life existed anymore. The day she arrived on this island, was the day Salvitore tore everything she had of value from her old life from her, even the treasured bracelet.

“Stop your sniffing, Chiara Sanchigo,” she sneered the name. “You know it will achieve nothing!”

Angrily, she wiped off the tears and tried to find comfort in the one item that remained. Her finger circled the spot through the yoga pants. A ring of small roses tattooed on her hip, but its significance was forever gone—she was her parents’ little rosebud no more. She shook the sorrow away as she opened the door. Being angry helped to chase it away, for a time at least.

In the dim light of the hallway, she looked up into the vacant eyes of one of Sanchigo’s minions. From experience,

she knew there was little hope of having a conversation with him.

“Where to?” She sounded lethargic.

He raised his burly arm and indicated the staircase. They walked in silence while she braced herself for a confrontation, knowing it wouldn't end well, it never did, especially not at this time of night.

By the time her escort stopped in front of an opulent carved wooden door and announced her arrival, her hands trembled inside her pockets. A cold sweat broke out all over her body. With a formal bow, the guard stepped aside and opened the door.

Chiara hesitated at the threshold. She curled her hands tighter inside her pockets until her nails bit into the tender flesh of her palms. Like always, when she was about to face the mighty mafia don, her confidence left her.

“Father,” her voice faltered as Sanchigo raised his head, taking stock of her trembling limbs before dismissing the guard.

“Bulldog tells me you were slacking in your training this afternoon.”

Chiara's jaw went slack, but she didn't bother defending herself. Even the strongest grown man would have become weary. After two hours of exercise, she was about to pass out from fatigue. Still, it hadn't been the end. Bulldog forced another hour of knife training on her. Gruelingly wielding a knife that she had to fight like a lunatic to keep from being cut.

She shivered under the Don's intense scrutiny but refused to lower her gaze. It was the one thing she had learned early on, not to give him reasons to belittle her.

“Come,” he said as he got up and headed out the door. Chiara's heart sank as he guided her toward the training room in the basement.

Her legs grew heavier with every step. By the time he swung the door open and stood aside to allow her entry, she struggled to drag her feet inside. Bulldog was already there, waiting in the center of the room with his large hunting knife clutched in his huge paw.

“This will be the last training session for today,” the Don said as his unfeeling gaze raked her face.

“Let’s get started, little chit.” Bulldog waved the knife at her.

“NO,” she said with a shudder. “I’m tired. My muscles are sore. I can’t— Oww!” Her protest ended in a scream as Sanchigo backhanded her.

“You will do as you’re told. Now either take that knife on the table or Bulldog will start cutting that pretty little face of yours.”

Stunned, Chiara reached for the blade, then stopped. She looked up at Sanchigo through tear-filled eyes.

“Please, Father. I’m too tired,” she pleaded, hoping he’d see reason, although his expression didn’t bode well. Her head was shaking, desperately fighting the panic that was clawing at her mind. As tired as she was, it was a given that she wouldn’t be able to ward Bulldog off. She was sure to get hurt tonight, one way or another.

“Now, Chiara. Here and now!”

For the first time, she felt pure hate flow through her veins. Her eyes snapped at him, flashing with emotion. “What kind of monster forces his child to do this?”

His eyes grew dark with irritation. “Because you are now MY child, you will do as I say. The days of manipulating your parents are over. Big eyes and tears don’t work on me. The only way you will earn my respect is by proving you have earned the name Sanchigo.”

She stepped up and picked up the knife before facing Bulldog, “Don’t cut me.” Her eyes pleaded for his mercy.

The door opened, and Salvitore welcomed someone else to the room. She caught the eye of the newcomer—a tall black male. He wasn't one of the usual guards and was a strong, well-built, handsome young man. Her eyes caught the cold blue eyes of her father, which were locked onto hers, making a wave of shock spread throughout her body.

“Who... who is this?”

“Shut up,” Salvitore sneered with frustration. “We'll introduce you when you are done. Train now!” His voice was becoming harsher.

Shoulders bent in defeat, she picked up the blade and stepped closer to Bulldog, watching him wearily. He was obviously annoyed that he was kept awake and would surely take it out on her. The sharpness of his blade reflected in the light above. A shiver trailed down her spine as she spread her feet and took the fighter's stance.

The moment his huge body rushed toward her, Chiara lifted the blade to protect her face and stumbled back to avoid a strike that would have blinded her. It didn't deter him from his intention to teach her the importance of having her own knife trained on him at all times.

“Shit, Bulldog. You almost took my eye out,” she panted as she jumped out of reach.

Bulldog growled menacingly, watching her. Was Sanchigo tired of his game? Did he want her to die? Would the next slash slice her throat or jugular?

“No, little chit,” Bulldog growled. “But the sooner you realize that the life of a mafia don's daughter isn't an idyllic dream, the better. Out there, you will always have a target on your back, and I won't be around to save the day. Now stop being such a pussy, and fight!”

In that moment, Chiara was pushed further from her previous dreams of finding true love when she grew up—not with people around who would as soon slice her throat than treat her kindly.

The next slash came from her, as she concentrated on what he had taught her.

“That’s much better, but you’re still too slow. C’mon, let’s see what you’ve got,” Bulldog taunted her as he attacked with renewed vigor.

The blade in her hands became a blur as she matched him with a slash, a feint, and a quick swipe to defend. When his blade sliced through skin and muscle at the top of her left shoulder, Bulldog praised, “Well done.”

But Chiara had reached the end of her endurance. She fell to her knees, covering the cut with her hand. Tears rolled over her cheeks as she watched the blood cipher through her fingers. The burn of the cut felt like a live wire sparking against her skin.

“Stop your caterwauling,” Sanchigo bellowed. “Bulldog, continue. Either she fights, or she’s going to end up in the hospital. It’s time you realized your prissy little life is over. You’re a Sanchigo now, and by God, you will start acting like one!”

His words echoed in her ears, sending waves of fear rushing through her heart. No matter how much she kicked against the path destiny was taking her on, she had no choice. She would have to play the part he was forcing on her until such a time she found a way to escape him. For now, it would be in her best interest to learn to fight as best she could.

Sanchigo was right. Her prissy little life was over. If she ever wanted to have control over her own fate, she needed to become someone else—the kind of person he wanted her to be.

She looked up. Bulldog stood unmoved, his body as hard as the rock walls surrounding her.

With a furious cry, she wiped away the tears, got to her feet, and grabbed the knife. Before she was in position, he came for her again. Instead of jumping to safety, she parried his strikes with increasing speed.

“That’s more like it,” Bulldog murmured as he continued to fuel her anger with quicker slashes. Soon, her shirt was in shreds and blooming red from the little nicks all over her torso.

“That’s much better, but it’s enough for now. You’re bleeding. Truthfully, I’m quite impressed with your ability to wield a knife when pressure is on you to perform. It speaks of strength and character,” Salvitore said as he waved them both closer.

Chiara sensed his satisfaction as a lazy smile spread over his lips.

“Continue like that, and you’ll prove you’re worthy of wearing the Sanchigo name. Come, I’ll make the official introduction.”

The newcomer watched her with unwavering regard. For the first time, she noticed the same cruel glint in his eyes as the one always present in Sanchigo’s.

“This is Luc Delaware. Your future husband.”

Her future husband? She was fifteen years old, for God’s sake! She stared at Sanchigo wide-eyed. If possible, her whole body felt even colder as she became aware of her T-shirt plastering to her body with the blood flowing freely from the nicks. Bile formed in her throat, and she wanted to be sick. Trembling, her eyes darted from Bulldog to the man called Luc Delaware, and then back to Salvitore. “Wh-What do you mean?”

“Stop questioning me!” She felt the blow coming before it hit. It was so hard, she catapulted sideways and her face was smashed against her Bulldog’s chest. Sanchigo squeezed her shoulder, making the pain sear like fire, causing the wound to gush open.

“Just what I said. Now, be a good, little girl, find your caretaker so she can dress your wounds, then go to sleep.”

Chiara walked out of the training room as if in a daze. Just when she thought she had figured out how to deal with

her fucked-up new life, Sanchigo pierced her soul with another poisoned arrow.



A sinister smile wrapped around Sanchigo's lips as he watched Bulldog escort young Luc Delaware to his room.

He was training the ultimate weapon to stop the FBI, CIA, and the DEA from interfering in his business. But the failed banking scheme had taught Sanchigo a valuable lesson. Never go into battle without a foolproof backup plan—Luc Delaware was it.

Young and rebellious against a military father who had been pushing him into a box his entire life, at twenty-eight years of age, Luc was keen to show the world his worth. Sanchigo, of course, knew just how to benefit from his desire to get out from under his father's rule. Luc was key in a guaranteed plan to have the transportation law scrapped across the entire country.

“Soon, I will have free access to move my product across all American borders.” The chuckle that filled the room was as deadly as Hades' spear. “And with Luc as my son-in-law, I will have Vice President Delaware in my pocket. To keep his son alive, and the voters in his corner, he will do my bidding and become my puppet.”

It had been a very wise decision to legally adopt Rose Martens. She was the perfect addition to his family since, unlike with his own children, he didn't need his wife's permission to force her to do his bidding.

“Yes, very wise, indeed.”





# Chapter Fourteen



*The Wilde Ridge Farm, Bunkie, Louisiana...*

Sera's eyes went as wide as saucers when Tanner came through the back door into the kitchen. Her gaze was glued to the ominous-looking bullwhip in his hand.

“Morning, Babygirl.”

It was with difficulty that she kept her feet planted firmly on the floor and did not turn tail and run when he caught her around the waist for a lusty kiss.

“You were sleeping so soundly, I didn't want to wake you when I left earlier.”

“Where did you... ahem...” She cleared her throat with another dubious glance at the whip. She had felt the cut of his belt and the scorching sting of his palm, but a whip? No fucking way would she be able to withstand that!

“Where were you?”

“There was a problem with an overzealous bull. Nothing brings him out of his lustful haze quicker than the snap of a whip.” The corners of his mouth began to curl as he once again caught her eyes drawn to the bullwhip. “You seem fascinated with my whip. Care to feel its nip?”

“Er... hell no!” Sera quickly pulled out of his embrace and picked up the cup of coffee she had just made. She held it in front of her like a shield, as if she would be able to hold him off.

Her nervous reaction caused a spark of desire to flash in his eyes. She should know by now that there was nothing as entertaining as a Babygirl attempting to avoid her Daddy's ardor... or in this case, torment.

She swallowed convulsively.

*Dear God... just look at him! So self-assured and so fucking sexy.* Her mouth was getting drier by the second at the look he was giving her.

After he watched her squirm for a few seconds more he set the whip down and crossed his arms.

“Coffee this early in the morning? Did you even have dinner when I was late coming home last night?”

“No. Well, yes, ahem, I ate dinner but not breakfast...”

Tanner reached into the breadbox and took a knife to the bread before dropping four slices in the toaster.

“Fruit, toast, eggs with a large helping of bacon, and a glass of orange juice should get you going.”

“Need I remind you that I'm not a big eater this early in the morning?”

“A healthy breakfast is much better for you than loading yourself with gallons of caffeine.”

Sera chose not to enter that debate and brought the cup to her lips. Just then the toast popped, releasing a tasty aroma that tickled her nostrils. She sniffed appreciatively. Her coffee forgotten, she moved around the island.

“Well, maybe the fresh country air does something to one's appetite this early,” she excused herself lamely as she placed a piece of toast on a plate and slathered it with butter.

“Glad you've come to your senses,” Tanner told her, kissing her neck softly before gathering the bacon to pop it in a pan. He wiggled his eyebrows at her. “Although it would've been more fun to convince you otherwise draped over my lap with my palm heating your naked ass.”

Her face flushed as she felt the blood drain to the junction between her legs. In an effort to regain her composure, she took a large gulp of coffee in hopes of quenching the heat flaring in her cheeks.

The chuckle filling the kitchen was testimony that Tanner wasn't fooled.

“Good try, little one, but I can smell your arousal, even above the aroma of the frying bacon.” He shrugged. “Although you do realize that I don't need an excuse to spank you. I can do it purely because I feel like it.”

*Holy shit!*

“I... ahm... forget it, Tanner. It's way too early for your shenanigans!” Her hands trembled as another wave of desire washed over her. Breathless, she hugged the coffee mug against her chest. “I'm just going to finish this cup outside.”

She pressed her body tightly against the fridge to stay clear of him and quickly headed to the back door, without so much as touching a finger to his muscular body.

*Good Lord! How does the man manage to make me so weak! So... so submissive. I'm a strong woman! I can kick any man's ass, yet with him...*

With him, all she wanted to do was please him. See that slow smile of appreciation and pleasure spread over his face when she did something completely out of character and... and babygirl-like. Like just now.

“Stuttering! Running away! For fuck's sake, Brookes, get a grip on yourself,” she mumbled as she sat down on a stone bench under the large oak tree outside the kitchen door.

The rustling leaves and chirping birds were the only sounds, except for the clatter behind her in the kitchen. It was soothing and somehow allowed the blood to stop pumping quite so quickly through her veins.

She had managed to drink almost half of the coffee when the screen door banged against the frame. Tanner

strolled toward her carrying a tray stacked with their breakfast and two glasses of juice.

“So, we’re eating out here, love?”

“Fresh air is good for you,” she retorted without meeting his eyes.

Tanner chuckled. “Feisty still, are we?” He tilted her face and traced the edge of her jaw. His eyes narrowed in thought as he studied her with the intensity she had discovered—and at times abhorred—as a trait that caused her stomach to flutter incessantly.

“Feisty? No. I prefer assertive,” she responded with a haughty look.

“Oh? And yet I do believe my hand on your ass might disagree.” Tanner flashed the sexy grin she so adored. “Hungry yet?” he asked as he put the tray down in front of her on the stone table. “Better eat up because you have a busy day in store for you.”

“Busy? Me?” Sera wrinkled her nose. “Doing what exactly?” She picked up a piece of crackling bacon and popped it into her mouth. “Especially since you refuse to allow me to do the job I’m here for... being your bodyguard, remember?” she groused at him, not in the least impressed by the carefree shrug of his broad shoulders.

“Let me see. Cleaning up after breakfast should top that list. I reckon my office could benefit from a good clean-up.” The twinkle in his eye could not be denied. Tanner nodded toward the chicken pen. “If there’s time, you can wash out the chicken pen.”

“Wash out the chicken...” she glowered at him and shook a finger in his direction. “If you think I’m going to slave away cleaning up after your fucking chickens, you’ve got a surprise coming. I’m not your damn slave, Tanner Wilde!”

“Funny. It would’ve been much more convincing had you not sucked my cock and swallowed my cum the night before. More so because you do it willingly and often. Your

surrender comes effortlessly, little one, and the tone of your voice speaks of how much your submissiveness means.” He sat down beside her. “I guess we need to work on making your words, actions, and meaning match.” His soft reprimand silenced the angry tirade on her tongue. “Oh, and remember to keep your voice down. Sound travels far in the silence of the country, you know.”

“It’s not my fault you’re so damn good,” she muttered through pursed lips.

He stared at her for long, drawn-out moments. Sera could feel his eyes studying her, and she tried to remain aloof. With every passing moment, though, her pulse accelerated. The heaviness settled low in her belly again. *Dammit!* Just being in his company was like foreplay to her.

“Want me to prove I can do it better again?” Tanner asked with a playful grin and winked. “Of course, after breakfast, which I insist you eat first. Here, I want you to eat at least five strips of bacon, and four slices of buttered toast.”

“Five?! Four?! Oh, for the love of...” She took a deep breath, ready to deliver another rant, when Tanner lifted his hand. She bit back on the reply.

“Didn’t we agree that we’re not going down this road? Eat, Babygirl. You’re not leaving this bench until your plate is empty.”

“We agreed on nothing. You just decided I need all this food stuffed in my body. I had a piece of toast, so I’m fine.” Sera did the unthinkable and stuck her tongue out at him.

“Put that cute tongue of yours back in your mouth unless it is to eat the bacon, kiddo... or suck my cock. Else you may have a lesson on why you should obey, not once, but twice.” His brow rose when she kept quiet and picked up her plate. “Good choice.”

Her expression turned contrite, watching Tanner stacking three pieces of bacon onto the buttered toast.

“As punishment for not accepting what is best for you,” he murmured close to her ear as he pushed it past her lips, forcing her to take a bite. The way he drew the words out and coupling them with the twitch of his full lips was pure seduction on its own.

*Oh God! If I give him any more ammunition, I'm going to be walking sideways all day long.*

Sera munched quietly, unable to stop a gasp from escaping when he circled her knee closest to him, then lifted her leg to tuck her foot in between his legs. Determination was evident in his voice.

“Good girl.”

“What are you doing?” Sera glowered at him when he pinned her leg between his. “Hey,” she protested as his hand slowly crawled over her thigh to disappear under the hem of her dress. She looked around. “There are people everywhere!”

“So? No one can see what I'm doing from that far.”

“You wouldn't dare!”

“On the contrary, a Daddy does anything necessary to take care of his Babygirl.” His fingers toyed with her chin before grasping it with his thumb and finger. He tugged gently, drawing her closer. “In order for you to have the energy for the chores ahead, you will require plenty of nourishment... and a little extra boost.”

His lips covered her mouth to swallow the carnal cry that escaped from deep within when he pushed aside her panties and thrust two fingers inside her pussy.

“Hm, it seems like somebody enjoys a little morning exercise. Lucky for you, I'm happy to oblige, isn't it, my sweet Babygirl?” His wicked chuckle wrapped itself around her senses.

She stiffened, afraid that someone might overhear. He licked the lobe of her ear before sinking his teeth lightly into the flesh.

“Feel free to keep on gasping. I find the way you breathe after the first thrust is quite exquisite.” Tanner began to manipulate his fingers inside her, stimulating every part he could reach, and before she knew it, they were dancing together with familiar ease.

“Tell me, beautiful, is Daddy’s Babygirl feeling hungry already, hm?” His head bent forward and suckled her lips. “Keep moaning as much as you desire. You’re in the safety of my arms, and nobody can hear.”

“How is that possible, Tanner? I feel,”—she shuddered in response to the expertise of his skilled digits—”so lost?”

“If your Daddy isn’t your guide, who can help you navigate through those turbulent waters in your mind?” His left hand moved between her breasts and under her bra to caress her nipples. Desire swept through her.

“Feel, love. Close your eyes, drop your walls, and feel. Give into the sensation. Stop worrying about what others might think and just experience. Feel.” His teeth bit into her bottom lip. “Does this feel good?”

“Hell yeah,” Sera gasped.

“Did that sound come out of that delectable mouth of yours?” Tanner murmured against her lips as he pinched her nipple hard, causing her to arch from the spike of pain.

“I don’t believe I know this girl. Can you describe her?” Tanner tilted her head as his mouth slid down her neck, nibbling his way across her bare skin. Lifting her dress, he felt her shiver as her nipples were exposed. “Take it off, baby, now,” he ordered huskily, tapping his fingers between her legs. “Now!”

Dazed and sensually overwhelmed, she instinctively, and without remembering that they were outside in full view of anyone watching, grabbed the edges of the summery yellow dress, lifted it above her head, and flung it to the ground.

“Very good. Your pussy seems to enjoy listening, too. It’s a shame your mind has no clue when to do the same.” His

hand appeared, glistening, right under her nose. “Smell,” he growled as he painted a line on her upper lip, her bottom, and right into her navel. Tanner pushed her flat on her back on the bench. “It smells like honey to me. Deliciously scrumptious.”

She would swear later, if anyone asked, he must’ve swallowed half a bottle of honey before licking up every drop that stained her skin.

Tanner leaned into her with a wink. “Mmmm,” the dark vibration rumbled through her. “Too bad we can’t ask your tastebuds who tastes sweeter. You or honey?” He kissed the tip of her nose before she realized that her lower half was now completely bare. She hadn’t even realized he had removed her panties.

Sera shrieked. “Oh no! No, you don’t!” Her hips twisted and squirmed as his fingers trailed around her throbbing sex. “I haven’t... you didn’t,” she puffed as her back arched, lifting her legs to push his digits deeper into her channel.

“No? I think yes is a much better word at the moment.” He gripped her hips and raised her to position the blunt tip of his cock at her entrance. Watching her intently, he plunged deep into her pussy. “Ah, Babygirl, always so wet and ready for me. Did I leave you waiting long enough, hm?”

“Ah-ye-sss. Yes, I’m so close,” Sera groaned as her inner walls gripped the hard ridges of his tumescent length.

“Touch yourself, baby. Rub your clit,” Tanner instructed.

Sera’s cheeks burned with the first blush she had ever experienced while being intimate. The word clit was definitely not used often or freely in her circles and in bed, even less.

She gasped when the pressure to move gathered speed, pushing the blood quickly to her pussy, making the throbbing unbearable. His eyes swirled with pleasure as she blindly reached for the little nub and started caressing it.



“Beautiful. You don’t need to wait for me, little one. I want to watch you cum on my dick. That’ll be my pleasure. You giving me what I want.” Tanner’s hard thrust lifted her hips clear off the bench, provoking the flame to burn brighter. “I can smell how aroused you are. See the wetness trickle down onto my sack. I told you how the fresh country air is beneficial. It gives the body so much more oxygen to enjoy the most precious thing in the world... the best orgasm.”

“Tannerr...” she hissed as the climax flashed in a rainbow of color as it exploded in her stomach like a cascading volcano of ecstasy.

“Oh, yeah, my pet. There we go. Just feel and let go. Relax. Release,” he urged. Cupping her cheeks between his hands, he pounded harder. He drowned out her loud shrieks and moans by covering her lips.

“Perfect.” His dark growl echoed in her throat as he continued the pumping motion. Thrust, pause, twist, pull back, and drive forward again. He repeated the sequence with precise accuracy, perfectly aimed at her G-spot, driving her crazy.

“Hmm, still in the clouds? Do you feel how I’ve thickened, Babygirl? How ready your Daddy is for another climax? Your body is so alive, responsive to the touch, hot... and naughty.” His grin was one of the sexiest she had seen on him yet.

“As it always will be. When you submit to your desire, give in to what makes your skin sizzle and the blood rush south of your brain, I promise you, my little one, this... this euphoria,”—he gestured with an outward wave of his hands around the area—“will continue to be ours.”

“Yes!” she managed to exclaim when the lust fog began to clear.

“And all the pleasure your Daddy can give and for some of the consequences I deem necessary for the discipline that your little backside requires.”

That one comment broke the spell, and her eyes immediately glazed over.

“Discipline?” She frowned as she shifted her bottom from side to side in memory of the fire his hard hand could cause. “Me? Awww fuck,” her head snapped back as her toes dug into the edge of the bench, unable to help herself as she succumbed to another soul-stealing climax. Trembling, she relished the pure enjoyment Tanner’s skillful cock elicited, moving to a place that turned everything inside her into a liquid mess.

“No use fighting it,” Tanner drawled as his hips joined the motion of the waves, building another climax to join hers in a stormy explosion. “My dick and I,”—he gripped his cock at the base and fucked her deep and hard—“have more discipline than a will-o’-wisp such as yourself. Face it. I won’t allow anything else.” He grasped her ankle, and the other joined it on his left shoulder.

“I will allow and demand,”—he placed his hands next to her body as he surged deep inside with a growling chuckle—“that you surrender. At all times. On all levels and to the very depths of your soul. Open up your heart and body. Lift your spirit and surrender. You know what I’m asking for, Babygirl.” He paused mid-thrust. His breathing was heavy, but the intensity in his eyes held her transfixed. “Will you? Will you surrender and give me this? All of it?”

She didn’t answer. Instead, her lips parted on a gasp when he eased in and out, rotating and pressing his engorged cock deeper, coaxing, tempting her, bringing every cell and pore to attention. Her mind began to shut down again and switch off from the demands he was making on her mind, her body, and her heart.

She responded, allowing the tiny, shimmery ray of light in the far recesses of her brain to burst forth in a frenzied blaze as Tanner once again gave her body permission to take flight into the sky.

“Surrender,” he said with the same amount of finality in his tone as before, the dominance making her shiver in trepidation. “You know you need to, my little one. Do it. Surrender,” he whispered against her lips before he covered them with a kiss so passionately demanding, there was no doubt in her mind where the soul-searing interlude had landed her.

Right at the feet of his absolute, complete, and radical authority.

Tanner Wilde, her Daddy Dom, and Master, and her future husband. Nowhere in that equation did the words fake or pretend feature.

Nowhere.

# Chapter Fifteen



*Fourteen years ago...*

*For the first time in two months, Sera had a spring in her step. Thankfully, the tour to Iraq had been a short one, but it had also been the hardest one of the few she'd been on since she joined the army and the reason she had decided to apply for a Directorate of Operations at the CIA. Even at the young age of twenty-four, she was one of the best in tactical maneuvers, and therefore drawn to go on various tours.*

*To leave her one-year-old little girl behind with her aunt had been the most harrowing thing she ever had to do. Although she initially insisted that Sera must abort the baby, she had shown a true liking for her baby niece, which was the only reason Sera had felt comfortable that she would take care of her. She drew comfort in the fact that Uncle Steve loved her and would be there to look out for her.*

*"It's definitely time to reconsider my career, especially since I don't have a husband to be there for our child when I have to go on these tours. I don't think I can keep doing this. Being without her for two months... What if I'm called on a six-month or a year tour? No, I made the right decision to join the CIA. I'm all she's got."*

*Guilt rippled over her. She didn't have a husband. Never got married or even been engaged. Her beautiful little baby girl, Savannah, didn't have a father. Well, she did, but he didn't know about her. Sera had never told him. What was the point? It had been a one-night stand, and she doubted he even remembered her. A night of hot indulgence after a party where*

*she had celebrated her twenty-second birthday with a group of friends at a club.*

*And got rip-roaring drunk for the first and last time in her life.*

*That she even remembered what had happened or how gorgeously sexy and hot the guy was surprised her. Yet she did. She recalled every touch, every caress, every kiss, and every shattering climax she had over the course of the night—not once thinking about protection, or the danger of falling pregnant.*

*Of course, her aunt had been furious that she had the audacity to fall pregnant. Even though Sera didn't live with them anymore, she was really fond of her Uncle Steve, and it shook her how disappointed he was in her when she told them. He had such high hopes for her in her military career, one he had helped her to achieve since he was the Director of the CIA. He felt having a child would hamper her opportunities.*

*Sera stood firm and against their wishes, gave birth to Savannah eight months later. Of course, Uncle Steve insisted she go and live with them. Alone, vulnerable, and afraid that she wouldn't be a good mother, she gave in and moved in with them. It went well... at first. Her aunt had kept her distance as much as possible. She never let an opportunity pass to let Sera know how she had humiliated them in the community and jeopardized her uncle's reputation at the CIA and his chances at running for president one day. Lately, Sera wasn't so sure her aunt wanted her and Savannah there anymore. They were having large parties at home, setting the path to Uncle Steve running for Office.*

*Perhaps it was time to find their own place. She knew she could take care of Savannah and that she was a good mother. She didn't need her aunt and uncle to hold her hand anymore.*

*With a smile on her face, she walked through the front door, calling out brightly, "Hi everyone, I'm home!"*

*Silence folded around her like a heavy cloak as soon as the echo of her voice dissipated. She felt it... the emptiness, the loss.*

“No! No, no, no! Savannah!” Sera’s legs moved restlessly on the bed as the dream kept her captive like the tentacles of an octopus.

*With her heart beating rapidly, she called out her uncle and aunt’s names as she raced up the stairs toward Savannah’s bedroom.*

*“Where is everyone? Uncle Steve! Oh, God. NO! NO!”*

*Sera’s legs gave way, and she fell to her knees as she ran into Savannah’s bedroom... except there was no sign of it ever being a little baby girl’s room. The pink curtains with unicorns were gone. The wall painting of a mystic forest with unicorns, bunnies, and bees was no more. The walls were painted a stark white. A large four-poster bed dominated the room, covered in a dark green comforter.*

*“Savannah! Oh, God! Where is my baby?”*

*“Stop that godawful noise, Sera. You’re giving me a headache.”*

*Sera scrambled to her feet. “Where is she, Aunt Pat? Where is my little girl?”*

*“You must be hallucinating, Sera. You never had the baby, remember? You had an abortion.”*

*“No, I didn’t.” Sera shook her head, her hands trembling as she covered her mouth. Fear tightened around her heart like a vice. “Savannah just turned a year the week before I left. We had a birthday party for her in the garden.”*

*“Oh, your poor child. It seems your mind is scrambled. Your uncle did tell me it was a rather vicious tour. Come, I think you should lie down.”*

*“NO! I want my child! Where is my baby? Tell me, damn you!”*

*“Sera, that’s enough.”*

*“Uncle Steve, thank God,” she cried as she clung to him. “Where is Savannah? Please, please tell me where my baby is.”*

*“Oh, my dear, dear child,” he murmured as he brushed his hand over her hair. “You never had the baby, Sera. You aborted it, just as your aunt said.”*

“No! How can you say that? No! No! No! What have you done to her? I want her back! Tell me where she is!”

“Wake up, Babygirl. C’mon, little one, wake up. You’re having a nightmare.” Tanner’s warm arms wrapped around her and held her tenderly against his hard body. “Shh, it’s okay, Sera. I’ve got you.”

“They gave her away.”

Her voice sounded desolate and lost in the darkness of the room. It was the first time in years she had the dream. The pain, hurt, and loss never went away, but over time, Sera had learned to lock them away in her heart. That Aunt Pat was ruthless enough to give her child away she could accept, but the deceit of a beloved uncle broke her soul.

“I’ll never forgive them. Never.”

“I’m here, Babygirl,” Tanner crooned in her ear. “You don’t need to tell me anything, but when you’re ready, I’ll listen.”

“I never told anyone about it. Not after I realized they had turned an entire community against me. Every single one in the suburb played along. They made me believe...” A dry sob rocked her body. “They made me believe I was crazy and that I never had a child. God, I came so close to losing my mind.”

“Who are you talking about, Sera?”

“My aunt and uncle. I went to live with them after my mother died when I was ten years old. It wasn’t an easy life. My aunt... all that mattered to her, or rather still matters, is

prestige and money. I adored my uncle, but he never opposed any decision she made. I was locked in a hellhole of her making. It was little wonder that I chose to join the military, then the CIA. I couldn't wait to get out from under their rule." She trembled as the memories of her life came flashing back.

"Then I did something stupid. I fell pregnant. She was livid and demanded I have an abortion. I refused. When Savannah was born, they insisted I come back home so they could help me raise her. I was alone, vulnerable, and scared, so I went." Another shudder.

"I thought they loved her. They had me fooled. God, did they have me fooled. Before her birth, I had transferred to a non-operative position in the army—a desk job. I wasn't supposed to go on tours anymore. When I was drawn, I tried to get out of it but was denied. I only found out afterward that my uncle set it up."

She went quiet for a long moment, forcing her troubled mind to calm down.

"When I returned two months later, Savannah was gone."

"Savannah, your baby?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean gone?"

Haltingly, she told him the cruel twist fate had played on her. Tears ran down her cheeks, glistening in the moonlight as she relived the nightmare she just had.

"They gave her up for adoption. It had all been set up before I even left. The adopted parents took Savannah at the same time I got on the plane heading for Iraq."

"That's illegal. She wasn't under their guardianship. They had no legal way of doing that," Tanner said angrily.

"It didn't matter. My uncle... he's a very powerful man, Tanner. No one will oppose him today. No one dared to then." She shook her head. "I've been searching for my little



girl for the past fourteen years. She turned fifteen two months ago. It was a closed adoption. I can't find any information anywhere."

"Who is your uncle, Sera?"

With sad eyes, she looked at him. "Leave it, Tanner. Accosting him would be fruitless... not to mention dangerous."

"Tell me!"

"My uncle is the POTUS, Tanner. Steve Harding, the President of the United States."

"Holy fuck."

"Now you know. Unless I can find her on my own, I will never see my little girl again. He holds all the cards. I have no way of fighting him."

"What about Savannah's father? Why didn't he stop them?"

"He wasn't part of her life. I don't even think he would remember me."

"What are you saying?" His eyes flickered as he looked at her, his hard gaze penetrating the darkness of the room.

"I never told him I was pregnant."

His expression turned thunderous. Sera cringed in the face of his rising anger. She knew how important family was to him.

"How could you not have told him? He had a right to know he was a father."

"It was a one-night stand. It happened during my first tour. I had just witnessed the first cruelty of war, and I was vulnerable. It was my birthday and the perfect excuse to get drunk as a skunk, so I could forget the sight of children being killed. Collateral damage, they were called." She swallowed

hard but avoided his eyes. “Besides, I n-never... I never saw him again after that.”

“And that makes it right? Not telling him?”

“I’m tired.” She pulled out of his arms and turned her back on him. “I’m going back to sleep. I’m sorry I woke you.”

“We’re not done talking about this, Sera.” He was quiet for a long moment. When he eventually spoke, his voice was dangerously soft. “Your first tour. That means the one in 2007 to Afghanistan.”

Sera’s breath stuttered in her throat, but she refused to turn around.

“It *was* you. That’s why you were familiar when we met at Quantico. You were the young woman I spent the night with after that raid on the military hospital.” He yanked her upright and forced her to look at him.

“I’m right, aren’t I? I am Savannah’s father. I have a daughter. You fucking knew who I was when we met in Quantico, and you didn’t tell me. Jesus! How could you not tell me?”

“Tanner... I was young, stupid, and scared. We each went our own way afterward. I had no way of—”

“Bullshit! You knew who I was. I told you my name and where I lived. I might have gotten drunk over the course of that night, but I wasn’t out of it. I remember everything, Sera. You fucking always knew who I was.”

“Yes, I did, but let’s not discount the fact that you never knew who I was. If you did, why didn’t you ever try to find me? I’ll tell you why, Tanner Wilde! Because I meant shit to you. I was nothing other than a piece of ass you fucked to forget the casualties of war!”

“Mary Sitwell. That’s the name you gave me, which I found out later didn’t exist. So, if that’s what you want to tell yourself to absolve what you did, go right ahead. You didn’t

know me then, Sera, and you just proved that you still know nothing about the man I am. The man I've always been."

He got up and walked toward the door.

"Know this. I don't give a shit that your uncle is the POTUS. Come what may, I will find my daughter, even if I have to choke it out of him."



# Chapter Sixteen



*Mayan King Ranch, Santa Cruz, Belize...*

Chiara was listless. For the first time in weeks, she was given time off from training. After her private school lessons were done, she felt lost. Class, exercise, and gruesomely tough training had become so routine, she didn't know what to do with herself.

Rose Martens would have curled up next to the swimming pool with her nose buried in a young adult romance, but that innocent, vulnerable young girl was no more. Within a couple of months, Bulldog had transformed her into a cold, heartless, would-be killer.

But right now, she couldn't even distract herself by thinking about the dreaded, powerful mafia don or his shady intentions.

"I'll never get away from here," she mumbled as she considered attempting another escape, like she had tried so many times in the first few weeks. She never got far, and all she had left for her troubles were permanent, cutting whip marks all over her back. She gave up after that. Escape would have to wait for a more fortuitous occasion. For now, she had to accept her fate and become as ruthless and unfeeling as Salvatore Sanchigo. It was the only way to survive.

Chiara kicked open the patio door and walked toward the pool.

"Where do you think you're going?" growled her guard, Igor, the jagged-toothed and ugliest motherfucker she

had ever seen.

“Swimming, or is that against the rules now as well?” She glowered at him haughtily in a perfect rendition of the mafia don.

Igor snarled in response but didn't say anything. She had no doubt that he would like nothing better than to see her suffer, but Bulldog had issued numerous warnings about harming the *princess*. All the guards understood Chiara was there for a specific purpose, and they knew Salvatore would kill whoever hurt her without receiving a direct order from him.

“Well, thanks for ruining it,” she snapped as she walked back into the house, the words chasing after her. “Suddenly, I lost my desire for swimming, especially if your ugly ass stands around watching.”

How she ended up in Salvatore's study, she had no idea, since it was off limits to everyone. “Fuck that, he's not here, so who's gonna stop me from snooping?” Closing the door behind her with a soft click, she pressed her back against the door as she looked around the room.

An oversized fireplace dominated the right side of the room, with a collection of framed pictures above the mantel. To the left, there were two massive double doors leading to an open terrace. On either side of it, two full walls were covered with heavy floor-to-ceiling bookcases. A deep red-and-black Persian rug with a diamond pattern made an odd centerpiece over the dark, polished floors. The rest of the décor were accent pieces.

In the center stood a massive, almost medieval wooden desk with a top carved from a single piece of wood and one comfortable-looking desk chair behind it. Along the right side of the wall was a bar lined with expensive imported booze. Not sure what drew her to the antique mahogany bureau bookcase to the left of the terrace doors, but she found her feet moving toward it. It appeared to be empty except for a small,

locked door. Chiara squatted down, opened it, and stared inside.

“So, what have we here?” Chiara whispered as she peered at the file box. It was rather thick and a quick flick-through produced hordes of legal documents and photographs. “What the effen hell?” she muttered as the name Rose caught her eye. Sitting down on the carpet, she placed the folder on the floor in front of her. Looking around, she pondered her next move. Should she dare open the file and read it? What if someone caught her?

“So, what are they gonna do to me? Whip me? It’s not as though I’m not used to it. Fuck it, it’s my name in there. I have a right to know what he’s hiding from me.” With trembling hands, she opened the folder.

At the front of it was her name. At least the name she had believed was given to her by her birth parents, Rose Mary Martens. Except, they weren’t her real parents. They never told her she was adopted.

“Oh, lucky me,” she sneered. “To have been adopted twice in one lifetime.”

Tears filled her eyes as she remembered the happy, carefree life she had lived with Danny and Lilly Martens. Movie nights, picnics, holidays at the coast—so many, it hurt her head just thinking about them. She wiped away her tears with an irritated gesture.

Why was she still grieving the deaths of her adopted parents when they had lied to her all her life? They were both botanists and had left on an excursion to the Amazon, leaving her behind with the promise they’d be back in six months. Come to think of it... what kind of parent left their child at home for six months with a sibling who hated the sight of her? They knew Aunt Vera didn’t like her. She never made a secret of it. Chiara never understood why.

“Perhaps it had to do with who my real parents were?” The question was wrung from her lips as she hesitated to turn

the page. Life had turned its back on her in an unexpected, cruel way. What if what was in the file would only add to the clusterfuck her life had turned into?

“You won’t know unless you look. C’mon! You’re not the prissy Rose Mary Martens anymore. You’re Chiara Sanchigo. You’ve now got a backbone made of steel. Turn the fucking page. See who threw you to the wolves in the first place.”

Chiara took a deep breath, determined not to cry again. Who knew that one damn file could make the past and present so intertwined and confusing? Slowly, with a hand that was decidedly shaky, she turned the page.

INFORMATION BIRTH, NAMING, AND STATUS OF  
ADOPTION AUTHORIZATION:

Savannah Brookes (birth name), who will be raised as Rose  
Mary Martens (adopted name).

Birth mother: Sera Anne Brookes.

Birth father: Not listed.

Adopting parents: Danny and Lilly Martens.

For long moments, Chiara just stared at the names, reading her mother’s name over and over, then murmuring her birth name in a mantra in a voice that became hoarser the more she said it.

“Savannah Brookes, Savannah Brookes, Savannah Brookes.”

After some time, she ran her finger over her mother’s name, tracing its letters. Her vision blurred as tears once again gathered in her eyes. She pushed it back, sniffed once, and wiped her tears as she read the names of her adopted parents, Danny and Lilly Martens, in a desperate attempt to find something solid and familiar she could cling to.



“Why did you give me away, Sera Brookes? And who the hell is my father?”

Sensing a presence in the doorway, Chiara froze and watched in horror as her captor father strolled toward her with a cigar clamped in his mouth. He didn't seem angry, although his menacing scowl caused her blood pressure to escalate. He halted a couple of feet from her and folded his arms over his chest, staring at her with a cryptic gaze.

“This ain't going to end well, for anyone, is it?” she hissed between clenched teeth. It wasn't the best reaction after getting caught reading his private property, but to hell with his feelings. There was no excuse for the way he had uprooted her life without a second thought about what the emotional shock would do to her.

“From what I just heard, I believe you're the one who doesn't like what you just found. Am I right, young lady?” His voice was cool and clipped. His penetrating gaze bore deep, revealing the angry man beneath the calm exterior. “Surely, that's not a reason to risk punishment. You must have realized you'd get caught if you entered my personal space.”

Chiara broke off from his snaky glare as rage swelled inside of her. He was angry, but looking at him closely, he didn't seem all that upset that she had found the file.

“I have a right to know who my birth parents are. This folder, some of these documents, from what I read, are supposed to be confidential since it was a closed adoption, which I believe means the information about my birth mother was never supposed to be disclosed. How did you come by it?”

“Surely you know by now that I won't let something as trivial as legal or lawful matters stand in the way of what I want. I have unresolved issues with one Sera Brookes, and I needed all the information about her I could find. Imagine my surprise when I found out she gave birth to a little girl fifteen years ago.” He smiled evilly.

“It offered me the opportunity to lodge the perfect revenge against her. Do you know, if not for her, and your father, for that matter, your adopted parents might still have been alive.”

Chiara winced but buried that information to ponder over later since it hinted at what she had been suspecting—that he had been involved in their deaths.

“You know who my real father is?”

“Of course, I do, dearie, and if I arrived a few minutes later, so would you have. I have unlimited resources. A little something like not disclosing his name on a birth certificate or adoption papers wasn’t going to stop me.” Sanchigo blew a smoke ring at the ceiling. “Do you want to know who he is?”

“Yes, of course, I do.”

“Hmm.” Before Chiara could react, he snatched the folder up from the floor and closed it. “All in due time. For now, and before I tell you who he is, I need to know your thoughts. Now that you know who your mother is, how do you feel?”

“How am I supposed to feel? It’s just a name, and it means shit. The only thing that matters is that she didn’t want me. My father didn’t want me. They both threw me away, and for that...” Her eyes grew cold. “For that, I hate them. I fucking hate them!”

“That’s good to hear, since it mirrors what I feel about them. At least in that sense, we’re on the same page. You are here because I need you to make them pay. Your birth parents split my family apart, like they did yours by throwing you as a little babe to the wolves.” His eyes turned dark. “They must pay, and you will help me.”

Chiara straightened, her eyes hard and cold, nothing left of the sweet innocence, the happy and committed schoolgirl of a couple of months before. The smile curling her lips was menacing.

“What do you want me to do?”

“Ah, now that’s the spirit, dearie. Finally, you show the colors of a true Sanchigo!”



*Federal Correctional Institution, Tallahassee...*

“You’re a week late, Brinkman.” Jessica Hewitt didn’t bother to hide the animosity in her tone as she sat down facing him. She was irritated, and it showed in her entire demeanor.

“You were the attorney general for years, you know as well as I do that you don’t just walk into the Chief Justice’s office. He’s a busy man.”

“Ah, so you don’t hold as much accord with him as you so confidently claimed when you were here last week. Why am I not surprised? You were always prone to blowing your own horn.” She grimaced as her fingers got caught on tangles as she ran them through her hair. Without proper shampoo and conditioner, it was a challenge to keep her naturally curly hair healthy. As it were, the once shiny and silky tresses looked brittle and were spotted white with split ends. She hated it, as much as she loathed being locked up in this wretched prison.

“So, did you get it, or are you wasting my time?”

“I got it,” Brinkman grunted as he attempted to settle his large body on the chair that was much too small for his size.

Jessica would be lying if she didn’t admit to enjoying his discomfort. There was something about Senator Brinkman that didn’t sit well with her. For one, she never trusted the picture he presented to the world of a politician with no agenda other than to serve his state. Until he had been elected senator, he had shown no empathy or compassion for his fellow countrymen.

Prior to running for senator, he owned one of the largest private banks in the United States. As far as she knew, he was still the major shareholder in it. He was filthy rich and

made no secret of his wealth since he lived as large as the body he carted around.

Come to think of it, his bank was one of only a few that hadn't been targeted with the scheme the Golden Wizards had attempted that got her locked up. Her gaze sharpened as she looked at him.

Jessica Hewitt didn't believe in coincidences. Now, more than ever, her senses sparked with suspicion. If this bastard was one of those who Sanchigo had dealt with behind the scenes, she would find out... and he would pay for hiding while the rest of them had to suffer the consequences of their failure.

"The suspense is killing me, Brinkman," she sing-songed in a dry voice, her expression one of boredom.

"I'm not an idiot, Ms. Hewitt. Do you honestly think I'll just pass this along without you owning up to your part of the deal?" He waved the A4 sized envelope in the air. "Tell me what I want to know and it's yours."

"Not before I see that document. See, it's the one thing I learned locked up in here. I don't trust anyone." She held her hands up. "Don't worry, as you so rightly said, the feeling of mistrust is mutual. I won't touch it but you will hold it so I can read the entire document and verify that the seal and signature on it are the real thing."

"That I can do," Brinkman grunted as he pulled the legal document free of the envelope and held it up in front of her to read. He turned the pages when instructed. As the minutes ticked away, his annoyance and impatience grew. "Hurry it up, won't you? I assure you it's authentic."

Jessica ignored him and continued scrutinizing every sentence in the legal exoneration notice. She had seen the stamp and the Chief Justice's signature more than often enough to know it was the real thing. Relief washed over her, but she refused to let it show on her face. She sat back.

“Impressive, Senator Brinkman. To be honest, when you didn’t appear as promised, I didn’t think you had it in you.”

“Enough. I offered you an out. Now, it’s your turn to own up.”

“Pen.”

“What? He glared at her.

“Do you honestly think I’m going to say the name out loud?” Her eyes moved to the CCTV camera against the wall. “It might not record what we’re saying but it’ll be easy-to-read lips. I’m not saying shit. I’ll write the name down, and get this, Brinkman. There will be no discussion about it. You wanted a name, and that’s all you’ll get from me.”

Brinkman didn’t push the issue, knowing it wouldn’t serve a purpose.

Placing the exoneration document and envelope on the desk, he slammed a black and gold Waterman pen on top. “Get it over with,” he snapped, clearly annoyed that she dared play the fiddle and decide the rules.

His eyes widened as she handed him the envelope with the name written on it. She took the legal document and got up. Saluting him with the papers, she headed toward the door.

“Nice doing business with you, Senator.”

“Wait! This can’t be right,” he called out, twisting in his chair as he struggled to get to his feet. “There’s no fucking way he’s involved with the Golden Wizards.”

Jessica looked at him over her shoulder. “No? Guess I’m mistaken then. Believe me or don’t. I don’t give a shit one way or the other. You just make sure I’m outta this shithole before the end of the week.”

Her dry laugh at his disbelieving expression chased after her as she walked away. For the first time in months, she felt like she might have a chance at living a normal life again.



# Chapter Seventeen



*Club Rouge, Baton Rouge, Louisiana...*

“Why are you making me stay?” Sera asked through tight lips. Being at Club Rogue with a Daddy who made no secret of his animosity toward her was the last place she wanted to be. In here, she was too vulnerable, and in the current state of mind she was in, a scene with him spelled disaster for her equilibrium and more so... her heart.

“You’ve completely excluded me from all information about Sanchigo or how the search for him is going.” She dug in her heels, and he was forced to stop walking, although his gaze continued its search over the sea of faces already in the entertainment chamber. For all intents and purposes, he was giving her the cold shoulder.

Sera looked beautiful, courtesy of Sage dressing her in a long, white sheath dress with side slits all the way to her waist. The material molded to every curve of her body. Underneath, a gold thong peeked out when she moved. Her dainty feet were adorned in gold stilettos, a perfect foil to the blonde hair cascading in loose curls down her back. With a gold lace mask, she looked like a seductive mythical creature... except she felt like a fraud, an imposter.

“I’m floundering about in the dark, so to speak, which means I serve no purpose anymore,” she continued to plead with him. “Not to the DEA since even if you find him, you’re not going to tell me, and most definitely not to you since I have yet to act as your bodyguard.”

“I never needed a bodyguard. I accommodated you purely to find what the DEA’s game plan was.” He smirked. “Believe me, it was no surprise to find out it was to use me as bait.”

“Let’s be honest, Tanner. Ever since you found out about... about...” Sera’s throat closed up, and she couldn’t force the words out.

“Having a daughter that you never told me about... notwithstanding the fact that you had fifteen years and nine months to do so,” he provided acerbically. Still, he refused to look at her.

“Yes.” The sigh whispering from her lips sounded desolate. “You hate me now. It’ll be better for both of us if I just leave.”

“To hate you means I have feelings for you, cherish and love you. Truth be known, I was heading that way. Now...” Finally, he looked at her. Sera gasped at the dark, blackness that seemed to glow in his eyes. “Now, I have only one aim in life. To find my daughter, and since you’re the only one with information and contacts, you will stay until I say otherwise.”

“You’re being unreasonable. Can’t we just—”

“Enough. From this moment on, you will only speak when I ask you a question.” He caught her chin between his fingers, his grip hard and punishing. “Do not forget that I’m Master Thor to you, sub. I expect you to do as you’re told. Is that clear?”

The morph into full Daddy Dom mode happened so fast, Sera struggled not to completely unravel and break down in front of the entire club. Her emotions were all over the place. The past few days had been harrowing since Tanner flatly ignored her. It was as though she had become a shadow in the house. He knew she was there but didn’t care enough to acknowledge it. She couldn’t continue like this, especially not since she had finally acknowledged the reason she could never



forget that first night she had with him. He was her soulmate. The man she gave her heart to, even though she barely knew him. Fate took them in different directions. When she was tasked to save him from the drug syndicate's clutches, she believed destiny had shifted, that finally she would have her happy ever after.

It seemed that fate and destiny were fucked up insofar as she was concerned. All she gained was to invite his loathing.

"I asked you a question," he snapped, his voice darkening perceptively.

"Yes, Master Thor, I understand." With her heart thundering, she couldn't decide which emotion had the strongest hold on her—hate for those who had brought her to this moment, regret, sorrow, or just the desire for this beautiful man who was now treating her like his most hated enemy.

He gripped her hips and turned her toward him. His hold was hard, but gentle when they pulled her tight into his muscular body. An arm snaked around her waist in a display of dominance, a clear sign that he was in charge.

"In here, you are my submissive. I will decide your fate. Tonight, you are going to experience sensations and emotions that will drown you with their intensity. I am going to break through that barrier you erected to keep everyone at a distance."

"Tanner, please, I—"

She gasped as one hand curled around her throat and tightened, squeezing so hard, she had to go up on her toes. Clawing at his hand, she struggled to draw a proper breath. For the first time, she wondered if he was partly sadist or if this was a display of exactly how much he abhorred her now.

"What did I just tell you?"

"I-I'm sorry. Master Thor!"

“That’s better.” His eyes glittered with evil intent. “Hear me well, sub. Tonight, I am going to break you.”

As terrifying as the promise in his words was, Sera was drawn into the molten depths of his silvery eyes. It was as if he sucked her into a whirlpool from where there was no escape. As long as she had breath in her lungs, she was trapped by his promise to crush her soul.

“Your body belongs to me,” he continued.

She drew in a harsh gasp as his fingers still didn’t relinquish the grip on her throat, his other hand trailing the fingers down her cheek. Sera turned her face into his palm, her eyes sliding closed as she basked in his caress. His touch seared her with the same intensity it always had. How could she miss something that was never hers?

She missed having him kiss her and make love to her. Missed those tender and mind-blowing moments shared together, coupled with the excitement and a sense of danger that had hung thick in the air.

His fingers trailed the underside of her arm, continuing their sensual journey downward. Slowly, his touch feathered over her breasts.

“Every inch, every pore belongs to me.”

Sera arched toward his touch, his teasing caresses. Tanner continued his exploration. Suddenly, he stopped, his fingers squeezing her nipple painfully. His lips pressed against the soft skin just below her ear as his mouth hovered. Sera froze, waiting with bated breath.

“That sweet cunt is mine,” he continued darkly.

“Ah, Tanner, nooo. Not while you feel—”

She stopped immediately when his lips peeled back to reveal his gleaming white teeth. She yelped as they clamped over the muscle at her shoulder. The sharp bite stung and throbbed viciously.

“Again, sub? Are you looking to be punished?”

“I’m sorry, Master Thor,” she wailed as he licked the darkening spot on her skin.

“I said every single inch. I never said that I’d be gentle.”

“So, you’re going to use dominance to punish me for not telling you about Savannah?” Sera desperately clung to the last vestige of hope that she’d be able to reach his compassionate side.

“Punish? I have no intention of punishing you. Oh no, my dear sub, I have something completely different in mind for you that will fling you so high into euphoric space, you will wish you never found me again.” He smiled darkly. “I’m your Daddy. I will own you. Every fiber of your body. Tonight, I’m taking your soul as well. You will submit to me—body, mind, and soul. Isn’t that what you yearn for? To lose control and let yourself go, Sera?”

She breathed deeply, unwilling to admit just how badly she wanted to do just that. Still, even though her mind screamed the opposite, her body was in full submission to her Daddy. Her words drifted in a hoarse acknowledgment toward him.

“Yes, Daddy.”



*Rogue’s Desire Flame private room, Club Rogue...*

“What are we doing here, Master Thor?” Sera asked as she walked into the room, staring agape at the luscious decorations in dark red and gold. The room shouted debauchery and sin. The opulence was only surpassed by the gleam from the whips, chains, ropes, candles, and floggers. Sera flushed at all the possibilities. Her inner core throbbed. She was wet, just envisioning what he intended by bringing her here.

“As I said, I’m going to unravel your soul, sub... or should I rather say... we’re going to.”

She spun around as the door opened, and Slade, aka Master Z, walked in.

“I-I don’t understand.”

“You will.” Tanner’s abrupt response warned her she had reached the limit of words allowed, so she clamped her mouth shut.

Slade’s eyes moved over Sera. There was melancholy in her eyes that belied the seductive picture she presented. A glance at Tanner warned him off pursuing it.

“Master Z is going to join us tonight in a threesome.”

Master Z gave her a crooked smile. “Relax, little one. Master Thor and I are the best of the best when it comes to pairing up to bring pleasure-play and sexual gratification.”

Sera looked at Tanner with a mixture of weariness and shock. His eyes darkened when he detected a slight tremble in her body. He locked his fingers around her throat, squeezed gently in warning, and she obeyed instantly by lifting her chin.

“I warned you what I’m after, Sera. The question remains though, no matter what has happened over the past week... Do you trust me as your Daddy?”

There it was—the loaded question. She did trust him, explicitly, but she couldn’t deny the warning that flashed inside her mind when something she had never experienced and always shied away from was about to happen. How did she overcome that fear of the unknown?

“Well, my pet? This is where I will earn your ultimate submission. Right here... tonight.”

“I trust you, but I... I don’t think I’m ready for a ménage.” Her fingers plucked at the seam of her dress.

“You know how to end something you’re not comfortable with in this club, Sera. The safeword is Red. Use it and we stop.” His eyes narrowed, but his voice sounded reassuring. “Are you going to use it before we even start?”

“I should, but at the same time...” Sera glanced at Slade, completely overwhelmed by the desire flashing in his eyes. He exuded the same power and strength as Tanner—the kind of sensual invitation she couldn’t resist. “No, Daddy,” Sera said softly. “I’m not going to use my safeword... yet.”

He smiled with a quick nod. “That’s my girl.”

Tanner circled her before stopping in front of her to slowly flick his tongue against the shell of her ear while Slade ran his fingers up her back, causing her flesh to prickle and her nipples to strain against the softness of her dress. She gasped as he unfastened the slip of material and felt it slither down her legs, leaving her standing only in the gold thong.

“Easy, Babygirl.” Tanner’s voice carried a soothing melody as he observed her violent tremors. With tender care, he extended a delicate finger, tracing a path along her cheek, all the while locking his gaze onto hers. “Just hold on to that trust.”

“I’m trying to. I need to because I...” She gulped back her words and looked down, clamping her fingers together in front of her. Her effort was palpable, a struggle evident in every fiber of her being. She battled to maintain her grasp on the elusive thread of trust, her fingers pressing together in a silent plea as she lowered her gaze, her words caught in her throat.

“That you what?” Tanner waited patiently. The flash in her eyes when she hesitated was the most honest expression he’d seen from her to date.

He cupped her cheek and smiled gently. It would be so easy to order her to continue and she would—immediately, but he needed her to be at ease, to have the freedom to open her heart.

Caught in the gravity of the moment, she inhaled a deep breath, grappling with her emotions before she spoke, each word a step forward into vulnerability.

“I... I’ve never felt so exposed, so seen.” Her words carried a weight, a confession that lay heavy in the air between them.

Sera felt it then. It was as if an unbreakable thread of understanding bound them together. Despite his anger and disappointment in her, his presence stood firm, an unwavering pillar of support amid the tempestuous sea of emotions. His gaze, unyielding and warm, extended an invitation—a safe haven where she could lay bare her soul without the looming specter of judgment. The tapestry of their connection was woven with moments like these, where walls crumbled, revealing the intricate mosaic of emotions beneath.

“More than that.” Her voice trembled slightly, and she could sense Slade’s silent presence behind her, lending an air of solemnity to the moment. “I think I’ve fallen in love with you.”

As the words escaped her lips, they took on a palpable reality, no longer confined to the recesses of her mind. He had remained a constant presence, a phantom heartbeat echoing in her thoughts—ever present since that magical night they had shared and where they unknowingly created the lifeform that would bond them forever. She found it incomprehensible that this man had become her stable force—her only stability in a world filled with chaos.

Her gaze, awash with sincere vulnerability, lifted to meet his eyes. “I do. I love you so much, it’s an emotion that has grown from that first touch so many years ago and... I can’t believe I only just realized it.”

Overwhelming as it was, this emotion carried a sense of completeness. The intensity of her feelings was unlike anything she had ever encountered before—an uncontained force, boundless and unrestrained. In Tanner, she had unearthed the elusive element she had sought for years—peace. It was as if her heart, long confined to a melancholic stillness, was now dancing with unbridled joy within her chest, filling the void that had persistently haunted her.

Tanner didn't say a word but the darkness that had taken residence in his soul slowly lifted, leaving the compassionate, loving man in its stead, watching her with glowing eyes.

"Perhaps I should leave you two alone," Slade said as he stepped back.

"No, stay." Tanner's gaze didn't release Sera, and although she cringed at the implication, she strangely felt reassured as he continued.

"Sera might have scratched the surface with this declaration but there are still too many chains wrapped around her soul. I am going to free her of all those restrictions tonight."

"Master Thor, may I ask a favor, please?" Sera's voice carried a gentle plea, her fingers caught in a restless dance along the edge of the thong's fabric.

"Since you're asking so nicely, go ahead." Resolute and watchful, Tanner held his ground, unwilling to let down his defenses. He refused to lower his guard.

"I need a hug. May I please hug you?" Sera said, her words were like fragile petals unfurling in a breeze.

A subtle shift in Tanner's demeanor caught her attention—an almost imperceptible flicker in his eyes, a clenching of his jaw. It was as though he grappled with an internal struggle, an inner battle to rein in something potent, which was why his response came as such a surprise.

"Yes, Babygirl, you may."

Without a moment's hesitation, Sera closed the distance between them as she entered the circle of his arms. His frame, now familiar to her after their time together, held a level of intimacy beyond the surface. In the span of the weeks living with him, she had become attuned to the cadence of his movements, the subtle, reassuring scent of his understated aftershave, and even the rhythmic melody of his heartbeat during the tranquil moments before they fell asleep. But this

was different. It marked the first time she truly felt him—his very essence.

In that embrace, the barriers between them melted away, allowing her to experience a connection beyond the physical realm. His embrace enveloped her, a sanctuary of warmth and solace. It was as though their spirits intertwined, a dance of energies that transcended the ordinary. In that simple yet profound moment, she gained an understanding that surpassed words—the unspoken language of emotions and the profound depth of their bond.

He might not be willing to admit it, but she knew. He loved her, too.



## Chapter Eighteen



“Come, it’s time.” Untangling himself from her, Tanner led her to the large bed.

Sera glanced between the two men, now secure in the knowledge that her Daddy did care for her. Sexually, she had never experienced the satisfaction she had with Tanner. Maybe sexual need was like a drug, and certain things became a must-have. If she was honest with herself, she had been dreaming about the rapturous sensations the books she read described of double penetration—experiencing the ultimate pleasure of being fucked from both sides.

“Please take off your panties, sub,” Master Z ordered.

Sera stiffened at the demand, but she didn’t hesitate. The commanding presence of this man teased at the submissive inside her, and she reacted instinctively.

Both men removed their shirts and kicked off his shoes in easy masculine moves, waiting patiently for her to comply. She glanced at Master Z. He was a delicious specimen of manhood with his bulging muscles and broad chest that tapered into narrow hips. His abs rippled with every movement he made. Her breath staggered in her throat. To have two such powerful and gorgeously sexy men at her disposal was almost more than she could fathom, especially since within the boundaries of the lifestyle, she was the one with the ultimate control.

Sera dropped the thong on a chair and straightened. With her hands behind her back, she waited. Master Z circled her, tracing a finger over her skin.

“Such delicate beauty, yet strong and confident, am I correct, Master Thor?”

“Indeed, Master Z.”

Slade pressed his hard body against her back. His arms circled her waist to cup her breasts.

“You’re trembling, Sera. Are you scared of me?”

“No, Master Z. It’s just... I don’t know what to expect.”

“We’ll take care of you, little one. Of that, I can assure you. All you need to do is relax and feel. Clear your mind of all the trepidation and fear. Just... feel.”

He squeezed her breasts and trailed his palms with feathered lightness over her nipples. His deep voice relaxed her. She leaned back against his hard body, feeling the heat of his touch penetrate her skin. She bit her lip as arousal slowly unfurled inside her loins.

“On the bed, please, Babygirl.” Tanner’s voice reached her as if in a haze. Without her brain giving the instruction, she found herself kneeling in the center of the large bed.

Joining her, Slade stood behind her and nibbled on her earlobe while he continued to play with her nipples. Squeezing, pinching, and tugging gently, every action aimed to spike her arousal. And it did, at an alarming rate as she closed her eyes and imagined what it would feel like to be at the mercy of two such gentle giants.

Then *he* was there, pressing his naked chest against hers, stealing her breath away at the unexpectedness of it.

“Breathing, Babygirl?” Tanner asked, examining her expression and eyes for signs of discomfort or fear.

“Barely, Daddy, but I’ll be better, now that you joined us.”

“Hm, I see you’re wearing that rosy hue of arousal I like so much, little one.”

“Master Z has magic hands, Daddy, but you have the master touch,” she hissed when he leaned down to nibble and suck on her taut nipples. “I’m sorry. I should keep quiet,” she mumbled when she realized she’d unwittingly broken the rule of earlier. No talking unless asked a question.

“You’re free to talk, little one. I daresay you won’t be able to keep quiet for too long.”

Sera could feel the trembling in her thighs, the slow burn of warmth that ignited inside her core. Just the thought of their cocks rubbing against each other deep inside her caused her pussy to tingle in anticipation.

“We’re about to give you a mind-blowing experience, Little S. One that will make you realize what submitting to your Daddy is all about. What being my Babygirl means. From this point on, there’ll only be pleasure in your mind.”

Sera gasped as she felt their hard tumescence press against her thighs. Tanner was big, but from the hardness pressed on her left, she ascertained that Master Z was huge. A ménage à trois was a new experience for her and a wave of trepidation washed over her, hoping she wasn’t about to make a complete fool of herself.

Slade traced his hand over her stomach while Tanner pressed his lips against hers in a warm, tender kiss that promised sensual delights. She whimpered as their hands closed around her breasts, gently kneading and flicking their thumbs over the taut tips. Tanner feasted on her mouth with a skill that made her forget the past. Her breath hissed from her mouth as Slade trailed his lips over her collarbone to kiss the curve of her throat.

She hung onto Tanner’s neck and returned his kiss with urgency, arching her back to press her breasts deeper into their hands. The experience flung her onto a cloud of euphoria. She moaned when the two men licked a slow path over her chest to kiss the underside of her breasts.

“Oh Lord,” Sera whimpered, not used to such tender caresses from two men at the same time. She’d never realized how sensitive her breasts were to touch. Gentle touch, not painful twists and pinches. Now, with both of them nibbling and kissing the slope of her breasts, she craved more. Their lips tugged on the needy tips, then sucked them into their mouths with evident lust.

They were gentle until Slade sucked harder and stretched her nipple, clamping his teeth around the tip.

“Aahhh... fuck!” Sera cried out in surprise as she felt her pussy flush with her essence. He returned to soft and deep sucking, while Tanner bit down on her nipple and repeated the same action.

“How does that feel, my pet?” Tanner asked, his gaze searching hers.

Sera was spellbound by the sudden rawness in his voice and the lusty look on his face. His desire was apparent in the rigidity of his muscled frame.

“Better than I dreamed it would, Daddy... Oooh!” Her eyes widened as she felt Slade spreading her labia to spear his tongue deep inside her, lapping at the honeyed juices he found there. He kissed a path on the inside of her thigh toward her knee, allowing Tanner to lean closer and swirl his tongue around her clitoris, sucking it gently into his mouth.

*Ohhhh, shit!*

Her body shook, and her heart hammered wildly inside her chest. She panted, desperate to slow down her heartbeat. Her fingers curled into the sheets beneath her.

*God, I’ve never felt anything like this! Not ever.*

She couldn’t find a word to describe her feelings. There was excitement, loads of heat, and expectation, but no fear. In the past, during such a scene, she would have been terrified, lost in a helpless cage between two men who enjoyed hurting her and didn’t have a care for her pleasure.

Now, she trembled with desire and need. She caught their eyes and was overwhelmed by the coalescence of joy and triumph flooding her mind, realizing then that they were as excited and aroused as she was, entranced by her reaction to them.

“I love how responsive your Babygirl’s body is, Master Thor,” Slade said against her pussy, rubbing her clit with his thumb, which caused her stomach to roll in reaction.

“Yes, it is. She looks like a wood nymph—an ethereal beauty.” Tanner kissed a circle around her nipple before he sucked on it.

“Daddy, oooh, I... please, I need...”

Tanner pulled her into his body and settled on his back, taking her with him. Both the men were already aroused and more than ready to culminate this scene. He didn’t need to tease her any further.

Sera sat up and stared into Tanner’s eyes as she felt Slade behind her. His hands closed around her hips to lift her over Tanner. She hissed a breath as Tanner guided his cock to her pussy.

“Ah, little one, I love that you’re always so hot and ready for me. Take it slow, Slade. I want to savor every inch of those satiny petals as they wrap around my cock.”

Slade lowered her slowly, kissing her behind her ear when her head rolled back on his shoulder as Tanner’s large cock speared into her.

“Daddy, I can’t tell you how wonderful it feels every time you enter my body. I love it when you pulse inside me.”

“You really are a treasure, Babygirl, more than you’ll ever realize,” Tanner responded. He nodded to Slade while he caressed her nipples.

Tanner pulled her closer, to wrap his lips around a taut nub and suckled like a baby. Sera gasped at the unexpected

squirt of lube on her puckered hole. Her body tingled with anticipation as Slade spread the gel inside.

“Master Z will wear a condom, love. Just relax and let us take care of you and your pleasures.”

Slade lifted her off Tanner’s cock until only the tip remained inside, while Tanner continued to suck her nipples, lazily tweaking, and pinching the other between his fingers.

Slade slowly pushed the spongy, bulbous tip of his cock forward while Sera instinctively bore back until he entered her rosette. He was huge and left her panting as he kept pushing until he was past her sphincter. He stopped to caress her soft cheeks with gentle strokes.

“You okay, little pet?”

Sera was completely relaxed as she stared at Tanner. His gaze offered her reassurance and a promise of untold rapture. Now was the time to show him how much she trusted him. She surrendered her body and her soul into his hands.

Tanner smiled as he read her expression.

“Beautiful, little one,” he said against her lips. He kissed her and reached down, pulling her ass cheeks apart, an invitation for Slade to go hilt deep inside her. Her moan puffed into his mouth, a sign of the pleasure they were offering her.

Slade dragged his cock back slowly, ensuring that every nerve ending inside her ass and pussy flared to life. Tanner pushed back in, and they set a slow rhythm—plunging in and out, in opposite directions.

She tossed and turned in pure, undiluted ecstasy. Catching her open mouth with his, Tanner plunged his tongue in, sucking and chewing on her top lip.

“You are so beautiful, Babygirl,” he murmured through short bursts of breath. “I need you to let go now. Unshackle those chains and fly, Sera.”

Sera’s body was on fire. She gulped as their velvety steel rods plunged deep inside her with long, rhythmic strokes.

The thrust of their turgid lengths built the pressure inside her loins to a height previously unknown, something she'd never experienced before, filling every inch of her and flooding her mind with bliss.

“I need more. Please, Daddy,” she pleaded.

Tanner was elated at her unpracticed surrender, at the way she unwittingly crawled out of the locked cage she'd been hiding in. They increased the tempo but continued the gently rocking rhythm.

Sera could feel the pressure inside her building, like a coil tightening with every thrust. She knew the end was near when Slade reached down to rub her clit.

“Please, Daddy. I need to come,” she cried, her nails digging into Tanner's chest.

“Yes, Babygirl, come for us. Now.” Tanner urged her.

It was all her body needed. She bucked wildly as a surge of warm liquid erupted from inside her. Her blazing eyes were locked on Tanner's face. She choked out a scream and streams of her juices showered their cocks.

“Shit.” Slade's face was drawn into a tortured expression as he pinched back his orgasm, wanting to pleasure her first. He pulled back and watched as Tanner powered into her with strong, upward thrusts. The hot spurt of his ejaculate triggered another climax for Sera. Her cries and his growl echoed through the room.

Slade thrust home and plunged inside her with fierce strength to drive her to an uncontrollable climax that rippled through her and tossed her high into the cloud of blissful ecstasy. He kept plowing her body until the familiar flashes of heat flared in his chest, wave upon wave drowning him in a state of rapturous elation. His eyelids fluttered and twitched as the dam inside him burst. He roared when the world around him came to a grinding halt and all his energy was concentrated on that rush of heat, from deep inside his loins, which erupted deep inside her bowels. Pulsating streams of hot

viscous semen spewed out, his body shuddering with the intensity of his release.

Slade slumped on the bed next to them. The sound of their breathing was harsh in the room, as all three battled to find their breath. Sera fell onto Tanner's chest, purring when his arms wrapped around her to hold her tight.

"I didn't lie to you earlier, Daddy," she whispered in his ear. His body immediately stiffened, but she ignored it and kissed him his neck. "I love you, Tanner Wilde. More than I ever thought possible."

Tanner pushed her upright and stared at her. The truth of what she'd said was there, shallow in her gaze, laid bare for all to see. He brushed back her hair to tumble over her shoulders. Neither of them noticed that Slade had silently left the room.

"You are more than I had hoped to find, Sera. This... the woman I see in front of me now, is the one I have been waiting for. Regardless of the past, I trust you with my heart."

Sera beamed at him. She wasn't disappointed when he didn't return her declaration of love. At least now, there was hope. For a future filled with love and joy.



# Chapter Nineteen



*Omni Airport, Port Allen, Louisiana...*

“The eagle has landed,” Sanchigo said with a humorless grin as the luxurious black Bombardier Challenger 600 private jet rocked gently to a stop.

He glanced at Chiara, who sat opposite him, staring out of the window. Dressed in black skinny jeans, a tight-fitting black, high-neck sweater, black thigh-high boots, and a red leather biker’s jacket, she looked chic. His grin widened. With her hair now colored as white as his, she appeared much older than the innocent fifteen-year-old girl who had walked into his house a couple of months ago.

She turned, noted her father’s attention, and gave him a rare smile. Sanchigo beamed with pleasure. Bulldog deserved a large bonus for his success with the training. He had turned a timid, prissy young girl into a cold, unfeeling fighter—one who had already proven she could kill without hesitation.

They were waiting for the captain to lower the stairs to allow the party to debark.

“Will they all be dead when we finish here, Father?” Chiara’s voice punctuated the feelings at war inside her.

Sanchigo’s chest puffed out even more. She truly had become the kind of daughter he always desired. His own blood children were no match for Chiara.

“If that is your desire, dear child, then so it shall be.”

She gave her father another fleeting smile before returning to study their surroundings. Her eyes flicked briefly to the new addition to the family. Her husband, Luc Delaware. At first, she fought the union, citing that she was too young to get married, that surely it was against the law for a fifteen-year-old. In the end, she saw reason and agreed that marriage was the best course of action to effectively guarantee their success in exacting vengeance against Tanner Wilde and Sera Brookes. He was exceedingly proud of her that she had refused to budge on culminating their vows. Luc wasn't to touch her until she turned eighteen, and only if she had fallen in love with him by that time. She made no secret of the fact that she didn't like her husband.

“He shouldn't be here,” Chiara interrupted his thoughts. “I detected a battle inside him, Father. Are you sure he's one hundred percent on board with our plan? Once we walk off this plane, there's no turning back. Everyone in his family will become targets, especially Vice President Delaware.”

“And the problem is?” Sanchigo's eyebrow darted higher.

“When we began this journey, you asked me how far I was willing to go to get revenge for my birth parents casting me to the wolves. Hate is a powerful driver in any act. You know that's what drives me. Do you know what drives him? Why is he so desperate to see his family come to a fall?” Chiara met Sanchigo's eyes, making him lean closer so she could stare deep into the windows to his soul. “Bulldog taught me that to accomplish an action this significant, there must be no conflict of motives. Otherwise, his indecision will cost us all dearly. That's not an option.”

*Bulldog definitely deserves a bonus!* Sanchigo was highly impressed with Chiara's resolve, and her unbreakable desire to do harm.

“Agreed. That's not an option,” he concurred but chose not to disclose details about Luc's motives. His lips pinched

before he waved a hand dismissively. “I had the same concerns when I first approached Luc. Needless to say, dearie, if I hadn’t known he was ready to serve me unconditionally and with the utmost loyalty, he would never have walked through our front door, let alone married you. Besides, if he fails, not only will his family suffer, but he will follow them to their graves.”

Chiara straightened up. She sat with her palms facing down and her knees spread wide.

“As long as he knows his place. I will not be controlled by another man, Father. That honor I bestow only upon you.”

“Ah, I knew I chose well. Don’t worry, my child. No one will ever take my place. I guarantee it.”



*The Triple K Secure Offices, Triple K Farm, Bunkie, Louisiana...*

“We found Sanchigo.”

“About fucking time,” Tanner said as he sat down at the conference table with a hot cup of latte in his hand. “Where is he?”

“He’s here. In Louisiana.” Kaden shrugged at the surprised looks Tanner and Slade gave him. “He arrived on a private plane at Omni Airport two hours ago. Our virtual alerts picked him up via facial recognition when they got off the plane on the tarmac.”

“Brilliant. So, what are we waiting for? Where is he now?” Tanner chucked down the hot beverage in one swallow, eager to get done with Sanchigo so he could concentrate on finding his daughter.

“He arrived with an entourage of four bodyguards, a young girl, and a very surprising guest,” Kevin said as he opened his laptop and typed in a command. The large screen

on the wall flickered to life, showing the picture of the group walking toward a waiting SUV.

“What the fuck is the VP’s son doing with Sanchigo?” Slade leaned forward as he peered at the photo.

“Yep, you’re right. That’s Luc Delaware,” Keith confirmed.

“Do you think he’s been kidnapped?” Tanner asked.

“I doubt it,” Kaden pointed to the monitor. “He seemed as close as petals on a flower with Sanchigo. Whatever his reason for being in his presence, it’s not because he’s under duress.”

“That’s fucked up. Now we know he’s up to no good,” Tanner railed. “So, where the hell are they, and who is that young girl?”

“We have no idea where they are or who the girl is. So far, facial recognition has come up blank, which isn’t surprising. Sanchigo has the contacts to keep his entire family’s lives off the virtual world. No one knows what his wife or kids look like,” Slade interjected.

“That girl is too young to be his daughter,” Tanner peered at the screen. “Well, gentlemen, we can either stand here with our collective dicks in our hands or take some action.” He looked around the room. “How the fuck don’t you know where they are. You had them at the airport.”

“The last sighting was when the SUV disappeared into an underground parking garage,” Kaden sighed with frustration. “It hasn’t come out. I sent a team to check, and the vehicle is still there. They must’ve swapped cars.”

“Damn it,” Slade mumbled. “Alright, Kaden, keep a team guarding that garage until we can identify the location of where they disappeared to. In the meantime, keep looking. I’m going to visit the Director of the Secret Service to find out why the son of the VP of the United States is in bed with Sanchigo. I sure am looking forward to hearing what they have to say about it.”

“Oh my God!” Sera’s shocked voice floated from the door where she stood staring at the screen. “You found her. Oh, dear God! You found her!”

“Sera?” Tanner got up and grasped her hand, which was trembling visually. “What are you talking about?”

“It’s... she... that girl...” she stuttered as she opened her handbag and took out a worn photograph. She pushed it in front of Tanner’s face. “Look!”

“Sera? Who is this?” Tanner’s voice cracked as he looked at the picture of the laughing family on a beach. The young girl was a mirror image of the one walking next to Sanchigo on the screen.

“That’s me,” Sera said brokenly. “That’s me, Tanner. I was fourteen years old.” She looked back at the screen and pointed at it. “See? She looks exactly like me, and I know. I can feel it! That’s our daughter.” Her voice rose hysterically. “Oh, Jesus! What’s she doing with that bastard?”

If Tanner hadn’t caught her, Sera would have crumbled to the floor. Holding onto him, she sank into a chair. Her face was ashen with her eyes full of pain as the horrific realization hit home her that their child was in the clasp of one of the most depraved criminals on the planet.

“I’m going to take Sera home,” Tanner said as he picked her limp body up from the chair. “Keep me in the loop. I want to know the fucking moment you find that bastard.”



*The Wilde Ridge Farm, Bunkie, Louisiana...*

“I think you should go and lie down, love. You need to calm down.”

“I’m not going to lie down, and I most fucking definitely don’t need to calm down. I want that bastard, Tanner. I want him dead. Do you hear me? I want him...” A dry sob hijacked her tirade as within the next breath, Sera

broke down, and started crying. Deep, desolate sobs that wreaked through her body. She clung to him in despair. “I never thought I’d f-find her, and n-now that you did, h-he’s got her. Th-That bastard has her, Tanner! I want my little girl. I want our little girl!”

“We’ll find her, Babygirl, and once we do, he’s going to be sorry he ever came near her.”

A tempest of fury surged within Tanner, an intensity of anger that eclipsed any emotion he had ever encountered. It wasn’t merely anger; it was a potent blend of emotions that coalesced into an overwhelming rage. The ferocity of his emotions caught him off guard, a maelstrom that threatened to engulf his usual composure. He had no doubt that Sanchigo was using Savannah. That he had in some way found out who she was and was going to use her against them in his war of vengeance.

He battled to restrain the turmoil that surged within him, knowing all-too well that his reactions had the potential to stoke the flames of Sera’s own emotions. With his daughter ensnared in the clutches of that fuckface, he recognized the deadly stakes at play. The last thing he could allow was for the woman who now occupied the most sacred chamber of his heart to recklessly charge into the same perilous abyss of danger. He hugged Sera tightly, unconsciously tightening his grip until she whimpered in protest.

“We’ll find her, love. That I promise.” Ignoring her protest, he carried her to their bedroom and laid her down on the bed. “Try to sleep. I’m going to make you a cup of tea.”

In that moment of internal struggle as he walked back down to the kitchen, he grappled with his primal instincts, forcing his inner tempest to subside. The interplay between his desire for swift action and his unwavering need to keep Sera safe was a complex dance within his psyche. He knew that while anger and urgency gnawed at him, a measured approach was imperative—a calculated strategy that would yield the

best chance of rescuing his daughter without endangering the woman he had so quickly come to love beyond measure.

But first... he had to find the bastard, Sanchigo. Picking up his cell phone, he dialed Kaden's number, who answered within the second ring.

"What's up, Tanner?"

"Could you please send Sage over to stay with Sera? I know there's a security detail around the house, but I don't want to leave her alone. She's not in a good state of mind."

"Why don't you just stay with her? We've got this."

"No, Kaden! I need to be involved. I can't just sit here twiddling my thumbs, while you do all the work. I want to be there the moment you find Sanchigo."

"Very well, I understand. I'll bring her over myself."

The voice sounding behind him as he ended the call chilled his blood.

"No need to look for me, Senator Wilde. I'm right here." A cackle of glee echoed through the room as Tanner turned around to face his nemesis. "And so is your daughter."

In that moment of first looking into the eyes of his own flesh and blood, Tanner knew what it felt like to stand on the edge of an abyss. Suddenly, he couldn't breathe, he struggled to think, and everything around him came to a standstill. His entire world crashed around him when he looked at Savannah. Despite being frozen in fear and indecision, he had never felt his courage run so high. He was looking at the young girl he and Sera had created on that one unplanned night, in perfect physical form. And that filled his entire soul.

"Ah, I see it's not a surprise, and here I thought you never knew you had a child," Sanchigo taunted him.

"What do you mean he didn't know," Chiara asked without taking her eyes off Tanner. It was obvious she was just as drawn to him as he was to her.

“Just what he said, Savannah,” Tanner interjected in a voice that cracked with emotion. “I didn’t know I had fathered a child... until recently.” His eyes turned glacial as he glanced at Sanchigo. “Your mother also didn’t give you away, like I’m sure he made you believe. You were stolen from her as a one-year-old baby by the family she loved and trusted... all to fulfill a passion for money and glory. She has been searching for you ever since.”

“Ah, well,” Sanchigo smirked. “Not too hard, it seems. I mean, I found the little chit within a couple of weeks, so the question you have to ask yourself, Chiara darling, is how hard did she really look for you? Did she even want to find you?”

“Is it true then?” Chiara studied Sanchigo unblinkingly, with a look so much like Tanner’s, his eyes filled with tears. “Is it?” Chiara waved at Tanner. “What he’s saying?”

“How dare you!” Sanchigo exploded with a rage Chiara had only witnessed a couple of times, in situations where he intended to kill a man. It was a fleeting moment before the killer he was trained to be as a child of the Sanchigo Mafia, took over. The killing machine within him emerged as he stared at Chiara, not as the doting, yet sometimes distant, father he always pretended to be.

His left arm swung around, his palm slamming so hard against her cheek, she fell to the floor. “Defying me in front of this bastard? Taking his side after all that I have done for you?”

“Touch her again, you fucking bastard, and I’ll kill you,” Tanner said through clenched teeth as he surged forward to attack Sanchigo but was stopped in his tracks by a hard karate chop at the back of his neck. He fell to his knees, struggling to shake off the blackness that threatened to engulf him. He looked up. The man pointing a gun at him was as big as a Goliath, watching him with black eyes that glowed like onyx.

“Try that again, Senator Wilde,” Bulldog growled, “and you’ll never see the sun rise in the sky again.”



Chiara had pulled herself up in the meantime and she stood, facing her father, as haughty as a queen. With her chin raised, her eyes flashing defiance, and her small hands folded across her chest, she scowled at him.

“There was no need to slap me like a child! I was just asking if what he’s saying is the truth.”

“Enough back chatting,” Sanchigo barked angrily as he looked around. The three bodyguards walked in, followed by Luc Delaware. “Did you secure the parameters?”

“Yes, Boss,” Igor smirked. “They’re all trussed up. Well, those who were wise enough not to fight.”

“You’ve turned into a pussy, Igor,” Chiara taunted him. “Since when do you leave anyone alive?”

“Listen here, you little bitch—”

The knife penetrating his left eye into his brain cut him short. His breath became a faint gurgle, then he fell face forward, a bloody mess.

A cold shiver coursed through Tanner as his eyes rested in shock on the small figure who stood watching with a stoic expression as the man dropped dead. Sticky droplets of red dribbled from the edge of the sharp knife in her hand.

“Chiara! What the fuck do you think you’re doing?” Sanchigo’s anger was palpable in the air as he glowered at her. Tanner wasn’t sure whether it was surprise or shock he detected in his expression. Fury grew higher inside him. His little girl must have suffered and been tormented badly to have turned her into a cold-blooded murderer.

“No one calls the little princess a bitch.” Chiara’s chin raised another notch as she caught Tanner’s eye. “Don’t look so shocked, Senator Wilde. I’m a quick learner, and believe me, Father Sanchigo made sure I had a hard taskmaster.”

Tanner didn’t miss the flicker of hatred in her eyes as she looked at Bulldog. No matter that he needed to wring

every last breath from Sanchigo, the Goliath behind him wasn't walking out of this house alive tonight.

Chiara saw the darkness and the hate he held on the verge of the surface. She recognized the similarity between their desires for Bulldog to pay for the pain he had caused her.

For his part, Tanner's heart tugged a little as he watched his daughter slip the knife into her belt. He caught her eye and held her gaze unblinkingly.

"Father Sanchigo, you say? I don't know how you got to be with him, but whatever he has taught you, and for whatever purpose, I beg you not to forget who your real father is, Savannah."

"Gmpf," she snorted as she took her spot next to Sanchigo again. "There was a time that sweet talk worked on me. Unfortunately for you, I'm not that sappy young girl anymore. Why do you think we're even here, Senator Tanner?"

Tanner ignored the hold Bulldog had on his neck and bore upright. "I don't know, Savannah. Why don't you tell me?"

"My fucking name is Chiara. Call me by that atrocious name once more, and I will gouge your eye out, too!"

Sanchigo placed a hand on her shoulder. For a moment, it appeared tender, but the tightening grip caused Chiara's eyes to water. She winced, and her hand rose, trying to claw at his fingers, but before the message from her brain could make it to her hand, she stood still. Then her hand fell back to her side.

"Let the name-calling stop. Our little princess is growing a backbone and making sure no one calls her anything she dislikes. Yes, *Savannah*," Sanchigo cocked his brow in a sinister smirk at her, "I might have failed in keeping her as a child, Senator Wilde, but her training in the ways of being a powerful member of the Sanchigo Family is going exceptionally well. Bulldog made sure to follow my every wish to have her molded into a full-fledged member of the

Cosa Nostra, and not only a member... a future leader. A formidable leader.”

He leaned back and studied Tanner, and though his demeanor exuded relaxed satisfaction, he knew his gaze hid the fierce envy within him.

“You have no idea how lucky you are, do you? A senator, a man with power and the freedom to rule in the way he sees fit. Well, I’m fucking sick and tired of hiding behind the curtains. I am more powerful than the entire fucking Senate, and it’s time everyone realizes it!”

Tanner ignored his diatribe. “And you’re never going to stop until you reach the White House, or the Oval Office, to become President of the United States. Is that why you have VP Delaware’s son as one of your cronies? So, are you, Sanchigo? Is that what this has been all about? Why you’ve stolen Savannah? Why you’re trying to ruin Sera, her mother?”

A wistful smile cracked the menacing façade of Sanchigo’s face.

“Love. You don’t believe in love, Senator Wilde, just as I don’t. The fact that you’re still unmarried at your age is proof of that. What the fuck does a word mean, anyway?” He drew himself up and spat the next word at him with cold determination. “Power is a far superior notion to fall for. If it wasn’t for power, you wouldn’t even be considering marriage now, would you? A wife is just one more acquisition to tick off in your life as a senator.”

“Oh, please, this entire façade is becoming exceedingly boring. Can we just move on and finish what we came here for?” Chiara interjected with a clipped tone. She gestured at Tanner and said with disdain, “So, who’s going to do the honors? Bulldog, you, Father... or me?”

Sanchigo barked out a laugh. “Do you hear that, Senator Wilde? Your beloved daughter is all too eager to be the one to end your miserable life.”

“What a shame she won’t have that pleasure.” Sage’s cold voice drew a groan from Chiara. She growled out her annoyance as they all turned to find Sage, Keith, and Kaden, surrounded by ten guards of the Triple K Security Firm standing behind them.

“Your stupid assholes! I thought you said you secured the perimeter?” Sanchigo bellowed out his anger at being sidelined. His guards didn’t bother to attempt an explanation as they were quickly overpowered by Kaden’s men.

“This is why you came here, Sanchigo? To kill me?” Tanner drew his attention back to him.

“You and that bitch Sera Brookes deserve to die. You made a fool of me, lied to me in my face, and for that, you will pay, but not in the way you believe. Sera Brookes is the one I will enjoy facing because she took my family away from me, leaving me to hide like a lost hound. If not for her continuous interference, they would never have been forced to leave the country.” He pointed at Chiara who watched him unblinkingly. “That is why she is here. To—”

“Oh, God! It’s you... tell me I’m not dreaming,” Sera said from the stairs as she took the last step and stumbled closer. “Savannah? Is it really you?”

In that moment, a change came over Chiara as she faced her mother for the first time ever. Her eyes widened and softened, allowing the vulnerable little girl she used to be to step back into the light.

Her chin wobbled as long forgotten memories surfaced, so faint they seemed ghostlike, but the familiarity clawed at her heart. In a soft whisper, she breathed, “You... are you my real mother?”

Everyone stilled, not a single soul moved or breathed for a couple of seconds. The silence echoed, as their hearts bled for the young girl who was denied the affection and comfort from the woman who loved and adored her since the very day she was born.

Sera took a few steps closer and came to stand before her. Chiara flinched slightly when Sera's hand came up to cup her cheek. She hesitated when she saw the love shine from the beautiful azure orbs of her real mother. A touch that was all-too familiar and yet so different from any she'd ever received from the woman who had brought her up.

“Chiara! Get away from her. Now!” Sanchigo's voice cracked like a whip, and she automatically stepped away from Sera. “You will not forget why we're here.” Before anyone realized what he was about, he pulled out a gun and pointed it at Sera. “If anyone moves, know this... my aim is true, as is Bulldog's. They will both be dead before you can blink.”

Tanner cursed himself for not disarming Bulldog when the troops arrived, but he had been too caught up with Sera arriving and knowing that the two most precious people in his life were now in danger.

Sanchigo's eyes locked on Sera, and his voice turned cold.

“Because of your incessant interference, my family was torn apart. I might never see my children again.” The smile on his face was pure evil. “I came here to return the favor. You both will suffer the consequences of interfering in my life. You've just been reunited with your sweet, little daughter, Sera Brookes. Now watch her die!”

“Nooo!” Sera screamed and flung herself in front of Savannah as he pulled the trigger.

The room quivered with Chiara's terror-filled scream, coinciding with Tanner's frantic warning as he charged forward. But time cruelly slipped away, and Sanchigo's bullet crashed into Sera, propelling her back into Tanner's waiting arms. His heart quailed, fear gripping him like an unmerciful fist in a powerful clutch. He watched life ebb from her beautiful eyes as blood bubbled past her lips.

A deafening blast ripped through Bulldog as he charged after Tanner. The second bullet from Kaden's gun that

hit him between the eyes almost disintegrated half of his head. He collapsed on the floor, blood pouring from his cracked skull.

For Tanner, time seemed to stretch and bend. His anguished cry and the cacophony of gunshots faded into a distant haze as he knelt beside Sera. Her flickering gaze met his, and her breaths grew shallow.

“Our little girl is so beautiful, Tanner. I’m s-so sorry I never told you about h-her. P-Please take care of her. L-Love her for me.”

“No!” Savannah screamed as she caught Sera’s hand. “You can’t die. Please, Mom! You found me. You have to fight! Please, don’t die.” She raised tear-filled eyes to Tanner. “Please, Dad! Do something. Don’t let her die!”

“A med-evac is already on the way,” Kaden said, his voice a lifeline in the chaos as Tanner looked helplessly at him.

“Do you hear that, my love,” Tanner whispered against Sera’s lips. “Help is almost here. Just hold on, Babygirl. For our daughter... for me. Please, just hold on.”

“I l-love you, T-Tanner,” she whispered, her voice growing weaker. “I a-always did.”

Tanner’s heart faltered as her body grew limp in his arms.

“No! Dear God, please. Hold on, Sera. You can’t... you just can’t...”

Her eyes flared one last time and then...

She was gone.

# Chapter Twenty



*The Wilde Ridge Farm, Bunkie, Louisiana...*

The sun shone brilliantly in the sky. The vibrant green hues of nature seemed almost conspiratorial, defiantly asserting that life continued its usual course, undisturbed by the heavy emotions that weighed on Tanner's heart.

Amid the vibrant surroundings, he exhaled slowly, attempting to quell the turbulence within him. This day should have been as gray and somber as his emotions dictated, yet the birds sang joyously, and the flowers exuded their opulent fragrances, as if oblivious to his inner turmoil.

Ignoring the well-meaning attempts of those around him to engage in conversation, Tanner walked around the gathering, resembling a mere shadow of his usual self. He wished he could blend into the fleeting shadows cast by the trees, sparing himself the twisted anguish that churned within.

Taking a seat, he glanced toward the left, where his parents rested in eternal slumber. A small, colorful garden he had meticulously nurtured stood as a loving tribute to their memory.

"Their souls deserve the beauty of these blossoming rose petals, the scent of love and remembrance. A testament that we have not forgotten them," Tanner mused softly.

"Are you okay, poppet?" he acknowledged Savannah as she sat down next to him. She nodded as she leaned her head on his shoulders. Tears that had constantly flowed since Sera died were ever present on her cheeks. Her small hand

slipped between his clasped fist, intertwining her fingers with his.

“I wish I had known her, Dad,” she whispered, her voice filled with longing. “I never knew, but the day I saw her again... th-that day I realized just how much my heart has missed her all these years.”

“I wish I had more time to know the real her, too, sweetie.” Tanner’s voice was strained. His emotions were like a tightly coiled spring, threatening to unravel at any moment. He hadn’t wept, he hadn’t raged. He simply existed in a void of emptiness.

“It’s my fault,” Savannah’s voice trembled with raw emotion. “I should’ve refused, let that maniac take my life instead of doing his bidding. Then Mom would still—”

“No!” Tanner’s voice was firm, cutting through the self-blame that weighed on his daughter. “I don’t ever want to hear you say those words again. You bear no responsibility for your mother’s death, Savannah. You were as much a victim as she was.”

Savannah’s red-rimmed eyes sought answers. “What’s going to happen to him? Will he be locked up forever?”

Tanner’s internal turmoil churned. The anger he harbored toward Sanchigo, the mafia don who had eluded justice, simmered beneath the surface like a volatile energy ready to ignite. Sanchigo had exploited the chaos surrounding Sera’s shooting to make his escape. Since then, he and his new puppet, Luc Delaware, had vanished without a trace.

“Yes, darling. He will rot in jail. I’ll make sure of that.” Today wasn’t the time to tell her that Sanchigo had avoided capture, especially since she was already hunching under the guilt she felt.

Hatred consumed Tanner’s every waking moment. Yet, he possessed a patience born of necessity. He vowed never to cease his pursuit of vengeance against the man who had shattered their lives. Tanner understood the perilous path



revenge carved, leading to two graves—one for the enemy and one for himself. But he no longer cared. Aside from the profound love he had discovered for his daughter, he felt dead inside, haunted by an emptiness that threatened to consume his very soul. Though Savannah had entered his life only recently, she had seamlessly become an integral part of him, entwining herself with his life, heart, and soul.

“Dad, please promise me one thing.” Savannah squeezed his hand between hers.

“Anything, darling.”

“Please don’t leave me alone. I know you’re angry and hurt, but if you die... I’ll have no one. I need you to live. I need you to tell me about Mom. I need to know who and what she was. Please, Dad. I don’t want you to die as well!”

Tanner patted her arm. How could he leave her behind with the danger of Sanchigo on the loose, knowing that he had already caused the deaths of the only two people she had ever loved—her birth parents? How would that be fair to Savannah? She had already been through so much. How could he cause her more pain by letting Sanchigo ruin yet another life?

A deep sigh of regret eased past Tanner’s lips as he closed his eyes. No matter what path he chose, he felt as though the decisions would rob him of his sanity and life. With her mother taken from her and her father now determined to avenge her murder, he feared the weighty burdens would be too great for a girl her age to cope with.

Savannah’s tear-filled eyes bore into him, breaking his heart as he realized the difficult and terrifying position his actions would plunge her into.

Sera was right to name her Savannah. Savannah in Greek means safe. How ironic that it was Sera’s murder that left her daughter vulnerable—an existence that was the very antithesis of the name Savannah.

Suddenly, Sera's face floated into view, and in his vision, she smiled warmly, her expression peaceful and hopeful. A calmness settled inside him and his eyes locked on the grave in which the woman he had loved now laid.

"I can't tell you that I'm not angry, Savannah," Tanner whispered. "That would be the ultimate deception. To survive and give you what Sera was unable to, my strength and support, will require vengeance. I can't let that bastard get away with just a jail sentence."

A choked sob of despair was swallowed in a jagged inhale of breath. Savannah clung desperately to him, her little fists pummeling his chest. He caught her hands.

"I know that a broken heart hurts so much worse than a bullet, Savannah. Sometimes, you think that not breathing or existing anymore might be the lesser pain. But life will bring you such incredible experiences that you will never know if you give up too soon, the life God created you to live." He lifted his daughter's chin until her glistening eyes found his gaze. A small smile creased his lips.

"Today is not a day to speak of loss, nor is it the time for sad endings. We will remember the wondrous memories and vow to cherish them like they were only meant to be treasured. A child's lifetime, filled with laughter, wonder, and love—precious memories and blessings for us to share." He squeezed her hands gently and lovingly. "It's what your mother wanted for us."

Fueled by the encouragement in his words, Savannah's determination to emerge from the shroud of darkness and return to a world of the living glowed on her face. Tanner gently wiped away the tears and cleared his throat.

"Today is for the celebration of a precious and cherished life. Let's live up to Sera's name and remember her as our source of comfort, warmth, and security."

With his words of wisdom floating on the breeze, Tanner carried his wife and his daughter's name into the

sunlight and turned his face heavenward. It would take a little time, but he would make good on his word. Today, the nightmare was ending, but danger still awaited the day the tides changed and the determination turned on him. That day would be the day Sanchigo would breathe his last breath, and Savannah's future would be secure.

Until then, Tanner would bide his time, work in politics, raise his daughter, and... wait.

The loss of his only love cut through his heart once again with an abysmal chill. All around him was a whirlpool of sorrow and heartache, swirling emotions he battled to keep under control. Today, he stood at a pivotal point where one door had closed and another stood waiting.

He hugged his daughter. "I hope one day you will understand but know this, my darling. Life holds surprises—hidden promises that make it worth living, but sometimes, even the most wonderful surprise can turn sour." He smiled sadly.

"Murders, betrayal, and revenge. Three events are set to collide, changing not only your life but also mine... forever."

"I understand, but I can't lose you too, Dad!"

He cupped her cheeks. His breath caught as he stared at her and saw his beloved Sera in every line of her face. They looked so much alike; it made his heart bleed.

"You're not going to lose me, poppet. For now, I'm not going anywhere."

Locked in an embrace of equal pain and compassion, they stood on the hill overlooking the fresh grave.

"Sera will always be with us, Savannah. In our hearts and living in our souls. We will never be alone."

A lone tear slipped from his eye as the melodious sound of Sera's voice floated toward him over the rolling hills.

*“I love you, Tanner. I always will. Take care of our beautiful daughter... until we meet again.”*

## *The End.*

Or no wait! Of course, it's not the end! The story of the Louisiana Daddies and Sanchigo continues in Demanding Daddy.

**Read on for the blurb.**

# Blurb: Demanding Daddy



## **CLUB ROUGE: LOUISIANA DADDIES, BOOK 3**

Demanding Daddy is the story of Slade Lewis.

*Slade Lewis*

Deputy Director of the CIA, Slade Lewis knew all too well that tomorrow was never guaranteed. He had lost many partners over the years in the line of duty. As DD, he took his job serious and the protection of his teams even more so. He didn't hide behind his desk with pen in hand. He fought every mission by the side of his men, everyone planned to the last minute detail.

Except, this time, he couldn't predict the outcome, especially not when the element that threatened failure was a petite brunette... one that needed to be mastered. There was only one problem. She was a wanted woman. A corrupt attorney general who by shady means, was released from prison.

However, there was so much more to her... and the more he found out, the less he liked what he uncovered.

*Jessica Hewitt*

She had a terrific career and made the headlines as an unbending attorney general time after time. Until everything changed and her past caught up with her, proving once again that blood was thicker than water. Family always came first.

This time, she lost everything. Her career, her freedom... and her one chance at finding love with a man she had a secret crush on since the first day she laid eyes on him.

With no choice but to go into hiding, the last person she expected to walk through the door as her informant, was the man she desired above all else. Caught between two worlds, nothing could prepare her for the effect DD Lewis had on her when his focus became just her. How did she stay loyal to a corrupt family when all it took to crumble her resolve was one dark look and the promise of retribution over his lap... as her Daddy Dom?

Get yours here: <https://books2read.com/LD3-DemandingDaddy>

# Books by Linzi Basset

## [Louisiana Daddies](#)

Covert Daddy – Prequel  
Black Ops Daddy – Book 1  
Radical Daddy – Book 2

## [Grace's Initiation](#)

The Interview – Prequel  
S is for Safeword – Book 1

## [The Guzun Trilogy](#)

Vadim – Book 1  
Vanya – Book 2  
Arian – Book 3

## [Decadent Sins Series](#)

Dominant Nature – Book 1  
Dominant Desire – Book 2  
Dominant Demand – Book 3  
Dominant Thrills – Book 4  
Dominant Mercy – Book 5

## [Castle Sin Series](#)

Hunter - Prequel  
Stone – Book 1  
Hawk – Book 2  
Kane – Book 3

Ace – Book 4  
Parker – Book 5  
Zeke – Book 6  
Shane – Book 7  
Danton – Book 8  
Billy & Mongo – Book 9  
Peyton – Book 10

*Club Devil's Cove Series*

His Devil's Desire – Book 1  
His Devil's Heat – Book 2  
His Devil's Wish – Book 3  
His Devil's Mercy – Book 4  
His Devil's Chains – Book 5  
His Devil's Fire – Book 6  
Her Devil's Kiss – Book 7  
His Devil's Rage – Book 8  
The Devil's Christmas – Book 9  
The Devilish Santa – Book 10

*Club Wicked Cove Series*

Desperation: Ceejay's Absolution – Book 1  
Desperation: Colt's Acquittal – Book 2  
Exploration: Nolan's Regret – Book 3  
Merciful: Seth's Revenge – Book 4  
Claimed: Parnell's Gift – Book 5  
Decadent: Kent's Desire – Book 6



Wicked and Fearless – Box Set, Books 1 – 3

Wicked and Deadly – Box Set, Books 4 - 6

*Club Alpha Cove Series*

His FBI Sub – Book 1

His Ice Baby Sub – Book 2

His Vanilla Sub – Book 3

His Fiery Sub – Book 4

His Sassy Sub – Book 5

Their Bold Sub – Book 6

His Brazen Sub – Book 7

His Defiant Sub – Book 8

His Forever Sub – Book 9

His Cherished Sub – Book 10

For Amy – Their Beloved Sub – Book 11

*The Bleeding Souls Trilogy*

Kiss the Devil - Prequel

*The Stiletto PI Series*

Fierce Paxton – Book 1

Fiery Jordan – Book 2

*Billionaire Bad Boys Romance*

Road Trip

Rogue Cowboy

*Dark Desire Novels*

Enforcer – Book 1

*Their Sub Novella Series*

No Option – Book 1

Done For – Book 2

For This – Book 3

Their Sub Series Boxset

*Their Command Series*

Say Yes – Book 1

Say Please – Book 2

Say Now – Book 3

Their Command Series Boxset

**Romance Suspense**

*The Bride Series*

Claimed Bride – Book 1

Captured Bride – Book 2

Chosen Bride – Book 3

Charmed Bride – Book 4

*Caught Series*

Caught in Between

Caught in His Web

*The Tycoon Series*

The Tycoon and His Honey Pot

The Tycoon's Blondie

The Tycoon's Mechanic

*Standalone Titles*

Her Prada Cowboy

Never Leave Me, Baby

Now is Our Time

The Wildcat that Tamed the Tycoon

The Poet's Lover

Sarah: The Life of Me

Axle's Darkness

*Naughty Christmas Stories*

Her Santa Dom

Master Santa

Snowflake's Spanking

*Box sets*

A Santa to Love – with Isabel James

Christmas Delights – with Isabel James

Unwrapped Hearts – with Isabel James

**Books written as Kimila Taylor**

*Paranormal Books*

Guardian's Spell

Zaluc's Mate

Slade: Blood Moon

Azriel: Rebel Angel

**Books Co-Written as Isabel James**

*Zane Gordon Novels*

Truth Untold

*The Crow's Nest*

A journey of discovery on the White Pearl

*Christmas Novellas*

Santa's Kiss

Santa's Whip

Mistletoe Bride

**Poetry Bundle by Linzi Basset & James Calderaro**

*Love Unbound - Poems of the Heart*

# About the Author

“Isn’t it a universal truth that it’s our singular experiences and passion, for whatever thing or things, which molds us all into the individuals we become? Whether it’s hidden in the depths of our soul or exposed for all to see?”

Linzi Basset is a South African born animal rights supporter with a poet’s heart, and she is also a bestselling fiction writer of suspense-filled romance erotica books; who as the latter, refuses to be bound to any one sub-genre. She prefers instead to stretch herself as a storyteller which has resulted in her researching and writing historical and even paranormal themed works.

Her initial offering: Club Alpha Cove, a BDSM club suspense series released back in 2015, and catapulted her into International Bestseller status. Labelling her as prolific is a gross understatement as just a few short years later she has now been published over a hundred times; a total which includes the other published works of her alter ego: Isabel James who co-authors and alternative penname, Kimila Taylor.

“I write from the inside out. My stories are both inside me and a part of me, so it can be either pleasurable to release them or painful to carve them out. I live every moment of every story I write. So, if you’re looking for spicy and suspenseful, I’m your girl ... woman ... writer ... you know what I mean!”

Linzi believes that by telling stories in her own voice, she can better share with her readers the essence of her being: her passionate nature; her motivations; and her wildest fantasies. She feels every touch as she writes, every kiss, every harsh word uttered, and this to her is the key to a never-ending love of writing.

Ultimately, all books by Linzi Basset are about passion. To her, passion is the driving force of all emotion; whether it be lust, desire, hate, trust, or love. This is the

underlying message contained in her books. Her advice: “Believe in the passions driving your desires; live them; enjoy them; and allow them to bring you happiness.”

Find out more here: <https://www.linzibassetauthor.com/>

# Stalk Linzi Basset

If you'd like to look me up, please follow any of these links.

While you're enjoying some of my articles, interviews, and poems on my website, why not subscribe to my Newsletter and be the first to know about new releases and win free books? You will also receive a free eBook copy of *The Interview* and *The Poet's Lover*.

Go to my website, [www.linzibassetauthor.com](http://www.linzibassetauthor.com), and while you're there, subscribe to her newsletter:

<https://www.linzibassetauthor.com/subscribe>

**Find all my social links and follow me here:**

<https://linktr.ee/LinziBasset>

Don't forget to join my fan group, [Linzi's Reading Nook](#), for loads of fun!

Don't be shy, pay me a visit, anytime!