



BRATVA MAFIA  
AGE GAP  
ROMANCE

MOROZOV BRATVA

# AUCTIONED

*to the Bratva*

LEXI ASHER

# AUCTIONED TO THE BRATVA

*Bratva Mafia Age Gap Romance*

*Morozov Bratva Book 9*

Lexi Asher

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## Chapter 1 - Sergei

“Sergei,” Roman’s voice echoed through the speaker of my phone connected to the car.

“I have just landed, and I am on my way, brother,” I replied as I followed the GPS’s route.

“Excellent, I will have the chef make us something for lunch. See you soon.” Roman’s voice once again filled the car before he hung up.

The drive from the airport to his mansion was short; before I knew it, I was driving up the long entrance to a gate with guards. As I neared the gate, it opened, and I was glad Roman had let his men know I was coming.

The house was truly magnificent in style and size. A door towards the side opened, and Roman walked down what looked like marble steps. He motioned for me to pull closer, so I stopped by the fountain next to the steps.

As I opened my door, he was there to greet me. “Brother,” Roman said as he pulled me into his arms and hugged me tightly. “It’s been too long.” He took hold of my shoulders and kissed each cheek before letting me go.

“I know, I know,” I said, wiping at my cheeks. He knew I disapproved of his chosen life but still acted as if I was part of it. I had gotten to know some of our Bratva family over the last few years, but I wanted nothing to do with the family business.

I grabbed my office bag and closed the car door. “Let’s go inside,” Roman said as he walked ahead of me up the steps into the mansion. Even though we were twins, he was unquestionably the larger brother and much neater in appearance than me.

As we entered the foyer, Karine was waiting to greet me. She also pulled me close and laid a kiss on each cheek. I didn’t mind her kisses as much as Roman’s, and I just smiled as we greeted each other.

We walked through an open living area with a bar on one side, where the barman poured each of us a glass of scotch. Then, we headed out another door to the backyard. The grass was a vibrant green, and the flowers appeared to be on steroids; they were so bright with color.

In the middle was another fountain, but it was a smaller one surrounded by giant live oak trees. Underneath them were tables and chairs set up as if they were hosting a party.

We sat at one of the tables as Karine came out with platters of food. “This view is amazing,” I said as we settled.

Roman stared out at the ocean and the white beach below. “It is quite gorgeous, isn’t it?” He smiled at Karine as she placed the plates down before sitting beside him.

They seemed so much in love, and I hoped that I might find a woman who looked at me that way one day. After our mother died and we learned the identity of our father, our lives changed drastically.

I was always content with it being just the three of us: Mother, me, and Roman. But lately, my mind was playing with the idea of a big family. I had actually gotten to know some of our dad’s family. As long as I wasn’t involved in the family business, I was okay with it.

“We have news,” Roman said after swallowing the mouth full of hors d’oeuvres he was chewing on. Karine’s face lit up as her full lips formed a smile brighter than the sun. Even her intense green eyes were sparkling.

I shifted nervously on my chair. “Okay,” I replied cautiously. Ever since Roman had joined our father in the Bratva, he had been trying to get me to allow them in as business partners in our company. I was wary as I felt it wasn’t good for business to involve the family business with our own.

“May I?” Karine asked Roman as they stared deep into each other’s eyes. He nodded and looked at me as she spoke, “We are having a baby, Sergei.”

“You are going to be an uncle,” Roman added as he jumped out of his chair, coming to stand by my side.

My mouth fell open; I was flabbergasted. This was not what I expected when he invited me to visit. Shaking my head, trying to absorb her words, I felt a knot forming in my throat.

Roman was practically jumping up and down beside my chair, and it took me a minute to register. As I stood, he embraced me. “Are you not happy for us?” he breathed into my ear as he picked me up. I felt my chest close, and my breathing stopped as he squashed me in his arms.

I returned his strength with a tight hug of my own, and like usual, we took turns squishing each other. He let his grip ease. As I stepped back, I saw pure excitement in his dark blue eyes.

I smiled at him and shook his hand. “Congratulations,” I said between deep breaths. Then I stepped around him and softly hugged Karine. “I am so happy for you both. This is great news.”

We sat back down and had another drink. After our shared meal and discussing baby names for boys and girls, Roman invited me to see his office. We entered the mansion and headed up a set of stairs.

He had cleared what he called the separation room right next to their bedroom and turned it into his office. The setup was nice and inviting.

Roman grabbed a couple of glasses from a tray on his desk and poured another drink. “Let’s have a seat. I have something else to discuss with you.”

I searched his face for clues on his sudden seriousness. But he kept all emotions out. I felt my heart sinking as I suspected that we would end up talking business at some time. I was open to getting to know the family, but involving them in business was another story.

After taking the glass from Roman, I sat down on the one end of the double couch. Roman pulled up a chair from the desk and sat down before me. He studied my face for a moment before speaking.

“Sergei,” he said as he sighed. I shifted in my seat, knowing what was to follow. “I know you are super-rational and always cool-headed when it comes to business.” He paused as I watched him closely as he slowly sipped at the scotch in his glass.

The stare he gave me, and the look in his blue eyes were intense and made me uncomfortable. I took a big swallow from my glass, almost emptying it, and breathed in deeply.

“I spoke to Father again this week. If you have any doubt, he can assure you that we are doing the right thing,” Roman said as he sat back, waiting for my reaction.

After draining the last scotch in my glass, I rose and placed it down on the table behind him. “Roman,” I spoke in a low voice. “You know I love you. But you also know how I feel about the company we worked so hard on building up.”

Roman rose from his chair, “I know, and that...” His words trailed off as I turned to face him, my hands clutched tightly into fists at my sides.

“And nothing,” I spat at him. “I do not want to hear about the good it can do bonding with our new family... We do not need this kind of business; our success is our own.”

My fists were shaking at my sides, and my face was hot from anger. I turned and headed for the door. I glanced back at him as I opened it, “Please, let this go. Thanks for lunch,” I said as I walked out the door and headed down the stairs.

Roman didn’t follow, and I felt relieved that he didn’t. I loved him dearly, but I wasn’t sure if I could control my anger at the moment. Karine was nowhere to be seen and I was glad about it. I left the house and drove to the hotel down the beach where I had booked in for the week.

Even though my brother had insisted I stay with them, I was glad I decided to get a room instead. They had enough space, but I didn’t want to be stuck in their home with a confrontation such as this. Roman knew how I felt about his



business and respected my decision. After ordering a Doppio from room service, I unpacked and looked at the view from my penthouse suite.

Once my coffee came, I started feeling better. I took a shower and decided to head out for the evening. Roman was always the one with short military-style haircuts, but mine, I had to pull my curls back and tie them up to keep them from falling as they wanted.

I looked in the mirror and decided to untie them as I wanted to let loose. I didn't need a professional look tonight. I needed some release and hoped to meet a girl for some fun. I changed my suit jacket for my leather one and left my tie on the bed.

Once I entered the lobby, I saw the bar to one side. After grabbing another Doppio from the downstairs bar, I headed to the parking garage.

Armed with a list of clubs Roman had sent me last week, I headed out into the streets of Miami. I started the cool blue Ferrari and sat for a moment programming the GPS. The smell of leather filled my nostrils, and I closed my eyes for a second. At age 44, I was here to relax, even just for one night. I tried my best not to dwell on the problems of family and business.

The motor purred like a kitten as I pulled out of the parking lot and headed down toward the beach clubs. Stopping at one of the clubs, Roman said it was neutral territory but good; I could see he wasn't the only one thinking so. The street was lined with people waiting to enter.

I pulled out again and headed slowly down the street, searching for a less populated club. I didn't need to go far as the bright lights of the next club lit up the street one block down. I stopped just down the street from the door and headed inside.

As I entered, Thriller one of Michael Jackson's songs started playing, and I felt relieved that it wasn't one of those pop-raving clubs. The club floor was sparkling with an array of colors, and most of the tables surrounding it were full. I

moved through the people towards the counter at the back and took a seat on one side of the bar. The solid wooden counter was covered in thick plastic, and I assumed it was to protect the wood from spillage.

Three young people were behind the counter, two males and one female. They looked like they could be siblings, all with the same hairstyles and skinny builds. One of the men neared me. “What can I get you?” he asked with a southern accent.

“Whiskey on the rocks, please,” I responded loudly, hoping to be heard over the music. The young man nodded and walked to the other side of the bar. As I waited, I surveyed the room. In one corner was a stage, and it seemed a band was starting to set up for the evening.

Most of the patrons appeared to be in their late twenties to early thirties, and I wondered if I looked out of place being in my forties. The men at least wore suit pants and not denim, as found in most clubs in Los Angeles these days. The bartender returned with my whiskey. I placed my bill down on the counter before picking up the glass of clear brown liquid and smelling the sweet aroma.

As I turned to face the door, a gust of wind entered, blowing in some leaves from the sidewalk as it swung open. A sparkling beauty strolled through the open doors. I wiped my eyes to make sure I was seeing clearly. Her bright red dress glittered as the lights hit her. Franky started to sing “The Way You Look Tonight,” and I felt my breath wavering as my heartbeat increased.

Her silky-smooth hair was tied up, but the strands framing her face seemed to glow. Her breasts were prominently wrapped in the tight top of her dress, which hugged her like a second skin. The dress flowed into a wide skirt that stopped above her elegant knees.

Her black stilettos were a perfect touch as they highlighted her muscular calves. She sauntered forward with effortless movement, causing my blood to boil. I felt sweat forming in my palms and rubbed my hands on my suit pants.

I could not take my eyes off her as she glided over to the bar. She was the one I wanted tonight. I wiped my brow as I felt the sweat developing and hoped she wasn't with someone.

## Chapter 2 - Irina

Standing here watching the ocean play in the distance while sipping the rich darkness of my mocha was the perfect start or end to any day for me. I couldn't believe I was finally here. When Evelina told me that Leo, her twin, could help me get a position at a nursery school in Miami, I had doubts.

But now, I was finally here and starting work next week. Evelina had also offered to assist with a house or apartment, but I wanted to do this myself.

After settling in yesterday at the closest hotel, I did some research online and made some calls. Now, sipping my mocha, I was filled with excitement. I saw so many houses and flats today with the agent. But there were two apartments close to the school and the beach that had caught my eye; I could not quite decide which one, though.

I was heading down to the beach tonight to scope out the clubs. I smiled at my reflection in the window, feeling silly. Leo had made sure I knew where not to go. So that left me with about three clubs close to one apartment and two near the other.

Intent on stopping at each, I walked to the door and stopped at the full-sized mirror. Turning in my bright red dress, I watched it flare and felt my heart skip a beat. The black stilettos complimented the dress, and I took my black lace jacket should it get cooler. I didn't intend to find love, but maybe some companionship for the evening.

Before leaving my room, I made sure my hair was falling just the way I wanted it to. At the top, the majority was tied into a bun, and around it hung loose strands to frame my face. It was a style I was rather fond of. The last time I had worn it up like this was in Russia as I said goodbye to Oleg.

It was time to leave. I wasn't made for filling my father's shoes in Bratva. I offered to assist Oleg and was shocked when he said I could return to my normal life if I wanted to do so. So shocked it took me a year to leave. But here I was, now getting on with my new life.

Once I was sure I had everything I needed, I headed down and had the desk call me a cab. Stepping out into the cool evening breeze, I felt a surge of excitement pass through me. This was the first time in my life I had gone out completely on my own.

In Russia, Evelina, or someone else from the family had always joined me. But here, there weren't a lot of people who knew me. A fresh start, with new experiences, and friends who still needed to be made. The ride to the road along the beach was short. The first club we stopped at was filled with a line of people longer than I had ever seen standing outside, and I decided against it.

I asked the driver to drop me at the next one across the next road. I could have walked, but I was a bit unsure of the area. This one appeared quieter, and I decided to head in. I paid the cabby and told him he didn't need to wait as I was sure the next one would also be close by.

After straightening out the wrinkles of my dress, I stepped through the doors. I expected to find a room filled with smoke, loud music, and drunk people, as in many clubs in Russia. But the air was clear except for a couple of smokers seated at tables to the sides of the open dance floor.

At the back was a long bar counter with scattered people drinking alone. Frank Sinatra was singing from a jukebox in a corner while the band was setting up. The place seemed quiet, and I wondered if I shouldn't go to another club.

The previous one was packed, and this one almost appeared dead. I decided to give it some time and strolled over to the bar. I would see if it got any better once the band started playing. I sat down at the one side of the bar. A couple was seated on one side, and a tall, handsome man on the other.

His dark curly hair hung around his strong face, his eyes almost disappearing into the ocean of waves. His leather jacket hugged his broad shoulders and fit perfectly. His eyes seemed dark, and I could not tell the color, but they almost appeared smokey in the darkened light of the bar.

He smiled at me as I sat down, and I felt my stomach making a knot. A young woman came walking over from the other side of the counter. “Hi, can I get you a drink?” she asked politely. Suddenly feeling uncomfortable and wanting to flee, I glanced at the handsome stranger.

The man in the leather jacket was staring at me. I glanced back at the door, wondering if it would be better to leave, but decided to stay. If I went now, he might follow, and I didn’t want to be alone outside. I would stay and wait him out.

I ordered a Black Russian. As the friendly bartender poured my drink, I glanced at the couple seated on my other side. They seemed deep in a whispering conversation and didn’t appear to notice anyone or anything at the moment.

The bartender returned with my drink, and feeling my nerves eating at me, I ordered a shot of vodka and downed it before picking up my cocktail. I noticed the mysterious man sliding off his stool and walking closer. I didn’t look at him or turn his way as he stopped beside me.

“May I take this seat, or are you waiting for someone?” He asked, leaning in closer. I felt a chill run down my back as his smooth voice hit my ears.

I slightly turned toward him but kept my head down and only peeked through my bangs. His eyes were a deep smokey blue, and his smile warm. I nodded, not sure what I should say. If I said no, I would be lying, and I did not believe in lying, even to strangers.

“Thank you,” he said as he sat down. His voice filled with confidence as he continued. “May I buy you a drink?”

The bartender returned and grinned at me as she asked if I was still okay. I tapped my glass to indicate I was fine. I answered the stranger without looking up, “No thanks, I can buy my own drinks.”

He relaxed on his stool next to me and sipped at his drink, staring out at the crowd gathering. As the band started up, the club rapidly became crowded. Soon, people were

shoving in around us to get to the bar. I felt stuffed and wanted to get out.

As I slid off the bar stool, someone bumped into me, pushing me to the side. My one leg gave away beneath me. For a second, I thought I was going to be trampled by the people shoving and pushing. But then I felt two strong hands grabbing me by the waist and pulling me out of the crowd.

He pulled me closer to him and stepped back out of the crowd. I looked up into those dark eyes. We were now standing in the corner, pressed up against each other as the people still poured into the club.

“Would you like to go somewhere quieter?” he whispered. His hot breath sent another chill down my spine that I could not explain.

All I could do was nod as my lungs struggled to find air. He gently held me close as we moved through the rowdy crowd to the door. I could feel his bulging muscles through the silky cloth of his shirt. He smelled of old leather that had been polished, and I had to shake my head to keep my mind from wandering off.

At the door, a man took hold of my arm turning me towards him. “Where you going lovely,” he asked stinking of alcohol. I felt the man from the bar slide his hand down my arm and take hold of the drunk’s hand. Leaning over my shoulder, he calmly spoke. “Let go of her, my friend.”

The drunk let go and stepped back. He pushed into another man as he stumbled. The man turned and punched him. As we moved through the door, I noticed the man who was not beating on the drunk had a scar on his face. My heart was racing as fear stepped in. We moved quickly and I was glad to not see more of the fighting that took place.

Once we stepped outside, he let go of me, and I took a couple of paces back. “Thank you,” I said, smiling softly at the attractive stranger. I shook my head again as new images invaded my mind and wondered why I had such a strong attraction to him. He looked familiar, but I could not quite place him yet.

“I take it, you are not from around here?” he asked as we stepped away from the door. No, I thought to myself as I slowly shook my head from side to side. I dared not speak as my voice might betray me.

“Neither am I,” he continued, not fazed by my silence. “Would you like to go to another one and try again?” he said as he held out his big hand. I glanced at the club and back at him.

“Excuse my manners,” he said, “I’m Sergei, and you are?”

A Russian name, I thought as I looked up at him and answered slowly, “Irina.” He still had his hand out to me, his face lit up with a smile that made him appear kind.

Why not? What was the worst thing that could happen? If I felt in danger, I would call Evelina. I placed my hand in his and allowed him to lead me to his car. He politely opened the passenger door and waited for me to be seated before closing it. He darted around the back and entered the driver’s side.

I felt a little shaken by the events inside and didn’t want to be alone. Plus, he just saved me. Who knows what could have happened if he wasn’t there?

I was still trying to figure out where I had seen him when we pulled into another parking area. The parking area was well-lit, and as he switched off the engine, he once again darted around the car and assisted me out. He was a gentleman, and this made me a bit more comfortable.

He held out his arm, and we walked to the club entrance. I noticed a coffee shop on the corner and realized we were close to the second apartment I had my eye on. He opened the door and waited for me to enter. The place was smokier and the music playing much slower than at the other bar.

At the bar, he ordered a whiskey and a Black Russian. Had he been paying so much attention to me, or did he just have a good memory? There was no band on the stage, and I



assumed that was why it was so much quieter. We got our drinks and moved to sit at one of the tables.

“I know,” I said as he took his seat opposite me, almost screaming as my mind saw Roman taking a seat next to Oleg. This man looked a lot like Roman and that was why he appeared to be and felt so familiar. Yet, there were quite a few differences.

Firstly, there were no bodyguards, no made men, and he surely didn't have a gun. But to be sure, I looked at the people around us again, no, there were no signs of Bratva men. Plus, Roman was married; why would he be out here? I lowered my head. What was I thinking?

“You know what?” he asked, looking at me sideways. I couldn't prevent the crimson shade from flooding my cheeks as I smiled at him, realizing I had said it out loud. Looking around, I must have been very loud as people were staring.

I shook my head and looked into my glass, “Nothing, sorry.” I replied. Feeling his eyes on me. I kept looking into my glass, not sure how to respond.

“Would you like something to eat, or have you had dinner?” he asked in his smooth voice. I slowly lifted my head, finding his gaze as I considered his motive.

“Something light, if they have,” I replied. He smiled and rose, heading back to the bar. He even walked like Roman, I thought as I watched him. I was sure it couldn't be, as Evelina said, Roman got married a few years ago. Plus, Roman had short hair, and this man had a great wave of hair.

Something was indeed familiar about him; I just couldn't place it. He glanced back with that warm smile across his lips. I shifted in my chair as I felt my breath catching again. I shook my head as he walked back with a large plate in his hands. I had to get rid of these emotions.

He was a stranger, who knew where from or what he would do if we were alone. He placed the big plate with snack food on the table, and I could not help but laugh. There were

sausages, shrimp, potato wedges, and more. On the other side of the plate was a variety of fruit.

“You not hungry after all?” he asked with concern in his voice. I smiled up at him and shook my head.

“No, this is just an interesting choice for a late supper,” I replied, smiling. He eased his shoulders and sat back down.

“So, where are you from?” he asked before placing a shrimp in his mouth.

I glanced around, making sure no one was eavesdropping; it was a habit I had picked up during my stay with Oleg. “Russia, and you?” I asked as I swallowed some of the grapes.

His eyes widened slightly as he replied. “I am from Los Angeles, born and raised, but my brother lives here.” He glanced over his shoulder as if he was looking for someone before downing his glass. “Do you need another drink?” he asked quietly. “No thanks, I’m still fine,” I replied wondering why he suddenly appeared to be on edge.

As he walked back to the bar, he kept looking around, and I wondered what or who he was searching for. He came back with another round of drinks and sat back down. “So, Irina, what do you do for a living?” This time, there was a faster pace to his voice as he spoke.

“I’m a nursery schoolteacher,” I answered, searching his face for any sign of danger. “What do you do?”

He glanced around again before meeting my gaze. “I have my own firm that I run with my brother.” He said as he took another shrimp. “I don’t usually do this,” he continued as he wiped his brow. “But would you like to go back to my hotel room with me?”

I lowered my gaze and smiled, not sure why his invitation was so tempting. This was not something I had ever done. In fact, I have barely gotten past kissing. Now, here was this perfect specimen asking me to go back to his room with him.

The idea of spending the night with him frightened me but also made my senses light up. I didn't know if it was the Black Russians or the allure of him, but I wanted him.

“No judgment, I promise.” He said as if he could see my thoughts. He leaned forward and took my small hand in his. He gently moved his thumb over my fingers from one side to the other. Again, my breath seemed to disappear, and my stomach made knots.

I did not understand the sudden urges he was causing within me, but I wanted to explore them. Looking up into his deep eyes, I smiled and nodded in agreement.

## Chapter 3 - Sergei

I held out my hand for her as I rose from the table. She slid off the chair and placed her soft, warm hand into mine. Oh, my mind was going wild, the things I wanted to do to her. I shook my head gently, trying to clear the mischievous thoughts.

She was not like other women. I could sense it; there was an aura about her. I just couldn't place it. We walked to the car, and I opened the door for her. Elegantly, she slipped into the seat and smiled as I closed the door.

I dashed around the back and almost slipped as I eagerly took my place in the driver's seat. My pants suddenly felt a size too small, and my heart felt like it was clawing at my ribs to escape. Why was this woman having such an effect on me?

We pulled out of the parking lot, and I headed back to the hotel. As we entered, I saw a flicker of doubt cross her face, and I swallowed the lump forming in my throat. I gave her hand a little squeeze and stopped at the bar.

"Are you sure?" I asked, smiling down at her, hoping she had not changed her mind. She glanced around and returned my smile, nodding her head ever so gently. I ordered a bottle of champagne and led her to the elevator.

We rode up in silence and stepped out on the top floor. I unlocked the room and held the door open for her. Irina walked in, and I couldn't help but notice her curves tempting me. Her silky brown hair glowed golden in the bright lights of the penthouse. She glanced at the room as if searching for something.

"I need the bathroom; which way?" she asked softly, glancing at me over her shoulder. I pointed to the door on the left side of the open living area and watched as she walked to the door and disappeared. She had curves in all the right places.

Oh, how I missed my home in Los Angeles now, the things we could do there. I scolded myself under my breath as

I realized I had not packed any of my toys. I came here intent on relaxing, and I brought nothing. What was I thinking? Where was my mind when I left? Roman had caught me off guard with his invitation; that must have been it.

As my mind wandered to my bedroom and the fixtures I had designed for total absorption into sex, I felt my dick start to throb. I smiled at myself as just the thought of having Irina here aroused me. The doorbell chimed, bringing me back to the present.

I opened it and allowed the young, dark-haired server to push the trolley into the room. I gave him a good tip and locked the door as he left. After pouring her a glass of champagne, I quickly walked through the living area, scanning various chairs. I was seeking something that would give me full access.

There were two double couches and two single ones, but the one in the middle differed from the rest. All the couches were facing toward the door and lined nicely along the wall-to-floor windows. I walked to the one in the middle.

As I stood looking down at the chaise lounge, I knew this was the one. I fluffed the pillows on it and placed them on one side of the chaise. Suddenly, I heard a glass making contact with a bottle behind me. Turning, I saw she was pouring herself another glass. I didn't even hear her come back in or drink the first glass, but that wasn't important.

I was sure she must be feeling nervous as she quickly drank the second glass as well. Taking the glass from her hand and filling it again, I led her over to the chaise. As she sat down, I handed her the glass, and she beamed up at me.

Glancing back at the second glass next to the bottle, I decided not to have any more. I did not like mixing my drinks and wanted to be fully present for this evening. The room was too bright and quiet, we needed music.

I walked to the cabinet by the entrance and found the TV remote. Her eyes followed me as I moved, I could feel them on me. I wondered what she was thinking as I first turned the lights down. Then I scrambled through the stations, found

one playing love songs, and decided it would work. Most women preferred that kind of music.

With the mood set, I returned to the chaise pulling the trolley with me and parking it next to us. The sky outside was darker than usual, and I could hear the wind lashing at the sides of the building. It sounded like a storm was approaching. After turning up the volume some more, I slowly sat down beside her and placed my hand on her leg just above the knee.

Her dress lay the perfect distance from her knee as my hand fitted nicely between the two. Her skin felt soft and warm. I turned to her and shifted my hand slightly up. She let out a gasp. I felt her body tense under my touch and leaned forward.

“If you want to stop at any time, just say so, okay?” I whispered in her ear. Her face turned crimson, and her smile appeared tight. She turned her head slightly and nodded in agreement before swallowing the remainder of the champagne in her glass.

I took the glass from her and set it on the table next to the chaise. She sat with her hands in her lap as I turned back. I placed one hand on hers and smiled as I leaned in and kissed her cheek.

Trying again, I returned my hand to just above her knee. She sat still as I moved closer. I slightly shifted my hand up her thigh, her skin warm and tender under my touch. She did not move as I came closer and kissed her on the lips.

Her lips were full and warm, instantly, I knew I wanted more of her. She tasted sweet and didn't resist when my tongue entered her mouth. As we kissed, I felt the throbbing deepen and knew soon I would have to make adjustments. I pulled back, smiling warmly at her, “Excuse me just for a second,” I said as I rose and headed to the bathroom.

Glancing back, I noticed her smoothing her skirt out across her legs. I closed the door behind me and breathed in deeply as I loosened my pants and shifted my dick upright. Opening the tap, I looked at my reflection in the mirror. My face also appeared slightly red, but could be from the drinks.

Never before had I been shy, and I didn't feel nervous, so there could be no other reason.

After I rinsed my face a couple of times, I made sure I was comfortable and zipped up my pants. Heading back to the living area, Irina looked like a Russian goddess. She had moved on the chaise and now lay perched to one side. Her right elbow was holding her upper body in place, and the dress strap had slipped off the shoulder of her right arm.

She didn't appear to notice that the bodice of her dress had also shifted, and the top half of her right breast was exposed. Her legs were bent, with her feet also on the chaise. Her left arm rested on her thigh.

As I walked closer, I could see it, I would shift her down and push her left leg over the back of the chaise. The right one can go down to the floor, and I would have complete access. Sweat formed in my palms as I neared her, and I wiped them instinctively on my pants.

I didn't want to scare her, so I had to make this slow. This was going to be a bit uncomfortable for me at first, but I knew it would only be for a while. I didn't mind, as she truly was unique. I knelt next to the chaise, grabbing hold of my pants with my left hand for some control.

With my right hand, I slipped the other strap down her shoulder and moved in. Gently, I placed a kiss on her cheek, and then on her neck. She took a deep breath as my lips found her shoulder bone and moved toward the top of her breasts.

She exhaled slowly, and I was sure I could hear her heart racing. I sat back on my legs and traced the line above her dress with the tip of my finger. Her skin was warm but, oh, so very soft.

I altered my position so I could reach her legs as well. I drew a line first up, one from her toes to the rim of her dress and then the other leg as well. She smiled as I stood and took her around the waist, shifting her down on the chaise onto her back.

Her half-exposed breast, now almost completely out of the dress, taunted me. I couldn't help but reach out and caress it with my fingers. She glanced down, and her face turned cherry red as she realized her breast was exposed. She brought a hand up to cover it, but I stopped her.

She closed her eyes as my hands pressed hers back to her sides. My hands traveled along her body and down to her feet. I slowly moved my hands up and over her calves. As I crossed her knees, I stopped and squeezed her thighs before moving further. I exhaled deeply as I tried to calm my thoughts so my throbbing dick would relax.

I felt her legs tighten as she pressed her thighs together. Her eyes were still closed, and her mouth looked tense. I slowly moved and placed a gentle kiss on her lips. She relaxed as my tongue sought a way in, and she eventually parted her lips.

Soon, I felt her legs also ease up, and I moved back down placing kisses along her body as I went. Every kiss had an arch or a wiggle effect on her, and I knew her body wanted more. When my hands sought passage this time, I felt her legs parting slightly.

All that was left between us now was her dress and panties. I breathed in deeply as my hands slowly went back to her knees and moved up her thighs, dragging her skirt with them. I wrapped my fingers around the sides of her underwear and pulled them down.

She gasped as they came with no struggle, and I dropped them to the floor. Leaning back in, I moved my hands ever so slowly back up, starting at her feet again. As I went, I placed tender kisses up those silky soft legs.

Gripping the hem of her dress as I moved closer to my end goal, I was sure to take the skirt with me. As I reached the top of her legs, I flipped the skirt over and placed my hands on her upper thighs.

Irina's eyes opened as she came up toward me, grabbing hold of my hands. "Wait," she whispered in a barely audible voice. She was shaking her head from side to side.



I let out a deep breath and stepped back. “Are you okay?” I asked, feeling slightly anxious as I was more than ready. But, I would wait for her; I was not into the habit of forcing people into situations.

“Yes,” she said as she stood, holding her arm across her chest, clutching her dress. “I just want to, well, just give me a second.” She sat up and straightened her dress.

I collected my glass and the bottle of champagne, wondering if this night would end up not being what I hoped. I filled her glass and poured myself one as well.

She looked more composed as I sat back down. Our eyes met, and I could see the flames burning within her. I handed her the glass and she took a long, slow sip.

As I watched her intently, I felt my heart picking up speed, and I placed my glass down. Her lips were plump and so alluring. Her smile was inviting, and I was sure she also wanted more. Gradually, I moved closer, picked up her legs, and placed them across my lap. She did not protest.

I leaned in and kissed her as I took the glass, placing it back on the table with mine. There was a burning passion in her kiss this time, and I hoped she was ready.

As I rose, I pulled her back into position and slowly trailed my fingers up her legs. She relaxed and closed her eyes again. I moved my hands up her thighs once more, hoping to gain access this time. She didn't move when I pushed her skirt over her hips, exposing her luscious pussy.

My cock throbbed hard against my pants as desire grew within me. I wanted her more than anything, but I also wanted her encounter to be memorable. I wanted her to beg for it. I smiled at my wickedness as I knelt next to the chaise.

## Chapter 4 - Irina

His hands were warm as he moved them up my legs and between my thighs, but his touch was soft. My heart was beating faster than I had ever thought it could. I tried to keep my breathing normal, but all my senses were tingling at once.

Suddenly, I felt his tender lips on my thighs, and it caused a hurricane within me. My stomach was turning and twisting, my heart was skipping beats while my lungs tried to keep up. Outside, the rain was slashing at the windows as the wind drove them. I felt my blood rushing through my veins as if competing with nature.

With his gentle touch, I allowed my body to move as he lifted one leg over the back of the chaise and pushed the other to the floor. My legs felt like clay as he molded them to his desire. I dared not open my eyes as he may see the fear in them and stop.

It felt so right, yet so wrong, and it scared me. He moved his strong hands up my inner thighs, causing my body to tremble. My breathing raced my heart as I tried to fill my lungs with air. His hands slid back down my thighs and gripped my knees with force.

Unexpectedly, his soft lips and open mouth closed around my pussy, and I sat up as if there was a spring inside of me. I felt my lungs collapse and my heart stop.

He was knelt next to the chaise. His right hand pinning my left leg hanging over the back of the chaise, and his other held my leg down on the ground. His head was between my legs, as he devoured my vagina. He was sucking me into his mouth as his lips closed.

I gasped at the air in the room, but it appeared there was no air to swallow as I grabbed onto the back and the side of the chaise. "Stop," I heard myself whisper.

My body trembled and shuddered as he moved his tongue around. What was happening? I had no control over my body, and my mind appeared to be absent. "Stop," I breathed out louder.

Sergei lifted his head, “Try to relax, honey.” He said in a calm tone, grinning from ear to ear. His cloudy eyes pulled me into the darkness that seemed to have taken over as my body wanted to explore. But I wasn’t ready for this and shook my head, hoping he was the gentleman he appeared to be.

Sergei dropped his head on his chest and breathed out loudly. I felt the pressure on my knees relax as he released his grip. Slowly, he rose to his feet and walked to the bathroom. I felt guilty for allowing him to believe there could be more and for being relieved.

I sat up and straightened out my clothing. I leaned over and picked up my panties, which were lying just beside the edge of the chaise. The bathroom door opened suddenly, and I slid them under the edge of my dress.

He strolled back over to the chaise, and I couldn’t help but admire his smoothness. He didn’t look upset, but I could feel a stiffness filling the air around us. He picked up the almost empty bottle and leaned over to fill my glass.

As he handed me the glass, I offered him a warm smile. Sergei returned my smile before sitting down next to me again. “So,” He asked in a deep voice. “You want something to snack on or watch a movie, or would you like me to take you home?”

He watched me intently as he spoke, and I shifted uncomfortably on the chaise. I felt sure he would be angry if I decided to go home now, and I wasn’t sure if I wanted to leave yet.

“Well,” I replied, taking a sip from my glass. “We can watch a movie if you want.” I continued, hoping my voice didn’t betray me. I liked him and wanted to give whatever this was a chance to develop. However, if he didn’t, that would also be fine by me.

Sergei stood and collected the remote. He called room services before sitting back down. He ordered another bottle with some strawberries and cream. While we waited, he flipped through the channels. As the doorbell rang, he handed me the remote before answering.

I was unsure what to make of his reaction. He appeared upset but kept his cool. Yet, it made me nervous as I knew nothing about him. I snapped out of my thoughts as the door closed. He pushed the trolley over to the chaise and offered me another glass.

Was he trying to get me drunk, I wondered as I pulled the glass to my chest. “Not right now, thanks,” I said, hoping he wouldn’t see the uncertainty in my eyes.

Sergei nodded and placed the bottle back in the ice bucket before sitting down. “Find anything you want to watch?” he asked, shifting his position, to face me.

“Not really,” I replied, placing the remote on the chaise between us. “But we could always talk a bit if you want,” I said, facing him. His strong features lit up as he smiled broadly.

“Sure,” he said softly as he took the remote and placed it on the trolley. He tapped the chaise between us and continued, “Put your feet up and relax.

I carefully considered his invitation before finally lifting my feet to the chaise. He gently straightened my legs and placed my feet on his lap. “Do you mind?” he asked as he started rubbing them.

His soft and warm touch sent a slight tingle up my spine. “No, it’s fine,” I said, shaking my head and feeling a little embarrassed. He was so gentle, kind, and loving, why did he also scare me, I wondered.

“So, you like kids but don’t have any yet?” he asked while rubbing my feet.

“Yes,” I replied. “Someday I want my own, but I still have time.”

“In Russia, did you also work at a nursery school?” he continued.

“I studied abroad and returned home, well, yes I did,” I answered as my mind traveled back to the last years spent with Oleg. But I wasn’t ready to divulge that kind of information.

He rubbed my feet and calves for a bit, just watching me. I found my mind wandering as I felt pure relaxation fill me. Could he be the kind of man I want to settle with? Was this all just a facade to get with me, or was this real?

I lay back and closed my eyes as he continued in silence. After a while, I felt him shift, and my eyes shot open. He was leaning sideways, pulling the trolley closer.

“I didn’t even ask,” he said as he dipped a strawberry into the bowl of cream. “Do you eat these?” he said, holding it in the air.

Feeling my breathing slow down, I nodded in agreement without a word. Sergei pushed himself up and leaned over, offering to feed me. I couldn’t help the smile forming on my lips as I slightly pushed up and took the bite.

Sergei grinned as he sat back down, his eyes sparkling in the room’s dim light. I hadn’t even noticed the light before now, but liked it. Pushing myself up, I dipped a strawberry in the cream.

Not sure why, but I felt it was my turn, and I offered it to him. Sergei took my hand in his and pulled it toward his mouth. He placed his lips around my fingertips as he accepted. His mouth was warm and inviting, sending a swirl of emotions through me as he slowly pulled back.

He took one of my legs and put it towards the back side of the chaise as he shifted slightly forward. Then he took me around the waist and gently pulled toward him. I practically sat on his lap once he was done moving us around.

Sergei dipped another strawberry and placed it halfway in his mouth before leaning forward. My stomach made knots and turns as I leaned in and accepted half of it. His lips were soft, and his kiss pleasing.

I decided to follow his lead for now as my senses lit up. There was no danger in kissing, and the mood was working for me. His kiss was harder this time as he took half of the strawberry from me. We exchanged some more before he leaned in and kissed me without them.

He spread some cream onto my lips and chest before leaning in again. His kisses were harder as he pulled me even closer. He licked at the cream on my chest as he lowered me back on the chaise.

My mind and body were swirling with excitement, and couldn't agree on whether to stop or if I should be begging for more.

I put my arms around his neck as he slightly lifted me forward. His strong hands quickly found the zipper on the back of my dress, and I felt the fabric loosen as the zipper slid down its rails. As he laid me back down, his hands brought my dress along with them, exposing my breasts.

His kisses moved from my mouth down my neck and onto my chest. I dug my fingers into his back as the tip of his tongue played with each of my nipples in turn. This sent new shudders through me as my lungs once again struggled to claim the air around us.

I felt his mouth close over my breast as he softly bit and pulled my nipples. My body arched entirely on its own, driving my breast more solidly into his accepting mouth. My vagina was throbbing with a warm sensation as I dug my fingers harder into him.

He pulled back and smiled at me in my confusion. With one rapid move, he pulled his shirt over his head and tossed it to the side. His taut chest glistened in the light of the room, and I couldn't stop my tongue from trailing a line across my lips.

I reached out and allowed my shaky hands to come to rest on his tight muscles. He gently put his hands over mine and moved my hands down his body. As they reached the top of his pants, he let go and I knew he wanted me to take his pants off.

But I was still not ready for this. I moved my hands back up his powerfully built body. He gazed down at me, and I smiled, "No, I'm not ready, Sergei," I whispered in his ear as I pulled him closer. I felt his demeanor change as he pulled back.

He glanced sideways as he answered. “No problem.” He kissed me some more before Sergei got up and poured himself a glass of champagne before filling mine again.

“Do you want to stay the night?” he asked for the second time. My mind was warped and I wasn’t too sure anymore.

“Yes,” I heard myself reply.

He swallowed half his glass and headed to the bedroom. I sat up and pulled up my dress and zipper before taking a sip from the glass on the trolley. He returned shortly with a robe and handed it to me.

“You can have a shower if you want. I don’t have other clothes for you, but I have a robe.”

Smiling at him, I rose and took the robe before heading for a quick shower. I felt better. As I came out, he was standing at the door waiting for me.

He was the image of excellence. As I studied him, I felt my heart leaping and pushed my hands through my ruffled hair. This night didn’t turn out as either of us thought. But I was fine with it; it was exciting and pleasant.

He leaned in and kissed me softly. “I’m sure you’re tired, but I would prefer if you stayed the night.” He spoke as he took my hand. I felt good and shook my head in agreement.

He took my hand and led me to the bedroom. As I sat down, he walked back to the door. “I’ll be right back,” he said as he left the room. I heard the bathroom door and knew he was most likely also showering.

Once he returned, he lay down next to me, trailing his fingertip along my arm as we stared at each other. He had a strange smile on his lips, and I wondered why he appeared to be so happy. After all, the night didn’t end the way he had hoped, I was sure.

My eyes felt heavy, but I wasn’t ready to close them yet. We could get to know each other a bit though. Maybe in the morning, we could see how things went.

## Chapter 5 - Sergei

Seeing her there on the bed in my hotel room as I walked back in made me feel comfortable. I wasn't sure why, but just having her here was calming. The living area looked like a hurricane had hit it. There were trolleys and glasses all over the place.

That was a subject for the morning, I thought as I entered the room. I smiled as I walked in. She was so innocent, and the evening had turned out to be less than I had hoped. Yet, it was fun, and there was a possibility of more.

"Today, I had a visit with my brother and his wife," I said as I lay down next to her on the bed. I glanced at the TV mounted on the wall opposite the bed, not sure why I said that.

Looking at her again I saw her full lips were pulled into a welcoming smile. She had a presence about her that pulled me in, and I couldn't help but share it with her. Everything about her called at me, especially her voluptuous curves.

"Tell me more," she replied as I drew a back down her arm.

"They're having a baby." I continued before I could stop myself. Then I noticed the panic in her eyes, and I was sure I knew what she was thinking.

"No, no," I assured her as I stood back up and waved my hands before me, "I am not ready for children, please do not think that is what I meant. We just met." I noticed her shoulders relaxing and moved to open the bedcover for her.

"Sorry, for scaring you; I just feel so comfortable around you that I could keep talking all night," I said standing back from the bed.

Irina's smile returned as she moved up and pulled the cover over her legs. "It's fine, I really don't mind talking some." She answered in a soft tone.

I exhaled the breath I was holding and moved around to my side with a couple of quick steps. As I joined her under



the covers, she lay back on the stack of pillows.

Her hair, a lovely contrast to the white covers, framed her face. For a moment, I could only stare at her angelic look.

I shook my head as thoughts of our evening tried to revive my stamina, and I lay down on my side again facing her. “You see,” I started again. “It’s not that I don’t think they shouldn’t have one. Well, it’s just that with their kind of business, I don’t think it’s wise. You know what I mean?”

Irina gazed at me as if I was suddenly speaking another language. “I’m not sure,” she said. “I thought you had your own company?”

“Oh, yes, we do,” I answered as I glanced at the clock on the bedside table. It was nearing two in the morning. Rubbing at the stubbles coming out on my cheek, I wondered how the time had passed so quickly.

“Do you have to work in the morning,” I asked turning my attention back to Irina. “I hadn’t noticed the time; we can sleep if you need to get up early.”

“No,” she replied, beaming. “I only start on Monday. When will you be going back?”

I pushed my hair behind my ear and moved closer. “I have a flight back on Wednesday, but...” I caressed her arm lightly. “I can extend my stay if there is a reason,” I completed grinning at her.

Irina took my hand in hers and squeezed lightly, “Let’s see how the weekend goes first.” She said as she turned to face me. “Tell me more about you.”

I felt a sudden need to tell her everything about my life. I wondered if she would understand it all. There were my kinks to consider. I smiled as my mind wandered back to my home. But then there was also Roman and Bratva.

My smile faded as I considered what would be safe and what not. How much could I share with her before pushing her away? After all, we had just met, and I knew nothing about her.

“Well, my twin and I were raised by a single mom in Los Angeles. Once we got to high school, we worked weekends, and then we worked two jobs each while putting ourselves through college. We started our own company, and I must say, we worked hard but managed to build a successful firm.”

“Oh, wow,” she replied with a hint of excitement in her voice. “And you?” I asked, smiling.

“I grew up without a mother, but my father done right by me, I think. I studied abroad and worked there for a while.” Her smile dropped as she spoke, and I could see tears forming in her beautiful eyes.

It was my turn to squeeze her hand, “It’s fine if you don’t want to talk about it.” I said carefully. Irina glanced at me and wiped her eyes before closing them for a second.

I continued our discussion giving her time to gather herself. “After our mother passed, we discovered some documents she had been hiding from us,” I said rubbing my cheek again as I thought back.

Irina opened her sparkling eyes and stared at me. “Why would she hide documents from you?” she asked quietly.

“Well, these documents we found were about our father,” I said, feeling a lump forming in my throat. I swallowed hard and grinned as I continued. “Anyway, my brother, Roman, came out here a couple of years back after meeting our father. He met his wife here and decided to stay. So, now I am here visiting.”

“Roman?” she asked as she sat up abruptly. Her eyes filled with what appeared to be shock as she turned away from me.

“Yes, my twin brother’s name is Roman,” I said, shifting upright so I could see her face as she turned further away. “He lives here with his wife; they want to incorporate our company with the family business.” I continued as I watched her closely. I wasn’t sure why I was still talking as she was clearly not interested.

Irina got out of bed, hugging the robe as she moved. “I’ll be right back she said, glancing back at me as she headed out the door.

I sat amazed at the sudden change in her when I mentioned Roman. Even with her being from Russia, I had not considered the fact that she might also be part of a Bratva family. Maybe I did, I thought as I considered my reaction at the bar. But seeing the effect his name had on her now made me ponder on this.

As I rose and headed for the minibar in the living area, my mind kept going over the shock on her face. She wasn’t in the living area and I noticed the bathroom door was closed. Did she know Roman? Was she part of our Bratva family? My head just went spinning with that thought.

She couldn’t be; I was sure of it. I had met most of our family and heard about all those I had not yet met from Roman. Her name had never come up before, so why did she seem shocked? I stared at the bathroom door for a moment unsure what to make of the situation.

I took two bottles of water from the small fridge and went back to the room. I placed one on the table next to her side of the bed and sat back down opening mine. I took a big swallow, emptying half the bottle as I heard the bathroom door open. Even if she was family, it wasn’t like we were getting married or having kids. We were only having fun. Plus, I am only half related to Oleg’s family, and nothing has even happened yet.

Irina came through the door completely composed. There was no sign of shock or anything else on her face as she got back into bed. She picked up the bottle, smiled at me, took a couple of sips, and placed it back on the bedside table.

Watching her aroused me, her luscious lips forming around the opening of the bottle. Her silky-smooth neck pulled taut as she lifted her head. I fought the urge to jump on top of her. I needed to know more about her first.

“I’m sorry,” I started as she turned to face me. “Do you know my brother; did I say something wrong?” I tried to read

her face as I spoke, but it was blank.

“No, I just had something in my eye,” she replied calmly and lay back down. Her hair spread across the pillow tempting me again.

I reached out, taking her hand in mine, “I’m sorry if I said something that was out of place.” Irina blinked but did not reply, and I was sure her smile was now plastered on. It appeared to pull her cheeks up but didn’t seem natural.

There was something here, but what, I could not determine right now. I decided to leave it, I would ask her again in the morning. I pulled the covers over us as I lay down next to her.

“Irina,” I said as I stroked her arm, and she turned her head toward me. “Thank you for tonight, I had a good time.”

She nodded, “So did I. But I think we should get some sleep.” she replied as she turned on her side facing away from me. There was a hint of fear in her voice, which made me uncomfortable.

I stared at her for a while, not sure if I should also turn away or hold her. She was different from the girls I usually go out with. There was something about her, but I could not put my finger on it. It made me want to hold her close and protect her.

Did she need protection? What was she hiding from me? Maybe I should ask Roman if he knows her.

Finally, feeling sleep calling me, I decided to move closer and softly placed my hand around her. She did not move or stir as I gently pushed my arm in under hers and hugged her to me. I lay holding her, feeling her chest move with every breath.

I closed my eyes, absorbing her honeyed aroma. My mind traveled back to my house and my toys. I smiled as I played with her there until I drifted off.

## Chapter 6 - Irina

I felt him move closer and place his arm around me. I didn't dare move. I lay waiting for him to fall asleep. The odor in the room was clean but I could still smell that strange leathery aroma. Was this his natural scent I wondered as my mind restarted the evening.

My mind wandered to our first encounter at the bar and how he looked so much like Roman. But I dismissed that thought as he wasn't Roman. I thought he would be safe seeing as he was not raised in Russia and could not be part of Bratva. But Bratva appeared to have longer fingers than I had imagined.

Even though he was raised in Los Angeles by his mother, his father was Oleg. I met his brother Roman once. It was when I was still assisting Oleg, and that is why he looked so familiar. I should have asked him if he had a brother before anything started. But how could I have known? I didn't know Roman had a brother.

This evening had started with so many different feelings and ended pretty much the same. That was before we entered the room, before he started talking.

My body had betrayed me. I wanted sex with him but now I was glad I decided to wait. I came here hoping to start over, wanting to get out, I just can't stay. He may say he wants nothing to do with it, he may even believe himself.

But growing up with it, I knew better. At some time, it becomes part of you, especially if you are family. True blood can't escape it. I was lucky, but Sergei doesn't know yet. Family is family.

As I waited, I felt his arm going heavy, and I slowly shifted to my back. Sergei closed his hand around my arm, and I stopped moving. His breathing was shallow but not enough for him to be completely asleep. So, I waited some more.

I didn't want Bratva in my life anymore. He was a charming man, and I was sure he could be what I was looking

for, but I couldn't stay, could I? I contemplated this while I lay wide awake.

To him, I was sure I would just become another nick on his belt. This is what I kept telling myself until I believed it. I would end up being just another one of his girls. I wanted more from life, that was why I came all this way.

Thinking about it now, as my emotions came down, I could kick myself for being so gullible. I should have seen the markers. After all, I grew up between men and could easily have spotted a player. Why didn't I see it, or did I not want to? Has moving here made me so vulnerable that I would jump for the first man I met?

This was not me and it sure wasn't who I wanted to be. As my mind absorbed all that had happened, I felt a pang of fear grow within.

I felt my eyes burn as tears started forming, and knew I had to get out. Tenderly, I took his hand and held it in the air as I shifted out from under it. As I placed his hand down on the bed, he moved, and I froze. But he only moved a little and then relaxed again.

Slowly, I let out the breath I was holding before heading for the living area. I clutched the robe as I started for the bathroom to change.

I wiped the tears and rinsed my face. Staring at my reflection in the mirror, I noticed my eyes were puffy and my hair looked wild.

I smoothed my hair out and tied it up before rinsing my face a second time. It was an amazing night, I thought, that is what I will remember of him. I glanced at the door, my heart and mind were struggling to agree.

Maybe it was due to the strange fluttering in my stomach or my heart trying to convince me I could stay. But I knew better, and staying would only make it harder to leave later. I softly slapped my cheeks before pointing at my reflection.

“Get a grip on yourself,” I said to the face staring back at me. “This is the reason you left Russia; you are not going to allow puppy love to convince you otherwise.”

I quickly glanced around making sure there wasn't anything I forgot before heading for the door. As I moved, I peeked through the open bedroom door, he was still asleep. I felt a heavy weight lift from my shoulders as I unlocked the penthouse door and slipped out.

Gently, I closed the door behind me. Leaning against the closed door I breathed in deeply. “Yes, I am doing the right thing,” I told my questioning heart. Quickly, I moved to the elevator and pushed the button.

It felt like it took forever for it to arrive. I kept looking back at the suite door, expecting it to open any second.

I rode the elevator down to the lobby and exited quietly. For some insane reason, I expected the doorman to stop me. My mind told me to move faster; Sergei was coming to look for me. I couldn't decide if that was just what I wanted or if it was what I feared.

But no one stopped me, I walked out into the brisk morning air just before dawn. The streets were still filled with silence as the world slept. The doorman hailed me a cab.

As I got in, I glanced up at the penthouse windows. A black blanket still lay over the building, there was no light on in any of the windows, so I left.

I gave the driver my hotel address and sat back. The ride to my hotel was quick. I paid and headed to my room. Even though he didn't know where I was staying, I was filled with a sinking feeling. My stomach felt like one great knot.

After locking the door, I walked to the chair by the window and plopped down in it. I removed my shoes and threw them towards the bedroom before opening the window. The air was cool and comforting. What if he asked Roman or Oleg about me, would Evelina tell them where I was staying?

If I needed to, I could tell Evelina what had happened, and she could convince Roman not to say anything. Oleg

would first speak to Evelina before saying anything, though. But Roman. This was his brother, his blood. Yet, Sergei said he wanted nothing to do with Bratva. Would he then ask them about me? Maybe not, I was just seeing fires that weren't even there, I assured myself.

My head was still spinning so I put the kettle on and headed to the bedroom. I wiggled out of the dress and allowed it to fall to the floor before stepping into my nighties. After making a fresh cup of coffee, I returned to the couch at the window. I had to clear my mind.

The rich aroma filled the confines of the room and had a calming effect. I sipped slowly as I watched dawn arriving. The sound of traffic and people started to fill the air traveling in from the street below.

I closed the window, rinsed my cup, and headed to the bedroom. My eyes were heavy, and I needed some rest. As I climbed under the soft covers, I decided I would go exploring this afternoon. Maybe I would go for a swim or a walk on the beach.

For now, I would stay clear of the clubs until I was settled. As my eyes drifted closed, I saw Sergei's warm smile as he kissed me. My body tingled with the afterthought. I would cherish the night for some time, I thought as I drifted off.



## Chapter 7 - Sergei

I turned and stretched out trying to find her with my eyes still closed as I breathed in the fresh morning air. My hand landed on the cold sheets, and my eyes flew open. The bed next to me was empty. Sitting up quickly, I listened for any sound in the suite.

Maybe she was in the bathroom. I jumped out of bed and walked through the bedroom door. The bathroom door was open, and her clothing was gone. Did she go to get us coffee?

Yes, I told myself, she had gone for coffee. I collected my clothing from the suitcases still packed and headed to the bathroom. After a quick shower and a set of clean clothes, I felt refreshed. I checked my watch, it was just past six. Why did she not order room service?

There was nothing here, no sign of her; it was as if she was never here. Rubbing my smooth chin, I wondered if she left. Why would she just go?

I picked up the phone and ordered a pot of coffee with two mugs, maybe she just went to get something. I checked the table by the door and the ones in the bedroom, hoping she had left a note. But there was nothing.

The doorbell rang and I thought maybe it was her. I opened the door ready to welcome her back, but it was room service with my coffee. It was the same young man from the night before.

“Have you seen the lady perhaps this morning downstairs?” I asked as I handed him a tip.

His thin lips pulled into a tight smile across his scrawny face. “No sir, sorry, I haven’t. Enjoy the coffee, sir,” he replied and headed out the door.

I watched him leave and closed the door behind him before pouring a cup of perfectly brewed darkness. I added sugar and some cream as I needed sweetness this morning.

With my cup in hand, I strolled to the large window and opened the blinds. The sun shone bright, and I knew it was going to be a sunny day.

The world outside was in full swing as people scurried along the sidewalks and cars moved up and down the street. As I sipped at my cup absorbing the sweet aroma of the coffee inside, I wondered what time Irina had left.

Turning to face the room again, I realized that she had left. She didn't intend on returning. I realized I had no idea who she was. No surname, no address, nothing, my mind topped over her reaction to Roman.

Standing there with the sun shining over my shoulders, I felt my temper flare up. "How dare she just walk out and disappear." I spat at the empty room. Why was this upsetting me so? After all, it was supposed to be a one-night stand. But then again, we didn't even make it that far. "Is that why I feel so upset?" I asked the walls.

Hearing my voice echo through the emptiness, I realized my anger was taking over. I paced up and down the length of the window calming my mind. I was the one who decided when things ended. I should have insisted she tell me about her connection to Roman and Bratva last night.

She can go to hell, I thought to myself. Why should I care who she is or isn't? If she didn't even have the decency to face me the next day, I didn't give her any cause to run. I treated her gently and with respect. Was this how she did things?

I could ask Roman if he knew since she was a Russian in Miami and he was bound to know her. But maybe I should leave it at what it was: an amazing night. Leaving like this without discussing the issue most likely meant she didn't want more than what we shared. She could keep her secret; I didn't need people like her in my life anyway.

Considering everything, I decided to let it go. After all, I had more important things to focus on. I was still in two minds about Roman's suggestion of moving down to the coast and getting a manager to run the business in Los Angeles.

Turning back to the window I admired the view. It was spectacular, about that Roman was right. There was an allure to this city. It seemed to scream come with me for fun. “Fun, yeah,” I said out loud as I thought back on the evening. Feeling my anger rising again, I pushed the thoughts from my mind. I wondered why the thought of her was pushing all my buttons.

Maybe I will take a ride and see what else to do around here. My mind needed some other form of pleasure. I thought I might just see something worth staying for as I tried to smile at my reflection. Yet, my mind kept strolling back to Irina.

I shook my head and emptied my cup. As I walked to the penthouse door, I placed the cup down hard on the serving trolley. I grabbed my wallet and keys at the door and headed down to the parking bay.

The Ferrari’s engine purred as I started her up. Pushing the pedal to the floor, I pulled out quickly into the street. I had no real destination, so I just went up and down the roads for a while. The radio was blaring, and soon, the fog in my mind cleared. I slowed down and admired the sights.

Finally, I drove along the ocean and stopped by a coffee shop with a deck overlooking the beach. After settling on the deck, I noticed it was close to the second club. I ordered a tall coffee and waffles for breakfast. While I waited, I watched the people filling the beach below.

I imagined spending the day with Irina on the beach. Angry again, I shook my head, why could I not just let go? What was it about her that caused my mind to keep holding on? I allowed my anger to flood my mind, hoping to rid myself of her lingering image.

There were many attractive women all around. I could have any one of them, and none would treat me this way. Soon, the waiter returned with my order. I sat eating in silence as I kept my eyes on the scenery displayed below.

Even with the slight chill in the air, women were walking around in bikinis and sunbathing. It was a gorgeous

sight. Once I was done, I visited an old friend from high school. He had moved here many years back.

He lived more inland, and the drive there took about two hours. After catching up with a couple of drinks, I headed back toward the ocean and my hotel.

There was a restaurant not too far from the hotel. Roman had mentioned that I should try their food while down here. So, I decided to go there before heading back to the hotel. I did not intend on going out tonight, just supper and then back.

Roman had invited me over to their place for the day, but I declined. I would see them tomorrow and wanted to rid myself of this strange longing for Irina. Roman would see right through me and I didn't want his scrutiny right now.

Maybe I would watch a movie or see if there is a game on any of the channels. Yes, I thought as I pulled up to the entrance. A quick supper, some drinks in the hotel bar, and then, TV time. I got out and handed my keys to the parking assistant.

“Don't park her too far,” I said as he got into the Ferrari.

I strolled in; the place was lively and had a variety of people. The lady standing at the small podium asked if it was only me. I nodded and she opened a big book. As she scrolled through the list, I assumed she was she was looking for an open table. I wondered if this was one of Roman's regular places.

Glancing at the people, I considered the fact that many of these people might even be Bratva. Although, there didn't appear to be any significant sign that it was a mafia hangout. Besides, Roman knew how I felt. He wouldn't intentionally send me somewhere that could be cause for worry.

The hostess took a menu from the stand beside her and waved for me to follow. We walked around a couple of tables toward the back. She walked to one close to the window.

The hostess placed the menu on the table and waited for me to sit down. “Your waiter will be with you shortly,” she said before heading back to her podium. Most of the people seated closest to me didn’t even look up as I passed or sat down. They were all busy with their meals or companions.

A short, stocky, dark-haired guy in a white shirt and black denim came up to my table. He had a notepad and pen in his hands. “Good evening, sir.” He said in a soft tone. “What can I get you to drink?”

“Evening, whiskey on the rocks, please,” I replied. The young man bowed his head and swirled around, heading back through the tables.

I picked up the menu and studied it for a while. When the waiter returned, I was ready to place my order. “I’ll be having a grilled rib eye, plus wasabi mashed potatoes on the side, please,” I said as I handed him the menu.

The young man scribbled on his pad before answering. “Very well, sir. Enjoy your whiskey.” I raised my glass as the waiter once again made his way back through the tables.

Bringing the glass up to my mouth, I noticed two young women walking toward me. I swirled my glass and breathed in the rich aroma of fine whiskey while I watched them.

The hostess seated them at the table beside me. I glanced over, not wanting to stare too obviously, before taking a sip from my glass. Meeting another woman was not my intention, but maybe it would clear my mind for good.

The two ladies were both quite attractive, but the redhead had caught my attention more than the brunette. They smiled as I took another look, and I knew I was made. I smiled back and lifted my glass in a symbol of cheer.

They whispered to each other and smiled broadly. If I was lucky enough, I could take both back with me tonight. Their waiter arrived and stole their attention. I was still smiling at them when I heard my phone ringing. I took it out

of my coat pocket to see who was calling. But my attention was still on the table next to me.

## Chapter 8 - Irina

The sun was almost at midday when I woke. Pushing the covers off, I stretched out before sitting up on the feather-soft bed. The couple of hours of sleep I got did me well. I felt revitalized and ready to tackle the rest of the day.

My mind wandered back to Sergei and his warm kisses as I stood up. He was a gentleman, and my body still tingled just thinking of his touch. But I knew if I allowed anything to develop, I would end up back in Bratva.

Feeling his hands move up my thighs, his warm touch, and tender kisses. I grinned as my mind traveled back. His tongue made me tremble and I wanted more. But I knew I did the right thing as there could be no future with him.

I smiled at my reflection as I opened the curtains and looked out. “No bars or clubs tonight,” I said to the face staring back at me. “Maybe he wouldn’t join his family,” I said to the girl in the window. “No,” I replied to myself, the body can’t always get what it wants. I wiped at my reflection and turned around. My hotel room was nothing like Sergei’s, but it was a good one.

It had a small kitchen and living area all-in-one, a bedroom, and a bathroom. What more could anyone need? I considered my options as I headed to wash and dress. For lunch, I would see what restaurants there were on the beach.

For dinner though, I might just do take-outs and stay in. One night out was enough entertainment for me for now. After dressing in jeans and a loose shirt, I brewed a pot of coffee.

With my cup in hand, I sat by the window, smelling the salty ocean aroma wafting in with the light breeze. The street below was crowded as people moved up and down the sidewalk. In the distance, I could see the beach. It also appeared to be buzzing with activities.

After my morning coffee, I headed out. As I exited the lobby, the doorman hailed me a cab. “It’s fine, Liam,” I said

softly, touching his arm and lowering it. “I think I’ll walk a bit. Thanks.”

Frank, the day doorman smiled and nodded his head as I started towards the shopping malls. I didn’t know where much was around here, but I could find my way to the shopping centers, the beach, and my hotel.

If I got lost, I would grab an Uber, I thought as I crossed Main Street and entered the shopping center. The beach was a little way to go, but exercise never killed anyone. At least not that I knew of. I walked through the center looking at an array of shops.

Once I was back outside, I headed down towards the beach. The sun was above me now, tickling my skin as it beat down. I tried to stay close to the shops for some shade. All I needed was a sunburn to make this weekend unforgettable, I thought.

I stopped at a small local shop and bought a bottle of water when I noticed the two men across the street. At first, they seemed to just be heading in the same direction. However, something felt off about them.

After another block and a half, I noticed the one pointing at me. I stopped halfway down the next block to be sure. As I glanced their way, I saw they had also stopped. Slowly, fear crept up my spine. I considered getting a cab after all, but there were none in sight.

So, I slowly continued as I took out my phone and texted Evelina. Once the message had gone through, I somehow felt better. At least if something happened, I knew she would send an army to look for me. So would Sergei, my heart screamed. “No,” I said out loud as I moved, “He wouldn’t.” I shook my head, trying to clear it.

I made it to the beach without any hassle. I removed my shoes and walked in the sand along the beach. I surveyed each restaurant, trying to decide which one to try. The two men were still lurking behind me. But I was sure they wouldn’t dare try something with so many people around.



My feet were tired of walking. Plus, I desperately needed to eat as my stomach felt like it had started eating me. About halfway through the second block, I decided to enter the next restaurant I saw. At this stage, any food would do.

I sat down on the deck facing the ocean and ordered coffee and a croissant. Glancing back at the street, I didn't see the two men anymore. I scanned the restaurant, but they weren't there.

Maybe they decided I wasn't worth the trouble. Or maybe my brain is seeing things, they could live in the area for all I know. After eating, I felt better and sent Evelina another message saying I was okay.

She must be busy as she had not even read my first text. But that was fine as there appeared to be no immediate danger. I noticed the sun was coming down hot as I got ready to leave. The air just above the sand was making wavy lines. I considered staying a while longer for a moment, but when the waiter placed the bill down, I decided against it.

I tapped my card on the machine and popped the complimentary sweet in my mouth before rising from the table. The waiter smiled at me as I thanked him for a great lunch and turned to leave.

My stomach made a swift turn as my food threatened to push up. Holding my hand over my mouth, I headed for the steps leading back to the street.

Why was I suddenly feeling sick? I grabbed onto the railing. I took the three steps slowly as my legs turned wobbly, and my vision started fading. "No, no," I screamed but there was no sound coming out of my open mouth.

A dark green van pulled up to the sidewalk. I tried screaming again, but there were no sounds. I felt my spit run down my chin and for a second, I imagined a baby teething with all the slobbers running out. My heart pounded in my chest, which felt like it was being crushed by a big rig.

My body gave way, and the sidewalk came into view. I was falling, this is going to hurt my mind warned. But before I

collided with the stones. A strong arm wrapped around my waist.

I was being pulled upright and the side door of the van opened. No, no, why did I let Evelina know I was okay? I thought as my vision disappeared. I heard the slamming of the van door, and silence filled my mind.

What happened, where was I? My mind insisted as I tried opening my eyes. My vision blurred and my head ached as I returned to the empty world of sleep.

My body felt constricted, but I dared not open my eyes again. I listened to the three voices whispering not too far away as my mind tried to understand what had happened. The last thing I remembered was the van before me and an arm holding me up.

I must have been drugged, I thought tasting a bitterness in my mouth. Thinking back to the croissant I couldn't decide if it was that which made me sick or the sweet, I ate. My stomach was still paining as if the food I ate was rotten, yet it tasted fine at the time.

It had to be the sweet, I was sure of it, but why? Why would anyone want to drug me? My mind rushed back and forth to all I had done since landing here. There was nowhere I could place that I could have endangered myself.

Was this Sergei's doing? Oh, he would pay if he had me kidnapped, I thought. I would make sure of it. How dare he treat me this way.

I opened my eyes to a blinding bright light and had to squint for a second so my eyes could adjust. The voices fell silent as I tried to sit up. I couldn't move, glancing down toward my feet, I noticed the straps running across my chest, middle, and legs.

"What the hell?" I heard myself saying out loud as panic invaded my mind and body. I turned my head frantically, trying to figure out where I was. It looked like a storage room of sorts. To my left was a stack of boxes and somewhere

behind them a window as there was light coming in behind them.

To the right, I saw a small room in the distance, which I presumed could be an office. The walls were made of silver waves, which could be a kind of steel. The van was parked to the side of the small room, but I didn't see the men.

My heart was racing, and I could hear myself breathing heavily. I closed my eyes and tried to calm the blood boiling through my veins as my mind raced through the darkness.

Where was I, what was happening? Would Evelina realize something was wrong? I felt a tear escape my lids as I tried to regulate my breathing. I knew I needed to get a grip on myself.

“Well, well, well.” I heard a rough voice say from somewhere beyond my feet. My eyes flew open, and I lifted my head as far as possible to see who it was. My head suddenly felt like it wanted to split open as a crushing pain shot through it.

Tears blurred my vision as the figure moved closer. No, no, no, I heard my brain shrieking. What was happening, why did I not call Evelina rather than send a message? She would have known if something was up, maybe she did know, maybe she would come with her brother and cousins to rescue me.

“Irina,” the rough voice interrupted my thoughts. “Daughter of the late Mr. Gusev.” I lifted my head slightly as the figure emerged beside me. I felt a big, warm hand take hold of my arm as the man leaned in closer. Lowering my head, I tried to focus on his face.

I only got one word out before a thick, rough finger crossed my lips, silencing me. “Who...” I started asking. I was sure the man beside me was as broad as two or three white birch trees of. He was quite tall as well and his face was covered in scars and lines from old age. I did not recognize him, in fact, I was sure I had never seen him before.

“You, my dear, you do not know who I am, but I know you, very well.” He grinned at me exposing his crooked

stained teeth. His eyes appeared to have a strange yellowish glow in the bright light which scared me.

“But” he continued, growing louder as he spoke. “I will tell you who I am; there is no need for guessing.”

I blinked rapidly and swallowed hard as I tried to contain my fear. But tears were running out of my eyes and down the sides of my face. I started sobbing, my body shaking as I tried to catch my breath.

“Get a grip,” The man said as he slapped me across my face. “I need you to focus.” He breathed out. “Your father and Oleg owe me. They thought they could push me out of the family.” He said as he straightened up, rubbing his graying beard with two fingers.

He stared out across me and grinned. “I will get my due, one way or another.” He proclaimed, glaring back down at me. “I am Caleb Glenvish, and no one pushes me around.” I felt a pinch on the inside of my arm. Looking down I saw the syringe.

What were they doing, what was he injecting me with? I tried to pull my arm out of his grip but with the bounds and his strength, it was to no avail. Then, I felt my body going numb as the liquid ran through my veins. I racked my brains trying to place the name he gave, but I had never heard it before.

Another man appeared beside him from nowhere, and he whispered in his ear. This man was just as tall but about half his width. He had a full bush of black wavy hair and narrow-set brown eyes. On his right cheek was a scar that looked like it could have been made by a knife.

I didn't recognize him either as he glared down at me. My vision blurred, and my eyelids felt like they were made from steel. I tried to keep them open, I needed to know where I was. But soon, the darkness filled my vision again.

## Chapter 9 - Sergei

Looking at the phone in my hand, I saw it was Roman and answered. “Hey brother, how are you this lovely evening?” I asked.

Roman laughed before responding, “Well, you sure are in a chipper mood. May I ask the reason?”

“Nothing special,” I replied, realizing my voice was calmer than usual. I nodded as the waiter placed my order before me.

“Well, what are your plans?” Roman inquired as I took a sip of whiskey.

“Nothing planned, just having dinner,” I replied in as normal a voice as possible. “Why, you have somewhere I need to be?”

“Yeah,” Roman said. “I would like to meet at this new club that just opened. I haven’t been there myself yet and thought maybe you would like to join me?”

I paused as I considered his invitation, “No shop talk?” I asked.

Roman laughed, “No shop talk, I promise, just you and me like old times.”

Hearing the calmness in his voice, I agreed, “Just give me half an hour. Send the address, and I’ll meet you there.” Roman chuckled as he hung up. Shortly after, my phone pinged as his message came through with the address.

I quickly ate my meal, enjoying the steak which was perfectly done, and paid the bill. I stopped and leaned in as I moved past the two women at the table next to me. “Good evening, ladies,” I said. They both smiled and nodded. “I hope you have a great evening.” I continued before heading out to meet Roman.

Seeing that I caught their attention, I felt it necessary to at least greet them.

As I stepped outside, the Ferrari was waiting. I tipped the man as I got in and loaded the address to the GPS console. “Good evening,” the car responded. “You are heading to Club Flames. Take a right at the next intersection.”

The night was still young as I headed to my destination. I didn’t intend to visit a club again. But I wanted to spend some time with Roman while I was here. Finding time alone with him these days wasn’t easy, so I would take what I could get.

I noticed a string of people standing outside as I arrived at the club. I wondered how Roman intended to get us in with such a queue but felt intrigued. I pulled up to the door where the valet parking assistant was waiting.

Handing him my keys, I saw it was just before nine. Scanning the crowd, I noticed Roman waving at me from a side door and headed over. Shaking his hand before we entered, I saw the red touching his cheeks and wondered how many drinks he had while waiting for me.

The outer appearance of the place was dark with only the big-name sign lighting up the front of the building. It had a fascinating look. I would have mistaken it for a storage facility if I had passed here without the sign-on.

But once we stepped inside, the club vibes hit us. The music was deafening, and the variety of lights hanging from the ceiling lit the place up. On one side was a long bar counter with a dozen barmen and women. There were small tables scattered throughout, and I counted about five small stages.

On the opposite side of the room was the main stage, where a band was set up. The place was packed with people moving in all directions. We made our way through the crowd to a table between two smaller stages. As I looked up, I noticed what appeared to be the bottom of a kind of cage hanging in the ceiling.

“Do they have exotic dancers here?” I asked Roman as I pulled him closer so I would not need to scream at him. I pointed up as his face drew a blank. Looking up Roman shrugged, “Not sure, remember, it’s my first time here.”

We settled at the table, and a skinny blond waiter came pushing through the people toward us. “What can I get you boys to drink?” She asked as she stood between us.

Roman ordered two whiskeys on the rocks and two vodka shots. I observed that less than half the people appeared to be younger as the waitress moved back through the crowd. The majority of clubgoers were our age class and older it seemed. The club’s music also fits our era. This was the extreme opposite of the couple of clubs I visited last night.

The waitress returns with our drinks. Roman lifted his shot, “On family,” he said as he extended his arm towards me. I picked up my shot and met his hand halfway. After downing them, we grinned at each other. This was something we always did when we went out.

The music suddenly died as two men walked onto the stage. The older man picked up the mic and tapped it. “Evening, brothers and sisters, family and friends.” His voice echoed through the building.

Roman shifted to look at the stage. His expression changed as he turned and saw the men on the stage. “We need to leave,” he spat over his shoulder at me. Then we noticed the two cages coming down from the ceiling to the sides of the stage. They were covered in red and gold curtains keeping the content hidden.

“Tonight, we have two special items on auction.” The older man said as he turned, indicating the one and then the other cage. Roman downed his glass and slammed it on the table as he moved toward me.

“What is happening, Roman?” I asked as he grabbed me by the arm. As he looked at me, I saw rage filling his eyes.

“We must leave, now.” He sounded provoked, and I wasn’t sure what had caused this change.

I swallowed my drink and placed the glass down. As I turned to leave with Roman, the curtains were pulled open around the two cages. “Here in this corner,” the man

proclaimed. “We have the lovely Ms. Petrov, and if you turn your attention to my left, we have the shy Ms. Gusev.”

Roman froze and turned rapidly, almost pushing me over. I looked from the right cage and then left. When my eyes settled on the left one, I saw her. There, in the middle of the cage, sat Irina. My mouth fell open as my breath disappeared.

She was wearing a white satin see-through dress that prominently displayed her perfectly formed curves. It seemed a bit too extreme as it basically exposed her entire body. My heart stopped for a second as I tried to catch my breath.

I felt my feet moving of their own accord as Roman started dragging me forward. I have never seen him like this, he appeared to be steaming from anger as we pushed through the crowd. As we neared the stage two large men stopped us in our tracks.

Roman looked from one to the other as he spoke, “I demand to see Caleb now.”

The two men glanced at each other before replying in unison. “He’s busy, can’t you see.”

“Well, well, look at what we have here.” The large man on the stage said as he handed the mic to the guy standing next to him. He came down from the stage and walked toward us. “Morozov brothers,” he said as he stopped just behind the two bodyguards.

I felt rage building within me, but before I could get a word out, Roman shoved forward between the two men. He rammed the older guy backward. “That’s Irina,” he spat, pointing at the cage to the left. “What do you think you are doing with her, Caleb?”

“Well then, calm down now.” The man Roman called Caleb said as he smoothed out his suit jacket. “I am owed some money, and one way or another, I am going to get it.”

“There is no way Caleb, Irina owes you nothing and neither does the Morozov family. You know that.” Roman proclaimed, his voice raising with rage.



Staring at her sitting in that cage, I felt my own fury rising. I was flooded with a sudden need to protect her from this man and the life I was trying to stay clear of. I felt sure it was due to her connection with the Bratva that she was in this situation.

However, she left if my memory recall is correct. Maybe her father was in the life; why would Caleb think she owed him money otherwise?

Glancing around the room and then at Roman. My mind considered the options, maybe I would have to accept the family bond to get her out of this situation. If that is what would be needed, I would do it, I thought to myself. But first, I would try my way.

Stepping forward I spoke up. "I'll buy her, name your price," I shouted at Caleb. He glanced at me with disgust and laughed. "You can bid on her like everyone else my friend."

"No," Roman said the anger in his voice very clear. "She isn't part of Bratva, and you have no right to her."

"Oh, Roman, my man," Caleb said as he rubbed his chin. "You have no idea, ask your father why I am doing this." Caleb turned and headed back up the steps to the stage.

Caleb's bodyguards grabbed me and Roman and pushed us back to the table where we had sat earlier. "Stay and we might not need to kick you out. Look where you are; you are outnumbered." The one said as they returned to the front of the stage.

What did Caleb mean when he told Roman to ask our father, did he have something to do with this? I wondered.

I realized that these men were not going to listen to Roman or any threats he could make. "Leave it, Roman, I'll buy her, even if it costs me everything," I said as he slammed his fist on the table.

"Well, people. May I direct your attention to the lady on my left." Caleb said over the mic. "We will start bidding on her first." There was a cheer throughout the club. I looked

around at the people and wondered how anyone could just accept something like this.

“Let’s get this auction going,” Caleb shouted cheerfully. “Directly from Russia with love is the shy Irina Gusev, let’s start at one million,” Caleb said as he raised his hands into the air. “Do we have a million? Yes, you, there in the back, thank you.”

“Do I hear two?” Caleb continued. I lifted my hand, but Caleb appeared to be waiting for other offers that he got. “Yes, thank you, Sir,” he said as he pointed toward someone seated at the bar.

I felt a tinge of fear pulling at my insides. What if I can’t save her from this? What will happen to her if someone else gets her? I clenched my fists at my sides as my fury raged within me. I wanted nothing but to save her and to make Caleb pay.

If I couldn’t buy her, I would take her. I wasn’t sure how that would work, but I would not stand by idly.

“Can I have three?” He asked, and I lifted my hand again. “Okay, fine, I see you.” He said, pointing at me. “Anyone wanting to go to four?” He continued. I kept my hand in the air, I was willing to pay whatever price he wanted.

I noticed Roman was on his phone, and I assumed he was calling our father. He could call who he wanted I thought, I would buy her and save her from this life. I was interrupted when Caleb called out, “This is getting intense people. Do I hear ten, is anyone offering ten?”

I stretched out higher, hoping to be seen, and I even added my voice to my hand as I called out. “Here.”

Caleb smirked at me and scanned the room. “Anyone else maybe, anyone?” he continued.

I rose from the table boiling with rage as I slammed my fists on the table. That caught Caleb’s attention but did not deter him from his mocking. Roman grabbed one of my arms. I noticed six other men standing close by as I glanced at him.

Some of them I recognized from meetings and others from photos Roman had shown me. At that moment, I realized that being part of a bigger family may not be so bad after all.

Roman pulled my hand to him and shoved a gun into it as he drew me closer. I was shocked and tried to let go, but his grip around my hand and the gun. His grip intensified as I struggled.

Over my shoulder, I heard Caleb announcing that the final bid had been accepted. I glanced back to see him pointing at the fat blubber of a man seated at the bar. "Sold for ten million to the handsome man at the bar," Caleb said gaping directly at me.

## Chapter 10 - Irina

I couldn't hear what the man with the scar was saying but Caleb's composure abruptly changed as they spoke. The two men glanced at me, and then Caleb stormed off leaving me with the stranger.

He stood closer and looked down at me as he moved to my head. He started pushing the steel table I was tied to toward the small room.

"Please," I said quietly, trying to look back at him, "please let me go."

The man only smirked and kept on pushing without a word. The door opened as we neared the room, and I was forced inside. He picked up a roll of tape from the table inside. Glancing at me as he cut a piece, he stepped closer. He trailed a line over my cheek before he placed the tap over my mouth.

I tried to object and move my head from side to side but the throbbing returned, and I had to stop. The man ran his fingers up my leg, and I squirmed while protesting through the tape covering my mouth.

"This is what you get for coming here and messing with the family," he said, staring down at me with his hand firmly on my thigh. I felt my heart racing and my chest closing as I struggled to keep my breathing normal.

He chuckled and ran his fingers up my arm as well before leaning in closer. "You will collect a nice sum on the auction." He added before leaving the room. Two men were standing at the door, guards, I presumed as I tried to make out more of my surroundings.

My stomach hurt and I still felt drowsy from whatever they injected me with. Fear gripped me as my muscles spasmed. My arms and legs shook for a bit before calming down. I wondered what was surging through my blood and could only hope my body could handle it. I didn't want to die here and not this way.

A short while later two women came in to change my clothing. I noticed the two guards smiling as they removed my

clothing. They untied the top straps and pulled a long silky dress over my head. My arms felt heavy, and I suspected it was from the drugs. Laying me back down, they tied the top straps again before releasing the bottom ones.

Once I was changed, one woman removed the tape as they cleaned my face and neck. “What is hap...” I tried to ask, but my mouth was dry. I was sure my throat was scratched as it felt like I had swallowed a ton of sea sand or something.

The pulsing in my head hadn’t subdued either, and my vision kept going in and out. “Just relax,” the younger woman whispered as they brushed and tied my hair up.

“Come on ladies,” I heard a man speak from somewhere in the distance. Two other men entered, and the women moved back with their heads down. The men undid the bounds and dragged me through the door. They took me down a passage and another door.

“It’s almost time to open.” The voice added as they shoved me into some kind of cage. It was circular with bars all around.

One of the women entered with me and rubbed something on my gums before leaving. Instantly, my mind whirled, the earth spun, and I felt my body go numb. I tried screaming, but no sounds were coming out of my open mouth.

As the steel cage started lifting, I grabbed at the bars and gripped them for dear life. Glancing around it appeared that I was in a club. My body was shivering, but I wasn’t sure it was from the cold air. My mind tried to reason with the situation, but fear had a solid grip on me.

The lights seemed to be floating, and so was I. There were spots of black swimming around my vision as well. Then, a sensation of heat washed over me, and I felt sweat forming on my forehead.

Soon, the cage stopped as the curtains hanging from the ceiling surrounded me. Loud music started playing below me somewhere. I grabbed my head as the drums penetrated my mind causing the throbbing to increase. Tears fell from my

eyes and streaked down my cheeks. I wondered why I didn't stay indoors or stayed with Sergei.

Looking around my heart filled with dread, this was not going to turn out well. No one knew where I was, and I couldn't even be sure they knew I was missing.

Making the wrong choices because you think you know everything has gotten you here, my mind spat at me. I wanted to stay clear of Bratva, and look at me now.

I tried to stifle the crying as my throat closed and my heart started pounding in my chest. There was no escaping reality. I inhaled hard and exhaled in shudders as my mind tried to understand everything. My lungs burned and so did my eyes, but I had to try and focus.

The music blared below me, and lights lit up the floor as voices started to fill the room. I couldn't see much as the floor of the cage was covered. Peeking through the side, I managed to see some of the people moving around below. The room filled quickly, and soon, the people below were pushing and shoving around each other.

As my head started clearing, I tried calling out, but the music drowned out any hope of being heard. It wouldn't make a difference anyway, my mind kept telling me. Just give it up, you are not getting out. The people in this room are all willing participants.

I hugged my chest as despair filled my veins. I carefully moved to the middle of the cage and held on to the pole in the center. I could only hope that Evelina had tried calling and that she would know something was wrong. She would if she didn't get hold of me.

Breathing in deeply, I decided that she would know, she was out looking for me or the family at least. I had to hold on to hope if I wanted to get out of this. After a while, the music suddenly quieted down, and Caleb started speaking. I could only see his feet on the stage, but knew his voice.

As he spoke, I felt the cage started lowering. I scurried over and hugged the center pole as the people in the room

came into view. The lights were bright, I fluttered my eyelids, trying to adjust quickly so I could see the people.

Then the cage stopped abruptly on the ground as Caleb announced that I would be auctioned along with another woman. Glancing at the stage, I saw Caleb walking off the stage to the front as two big men tried to keep someone from getting through.

I tried to stand, but my legs wouldn't work with me. My arms were weak as well, but I managed to lift myself slightly. Focusing on Caleb and his men, I tried to see if I recognized anyone.

Was that, was it really Roman? I rubbed my eyes as I rose to my knees trying to see clearer. Yes, Roman was shoving the older man while talking to him. My heart bounced as a sense of safety and hope entered my mind. Seeing him gave me strength.

Sitting up more I gasped as my eyes caught a glimpse of Sergei. Did they know? What were they doing here? I tried to formulate ideas around this. I was trying to assure myself that it was not planned. No, how could it be? Roman would never allow something like this. It was a pure accident that they ended up here.

Roman looked furious and so did Sergei. Caleb walked back on stage as Roman and Sergei were pushed back to a table somewhere in the middle of the room. I tried to keep my eyes on them but there were so many people moving around.

Caleb, back on the stage started the auction, and my heart sank to my feet. Sergei was the first to make a bid. But I didn't want him to buy me, I wasn't property. I tried to stand, but my legs were still wobbly, and I sank back down to the floor.

"No," I tried calling out, but my voice sounded like a horse yelling as it left my mouth. Another bid was made by someone further back. I could not see them, and then someone at the bar also placed a bit. The amount kept going up.

Now and then Sergei would also raise the bid. I didn't want him to buy me, but what other way did I have out of this? I closed my eyes as the bidding continued hoping now that Sergei would get the final bid as it was my only option for safety.

Looking over trying to see Roman again. Through the people and faces, I noticed Ivan had also joined them. This meant that Evelina also knew I was here. A flicker of hope embraced my pounding heart. But, if Ivan was here, there would be more of the family present. I glanced around the club but couldn't make out any of the others.

I clung to the pole and lowered my head as my heart raced. This could turn into a shootout, I thought as the bidding started slowing down. Sergei raised the bid and Caleb on the stage pointed towards him but didn't lower the bidding hammer. He was moving his hand sideways toward the bar.

"Sold," the man pronounced, "for ten million to the handsome man at the bar."

"No," I screamed, Sergei had the highest bid. That man didn't even raise. Sold to a stranger, my mind tried to focus, but I couldn't get a grip on the situation. This was done on purpose, I thought. These people just wanted to get one over on the Morozov family. I was sure of it.

Tears streaked down my face as the air left my lungs and I collapsed into a bundle on the floor. This wasn't happening, I thought, it was a trap. Two men started unlocking the cage door and picked me up by my arms. I tried to hold the bar in the center, but they kept pulling.

My arms felt like they were being pulled out of my body. I feared they might snap at any second, but then my fingers slipped. The men started dragging me out. Over my shoulder, I noticed the three of a man from the bar waddling over toward us. Before my mind could formulate any more thoughts, I heard the first gunshots echo through the room.

Glancing toward the sound, I saw Roman and Ivan shooting at the men by the stage. Trying to focus on the people scurrying around, I saw Sergei. He was fighting off two



bodyguards as he came closer. The two men that had dragged me out of the cage let go of me and I lay collapsed on the floor. I tried to stand, but my legs were still numb.

I was almost to my feet when I felt my legs give away. I held out my arms out to Sergei. Before I collided with the cement floor, I felt his strong arm wrap around me and pull me into his grip. I flung my arms around his neck, breathing in deeply.

Sergei lifted my feet off the ground as he turned and headed for the door. Relief washed over me as his presence filled me with a sense of safety. I closed my eyes and held on tightly as we moved. My head still throbbed but knowing I was saved allowed my mind to relax.

We moved through the people, but I wasn't fully functional yet. I felt someone shoving us and heard another couple of shots before silence filled my mind.

At some point through the fog, I recalled being carried into a house and then back to a car. Every time I tried to open my eyes, the lights blinded me. There were ghosts seemingly everywhere, so I gave in to the drugs in my system.

I allowed my mind to swim through the sea of visions at free will.

## Chapter 11 - Sergei

I felt my fingers close around the gun as if they knew what they were doing. I was numbed by fear as a chill ran down my spine. Caleb had overlooked my hand and my bid. He sold her to that, I thought as I glanced back at the bar and then the six family members.

We had brothers and cousins all backing us up, my mind assured me as I recalled their names. Ivan, Nikolai, Aleksei, and Yuri. But they were the only names I could remember, though. I thought she would be saved one way or another as Roman leaned closer.

“You be sure to get her out brother,” Roman said as he let go of my hand. “We’ll handle the rest.”

Feeling my rage replacing the shock, I nodded in agreement. Glancing over to the bar, I saw the fat slob getting up and walking toward the stage. I turned and headed for the cage where two men were unlocking the door.

A couple of shots flew past me in the direction of the stage. Focused on Irina, I didn’t even flinch as I moved through the crowd. People were screaming and shoving in all directions as they tried to escape.

Some fell and others simply trampled over them. Glancing back, I knew I had to stay on my feet and focused.

In the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of the two bodyguards moving toward me. I allowed my anger to take control as they tried to grab my arms. Turning swiftly, I swung my hand with the gun and felt it collide with the first man’s head in full force.

There was a loud ‘bang’ as a bullet was released scraping the man’s ear but whirling into the crowd. I had no time to stress about stray bullets. I made a mental note to try not to pull the trigger without a solid target in mind.

A trickle of blood instantly started where my gun had struck him. The trail of blood ran down the side of his head as his legs gave way and he collapsed to the floor. He was

clutching the side of his head as his eyes looped in their sockets.

The second man was holding onto my other arm as he tried to pull his gun from his hip. The scattering of people around us made it impossible for me to see Roman or the others. I took a deep breath and focused on the situation.

Glancing around at Irina, I knew I had to move quickly as they pulled her out of the cage. She looked weak and confused. My heart raced within the confines of my chest. A burning sensation pushed through, and it felt like my chest might burst open.

Without even being fully aware, I swung at the second man. My hand with the gun struck his cheek, and his head bounced sideways. I felt his grip on my arm loosen and I swung with my now free hand.

As I hit the bottom of his jaw, I experienced a stinging in my fingers. But I felt something snap under his skin, and he was moaning in pain as he went down.

Looking back as I headed to the cage, I finally saw Roman and the others. They were scattered throughout the club. Roman and Ivan were standing on the stage with Caleb. Ivan was behind him, and it looked like he had a gun on Caleb's back. Roman was before him pointing his finger at Caleb's face.

The two guys holding Irina up backed away as I closed in on them. She tried to stand but her legs appeared lifeless. For a second, I felt an increased rage inside flare up. If they hurt her, I mumbled to myself as I pushed forward. I swear, I will kill them all.

Irina held out her arms as I stepped in and grabbed her around the waist. She hugged me tightly and that was fine with me. I held her close to my chest, picked her up, and headed for the side door.

The fat slob was blocked off by Yuri, which I was grateful for. As I got closer to the door some men started moving toward me. I turned and walked backward through the

door just in case. But Nikolai and Aleksei stepped in before they could reach us.

As I turned to head for the car, I caught movement beside us. Turning with the gun aimed at shoulder height I saw a man with a scar running toward us. I squeezed the trigger and felt the recoil lift my hand. The man went down, and I turned back to the front. I had no time to make sure whether he was dead or alive. I only knew that I had to get Irina out of there.

I shoved the gun into the side of my pants and picked Irina up fully into my arms. As I reached the street, the valet had my Ferrari running. He opened the passenger door, and I placed Irina inside. I slid over the bonnet and got in on the driver's side. Pulling out, I texted Roman to say we were heading to his home.

I wasn't sure who these people were and how much they knew. Hell, I didn't even really know what was happening. But I did know Roman's place would be the safest right now.

The gate was open, I pulled in and parked next to the steps leading to the front door. I jumped out and headed around to the passenger side. I opened the door and pulled Irina out of the car. Feeling a wave of relief wash over me, I embraced her in my arms. She was still out of it and felt limp.

The front door opened, and Karine came down the stairs followed by Evelina. I held Irina tightly; I didn't want to let go. She needed me, my protection from a world I knew little about. As the two women reached us, I heard a car pulling in.

Turning with Irina still in my arms, I pulled the gun from my side ready to shoot if there were any sign of danger. I breathed out loudly as I saw it was Roman pulling in. Karina pushed the button and the gate closed behind him.

Roman parked beside us. As he got out, I saw Ivan was with him. "Thank you, thank you both," I said as they stepped closer.

“Let’s get inside,” Roman said as he kindly pushed me toward the house. “Karine has some of her men patrolling the streets while my men will be walking the yard.” He continued as we headed inside.

“We need to talk,” Roman said as we were safely inside behind closed doors. I nodded and eased my hold on Irina. She glanced up at me and I gently kissed her forehead. Evelina and Karine took her from me as I stepped back.

Irina had a strange smile on her precious lips, I was sure she was not completely sober yet. I stared as the three women headed to the kitchen, lounge, or wherever they were taking her. Irina was hanging on them as if she was intoxicated. I wanted to go with them; I wanted to make sure she was safe.

Roman tapped me on the shoulder, “Let’s go to my office.” he said. He walked in front with me and Ivan in tow. My mind kept seeing Irina in that cage and I couldn’t rid myself of the protective feelings I held.

“You think this is over? Did you kill that man?” I asked as Roman closed the door behind us.

Roman paced to his desk and picked up a stack of papers. As he held them out to me, he replied. “No, brother, this is far from over. We don’t go around just killing people, where’s your head at?”

I took the papers from him and looked at them. “What is this?” I asked glancing from him to Ivan.

“We have found a house for you here in Miami, close to us all,” Ivan said.

I stumbled backward in awe. But before I could protest, Roman stepped closer and added to Ivan’s statement. “Sergei, you were looking for a place, and after tonight...” Roman looked sternly at Ivan.

“After tonight, you will need to stay close. It is for your and Irina’s protection.” Ivan completed.

I sat down in the chair staring at them in silence. My mind flashed through all that had happened. My blood was

still racing through my veins, and it felt like I had stuck my finger in an electric socket.

The adrenaline rush was far from over but I kind of liked the sense it brought. However, the idea that this fight wasn't over struck a nerve.

Roman poured each of us a glass and sat down opposite me. "You need to leave, tonight. I have arranged for a plane. You will go back home to Los Angeles until the sale has gone through," he said calmly.

I swallowed the content of my glass while Roman and Ivan watched me intently. "But..." I started and trailed off as I remembered my discussion with Irina the previous night.

She wanted to be a teacher, she wanted nothing of this life, and neither did I. But now, after all this, I suppose I have no other options left. No, I still had a say, I thought as I rose.

"No," I said as I walked to the desk and placed the papers down. "Yes, I want a home here but on my terms. It is my life you know."

"Yes, we understand Sergei, but..." Roman started saying as I interrupted him.

"I will keep us safe. I have money and guards, and I care for Irina." I spat back at them.

Ivan walked closer and placed his hand on my shoulder. "You will be safe. We know you can do this alone, but we want to help. We have already set up the guards and ensured your home in Los Angeles is safe. For now."

I was astounded; it felt like it had only been a couple of minutes and all these things had been arranged. Not sure how to respond, I breathed in deeply.

"Sergei, it is one of the homes you looked at. Remember you mentioned them to me over the phone last week before you came down." Roman said as he pulled the photo out from behind the stack of papers. "All you need to do is sign the papers."

I remembered that conversation with Roman and I did like that house. Maybe this wasn't such a bad idea. I grabbed a pen from the holder on his desk and signed the documents. Once done, I picked them up and handed them back to Roman.

"This is my choice." I said, "This is the house I want, yes."

Roman smiled as he took the papers from me. "Yes, but it will take about six to twelve weeks for the sale to be completed. In the meantime, you go home and settle your business that side, okay?"

"Thank you," I said as Ivan shook my hand. "But this doesn't mean I am joining anything."

"Well, then," he said. "Let's get the two of you on your way home."

Ivan opened the door and headed back down to the women. I pulled the gun from my side and handed it back to Roman, but he didn't take it.

Roman placed both his hands over mine as he spoke. "No, you keep it. You never know when you may need it."

Glancing at the gun in my hand I couldn't help but smile. I didn't say it out loud, but it made me feel more powerful. Nodding, I pushed it back into the side of my pants and pulled my coat over the butt.

We walked down and found Ivan sitting with the women in the lounge.

"I tried to give her some herbal tea to try and fight the effects of the drugs they gave her," Evelina said as she stood. "It may still take time to work out thought."

I smiled at her, "Thank you all for everything."

"No thanks needed," Ivan said as he tapped my shoulder. "Let's get you two going."

Outside, three more cars waited as the gates opened. I sat with Irina in the back as Roman and Ivan drove us to the private airstrip just outside of town. We were escorted by the three other cars all the way up to the plane.

Roman assisted me in getting Irina on board the plane as she was still out. I noted that there were four bodyguards on the plane as well. We said our goodbyes and I sat down with Irina.

Her face was white as a sheet, and she was still going in and out. Through the window, I saw Roman and Ivan waiting until the plane started taking off.

As the wheels lifted, I looked back and saw two other cars driving up to where my brother stood. "Roman!" I screamed against the window. Tapping at the glass, I screamed again, "Roman, behind you."

I knew he couldn't hear me, but my mind was traveling in new directions. "Stop the plane," I screamed at the bodyguards. "Stop the plane."

"Sorry we have orders, sir," the one replied solemnly. "Please stay calm, they will be fine," the other man said as I unbuckled my seatbelt.

Glancing down, I saw flickers of light, which had to be them shooting at each other. For now, there was nothing more I could do as we were in the air. I texted Roman to find out if they were fine and waited.

I paced up and down the length of the plane, waiting for my phone to chime. It was a while before I received a text back. But they were all fine, Roman replied. Feeling relieved, I walked to the back of the plane where a small bar was set up. I poured myself a drink and walked back to where Irina lay sleeping.

She stirred from a nightmare, and I was there at her side to comfort her. As she drifted off, I sat beside her and dozed off for a bit.



## Chapter 12 - Irina

Opening my eyes, I noticed I was lying on an airplane seat. Everything was fuzzy, I was sure I had heard Evelina at some point. Yet, I couldn't place her. Slowly, I looked around, but she wasn't anywhere to be seen.

I was covered with a fluffy blanket and an even softer pillow under my head. The plane was quiet. I saw two men seated on opposite sides of the plane before me. Feeling some turbulence, I knew the plane was in the air.

For a moment my heart stopped. Where was the plane heading to? Who was with me? I tried to sit up so I could see if there were other people on the plane except for the two guards.

As I moved, I felt a quick stabbing sensation run through my mind. I grabbed my head trying to hold it together as it exploded with increasing pain. The sounds coming out of me were that of a strangled animal.

Fear hugged my heart as I clapped my hands over my mouth. I couldn't decide if I should hold my head or keep my mouth closed. Resting back on the soft cloud of a pillow I felt a warm hand on my shoulder.

"Relax, you are safe Irina," Sergei said as he moved into sight. I breathed heavily as the angst left my body and relaxation took place. "Close your eyes and rest some more, we are headed to my home in Los Angeles where you will be safe."

I placed my hand over Sergei's as he softly squeezed my shoulder. "Thank you," I whispered as sleep stepped in and took me again.

Suddenly, I was back in that cage. I was screaming but no one was there to hear me. The room was empty, and, on the stage, sat Caleb and his men laughing at me. My body began to shake softly. I opened my eyes and looked up into Sergei's eyes.

Breathing out hard and fast, I tried to relax and push the images of Caleb and his men from my mind. Sergei pulled

me up and embraced me tightly. “I will never leave your side again,” he whispered.

I hugged him and buried my face in his chest as my sobbing intensified. Sergei caressed my hair as he held me, and I felt my fears dissipate. I was grateful that he and Roman were at that club tonight. If not for the family, I would have been sold to a stranger. Who knew what would have happened to me then?

Even though I didn’t know much about Sergei, he was Roman’s brother and that meant a lot. I preferred to be with him at the moment as I knew he would not force me into anything.

Just the thought of being with a complete stranger at the moment made me shiver. But thank God they were there, and now I am safe with Sergei. I shifted and cuddled into his embrace. There was something different about him though.

It almost felt as if he was giving off rage, it felt like it was pouring out of him somehow. But the man I met and had a lovely evening with didn’t seem to have such intense rage. I gently shook my head, clearing my thoughts from it. I was sure the sense was due to my own experience as Sergei was a gentleman.

Even though I overflowed with gratitude, I couldn’t shake the feeling that I would owe Sergei something. I was sure it would be something big, but would handle it once we got there.

Since the cage lowered at the club, his presence had been with me. Every time I opened my eyes, he was there. He was protecting me, but what would it cost me?

Suddenly, there was a shift in the angle of the plane and my grip on Sergei intensified. “It’s okay,” he whispered, “we are landing.”

I looked up into his handsome face and soft smile. My stomach made a slight turn as my heart skipped a beat. His eyes were shining as if he had won the biggest prize of his life. I wondered what had changed in him.

The plane landed and slowly came to a stop. Sergei let go of me as he rose and held out his hand. “Ready to leave?” he asked jokingly.

I was definitely ready and would go with him anywhere at the moment. I stood on shaky legs and placed my hand in his. I noticed the frail white dress as the blanket fell to the ground. I thought I had only imagined it and felt my cheeks redden as his smile broadened.

I placed my free hand across my chest as I stepped out into the aisle. Sergei quickly took off his jacket and placed it around my shoulders. “Thanks,” I whispered without looking up.

He places his arm around me, and we move to the door. The early morning air was cool as we stepped out and it hit my face. The airstrip was empty except for the three cars waiting next to the plane.

As we headed down the steps, I stopped and pulled back glancing around. “We’re safe here, I promise,” Sergei said as he gently pulled me into his arms. We took the last couple of steps as one of the bodyguards opened the car door, and we got in.

“I have no clothing or luggage?” I asked as we pulled out of the private airport. Instantly, I felt a sadness fall over me as everything I owned had been abandoned.

“Roman said he’ll send some guys to collect your things. It should be here in a day or two. Just relax, I have already arranged to have some items delivered to my home for you in the meantime.” Sergei said as he pulled me closer, wrapping his arms around me.

I felt safe in his arms and rested my head against his firm chest. Feeling his warmth comforted me even though it made my heart beat a little faster. Everything passed in a fog; it felt like I was dreaming.

We pulled into a long driveway that headed up to a vast double-story mansion. The house was a modern Victorian style painted off-white. Giant trees were running along both sides of

the driveway up to the sides of the house. Under each tree was a circle of colorful flowers growing in the shade.

Taking in the scenery it almost felt like I had entered a fairytale and not only dreaming. It was breathtakingly beautiful and not at all what I expected. I was instantly enchanted by the sheer wonder of his home.

Two guards stood on the steps leading up to the overly large wooden door. “You will be safe here, Roman has sent over some men for extra protection even though I felt it wasn’t needed,” Sergei stated as he led me to the door.

“I have a state-of-the-art security system in place. But, Roman insisted, so you are double protected.” He said as we entered the foyer.

Two sets of stairs winding up to the second floor and a door on each side of us. The white marble-tiled floor shone brightly as the sun entered the room through the wall-to-wall windows behind them.

“This way, my lady,” Sergei said as he moved to the right and led me up the stairs. We walked down a short passage and stopped just before the end.

“I had the room next to mine cleared and set up for you. I hope it is to your liking though.” He completed as he opened a door and walked inside.

The room was quite large as I supposed all the rooms in this mansion were. There was a dressing table by the window, a double bed to the right, and a door to the left. I moved forward slowly, admiring the colorful décor while Sergei just stood at the door.

The walls were lined with paintings of open fields, sunsets, and beaches. Some had horses in, and others were just the scenery. The bed was covered with a fluffy blanket and a selection of different-sized pillows. Everything was in light shades of pink.

“Oh, wow,” I said placing my hands over my mouth in awe. To the sides of the room door were cupboards and shelves. The shelves had books neatly stacked in alphabetical

order. Between the books were ornaments and a couple of adorable stuffed animals.

I felt sure I had just stepped into a story, as everything felt surreal. I turned and turned, taking in my surroundings.

Sergei's smile broadened as he watched me. "I am so glad you approve," he said. "Through that door is your ensuite bathroom and the bags on the bed should contain some clothing and other things I thought you may need."

I stopped and gazed at him, "Thank you, Sergei," I said as I walked over and flung my arms around his neck.

Sergei kissed my cheek, and a hot flash ran through my being. "If you go down the stairs, the door to your left is the kitchen. Please help yourself with anything. My home is now also your home." He said as he hugged me.

An urge to hold on to him and never let go pushed up in me. I stepped back not sure if I felt this way because he saved me, or if my emotions were just in chaos at the moment.

Feeling my cheeks heat up, I turned away and looked at the bags on the bed. There were three bags and a box waiting for me. With everything that had happened the last two days, I was unsure of how to react. I suspected the drugs could also still be attributed to my heightened emotions.

"Irina," Sergei spoke as he placed his hands on my shoulders and turned me to face him. "I have to go, but I am only going down the hall to my office. I need to talk to Roman, I'll be back shortly, okay?"

I nodded before giving him another hug. "Thank you for everything," I said before he turned and headed out the door.

"No thanks needed, dear, just holler if there is anything you need," he added before closing the door behind him.

Turning back to the bed and the bags with delight, I sat down beside them. The softness of the bed was a surprise as I almost sank away into it. I pulled the bags over while trying to find my balance. I ended up laughing at myself.

There were a couple of dresses, some pants, shorts, and tops in the first two bags. The third one contained a variety of underwear and sleepwear. I held up some of the lingerie wondering what the person who bought these was thinking.

Most of them were quite normal, but there were three pieces of clothing I would surely never wear. In the box were four pairs of shoes. I held up the black high-heels and considered the fact that he knew the size of my feet.

It was a bit strange, but Eveline could also have assisted with it. Yes, I felt sure she had. How else would he know which size clothing to buy? Placing the shoes back in the box, I lay back on the bed.

His hospitality and affection showed so much of his character I thought, staring up at the ceiling. I don't know how I would have survived this terrible ordeal without Sergei. I turned and pulled a pillow into my arms, grateful as I drifted off.

Startled, I sat up glancing around frantically. But then calmness entered me as the fog cleared, and I realized I was safe. Lying back down I tried to keep my eyes open as the images of the club kept flooding back. The ceiling started to turn as I focused on the light hanging from the roof, and sleep eventually came.

## Chapter 13 - Sergei

She looked like an angel, I thought as I left the room glancing back before closing the door. Stepping out into the hallway I felt anger pushing up in me.

How could anyone take an innocent woman and do that to her? What kind of person offers such a delicate being to a complete stranger at a price? My mind tried to rationalize all that had happened but could not fathom it all. This world is cruel, it was not a world I wanted any part of.

Thinking back to the moments before I took her into my arms. I had fought off the two bodyguards with a might I didn't know I had.

I found a stir of emotions that I had never experienced before. All my life, I considered myself a reasonable man, I could talk people down in any situation. But this new experience, clutching the gun, swinging at those men.

It stirred something inside. There was a side of me that was only now waking up, it seemed. A side that was hidden or locked away.

Still unsure of what was happening or changing within me, I knew that if I wasn't careful. If I didn't keep a lid on it and learned how to control it, I might end up with something I could not control. Something may just snap, and I wasn't that type of person.

This is a life my father and now also Roman are part of. If not for the family... I entered my office and grabbed hold of my head. What would have become of her if the family had not been there? Would I have been able to get her out? I didn't even want to consider the possibilities.

Pouring a drink, I picked up the glass and started pacing back and forth as I sipped at the content. I have never experienced such violence as tonight. This woman, this beauty, she provokes something in me. I can feel it scratching trying to escape from deep within. But I cannot identify it yet.

Admitting it to myself, I liked the thrill and excitement it brought. "No," I argued with myself, "You are out of

control, Sergei.”

Taking the gun Roman gave me, I placed it on the table. I allowed my fingers to run across the barrel and down the handle. I had never even held a gun, let alone used one. But tonight, it was like my being knew what to do.

This change was so sudden but felt so good. I pushed my hand through my hair. Have I always had a violent streak I didn't know of, I wondered. Or was this shift in me due to Irina?

Maybe it was the imminent fear of danger, I thought. It could just have been adrenaline rushing through me that made me so aggressive. Or, it could have been the gun.

I had to find a way that was safe for me to explore what was happening. I didn't know how to do that, but I had to keep this volatile rage on a tight leash.

Swallowing the last bit of Whiskey, I poured another and sat down in front of my computer. As I dialed Roman, I wondered what Irina was doing. Roman's face filled my computer screen as he came online. “Hi there,” he blurted out.

“Hi, Roman, I am just checking in on everything on your side.”

“Well,” Roman replied, looking at someone behind the screen and waving for them to come forward. “I want you to meet Ashan and Luder.” He added as two men joined him. “They are some of our cousins who have joined the family in Miami.”

We exchanged greetings before Roman continued. “They will be working with you on this operation once you return brother. And while you are keeping Irina safe, they will delve into developments on this side.”

“Fine,” I reply without hesitation. “I want regular updates though; I want to be kept in the loop, do you understand?” I asked.

Roman rubbed his stubble chin as usual when he had to consider important changes. “Sergei,” he started leaning forward into the screen.



“Yes, Roman?” I replied calmly.

“You do know that if you do this, you will be heavily implicated in Bratva’s business, don’t you?” Roman replied.

“Yes,” I answered, “I know and frankly, I no longer care. I will do what needs to be done to keep Irina safe.” My voice rose as I spoke, and I took a deep breath.

“Okay, okay,” Roman replied lifting his hands as if I was pointing a gun at him. “I get it, Irina is everything now.”

I smiled as I thought back to when we were kids, and he always played the robber. He used to do the same thing when I caught him. Roman returned my smile and I suspected he was thinking the same thing.

“She’s not, well, not quite everything. But keeping her safe is a priority for me.” I breathed out, thinking of her in the room upstairs.

“Right,” Roman said. “Ashan and Luder will be updating you daily on any developments here in Miami, and as soon as the purchase of the house goes through, you can join us.”

“Before we return, this Caleb must be neutralized. I don’t want her to fear for her life every time she wants to leave the house.” I added.

“Agreed,” Roman said glancing at Ashan and Luder.

“We will do our best, Sergei, and keep you in the loop.” They replied.

I nodded in agreement before we all said our goodbyes. Closing the call, my mind went back to Irina, and I rose wondering if she was sleeping yet. I would give her some time to adjust before getting too serious. After all, she had just gone through a terrible ordeal.

Even though I felt a strong pull to be with her, I would keep myself in line. I didn’t intend to scare her away; I wanted her to stay because she wanted to. I didn’t want her to feel she had no other option. Getting rid of Caleb would ensure she could make her own choices.

Pouring another drink my eyes drifted to the gun still lying on the table behind the laptop. I picked it up and smiled as it felt like an old friend. It almost felt like it was a part of me. A part I had missed my entire life. Deciding I wouldn't need it right now, I opened my safe and placed it inside.

Staring at it I knew things were changing, and life as I knew it was no longer an option. Wiping the sweat suddenly forming on my brow I realized I had to make peace with the change if I was going to succeed at my new goals.

Closing the safe, I turned the knob listening as the locks fell into place. I took a deep breath and turned to the door.

Leaving my office, I quickly walked through the house to ensure all the doors and windows were locked. Once I was sure everything was secure, I headed to her room.

I softly opened the door and peeked inside. Irina was lying on the double bed, holding onto one of the pillows. I quietly walked over and stared down at the magnificent woman lying there. Her curves were one of the things that caught my eye that very first night I saw her.

She was perfectly sculpted with a small middle, large breasts, and hips that were undeniable. My heart fluttered as I stood, no other woman in the world could ever be so utterly gorgeous.

I noticed her eyes were moving behind closed lids and her fists were clenched. I wondered if she was having a nightmare. I leaned over and gently pushed her hair back from her face. She flinched in her sleep, and I felt my heart aching for her. She had not changed yet and the dress they put her in was quite revealing.

I dried my hands on my pants as I stood watching her. My cock was stiffening just at the sight of her. Filling with desire, I couldn't help but join her on the bed. The feeling she stirred in me was more than just desire. Yes, I wanted her, but I wanted all of her.

Gently, I placed my arm around her wanting to hold on and keep her safe. Irina stirred and shifted backward cuddling into me. I felt my heartbeat picking up as her warmth pressed against my chest. She filled me with a strong sense of love and comfort.

My blood rushed through my veins pumping into my now stiffened dick. My body was acting of its own accord, and I could not prevent the way it responded to her.

I wasn't tired but needed to be close to her. I held her for quite some time before deciding to take a shower before she woke up. So many things happened in such a short period that I didn't even get time to change myself. Carefully, I pulled the pillow back into her arms as I rose. I also added one behind her to simulate my presence.

Glancing down at her, I noticed her sleep appeared to be calmer than on the plane. Her hands had also relaxed, and I hoped that she might feel safer by being here. Weighing my options, I wondered if I should just use this bathroom as I didn't want to leave her alone.

Although all my clothes were in my room, I didn't want to go to get them. She may wake up if I leave and be scared or unsure of where she is. For a moment I just stood, unsure of what I wanted to do.

Irina stirred again as I started toward the door. I froze and watched her. Maybe I should wait until she was up, I told myself. But what if she wanted some privacy, what if she preferred to be alone? I considered the fact that she may not feel the need to be together as I did.

Yet, I knew she wanted safety. But what if she didn't know where she was? Would she try to run, scream, or hurt herself? We still weren't sure what drugs they gave her. I surely didn't know the after-effects they could have.

Standing there in the middle of the room, I knew I had to make a decision. I thought I could always draw her a bath after she woke and then take a shower. I contemplated this for a moment before making up my mind. I walked back to her side. She seemed at peace.

Leaning over I gently kissed her forehead before I walked into the bathroom. I opened the shower and started undressing. “What am I thinking?” I asked my reflection as I looked in the mirror.

“Well, you want to keep her safe, don’t you?” I asked myself and nodded in agreement. “She will understand,” I told myself before entering the shower.

I left the shower door halfway open so I could hear if she woke up.

## Chapter 14 - Irina

I sat up, startled out of my dreams as the sound of running water entered my mind. Looking around the room, I saw the bathroom door was open. I breathed in deeply as my body relaxed, realizing I was on a soft bed and remembering Sergei's face.

Most of my dreams were horrific, I was filled with the angst of being back at that club. Being drugged and dragged into a cage. But each time my nightmare would end with Sergei. He stepped in each time to rescue me. I wiped the sweat from my brow as my heartbeat returned to its normal rhythm.

I felt his presence a couple of times during my sleep, and it soothed me. Now, after getting some much-needed sleep, even though it was haunted, I felt better. Laying back I vaguely remember Sergei coming in. I think he was in here a couple of times though. But I remember him standing by the door saying something.

Rubbing at the small bump on the side of my head, Caleb's face returned to my mind. His ugly smirk and stained teeth were clear as day as he laughed at me. Seeing this image in my mind made me shiver. He was the evil of my nightmares. I shook my head to clear my thoughts.

I no longer wanted to remember them or the events of the night. This was one of the reasons I tried to stay clear of Bratva. I knew there were evil dangers out there. I just never thought I would get pulled into it.

As I shook my head, I noticed the awful pain had also subdued. My head no longer throbbed as it had been sliced open. This was a good thing, I told myself as I rubbed down my arms and my legs to get the chill out of them.

Getting up, I glanced around. Most of the bags were lying scattered on the floor. Sergei might have chucked them when he brought me in, I thought. The sound of water once again came to my attention as I tried to make sense of everything.

Listening to the running water, I realized it must be the shower. I looked at the closed bedroom door and then the open bathroom door. Sergei must be in the shower, I thought. One way or another, I was determined to forget the horrid things and people. The events trying to stick to me needed to be washed away, I whispered to the room. As I listened to the running water, my mind filled with ideas on getting rid of my nightmares.

Sergei made me feel safe and assured me that I would hold on to him, I thought to myself as I slowly made my way across the room to the bathroom. As I moved, I tried to be as quiet as possible. I needed to be sure it was indeed him in the shower. Peeking around the door, I saw him standing there in the shower.

I didn't know who else I expected as I was sure his home was a fort. The shower door was only halfway closed, and he was standing with his back towards me. I slowly entered as quietly as possible and watched him for a bit.

His dark-tanned skin was a dazzling wonder, highlighting his brute and well-defined muscles. I didn't even try to stop my eyes from wandering. I felt my mouth filling with water as I scanned him. My eyes moved down his distinct shoulders to his waist. Following the path further I locked onto his gorgeous ass. Firm and round, thoroughly shaped to fit his carved body.

As he lifted his hands to rinse his hair, I could see the lines forming across his back. The muscles bulged out effortlessly with his formed shape. An intense desire to run my fingers across his body filled me. I felt a heat rising between my legs as I watched him.

Sergei was as gorgeous as he was caring. He appeared gentle with all his clothing on, seeing him now naked. He looked like a god. Realizing I needed him to forget the ugly faces, I stepped closer. As I undid the zip on the side of the dress, Sergei glanced over his shoulder at me, gathering I was there.

“I’m so very sorry,” he started as he turned toward me. “I didn’t want to leave you alone, so I decided to use your shower. Sorry, I will get out ...” His words trailed off as I smiled and slipped the dress off.

Sergei’s eyes widened as the dress fell to the floor in one swift movement and my body was exposed. He stood like a statue fixated on me. His eyes sparkled as a grin touched his lips. His hands flopped down to his sides. Slowly, I push my thumbs into the sides of the panties and slide them down my legs. Stepping out of them I could see the awe in his eyes.

His mouth opened but no words came out as I walked closer. Sergei opened the shower door, and I stepped inside with him. He simply stood there as if in a trance. I smiled up at him as his grey eyes fogged over.

“Are,” he started saying. “Are you...” I placed my finger across his lips, silencing him. His chest heaved as his breath seemed to quicken by my touch. But he didn’t move. Even though his chest was covered in soapy bubbles, I could see his firm chest muscles and abs bulging out.

My eyes traveled a path of their own as I followed his V-line down past his perfectly formed protruding abs. Lowering my gaze, I found myself staring at his well-endowed cock. Not that I have seen too many, but his cock had a good thickness to it I thought. It was longer than I had imagined, though. I felt a burst of excitement bubbling up in me.

My fingertips started tingling and I fought the need to reach out and touch him. Even just standing in his presence, I could feel the calmness he filled me with. The safety and hope he brought gave me comfort in knowing I was where I needed to be.

Slowly, I started turning and stepping back towards him. Glancing over my shoulder, I nodded at him and smiled. Sergei placed his hands on my bare hips and my body tingled all over.

I breathed in deeply as my body ached for his touch. I had no idea what was to come next, but I was more than ready.

I wanted him in me. I needed to feel anything but fear, and I was sure this was the right option.



## Chapter 15 - Sergei

Standing with her naked in front of me holding her hips, I tried to regulate my breathing. Something in her has changed. I blinked to make sure I was not dreaming.

Nope, I wasn't dreaming, she was really here, standing before me. I softly clenched her hips, feeling her silky skin move in my hands. My mind was racing as I tried to control my urges.

I glanced at the sponge, then at the bottle of soap trying to decide if I should use my hands or the sponge. After a second of thought, I decided my hands would work better for me. I wanted, no I needed to feel her magnificent curves, her smooth skin without a barrier.

Grabbing the bottle, I filled my hand with liquid soap. A slight tremor ran through me as I applied the soap to her back. Moving down her curves, I couldn't help but admire all that she was. My hands slid down her back over her hips and firmly grabbed her butt.

Irina stood firm but shifted slightly as I held her butt. She has shown great strength during these trying times. As I slowly move my hands up and down her back and her arms, awe comes over me. Even with all her generous curves, she is the most beautiful creature I have ever seen.

My hands moved up again and over her shoulders. I gently pulled her into me as I stepped forward. Sliding my hands down her chest, I felt her head nestling back on my chest. Her sweet, honeyed scent fills my nostrils and sends a shiver down my back.

As my hands moved over her breast, her hands reached back and settled on my thighs. Her fingers slowly moved an inch up and then down. I felt my cock pumping as it came to life. Her touch ignited the beast within. Slow, take it slow, I told myself as my fingers played with her peaked nipples.

My hands slid further down as I continued to bathe her in bubbles. "You are so gorgeous," I whispered into her ear as

I kissed her neck softly. Irina smiled at me as she turned into my arms.

“You make me forget, Sergei.” She said as our bodies collided. “I want to forget, and I want you to help me forget everything, all of them.” She whispered as she rose on her toes, wrapping her arms around my neck.

Her voluptuous lips parted, and her eyes closed as she came closer. I leaned in for the kiss as I could not deny her wishes. I pulled her tight in my embrace feeling the heat rise between us as my tongue entered her delicious mouth.

“Make me forget,” Irina whispered into my mouth.

“Your wish is my command, my lady.” I breathed out into her neck as I grabbed her butt and lifted her into my arms. I didn’t need her to ask again, I was more than ready to give her what she wanted.

Turning in the shower I pushed her up against the wall. She wrapped her legs around my waist as our lips met with passion.

Slow down, my mind hummed, it’s her first time. I gently lowered her as reality started to come back to me. I needed to keep the beast at bay for just a bit longer. It had to be perfect, no rushing, I told myself.

Irina looked up at me, her eyes filled with desire. “Are we stopping,” she asked between breaths.

“No,” I replied. “I just want to make sure it’s a wonderful experience for you.”

Irina’s smile stretched from ear to ear as I leaned in and kissed her. My hands wanted to be everywhere, so did my tongue and my dick. But I wanted her to have the full experience. I pushed her arms up against the wall as I kissed her neck.

Slowly I let go as I moved down kissing her breasts and sucking her nipples. She giggled and squirmed a little as my hands followed the kisses. I took hold of her breasts as I lowered myself to my knees. I felt her arch with each touch.

Irina pushed her hands into my hair holding tight as I drew a line with my tongue down her belly.

She exhaled deeply as I lifted her one leg over my shoulder. The throbbing between my legs had subdued slightly as my cock came upright as stiff as a log. I gently pushed my tongue between her pussy lips and moved it sideways swiftly.

Irina let out a small scream as I found her clitoris. Her grip on my hair tightened as I played with it. I felt her legs starting to shake as her breathing became labored.

Leaning deeper into her, I penetrated her with my tongue. Irina let go of my hair as her arms flung to the wall beside her.

“Oh, Sergei,” she breathed out as I stopped for a second allowing her to regain her legs. She was staring up at the ceiling with her eyes closed. Her body reacted to my every touch from there.

I leaned in again to find her clitoris with my tongue as my finger penetrated her pussy. Irina let out a cry as my finger moved in and out. She grabbed my shoulders, and I felt her nails digging in as she climaxed in my hand.

I rose, ready to take her, my dick pounding hard. My kisses were also more demanding this time as I picked her up into my arms and pushed her against the wall.

Her breathing was ragged, but her body was ready. She smiled as I kissed her neck and lifted her higher. Stepping in under her I kissed her hard as I lowered her onto my dick.

Irina gasped for air and clutched my back as my throbbing dick entered her fully. She was so warm, and her pussy was wet. I had to stand for a second to allow the beast to calm down.

Stepping back into the water, I lifted her up and down in slow movements. Irina turned her head into my neck sending shivers down my back as she kissed me. Our breathing started matching as I moved her quicker and quicker up and down my shaft.

I felt her explode as her body started to shudder in my arms. My mind went whirling as I burst into her. I felt my legs starting to shake and pushed her up against the wall to steady us.

“Oh, Sergei,” Irina said in shattering breaths as I lifted her off me lowering her to the floor.

I stood holding her in my arms as I wasn't ready to let go just yet. Breathing in her essence I realized she made me a stronger man. I wanted to protect her from the world and would do anything for her.

Once again, I started washing her. First her back and then her front. Irina allowed me to shower her. As I washed myself, she stepped out and flung on the silk robe hanging against the wall. She headed for the bedroom, and I felt this urge push up in me.

“Don't get dressed,” I called out of the shower as she walked out the door.

Irina peeked around the door, smiling at me. “Okay,” she replied and disappeared.

I quickly rinsed myself and followed her to the room with only a towel around my waist.

She was sitting on the edge of the bed as I entered. “So, what shall I wear?” she asks, grinning.

“Mmm, I would prefer nothing,” I replied as I walked closer. I pulled the chair from the dresser closer to the bed and sat down. “Okay, I'm ready,” I said leaning back. “Try them all and tell me what you think.”

Irina laughed, “You want me to put on all the clothes?”

Shaking my head and smiling at her I replied, “Not all at the same time, but yes, try on each outfit so we can see if they fit you.”

Irina picked up a dress and turned, holding it in front of her. Even her eyes were smiling, and that made me happy. I sat admiring her as she changed from one outfit to another going through them all.

I was pleased that all the clothing fit her, and she liked them. Once she had tried on the last one, she walked to where I was seated watching her.

“Now what?” she asked as she sat down on my lap.

“Now,” I said as I started to undo the buttons on the front of the dress. “I have to say that I like the naked look more.”

Irina laughed as she tried to stop me from undoing the buttons. She wiped at my hands playfully but didn't stop me. As I undone the last button, I slipped the dress off her shoulders.

Her skin, so smooth, shined in the sunlight as it filtered through the window. I picked her up as I rose, allowing the dress to fall to the ground. Irina smiled seductively at me as I wrapped her legs around my waist.

“Shower or bed?” I asked grinning at her.

“Well,” she replied. “We have done the shower. So, let's try the bed?”

I walked over to the bed and held her tight as I leaned over. I first had to get rid of the stuff on the bed, which I simply pushed to the floor. Once the bed was clear of clothing, I slowly lowered her down. I undid the clasp of the bra she was wearing and pulled it with me.

After dropping it to the floor, I pulled at the panty. Irina lifted herself, allowing me to pull it free. Staring down at her, I felt blessed to have such a fantastic woman in my life.

If Roman or anyone else had ever told me that such a devoted love was possible, I would have laughed in their faces. But now, now that I have met Irina, I could believe such a thing.

I gently moved her legs apart and pushed her feet up, bending her knees as I knelt between them. Her hair framed her full face and shoulders, she looked like an angel laying there naked before my eyes.

Rising to my knees, I propped myself up on my hands and placed them next to her shoulders. "Irina," I breathed out. "You are gorgeous beyond measure."

Her full lips pulled into that remarkable smile as I leaned in to kiss her. Her mouth met mine with intensity as she caressed my sides. I pushed her arms up over her head as I kissed her cheeks and then moved to her neck.

## Chapter 16 - Irina

Sergei leaned in and kissed me once again passionately. Since I joined him in the shower, he has not stopped complimenting me. I loved how he looked at me; his words made me feel special.

Yet, there was something different about him. The Sergei I met before and the man who now kissed me so enthusiastically was not quite the same one. Don't get me wrong, this day could not have ended any better.

But I couldn't rid myself of this deep feeling of dread. It could still be from the events of the previous night but what if it wasn't? Before my mind could formulate any more ideas, I felt his hot breath and kisses flowing down my neck.

I gasped as he nibbled my breast and my nipples instantly reacted. He made me feel safe, and we have a deep connection. I am sure of that. For now, my mind cleared as he licked my stomach, making it turn wildly.

Sergei's tongue finds its way down to my pussy, and I feel the throbbing lust returning. He softly pushed my knees sideways as he thrusts his tongue into me. I grab the blankets to my sides as my body arches and fills with excitement. His tongue ignited the fire within my belly every time he pushed in and pulled out.

The sounds I made just leaped out of my throat without consent as my body heated up with pure joy. I felt his tongue entering me, then licking at my clitoris. He knew just how to move as my body ached for him. I grabbed at his shoulders, but they were just out of reach.

So, my fingers found their way into his soft nest of hair as I wrapped my hands around his head. Suddenly, I felt him nibbling my clitoris and my body burned with a need for him. I pushed down on his head as I started to shake and shudder from pure delight. My legs cramped as they pulled tightly around his shoulders.

Sergei pushed a finger up into my vagina, and I arched up as I started to cum. He didn't stop. He continued to

pleasure me until I was done splattering over his hand.

Laying there trying to regain my breath, I opened my eyes. There he was, sitting upright grinning down at me.

Once my breathing had normalized, I indicated for him to come closer. Sergei leaned over me and kissed me hard. His breathing was also uneven I noticed as I caressed his back. Feeling his firm muscles move under my touch sent chills through my body.

I felt cherished that such a great man would want me and want to keep me safe. Sergei's warm lips tenderly covered mine as he removed the towel and dropped it to the floor. I could feel his throbbing dick between my legs and part them to allow him entrance.

Sergei slowly lowered his body entering me once again fully. He moved with care as he pushed his hand in under my butt and pulled me up into him. With his other hand, he pushed us up from the bed. Turning swiftly, I found myself seated in his lap.

He lifted my head kissing me softly before taking hold of my hips in his strong hands. I tried placing my feet next to his legs to assist with the movements. But he pulled them out so he could penetrate me all the way. Sergei lifted and lowered me with mighty strength.

With every move, I gasped at the air around us as he filled me deeper and harder. Throwing my head back he embraced the opportunity and sucked at my breast. His throbbing dick sent shudders through me as we peeked together.

Sergei fell back on the bed out of breath. I lay on top of him, moaning from pleasure as I tried to find my own breath. Hot and sweaty but feeling high on life, I hugged him.

After a while, Sergei sat back up, holding me in his arms. "This calls for another shower," he said as he stood with me in his arms and walked to the bathroom. He placed me down on the vanity as he turned and opened the water.



Once the temperature was right, he picked me up and placed me in the shower. He lathered me with soap. His hands slid over my body as he washed me. His touch was sensual and welcoming.

After we showered, he left for his room to dress. I sat on the bed for a bit thinking of all the pleasure I have experienced in this short time.

I tried to make sense of all the emotions bubbling through me while I got dressed. I knew he made me feel safe and cherished, and there seemed to be a deep connection between us. But was this what I wanted? Thinking about the events that have brought me here made me a bit uncomfortable.

Sergei stuck his head through the door as I was buttoning my top. “You want something to eat?” he asked grinning.

Pushing my thoughts aside, I smiled at him and walked to the door. “I sure do,” I replied as he took my hand.

We headed downstairs to the kitchen. He pulled out a chair for me to sit on at the small island in the middle of the room. I watched him as he headed over to the fridge and took out a variety of items.

After placing them down on the counter, he asked waving at the food before me, “Anything you don’t like?”

I studied the items before me. There was cheese, cold meat, biscuits, some fruit, cream, and some sauces. I shook my head as I replied, “Nope, I eat them all.”

Sergei seemed to light up at my answer and took out two plates and a salad bowl. He used a knife and breadboard to chop the fruit and placed them in the bowl before covering them with cream. Once this was done, he put two spoons into the bowl and set it aside.

He wiped the board and sliced the cheese and cold meats. These he placed onto the two plates with some biscuits. Once he was done, he took the seat opposite me, pushing one plate toward me.

“So,” Sergei said beaming at me. “Tell me more about yourself, Irina.”

Before I could start, he jumped up and walked back to the fridge. “Wait, I almost forget.” He added as he pulled out a bottle of wine and grabbed two glasses. He opened the bottle and poured wine into the two glasses before sitting back down.

“Now, we have everything.” He concluded staring at me.

“Well, what more is there to say? You know my story, and I am sure Roman, and the family filled in any gaps you might have had.” I said looking at the food on my plate.

“Not really,” he admitted, squeezing my hand softly.

Suddenly, I didn’t feel too hungry anymore. “There isn’t much more to add,” I said gloomily, picking at the food on the plate.

“I’m sorry,” Sergei responded as he reached out and squeezed my hand. “Things will normalize in time, just give it some time. Okay?” he added before taking a sip from his glass.

Sergei looked at me as he rose from his seat. He held out his glass toward me. “Let’s do this,” he said. “Let’s forget about the world out there and everything that has and is supposed to have happened.”

I smiled at him considering his words. “We can live in a world of our own?” I asked.

“Yes, we can. A world of our own.” He replied, grinning, holding out his glass again.

Lifting my glass, I met his in the middle, “A world of our own.” I said smiling. As we ate, we shared ideas about this world we were creating. It would be our own little bubble where the outside world could not touch us.

Once our plates were empty, Sergei rinsed them and placed them in the dishwasher. He came around to my side and lifted me into his arms.

“What about the salad?” I asked as he carried me out of the room and into the living area.

“I’ll go get it now,” he replied placing me down on the sofa by the fireplace. Sergei quickly made a fire and put on some music before he went back to collect the fruit salad. After having our dessert and some more wine, we headed back upstairs.

At the door to my room, we stopped. Sergei took me into his arms and just held me tight for the longest moment. I didn’t want to sleep alone, I wanted to be close to him, safely in his arms.

“Sergei,” I started looking up into his eyes.

Taking my chin into his hand, he leaned in and kissed me. “Yes, Irina.” He replied.

“Will you stay with me?” I asked wrapping my arms around his neck.

Without another word, Sergei picked me up and headed to his room. He placed me down and opened the covers so I could get in. I slipped out of the dress and got into his bed with only my underwear. I smiled up at him as he pulled the covers over me.

He walked around and took off his clothes before getting in. Sergei moved closer and wrapped his arm around me.

“Thank you for saving me,” I said as he pulled me tightly into him.

Sergei placed a warm kiss on my shoulder, and we lay like that until I fell asleep.

I awoke to the smell of freshly brewed coffee. Sitting up in bed, I saw Sergei entering the room with a tray.

“Good morning,” he said as he placed the tray across my legs. “I made you breakfast and coffee; I hope it is okay.” He added before kissing my forehead.

I beamed at him. There was bacon and eggs and toast, plus coffee. What more could I ask for?

As I ate, he got dressed. I was about halfway done when we heard his doorbell ringing. I felt my body tense up as he glanced at the door.

“No need to worry,” he said as he walked to the door. “Roman said he was sending over your things. It might be that.” He concluded as he left the room.

I slid out of bed and went to the other room to get dressed. As I finished, Sergei knocked. “May I come in?” he asked.

I laughed as I opened the door. “It is your house so you may enter,” I said jokingly stepping aside with a curtsy.

“All your things have arrived. Would you like them in here, or must they go to our room?” He asked, grinning.

“I was hoping to move in there with you,” I said, placing my arms around his neck.

“Then it’s settled.” He replied as he pulled me close and kissed me.

Once we moved all my belongings into his room, he showed me around the house. His office was just down the hall and so was the extensive library he had.

On the bottom floor was the kitchen and living area, an entertainment area, and a locked room. When I asked about the locked room, Sergei smiled widely.

“That’s for another time,” he said as he laid kisses across my face.

This made me wonder what he was hiding, but for now, I would accept it. My curiosity would likely run wild, but I was sure it wouldn’t be long before I saw what was behind that door.

“Are we going back upstairs?” I asked as Sergei took a step back.

“Sure, we can, something interesting up there?” He inquired, lifting his brows.

I smiled and looked down at my feet. “Maybe,” I said as he stepped in and lifted my head.

## Chapter 17 - Sergei

After showing her the house, I knew I had to get some work done. I had a lot to catch up on but didn't want to leave her alone. Heading back upstairs Irina pulled me to the library.

"Can I spend the day here?" she asked pleadingly, batting her eyes at me.

I laughed at her innocent, childlike manner. She made the atmosphere light wherever she was.

"Sure," I replied. "I'll grab my work and join you in a minute."

I watched as Irina entered the library before heading to my office. After collecting the work I would need, I returned to find her already deep in a book. Irina was lying back on the chaise in the center of the room reading.

Not wanting to disturb her, I sat down at the table by the door as quietly as I could and opened my files. I read through the first two reports and then found myself staring at Irina.

She looked so peaceful lying there. Today she had decided to wear one of the pairs of shorts I had bought her with a spaghetti top. She was stunning and I battled to refocus myself. After every report I read, I would find myself immersed in her beauty.

I wanted to get up and undress her, I wanted to feel her body against mine. I shook my head trying to clear the images so I could work. But it didn't last long, she was a distraction. Everything about her pulled at my being.

She stirred something within me, and I couldn't put a finger on it. It wasn't a bad thing, though; it just kept me entranced. At times I had to beat the beast back down as the locked room still called to me. But she wasn't ready for such things.

I shoved the files to one side and opened my laptop. Maybe I could get through my emails I thought. As I scanned them, deciding which to open, I found my eyes rising over the

screen locking on her. Sighing, I rose and walked to the cabinet by the door.

After pouring us a drink, I strolled over to her. Holding out a glass to her I cleared my throat. “A drink, my lady,” I said as she smiled up at me.

“Thank you,” Irina replied sitting up and taking the glass from me. The strap of her top fell from her shoulder driving my mind to the previous evening.

I felt the smile forming on my lips as my eyes traveled down her arm. I went down on one knee before her, trying to control my hunger for her. “Irina,” I said, placing my free hand on her knee.

Her eyes sparkled as she nodded at me. “I have to catch up with Roman,” I added. “I’ll be in my office for a little while but if you need anything.”

“I’ll be fine here, Sergei, go make your call,” Irina assured me, squeezing my hand softly.

Against my body’s wishes, I rose and headed for the door. On my way, I grabbed the files and my laptop. Stopping in the door, I glanced back. Irina had resumed her position and was reading again.

Stepping into the hallway, I breathed in deeply. “Get a grip, Sergei,” I told myself as I headed to my office.

As the library door was closed, I left my office door open so I could hear if she came out. Sitting down at my table I swallowed the contents of my glass before connecting the call to Roman.

“Sergei,” Roman said as his face settled on my screen. “Hi, Roman,” I replied trying to shove the images of Irina out of my mind. “Have you found anything on Caleb?”

“We have indeed dear brother,” Roman said grinning. “Let me tell you, this guy has a couple of screws loose.”

“Well, then, let’s hear it,” I replied as I sat back in my chair.

“Caleb grew up with our father and Irina’s father. As teenagers, they moved on to become part of the bigger Morozov family. But Caleb didn’t transition with them.” Roman lit a cigar and sipped at his glass before continuing.

“You see, Irina’s father came to work for our father, but Caleb felt he should be in control. He split from the group and started his own thing.”

Pushing my hair behind my ear, I leaned closer to the screen. “You mean he made his own way and now he blames us all?” I asked.

Roman rubbed at the stubbles on his chin, a habit he developed once his beard started growing. I smiled remembering the young Roman constantly rubbing his stubble.

“According to the stories, Caleb got into trouble about ten years back. He had a mental break and has blamed the family for it.”

“So, what do we do?” I asked Roman as I reached for the bottle of Whiskey on the table behind me.

“I spoke to Father,” Roman replied, catching my attention. “He says to be careful as Caleb is unstable and unpredictable. He has got some men on it as well. Once we know how his operations work, we can infiltrate.”

“How does father intend on resolving this mess the family has gotten Irina in?” I asked without considering my words.

Roman smirked at me, “We will have all the details for you once you come back. In the meantime, you just stay put and keep an eye on her.”

“Roman,” I replied in a softer tone. “I didn’t intend to imply in any way that it was your fault.”

“No, just that it was father’s fault, right?” Roman retorted.

I wiped at the sweat forming on my brow. “In a way it is, you have to see that,” I spoke out.



“No one is to blame except for Caleb, you understand. We are all trying to assist here.” Roman added as I poured a drink.

“Yes, so what is the plan, Roman?”

Roman glanced over his screen as if someone had entered. “We are working on it, brother. Once you land, we will have started working on it and will let you know what needs to be done. In the meantime, you do what needs to be done on your side. Evelina will be sending you some details in the coming weeks.”

I sipped at my Whiskey as Roman spoke listening with care. “Okay, so once the house registration goes through, the changes will be made before we come back, right?” I asked leaning closer to the screen.

“Yes, everything will be done on this side, and you do not need to worry about safety.” He assured me.

“Thank you, Roman,” I replied.

“No thanks needed brother, you stay safe, and we’ll talk again as soon as I have more news,” Roman added.

I nodded and said goodbye before closing the connection. Sitting back, I thought about Irina and wondered how she would react to all that was happening. At least Caleb didn’t know where she was at the moment, which gave me some comfort.

Swallowing the last whiskey, I rose from my desk. I may need to do some CEO interviews this coming week. Then the bigger question is, should I expose my home to strangers, or should I go into the office and leave Irina alone? I pondered on this.

Online, I thought, yes, I will do online interviews, I decided as I walked out of my office. The library door was still closed as I walked back. I had to keep her out of sight for safety. But I also wanted to show her some of my hometown.

As I opened the library door, Irina sat up and smiled at me. Yes, I would call my friend at my favorite restaurant I

thought. I am sure he could get me a private booth. I wanted to take her out and show her all that I had to offer.

I walked to her side and held out my hand. Irina took it and rose, placing the book on the chaise as she did so.

“Where are we going?” she asked as we headed out the door.

I lifted her hand and kissed it tenderly. “I want to take you out,” I said as we headed to the bedroom.

Irina smiled at me. “You think it’s safe?” she asked, squeezing my hand tightly.

“I will make sure it is,” I replied, leading her to the bathroom. “But first a shower.” I completed as I closed the door behind us. After a quick shower, we got dressed.

Irina wore a faded pink dress that exclaimed her gorgeous curves. Hugging her before we walked out the front door, I considered heading back upstairs first. Her sweet, honeyed essence filled my mind, and it went swirling.

Before I could change my mind, I led her out the door. Outside the driver Roman had sent over was waiting for us at the town car. Roman insisted we have three average cars so that we could blend in better.

I would have preferred to take her through town in my Porche, but knew the dangers it could attract. I gave the driver instructions and joined Irina in the back seat.

As we drove, it reminded me of prom. The girls we hung out with those years were nothing like Irina. I felt pleased that I had not met her in that era of my life. I leaned over and kissed her cheek. “I’m so glad you are here,” I whispered.

Irina’s cheeks glowed red in the reflection of the streetlights as we proceeded to our destination. She squeezed my hand as she blew me a kiss and smiled.

I felt my heart leaping as my senses tingled with excitement. Just as I wanted to tell the driver to turn around

and go back home, we pulled into the back alley behind the restaurant.

Stepping out, there were six bodyguards to meet us and escort us to the back door. I asked them to move the cars and wait apart from each other. This would assist with appearance. Otherwise, the three cars parked together might bring along some suspicion.

The drivers agreed and moved the cars. Inside we were met by my friend Braverly. He led us through the back and seated us in a dark corner that was enclosed with ceiling-high walls. A single light hung down, casting only enough light to make it romantic.

On the table were two candles and soft music played in the background. Irina slid in on one side of the solid chair, and I sat down beside her. A waiter entered with a bottle of champagne, and I was glad I was not driving us home.

I poured each of us a glass as the waiter took our orders. Irina smiled at me, and I could see the happiness in her shining eyes. I thought we would do this more often as I leaned over and kissed her gently.

Soon our food arrived, and we ate in silence. Irina seemed to be enjoying her shrimp and creamy rice. I had to admit the meal was delicious and I appreciated the effort that was put into it.

Once we were done and the bill was paid, we headed out the back again. The driver was ready as we stepped out. The ride home was smooth. As we entered the house, I felt relieved that we didn't have any issues.

I poured a nightcap as Irina went upstairs to change into something more comfortable. We sat down in the living area by the fireplace. Irina laid her head on my shoulder as I told her about the adventures me and Roman had.

She listened intently without saying a word. After a while, I felt her head getting heavy. Looking down, I noticed her eyes had closed. I took the glass from her hand and placed it down with mine on the table.

Gently, I stood and picked her up. She wrapped her arms around my neck as I walked upstairs with her. As I lay her down on the bed, Irina's eyes opened.

She pulled me closer and kissed me, "Thank you, Sergei." She whispered. "I had fun tonight."

"So did I, Irina, thank you," I replied as I stroked her hair. My hand moved down her cheek and I kissed her forehead as she closed her eyes again.

I wanted to wake her; I wanted her in my arms, but she needed to rest. Instead, I walked to the bathroom and got ready for bed. Irina looked so peaceful sleeping in my bed, my body ached for her.

Sliding in on my side, I moved closer and pulled her into my arms. Irina didn't wake up, but she wrapped her fingers around my hand. I fell asleep breathing in her sweet essence.

## Chapter 18 - Irina

While waiting for Sergei in the jacuzzi, my mind strolled back over the last few weeks. I was amazed at how the time had passed so quickly. It had been a rollercoaster ride of pleasure, happiness, and fun.

Smiling at myself I got lost in my thoughts. Sergei had been so understanding and kind. Life was almost normal, and I was enjoying my new life as his partner. I played with my toes in the bubbles from the nozzle as I thought of the dinners, movies, and talks we shared.

I was sure we had tried about every restaurant in LA. We may also have seen every movie available in the cinema and lots more on the TV. Then there were the long walks, early morning coffee in the parks and so many discussions.

He has opened up so much about his life growing up. He has shared his deepest secrets with me. I blushed, thinking of everything I had shared with him in return. I felt my cheek warm as my mind traveled to the evenings and even some mornings spent with him.

I have experienced so many new things by being here. Our bubble brought safety. I didn't want to return to normal life. Deciding I would share this idea with him when he returned, I played with the idea.

Sergei was a real gentleman, maybe the only one of his kind left in the world. I considered my feelings and wondered if I had fallen in love with him. No, I was relaxed, safe, and grateful, but I was sure I had not fallen in love. Sure, something was developing but was it love?

“Hey, there, penny for your thoughts,” Sergei said as he stepped into the jacuzzi.

Startled I jump up almost tumbling over the tray in his hands. “Whoa, slow down,” he said as he moved from side to side to rescue the food and drinks atop the tray.

“I'm sorry,” I replied as I reached out to assist in stabilizing the tray. “I don't know where my mind went just now.”

“It’s fine,” Sergei answered grinning at me. “Sit back down, it’s fine, I got it.”

Glancing up at him, I threw him a smile and fluttered my eyes. I have noted that it worked in all situations with him. Sergei’s grin spread across his face and his eyes lit up.

“I love seeing you so peaceful,” he said as he placed the tray down on the side. “Tell me why you were so startled please?” Sergei added as he pulled me closer and placed a hand on my knee.

“It’s nothing,” I assured him as I kissed him on his cheek. “I was daydreaming is all.”

“Well,” Sergei added as he handed me a glass of champagne. “I have some news to share with you.” He picked up his glass and sipped his Whiskey.

I turned to face him expecting him to continue. He stared at me as if waiting for me to react. I wasn’t sure what he wanted, but felt a slight tinge of fear turn my stomach.

“Has something happened?” I asked after an awkward silence.

“Yes,” he said excitedly. “My home in Miami is ready and we will be leaving the day after tomorrow. Isn’t that terrific?”

I felt a lump forming in my throat. Sipping from my glass, I battled swallowing. It felt like my head was spinning, and I wasn’t even drunk. Sergei reached around and brought forth a plate with some snacks on it.

My stomach was turning, and I didn’t feel hungry anymore. I felt sick and not sure why. “No thanks,” I told him as he urged me to take one.

“Can’t we just stay here, it’s safe and you can’t tell me you’re not enjoying it?” I said as I caressed his muscular arm.

“You know I would love to, but we can’t.” He replied softly.

Sergei still held the plate out toward me. I pushed it back to him as I felt my eyes starting to tear up. “I don’t want

anything,” I said.

“What’s the matter, I thought you would be excited to go back to Miami?” Sergei said dimly placing the plate down and moving closer to me. “You know Roman needs me there now, you knew from the start we would be returning.”

I pulled back as Sergei reached for my hand. “Will I be under guard all day every day and will there be guards at my place when I have to go back?” I asked as I rose and stepped back, trying to stay out of his reach.

“Your place?” Sergei asked loudly as he stood. “What makes you think you would be going back to your place?” he took a deep breath. “Irina, you will be coming with me to my new house, our new house.”

Feeling the edge of the jacuzzi against my calves, I realized that I would have to get out if I wanted to move further away. Sergei came forward quickly and took hold of both my arms.

“No,” I said as I tried to push him off. I felt my temper rising as the bubble we had been living in burst. “I want a normal life. I do not want any part of Bratva, and you know that.” I spat at him as I felt my legs weaken. Not wanting to fall over, I sat down on the side of the jacuzzi.

Tears started rolling across my face and I looked down trying to conceal the pain inside. “You knew from the first time we met, Sergei.” I breathed in deeply. “You knew I wanted nothing to do with this life.”

Sergei knelt before me and lifted my head. “You cannot after all that has happened even for a second, think that you will be safe there. Do you?”

I could hear the anger or irritation in his voice as he spoke. This made me enraged, and my temper rose even more. He knew, I thought folding my arms across my chest, I made it clear from the start. How can he ask me to join him in Bratva? I turned my face away from him to conceal my resentment and took a couple of deep breaths.

“Irina,” Sergei said as he tried to get me to look at him. “You are foolish if you think you can return to your old life.”

“No,” I spat at him, rising and pushing him back from me. “I decide what I want in life, and I am not going to be a part of Bratva. That is final.”

Sergei threw his hands into the air. “Really, you think it’s that easy to just step out and return to a normal life. You do realize you are still in trouble, don’t you?”

Seeing the pain in his eyes as he spoke, I felt my heart crumble. Lowering my head, I spoke in a softer tone. “Sergei, I can’t become part...”

Before I could continue, I was interrupted by the smashing of glass. Looking up I saw Sergei had thrown his glass against the wall smashing it to pieces. I had never seen him this angry and flinched as he turned back to me.

“No, Irina, you will not be safe there,” Sergei demanded as he moved closer to embrace me.

I glanced over my shoulder and stepped out of the jacuzzi, further out of his reach. Once I was out, I headed in and upstairs to the room originally intended for me. I slammed the door shut behind me and locked it. I pulled on one of the tops and a pair of shorts still lying in the bags on the floor.

Flopping down on the bed, I allowed my tears to run free. At some point, I felt my eyes were heavy and puffy from crying. I started drifting off.

I woke up screaming as Caleb joined my dreams and had me back in the cage. Sergei was slamming at the door begging me to let him in. Shakily I rose and moved to the door. I unlocked it with trembling hands. My entire being was shaking.

As he entered, I wrapped my arms around him needing to feel safe. We stood there for the longest moment as my racing heart slowed down. Once I felt calmer, we headed downstairs for a cup of coffee and tea for me.

I sat at the island while Sergei boiled the water and made us each a hot drink. He sat down opposite me in silence



drinking his coffee. Twice, I wanted to say how I felt. But I wasn't sure how I felt. My entire life felt like it was turned upside down.

Once we were done, he rinsed the cups and sat back down. "We have to talk, Irina," Sergei said as he reached for my hand. I allowed him to hold my hand, but I wasn't ready to look him in the eyes. I knew we had to talk so we could get past this obstacle, but I wasn't sure what to say.

## Chapter 19 - Sergei

She looked troubled as she finished her tea and handed me the cup. After rinsing them, I sat back down with her at the island. We needed to talk about the situation we would face when returning to Miami.

“We have to talk, Irina,” I started, leaning across and taking her hand in mine. “I know this is going to be a difficult change.” Her skin was so soft, I couldn’t stop thinking as I caressed her hand. She was a gentle piece of art that I only wanted to keep safe.

She didn’t look up but that didn’t stop me from talking to her. I needed to make her understand how appalled I was by her suggestion. How could she even think I would allow her to return to her normal life? After everything we shared, could she truly believe that I would let her out of my sight?

“Irina, I know you want nothing to do with Bratva.” I started as I pulled her hands towards me. “You know I don’t want to be part of it, I said as much to you the very first night we met, do you remember?”

Irina shook her head in acknowledgment but didn’t look at me. “Looking back to all that has happened,” I paused, taking a deep breath. “Do you really think you are not already part of everything?”

She glared at me, her eyes narrowing as she stood up from the table. I tried holding onto her hands so she would stay. Irina pulled her arms back forcing her hands out of mine. She crossed them over her chest as she started stepping back.

“No,” she uttered as I stood and quickly stepped up to her. “No, I want to return to my life.” She said as I pulled her into my arms. Irina tried to turn but I held on to her. I wasn’t going to allow her to lock herself up in that room again.

“Let me go,” she breathed out in a hiss. “I will decide where I want to be. You have no right to keep me here.”

Her words stung, but I also knew she was right. Yet, I also considered the fact that she wasn’t fully conscious of the

situation. Irina managed to get her arms out from between us. She twisted and turned as she tried to get out of my hold.

“Irina, calm down.” I tried to reason with her. Her shifting in my arms was opposite to what I thought she was aiming for. She clearly wanted to escape my hold, yet she was waking my inner beast with all the friction.

Looking down at her swaying, her hair flopping from side to side. Her lips pouted, so inviting. I saw the beauty of her and had to tighten my grip. “Irina,” I whispered, “Stop, please.”

For a moment, she glanced up at me as she stopped moving. Her sparkling eyes filled with fear as a tear escaped and rolled down her cheek. I relaxed my hold and wiped at the lone tear.

“Irina, I have something to show you,” I added as I kissed her forehead. My mind was traveling at a hundred miles per hour. I still had so much to teach her, and time was running out. She lifted her chin, meeting my eyes and lowering her head backward.

Her lips were still pushed out in a pout, and I couldn't resist. Leaning in, I kissed her hard and passionately. Feeling her return my kiss, I knew she wanted me as much as I desired to be with her. I swooped down and picked her up, taking her back upstairs.

At the top we didn't turn towards the bedrooms, no, we headed the other way. It was time to show her my playroom. Shifting her weight, I open the door and enter the dark room. I know my way around even without the lights. Stepping inside, I kick the door shut behind us and walk to the bed in the center of the room.

Irina's grip around my neck tightened as I moved. “Where are we?” she asked as I lay her down on the bed.

“My playroom,” I whispered. “Just lay still, I'll put on some lights now,” I added as I left her with a soft kiss.

Turning, I walked to the chest next to the cupboard. I lit the two candles on the shelf just above it before returning to

her.

“Oh,” Irina said as she pushed up on her elbows.

The dim light from the candles casted shadows across the room and the cupboards and chests were barely visible. Walking past the bed, I headed to the shelf on the other wall lighting those two candles as well.

Now we have a decent glow but not a bright one. Behind the bed against the far wall, I started the record player setting the mood. I opened the chest next to it and pulled out my soft leather straps. Irina sat up on the bed as I walked back to her.

“What are we doing now?” she asked with a slight tremble in her voice.

Sitting down beside her, I pulled her closer. “It’s a fun time,” I said kissing her full lips tenderly. “Relax, I won’t do anything you don’t want,” I assured her as I lowered her back down.

With the straps still in one hand, I got on top of her. Sitting on my knees over her I leaned in and kissed her again. This time my kiss was stronger as my tongue found its way into her warm mouth. Gently I pushed my hands under her arms and slowly forced them up above her head.

Sitting up I leaned forward as I slipped her one hand through the loop of the strap. “What’s this?” she asked, pushing her head backward to see.

“It’s straps,” I whispered as I tied the other end to the sturdy post. “Just give it a chance, you might find you enjoy it.” I breathed into her mouth as I kissed her before moving to the other arm.

“If I want to stop?” Irina asked, breathing heavily.

“You just say the words and I’ll stop, promise,” I added as I tied up the other strap to the post on the opposite side of the bed.

Glancing at the closed chests and cupboards, I wondered how she would react to the items stored there. One

step at a time, I reminded myself as I brought my hands down her arms to rest on her breasts.

Irina shifted her arms as I placed tender kisses down her neck onto her chest. Before I continued, I looked into her deep eyes; they sparkled with the unknown. Taking hold of her top in the middle, I ripped it open watching her intently.

There was a flicker of fear in her lovely eyes. But it dissipated shortly as I drew a line across the top of each breast with my fingers. Her chest heaved up and down as I reached in behind her and undid the straps of her bra.

I pushed the loosened bra up exposing her magnificent breasts. Laying down kisses on each, I felt her shifting under me. Glancing up, her eyes shone, she was enjoying it and I smiled. Moving down I pulled her shorts and panties down and dropped them to the floor.

“You are so gorgeous,” I breathed out, pushing her legs apart and knelt between them. I traced a line with my fingers up the inside of her legs. Tenderly I moved up and grabbed hold of her curvy hips. Irina breathed in deeply as I pushed her hips into the bed.

Raising to my knees, I allowed my fingers to travel further up over her naked body to her breasts. The smile forming on her lips made my insides crawl with excitement. I lifted my weight over her as I leaned in for a kiss.

Irina’s kiss was hungry. She softly bit my lip as I pulled up. Grinning down at her I started moving down again. Tender kisses flowed down her neck and ended on her breasts. I corrected my posture so I could have better control moving forward.

Nibbling at her breasts made her wiggle beneath me. I didn’t stop as she whispered my name. I moved further down laying kisses down her stomach and sides as I sat back on my haunches. Pushing my legs off the end of the bed, I lick at her pussy. Irina moaned as she lifted herself into my mouth.

I pulled back and waited for her to settle back down. “Sergei,” she whispered down at me with her head lifted. Her

eyes were filled with desire which was what I wanted. Pushing at her knees, I leaned in and nibbled at her clitoris. Irina's moans got louder with every lick and pull of her clitoris.

After a couple of times, I stood up and moved to the side of the bed. Irina looked up at me with hungry eyes. "What are you doing?" she asked breathlessly.

"Are you enjoying it?" I asked as I kissed her softly. Irina shook her head in agreement as a broad smile formed on her lips. "Want some more?" I asked smiling seductively.

"You know I do," Irina replied softly rubbing her legs together.

"The ties not hurting?" I asked, leaning in and feeling the tightness of them. Irina smiled and shook her head.

I quickly paced to the chest on the right-side wall and extracted a long gray feather. Turning back to her, I twirl it in my fingers.

"What's that for," Irina asked as I walked back to the bottom of the bed.

"More excitement," I replied grinning. I knelt back down on the bed between her legs and drew a soft line with the feather up each leg. Irina giggled as I moved up her legs and I made small swirls on her stomach with the feather.

Moving back down I directed the feather to her vagina. Making slow, soft movements from side to side and then up and down. She closed her eyes and moaned as the feather moved.

Seeing her so aroused made my stiffened dick pump in the confines of my pants. I rose and took off my pants giving my throbbing dick some space to move. Irina licked her lips as I knelt back down.

"And the trunks?" she asked as the feather traveled from one breast to the other making her shift. Making a line down her curves, I continued to tease her as my feather once again played between her legs. "Sergei," she breathed out as her bottom moved up and down.

“Yes,” I responded beaming at her.

“I want you,” Irina whispered as she pulled her feet up and pushed her hips out.

Moving closer I grabbed her butt and sank my head into her pussy. Irina screamed with pleasure as I nibbled her clitoris. I pulled back and rose to my feet.

“Now,” I said seductively as I moved to her side. “There is some unfinished business to take care of first my lady.” I bent down and kissed her hard.

“Unfinished business?” she asked through heavy breaths. There was evident confusion visible on her face.

“Yes,” I said pulling at her nipples.

Between her groaning Irina asked, “What business?”

I walked back to the bottom of the bed and stepped out of my briefs. Pushing her legs apart again I lowered my body to hers. My dick throbbed between her legs, and she moaned in my ear.

“You are staying with me in Miami, right?” I asked softly as I moved slowly between her legs.

Irina smiled up at me, “Yes, Sergei, yes, I will stay with you.” she said between heavy breaths.

“Well then,” I huffed at her as I slowly lifted myself to position myself correctly. “We’re leaving tomorrow,” I added as I filled her pussy with my throbbing dick.

Irina softly bit my ear as I lowered myself onto her and moved in and out quickly. She let out a scream of pleasure as she climaxed. Our breathing was both heavy and irregular as I filled her.

I reached up and pulled her hands from the straps. Our sweaty bodies slid as I moved. Irina wrapped her arms around my neck and her legs around my hips as I lifted over her. Grabbing her butt with one hand, I pushed up from the bed and stood up holding her in my arm.

She laid her head on my shoulder as her breathing started to regulate. I carried her back to our room and opened the shower. It was late and we had a lot to get done tomorrow before our flight. I felt pleased that she had agreed, and our fighting was over.

After showering, we headed to bed. I fell asleep within seconds, at peace with her in my arms.



## Chapter 20 - Irina

Staring at the earth passing by below us through the window, I found my thoughts sneaking back to last night. I giggled as my cheeks heated up thinking about his soft touch. My mind lingered on the feathers and the straps.

He had a wild side that I apparently knew very little about. His touch wasn't the only thing I enjoyed.

I glanced at Sergei who was talking to one of the guards. I could get addicted to this man I thought, licking my lips. He kept surprising me and last night, well, it was something I would never have considered. But to be honest with myself, I enjoyed it very much and would love to try it again.

Pushing my hair back from my face, I thought I would like to see what else he had in that room. Leaving after finding out there is more to the house and to him I didn't know, made me sad.

Sergei turned and walked back to where I was waiting. Something in his composure had changed since we left his home. He seemed upset or on edge. I just couldn't put my finger on the cause. It may be due to all that transpired in Miami before, but I couldn't be sure. It may even be due to something completely unrelated.

I smiled at him as he sat and held out his hand. Placing my hand in his, I leaned closer. "Is everything okay, Sergei?" I asked.

He gave me a tight smile and nodded, "Sure," he replied stiffly. Sergei stared at the guards, but he appeared to be in another dimension as his eyes hazed over.

"You seem a million miles away," I add, squeezing his hand lightly. "You sure you are fine?"

Sergei turned and looked at me. "Yeah," he mumbled under his breath. "It's nothing to worry your pretty mind with." He leaned closer and left a warm kiss on my cheek. "You want something to drink?" he asked as he stood.

“Sure,” I replied as I sent him an air kiss.

Sergei imitated catching it and put his fingers to his mouth before sending me one in return. His smile seemed warmer as he turned and headed to the drink station at the back. He returned shortly with two glasses. As he handed me one, I noticed the veins in his neck bulging.

Something was upsetting him. He was tense and angry, and I had to know why. “Sergei,” I whispered as he sat down. “Please talk to me.”

He took a sip from his glass before glancing my way. “It’s really nothing.” He tried to assure me, but I saw the doubt flickering in his eyes.

“Sergei, I’m here for you. Talk to me.” I said leaning closer. “Even if I can’t help, I can listen,” I said, caressing his cheek and pushing a loose strand of hair behind his ear.

He turned, grabbed me in my neck at the back, and pulled me closer. His kiss was hot and hard, filled with emotion. I didn’t pull away, I allowed him to kiss me as long as he needed to.

Breathing out hard as he let go, Sergei looked into my eyes. “Sorry, it’s the family,” he said sitting back in his seat. “Roman wants me to meet them all,” Sergei said as he stared into his glass and then swallowed the content.

“I never wanted to be a part of them either. But Roman,” he took a deep breath before continuing. “Roman is well-established within the family and with everything that has happened.” Sergei glanced at me and squeezed my hand. “Well, now there is no other choice.”

He leaned his head back and closed his eyes. “They have assisted with so much, Irina.” He breathed out. “They helped to subdue the bastard that started all this shit.” His eyes flew open as he focused his attention back on me.

“Without them, who knows what Caleb would have done to you or where you would have ended up.” Sergei huffed as he pulled my hand to his lips and kissed it softly.

He was also aching just as much as I was having to return to Bratva. At least I grew up learning what it entailed. He had no real idea. My heart ached for him.

“I know Sergei, but I also know most of the family,” I added, glancing down at my other hand with the glass in my lap. “I will be by your side through it all as we agreed.”

Placing the glass down on the food tray beside me, I turned to face him. Reaching out I placed my hand on his cheek. “Sergei, I will be with you every step of the way, I promise.”

Sergei took my face in his hands and stared intensely into my eyes. I felt a stir deep within me as he opened up to me.

“Together, always,” he whispered as a tear escaped his foggy eyes and streaked down his cheek. “I never meant to pull you into this.”

“Forever together, Sergei,” I responded as I wiped the tear from his cheek. Sergei pulled me into his arms and hugged me tightly.

“You are so perfect Irina,” he whispered in my ear before placing a tender kiss on my cheek and sitting back. “Come sit with me,” he added as he lifted my hand into the air.

Glancing around I rose and shifted over onto his lap as he embraced me. Resting my head on his chest, I could hear his heart rushing. “It’s all going to be fine,” I said as I played with the top button of his shirt.

He laid a kiss on my head as his embrace tightened. “Thank you, Irina.” He said as the fastened seatbelt light came on.

Sergei tried to fasten us in his seat, but the belt was just an inch too short. Laughing, I moved back to my seat, fastening the seatbelt as I settled in. Sergei smiled at me as the plane descended.

“Aww, no,” he said. “I considered dragging you into the restroom quickly and now we are landing.”

His smile was true and warm. I felt relieved that he was calmer, as he would need to keep his head clear moving forward. The plane settled on the tarmac with only a slight bump and came to a stop.

The guards got off first and waited beside the steps as we exited the plane. Three town cars were waiting for us just like in Los Angeles. We got into the middle car and headed to our new home.

As we traveled, I noticed that the streets appeared quieter than they were a month back when all the turmoil happened. Thinking of the date, I realized that the holiday season was over, and most visitors had returned home.

I wondered if I would be able to visit Evelina now that we were back. But I would wait to see what was happening before asking such a thing.

Sergei squeezed my hand as we pulled up to large double steel gates. The gates swung open, and we drove in. The house and garden looked magnificent. The driver parked before one of the double garage doors. Before I could open my door, I noticed four guards coming over quickly.

They opened the car doors and escorted us to the front door of the house. I noticed another couple of guards walking around the premises. Sergei opened the door and picked me up.

Surprised by his sudden move, I clung to his neck laughing. He carried me through the entrance hall into the open living area. The sun shone brightly through the large windows lighting up every corner of the room. "If you don't like the décor, we can always change it," Sergei said as he placed me down on a dark brown chaise.

Glancing around, the room reminded me of the penthouse he stayed in when I first met him. The windows weren't as large, and the color scheme was different, but the setup was too similar to be a coincidence.

I watched Sergei as he moved to the built-in bar in the corner of the room. His dark hair, now touching his shoulders

shone in the sun's rays. It would need to be cut soon, I thought as he poured us each a drink.

Sergei smiled broadly as he walked back to me with the two glasses. "Welcome to our new home," he said handing me a glass before sitting down next to me. We clinked our glasses and took a sip.

"A bit early for drinking, don't you think?" I asked as I placed my glass on the table next to me. On the wall before us hung a giant tv and the wall opposite the bar was filled with an array of portraits.

Sergei gave a little laugh and placed his glass down. Turning to me he leaned in and kissed my cheek. His lips were warm, and his touch gentle as always. I felt my cheeks warm up as I beamed at him.

"Somewhere out there," he said moving his hand through the air as if indicating the world. "Somewhere it is the right time for sharing a drink, we can imagine we are there, wherever it may be."

I placed my hands over my mouth as I laughed. He looked serious as he spoke and lifted a brow at me. "We can do what we please, plus, we have reason to celebrate," Sergei added as he stood and drew me up by my hands.

He pulled me into his embrace and turned in circles. "We are free spirits in our new home," he added laughing before we plopped down onto the chaise.

"Show me our house," I asked grinning at him. Sergei eyed me for a second before he stood and led me to the next room. Walking in I could see it was the kitchen.

"Well, my dear," he said, turning in a circle. "This as you can see, is the kitchen." He embraced me into a tight hug and kissed me softly. "Once again, if it's not to your liking, we can redo it."

Smiling up at him I felt a stir within my chest. "I love it," I replied rising to my toes so I could kiss him. "But" I whispered seductively. "Are there rooms like the one at the other house?"

Sergei grinned as he lifted me into his arms. “Well, let’s find out.” He said as I flung my arms around his neck, wrapping my legs around his waist, and we headed upstairs.

As he stepped onto the top floor landing his phone started ringing. He lowered me to my feet grumbling to himself under his breath. Stepping back he pulled his phone from his jeans pocket. Looking at the caller ID, he rolled his eyes and smiled at me.

## Chapter 21 - Sergei

“Sorry, I have to take this; it’s Roman,” I say as I kiss Irina’s forehead. She smiles at me nodding in agreement. Swiping at the screen, I lift the phone to my ear. “Hi, Roman, we just got here,” I said as I stepped closer and dragged Irina into a hug.

“Well, glad you got there. But that’s not why I’m calling.” Roman cleared his throat before continuing. “We’re coming over, but it won’t just be me and Karine. We won’t be alone, Sergei. Some of the family is here and also want to meet you. I just wanted to confirm that it won’t be an issue on your side?”

I glanced down at Irina’s smiling face. Feeling good with her there, I replied confidently. “Sure, no problem, brother.”

“Great, we’ll see you in a bit then,” Roman replied before hanging up.

Placing the phone back in my pocket I breathed out heavily. “We’ll have to wait a bit,” I said, picking Irina up into my arms. “The family is on their way.”

Staring into her sparkling eyes I couldn’t resist and leaned in for a kiss. We just stood there kissing passionately for a while before I carried her back down to the kitchen. I sat her down on the island. Stepping back, I placed my hands on her knees.

“Well then,” I said staring into her eyes. “What shall we serve our guests?”

“How much time do we have?” Irina inquired grinning at me.

Straightening out I pushed my hair back behind my ears. “Not much, I suppose as Roman’s place isn’t too far,” I answered.

Irina bounced off the island and walked to the fridge. “Let’s see what they stocked up on then?” She said as she opened the fridge and bent over to inspect the contents.

Watching her made my senses tingle as her perfect curves prickled my mind. I shook my head to clear my thoughts. There wasn't time for this now. But later, yes, later, we would enjoy each other's company, I assured myself.

Turning my attention to the cupboards, I quickly searched through them for something to serve our family.

We found some chips, crackers, cheese, olives, sausages, and other snack foods. Irina also discovered a couple of platter plates and started plating the hors d'oeuvres as I cooked the sausages. As she plated the last ones, the doorbell rang.

Smiling at each other, I headed to the door to welcome our guests. Roman and Karine were standing in front of the line as I opened the door. Karine stepped in first before giving me a quick hug and a kiss before the rest entered. Roman took me by the shoulders as we greeted them. He placed a quick kiss on each cheek.

The rest followed suit as each one entered. Soon the foyer was filled with strangers and some familiar faces. I felt a tinge of uncertainty rise as I turned to escort them into the living area.

Irina stood in the middle of the room as we entered, and I felt my mood change. She was there just as she said she would be. Walking to her side I placed an arm around her shoulders, feeling my confidence rise. Glancing down at her shining face I knew she completed me.

The family piled into the room, and Roman officially re-introduced them all. He introduced them at the door as they entered. But my mind hadn't quite registered as I wasn't sure what to expect. Irina knew a lot more of them than I did.

Obviously, I also knew Evelina, Ivan, Leo, and Yuri who greeted Irina as part of the family. Nikolai and Aleksei I met with the incident at the club. Then there was Luder and Ashan, whom I met only online while chatting with Roman. I introduced them to Irina after a firm handshake with each.



The women were mostly new faces for me except for Karine and Evelina. Reina, Mila, Theresa, Kira, Samantha, and five little ones were there.

Once the introductions were handled, we headed outside to the backyard. Exiting the house, it was the first time Irina, and I were out there. Roman and Karina had ensured it was breathtaking.

We walked out of the large double glass doors and down the short three curved steps to the first landing. To the left was a green lawn stretching around the house. There were a couple of large trees with tables and chairs arranged around them and flower gardens.

Toward the right was the patio with more tables and chairs and an entertainment area. Before us, there were more steps leading down to the pool area, which also had a couple of fountains and to the side a small waterfall.

It felt like we had entered another world, and I noted the excitement in Irina as she squeezed my hand. Glancing at her beaming face my mind filled with images of us enjoying the area. I smiled back at her and then shook my head to clear the thoughts. We have company and more urgent matters to consider at the moment.

Considering the options, we stayed on the patio as there was a bar and counter to the side which would suit the visit better. Irina, Karine, and Evelina headed back inside to bring out the platters. Roman walked with the other men and me to the bar area, where he poured everyone a drink.

The other women and children sat at the tables talking and laughing. I was astounded by the calm atmosphere surrounding everyone. Instead of feeling like a first meeting, it felt more like old friends getting together. Everyone was friendly and really talkative.

Once Irina and the other two returned, we all sat down at the tables. Most of the conversation was led by the women as we all shared a variety of childhood stories and mishaps of life. Time went by quickly and I was surprised at how much I felt at ease amongst them all.

Glancing over at Irina, she appeared to also have settled with them all. The atmosphere was filled with joy and laughter. I was surprised at how lively everyone was and how easy it was to get along with them. It almost seemed like we were all normal in a sense.

Irina was chatting and laughing with the women, and she seemed to adore the children. She would make a great mother, I found myself thinking. I was grinning at my thoughts when Roman stood and tapped me gently on the shoulder.

“We have some business to discuss brother.” He said as I looked up at him. I nodded and rose from my chair as all the men stood and started towards the house. Evelina also stood and excused herself from the company before heading inside with us.

Roman took the lead as I hadn't even been to my office yet. He headed up the stairs and down the short passage on the left. There were three closed doors down that way; the office was the last one. It was built toward the other side of the house. The windows faced a line of trees.

The office was bigger than the one at my Los Angeles home and I suspected it was due to the family size on this side. Most of my business in Los Angeles didn't include meetings at home. But here, there were sure to be more meetings at home.

There was a large oak desk facing the door by the window. It had one chair on the window side and four on the door side of the desk. There was a row of cupboards, shelves, and filing cabinets on the wall to the right. On the left side were three couches and a small table between them.

Roman waited for everyone to enter before he closed the door. I walked around the desk and sat down in what I assumed was my chair. Roman, Ashan, Luder, and Evelina sat down in the chairs by the desk. The rest sat down on the couches, and Roman cleared his throat as he shifted so he could see everyone.

“Right then,” Roman said. “Looking at the matter at hand, Caleb and his kidnapping of Irina.” He rubbed at his

stubbles before continuing.

“Ashan and Luder have been keeping an eye on him and his movements as they are not as well-known as the rest of us. They have discovered that he is not as stable as he used to be in his younger years.” Roman took a deep breath.

“He seems to have started losing his marbles, which has brought on sudden shifts in his behavior. This is making him a bit unpredictable, and even his own men have started doubting his actions.”

“Right,” Evelina added as she rose from her chair. “We have decided that he would need to be removed from the business; otherwise, no one will be safe. Ashan and Luder have started to infiltrate his business and he appears to trust them for now.”

“Right,” Roman pitched in again. “However, we may not have a lot of time to do what needs to be done. Therefore, I suggest we start taking out his men in the coming weeks.”

Clearing my throat, I rose as well. “Can’t we rather get them to come over to our operations?” I asked.

“We’ve tried Sergei,” Ashan responded.

“Some may consider it if Caleb was out of the picture, but others will have to be taken out due to loyalty,” Luder added. “As we climb the ranks of his operations, we have come across quite a bit of resistance. There are at least five of his men that will not go away quietly.” He completed.

Ivan rose and stepped up to Roman. Placing his hand on Roman’s shoulder, he added his voice to the discussion. “We have to ensure Irina’s safety and Father has made his orders clear brothers and sister.”

Roman nodded in agreement before he spoke. “In the next couple of weeks, Ashan and Luder will get us the layouts of Caleb’s club and home. Once we have that, we will need to get the job done as quickly as we can. He is a treat not only to Irina but to the entire family.”

Everyone nodded in agreement as they all rose to their feet. “Then it’s settled,” Roman said reaching out to shake my

hand.

“Agreed,” I said as I shook his hand. Keeping Irina safe was my main goal at the moment and if this was the only way, I would take it.

As we headed back out for another drink, Irina, Karine, and Samantha were on their way inside.

I pulled Irina into my arms and kissed her forehead. “Where are you going?” I asked as I hugged her.

“We’re getting some dessert for the kids. We’ll be right out.” She replied, smiling, as she turned out of my arms and followed Karine.

For a moment, I just stood watching her move. I felt relieved that she was here with me, and we have now settled on a plan to get rid of the problem once and for all.

Joining the others outside again, Roman hands me another drink as he raises his glass. “To the family,” he said, holding his glass forward.

I answered in almost perfect unison with the rest as we all clinked our glasses to his. “To the family.”

Irina, Karine, and Evelina returned, carrying bowls of ice cream and chocolate sauce for everyone. Roman pulled me to one side as most of the men joined their wives at the tables again.

“You look good brother,” he said as we stood looking at the family. “How do you feel about all of this?”

Glancing at Roman, I grinned. “Strangely enough,” I started. “I’m okay with it all.”

“Good, I’m glad to hear that,” Roman added as he swallowed the contents of his glass. “Another one?” he asked looking at the half-full glass in my hand.

“Sure,” I said smiling before I downed my drink and followed him back to the bar.

We had a couple more drinks before I noticed Irina and some of the other women had moved away from the patio.

Glancing around, I saw them sitting at the tables on the lawn under the trees. Some of the kids were playing on the grass and I felt sure they moved to keep an eye on the kids.

## Chapter 22 - Irina

I noticed Sergei looking at me from across the patio. I have moved with Karine, Evelina, and Samantha to the shade of the trees. We were catching up as I hadn't seen them for a while.

So much had happened during the last couple of months for them and me. There was a lot to share. Karine's pregnancy was going well, and I was glad for her and Roman.

Staring across the yard at Sergei, I felt my heart swell with pride. He was a little rigid when everyone arrived but settled in quite quickly. At the moment he appeared completely relaxed. He was talking and laughing with his family and seemed to be enjoying himself.

Being with his family, these people, even though he didn't know them all very well, made him happy. It gave me comfort to see him at peace amongst them. After all, they were his family, and family were important.

Even though he was having fun, he kept looking my way. It almost felt like he was keeping an eye on me. But I felt certain he only wanted to make sure I was safe.

"How are you doing, Irina?" I heard Evelina ask, pulling me back from my thoughts.

Smiling at her and Karine, I shifted upright in my chair. "I'm doing as well as can be expected, I think," I answer, glancing back at Sergei. "Things changed drastically but I am holding on."

"You know you can talk to us," Samantha added smiling at me. "With all you've been through, you need to talk to someone."

"It's just been a whirlwind with everything that happened," I said as I looked down at my hands in my lap. "I came to Miami to start my own life," I added smiling softly at Samantha.

"Then I met Sergei and ran away from him," I added, grinning. "Then out of the blue I got abducted. But Sergei and

Roman rescued me, and the last month I spent in Los Angeles where I was basically under house arrest just to be safe. It's been a lot to handle." I breathed out glancing at Karine.

Evelina winked at me as she leaned in, "Always remember your roots. You are stronger than anything life throws at you." She spoke.

I nodded my head. I knew what was at stake, I just wanted to return to a normal life.

"Why don't we then get together and have a lady's day out? I am sure that would help in making you feel alive again?" Samantha asked.

Karine sat forward, taking my hand as she spoke. "I think that's a fabulous idea and see no reason why we can't do it. Plus, with our army of guards, we will be in no harm."

I smiled at Karine. "Are you sure, I don't think Sergei will like that. I must say he has been very protective since the rescue."

"Nonsense," Karine added. "We each have a handful of guards. We will be as safe as being home. You need to get out and spending time with us is just what the doctor ordered."

We burst out laughing and I felt overjoyed by the invitation. Spending some time at a spa, shopping, or having cocktails with the ladies sounded perfect.

"Talking of you and Sergei," Evelina said as she pulled her chair closer. "You met but didn't stay and now live with him. Tell us what's happening here?"

Glancing over at Sergei, I felt my cheeks redden as they heated up. My mind traveled to all the developments between us and the most amazing sex. But I couldn't share all of that with them even though they were family.

"Oh my," Karine added as I looked back at them. "Tell us more as there must be a lot happening to turn your cheeks crimson like that."

Smiling broadly, I lowered my head again as I shook it from side to side. "Well," I started glancing back at Sergei and

then facing the three inquiring faces before me.

All three pulled their chairs closer and formed a small circle with me at the center of attention. I smiled shyly as Evelina patted my knee. “Come on, tell us a little more. We’re all family here.” she prodded.

“Well, okay,” I started. “We met in a club the Friday evening but soon discovered the music and people were not quite what either of us expected. Sergei introduced himself to me there and then offered to take me somewhere else. We considered a couple of places, but all seemed packed.”

I smiled as I thought back. “But then we found one that looked quiet. We had a couple of drinks and shared a light meal. Afterward, we went to his hotel room. I must add he was a gentleman the entire evening.”

“Really,” Karine questioned raising an eyebrow at me.

“Yes,” I said laughing. “He opened all doors and even respected me when I asked him to stop before things went too far.”

“What happened then that made you leave if he wasn’t forceful,” Evelina asked sounding surprised.

I pushed a strand of hair behind my ear, grinning at her. “You know why I left the only home I knew,” I said, staring at her.

“Yes,” she replied. “And so does Karine.” Evelina turned to Samantha. “She left Russia to start over without Bratva.” She said to her. Samantha shook her head in acknowledgment.

“Once Sergei started talking, he told me about his brother, Roman, and the company business he didn’t want to be a part of.” Taking a deep breath, I shook my head. “I left as I didn’t want a part of it either, and putting one and one together, I knew the brother he spoke of.”

“So, you left because of Roman?” Karine asked.

“No, I mean in a way. Not because of Roman but Bratva and look what it got me,” I replied lifting my hands



slightly.

“But he said he wanted nothing to do with it, so why leave?” Karine asked.

“I know the family and eventually, something would happen to pull him in,” I replied.

“Okay, but that happened anyway. So, after he rescued you? Everything changed didn’t it, so how do you feel now?”” Evelina asked, shifting to the edge of her chair.

Smiling, I felt the blush infiltrating my face again. “Well, ladies,” I said glancing back at Sergei. “That gentleman has a wild streak. But I must add, I enjoy it.” Turning away from them, I giggled. “I feel safe with him and the time we spent together has really opened my eyes. Plus, I never thought I would try some of the things we have shared, but now.” I beamed at them. “Well, I can’t wait to see what else he is hiding.”

They glanced at the men as Karine said, “I think I know what you are talking about.” Her smile lit up her face, and I was sure Roman had some streaks too. But I was quite sure it was nothing like Sergei.

“We are so happy for you,” The three of them replied smiling at me. “But, except for being a good lover, how are your other interactions?” Karine added.

“I must mention that Sergei makes me feel safe, special, and at home when he is around. He respects my wishes and comforts me when I need it most.” Glancing at him again, I smiled. “He knows how to treat me to make me feel like I’m the only woman in this world.”

“Oh, my,” Samantha said leaning into our conversation. The look on her face was strange. “Have you realized you are falling hard woman?” she said as she took my hand.

“What,” I reply, leaning back and pulling away from her. “I...well, I haven’t even considered that. No, I mean, he is amazing. But it is all only temporary, isn’t it?”

The three smiled at each other as Evelina leaned in and took my hand, pulling me back to them. “Think about it, everything you said, don’t you think you are in love?” she asked.

“Well,” I said grinning at them. “Maybe I am. Maybe just a little,” I concluded as I allowed Samantha’s words to sink in. “With everything happening so quickly, I haven’t even considered how I truly feel about him.”

“Find a quiet place to think and consider your feelings. It’s important that you are happy and not only safe, dear.” Evelina added.

“It’s time to go, ladies,” Karine stated as she rose.

Glancing back at Roman and Sergei, I saw Roman indicating it was time as he tapped his watch.

“This was so nice,” I said as we all stood and hugged each other.

“Now don’t forget, we’ll pick you up in the morning,” Samantha said as we walked back to the rest of the family.

I nodded in agreement as we started clearing the glasses and plates while the men headed inside. After rinsing and putting the dishes in the washer we joined the men in the foyer. We said our goodbyes, and I headed upstairs as Sergei walked out with the family.

I decided to explore the house a little while I was alone, and I discovered the library. It had a similar look to the one Sergei had in his Los Angeles home. Even most of the books seemed to be the same. Feeling sure that he informed Roman which books to stock it with, I searched for the one I was reading before we left.

I found it on a shelf with some more books by the same author. I was sure the added books were for me as Sergei noted my taste in reading. Grabbing the book, I settled in on the extra-large double couch in the corner of the room by the window.

Smiling at myself as I got comfortable, I considered that this may be the best corner of the house so far. I opened

the page I was on last and started reading. This day turned out to be exceptional I thought scrolling down the page.

The family was open and accepting even with everything that had happened. I was glad Sergei settled in with them; I felt it was important for him. While he was seeing everyone off, I would get in a couple of pages I told myself. I thought This was the perfect ending to any day as I turned the page.

My focus was split as I tried to read. My mind kept traveling to Sergei. He had so much to learn if he intended to become part of the family. I didn't have any doubt that he would be able to fit right in. But he wasn't as hardened as some of the men. They had grown up with what needed to be done, and he had not.

Even during this last month, having talks with them and knowing what was going on didn't change him. Once he was fully committed to the family, things would change.

This scared me a little as I doubted what we shared would stay the same. His current life would surely change, and I couldn't be sure we would work if things were different.

Thinking back on what the women said, I considered the fact that I may be falling in love. I wiped the idea from my mind and focused on the story. Feelings could change and we didn't know what would happen in the future.

I think the best course would be to take it step by step, I assured myself. Finding my place in the book again I started reading again.

## Chapter 23 - Sergei

After seeing everyone off, I returned to the house and ensured all the doors were locked. As I moved through the house putting off the lights, I noticed Irina was no longer downstairs. I thought she was still busy in the kitchen, but she wasn't there.

I headed upstairs in search of her. Thinking about our visit, I was surprised by the flood of emotions. I sincerely enjoyed the company of our family. Even the women were all friendly and seemed supportive of both me and Irina.

Irina was a big part of that, I couldn't have done this without her. Smiling as I entered the second-floor landing, I wondered what the discussion under the trees was about. Irina had glanced my way a couple of times as the four women huddled in a circle.

Turning on the landing, I noticed a light filling the short hallway. I was sure she had to be in there, so I walked to the open door. Peeking around the door I saw it was the library. Of course, this is where I would find her, I thought, remembering her fascination with the library at my other home.

Glancing around the room, I spotted her in the corner nook on the large double couch. She looked so relaxed with a book in her hands. Quietly, I stepped inside and leaned against the wall. She didn't notice me, and I could admire her for a bit.

Her hair glistened in the soft glow of the light above her. Her skin looked like porcelain and even though I knew she wasn't a delicate doll. I couldn't help but be filled with an intense feeling of protection. My emotions spun as I admired her curvy body.

She was lying on her side propped up on one arm. My stare flowed over her body as I absorbed her fully formed hips and stared down her legs to her feet.

Since the first time I met her, I knew there was something special about her. Something different as she stirred feelings in me, I never knew were there. Irina was not like

other women I have ever met. She brought out the best in me I considered as I shifted my stance.

“Hey there,” she said looking my way. “I didn’t hear you come in.” She closed the book and sat up straight.

“I didn’t want to disturb you,” I replied as I walked toward her. “You looked so peaceful.”

Irina’s smile broadened, “I am. I feel at home with you, Sergei.” She said, taking my hand as I came to stand before her.

Sitting down next to her, I placed a tender kiss on her cheek. “Thank you, Irina, for being here with me. You made this visit special.” I said as I pulled her into my arms and lay down backward with her.

She dropped the book on the table beside us as she cuddled into my chest. Trailing a line with her fingers down my chest she asked, “What did you think of the family?”

Feeling other emotions stirring, I took hold of her hand and kissed her fingers. “I must admit, they are not what I thought. I don’t know what I expected, but I enjoyed their company. And you?”

Irina giggled as she pushed me to my back and got on top of me. “When the family gets together, it is usually a time for relaxation and they are quite normal. But business is business, and mixing the two is usually not something that happens,” she said as she leaned in and kissed me keenly.

“They are good people. Not that I know everyone, but they are loyal, and family comes first,” Irina added as she lay her head down on my chest.

I played with her soft hair as I considered her words. “I did enjoy their company,” I added as I lifted my head and kissed her on the top of her head.

We lay there cuddling for quite some time without talking. I felt complete just having her there in my arms. It was nice to unwind and just have someone who made your life exciting.

“We have settled on a plan,” I said after a while.

Irina lifted her head, folded her hands over each other on my chest, and placed her chin down on them staring at me. Her face lit up as she smiled, and I wondered how one person could be so perfect.

“If all goes smoothly according to the plan, we could be living our lives fully very soon,” I said smiling at her.

“I am sure it will go according to plan,” Irina replied. “I have been invited out with the other women. They will pick me up in the morning.” She added before turning her head sideways and laying back down on my chest.

My heart stopped, and my mind blanked out as her words sunk in. Holding her to my chest, I sat upright quickly. “No,” I said sternly. “The timing isn’t right.”

Softly pushing her away from me, I took her face in my hands. “Irina,” but before I could continue, she placed a finger on my lips.

“Sergei,” she said sternly. “We have an army of guards if you look at how many men each of us have protecting us. Don’t you think we will be safe?”

She pushed back and got up from my lap. “I am sure one day out with the women will not put me in harm’s way,” Irina added as she stood before me with her hands on her hips.

Staring into her green eyes, I knew she was right. I was overprotective now and didn’t want her to feel trapped. I gave her a small smile in agreement as I placed my hands behind me on the bed and leaned back.

“Someone needs to know what the day’s plans are then. At least one of us.” I added.

Irina stepped forward grinning as she climbed into my lap and kissed me passionately. Grabbing onto her, I fell back onto the soft couch, submerged in her kiss. I was lost to her, powerless when she focused on me.

My body reacted to her touch as I felt my veins heat up and my dick come to life. As Irina leaned back in my embrace

for air, I moved in. I placed tender kisses down her neck moving slowly onto her breasts.

Irina pushed her fingers through my hair as I moved. My heart was running a marathon as I stood holding her tightly in my arms. She wrapped her legs around my waist as I turned and placed her down on the couch.

I pulled her top up over her head but held it around her arms. Leaning in I sucked her breasts moving from one to the other in short intervals. Irina wiggled under me moaning. I let go of her top as my hands worked on freeing her from the rest of her clothing.

Once I had her naked on the couch, I rose and pulled my shirt off over my head. Irina sat up and reached out, placing her fingers on my chest and moving gently down. I froze as my body quivered from her touch.

The throbbing in my pants increased as she undid my jeans and pulled them down. Irina placed her hands on my hips. She pulled me closer, leaving sensual kisses along my abs as she pulled my briefs down.

My cock was hard and ready as it bounced free from the clothing, but I had to be sure she was prepared. Lightly I pulled her head back by holding her hair and lowered her back to the couch. Her green eyes were on fire as our lips met.

I drew a wavy line down her body with one finger while our lips melted together. My hand slipped in between her legs and my finger penetrated her wet pussy. She arched under me moaning into my mouth.

Her body was radiating a sensual heat that called at the beast within. After a couple of quick finger movements, Irina grabbed at my shoulder blades. Her moans grew louder as her breathing became jagged.

Irina gently pushed me back up. "I want to," she said as her hand took hold of my dick. I stood back up allowing her full access. She sat forward and closed her hot mouth around my shaft. Moving forward, she took in more of me.

I felt my legs starting to shake as she sucked lightly on my dick. I grabbed her head as I threw mine back, breathing out heavily. Irina pulled back, playing with her tongue as she did before coming forward hard.

My dick felt like it was about to explode. I pulled her off me and gently shoved her back down.

Gradually I lowered myself between her legs and pushed my dick into her. Irina dug her nails into my back as she let out a scream of pure pleasure. I moved deliberately, slowly following her movements until we came together.

I plopped down next to her as sweat covered my body. Once our breathing started to regulate, I sat up. "Ready for a shower and bed?" I asked caressing her body.

Irina took my hand and kissed it, "Yes, I am," she responded lightly.

I rose and picked her up into my arms carrying her to the bathroom in our room. We showered and got into bed. Irina lay with her back to me, and I moved closer pulling her into my arms.

"Irina," I whispered over her shoulder.

She turned her head towards my voice smiling, "Yes, Sergei." She replied.

"Thank you for being here," I said as I kissed her cheek.

Irina caressed my arm holding her as she shifted more into me.

After a while, she stopped moving and I knew she had fallen asleep. I lay thinking about the plan set in place considering any holes we might have missed. As I drifted off, something came to mind but was lost in the swirl of dreams.

I woke up early in the morning with an immense feeling of terror. Glancing to my side, I saw Irina still peacefully asleep. Not wanting to wake or worry her, I slid out of bed. After washing, I headed downstairs and put on a fresh pot of coffee.



Standing by the kitchen window, I notice dark clouds accumulating in the distance. I shivered as something moved down my back. Turning quickly, I saw the kitchen was empty. There was no one there, and there were no sounds throughout the house except for the pot brewing.

Shaking my head, I walked to the machine and poured myself a cup. I wished I knew what I dreamt so I could settle my emotions. With my cup in hand, I walked to my office wondering if Roman would be up.

I sat down at my desk and scrolled through my email. Nothing stuck out as important. I closed it and turned my chair, so I was facing the window.

Watching the tree line, I must have drifted off again. I sat up startled spilling my coffee as Irina walked in asking if I slept there. She was standing at the door with her hands on her hips.

“No, no,” I protested. “I must have fallen asleep again,” I said as I rose from my chair wiping at the spillage on my pants.

“Well,” she continued. “I am making breakfast for you before I leave.” She completed as she turned and left the room.

Placing the cup down on my desk, I headed to the bedroom and changed before joining her downstairs.

As I descended the stairs, the odor of bacon mixed with fresh bread infiltrated my senses. My stomach growled as I entered the kitchen. Irina was standing at the stove taking the last bacon out of the pan.

I sat down at the island, amazed at the plates set out. There were freshly baked scones, some fruit, sliced cheese, sauces, and then bacon.

She turned from the stove with the plate of bacon, grinning at me. “Don’t look so surprised,” she taunted.

“When did you get time to do all of this?” I asked as I took a scone and broke it in half.

“Well,” she said walking around to my side and kissing my cheek. “I may surprise you yet,” Irina added softly as she headed upstairs.

“Where are you going?” I called after her and then remembered she was adamant about going out with Evelina, Karine, Samantha, and some of the other wives today.

Staring at the food before me I smiled. She was something else, I thought to myself. I was a lucky man to have such a wonderful... Mmm, rubbing my cheek where she kissed me, I questioned.

A wonderful what? I could not call her my wife and it wasn't like we were dating. I wasn't sure what to call us.

My thoughts could wait as my stomach growled again. Buttering my scone, I took a large bite. Oh, my, she can cook too, I thought as the taste played on my tongue lighting up my world.

## Chapter 24 - Irina

After making Sergei a decent breakfast and watching his awe, I headed upstairs to get ready. I hummed to myself as I decided what to wear. The excitement of going out with friends played with my mind. Everything I took out just seemed wrong.

By the time I had settled on two outfits, my entire closet was decorating our room. I stood before the life-size mirror with a sundress in one hand and a pantsuit in the other. I turned left and held up the dress to my body. Turning right, I brought up the suit. Shifting from one to the other, I smiled at myself.

Finally, I decided on the pantsuit. I laid the shiny black pants down on the bed with the accompanying jacket. Then I turned back to my closet in search of the perfect top. After a while, I pulled out a frilly-laced pink top that to me, was perfect.

After a quick shower, I dressed, pinned up my hair, and put a little make-up on. I never wore a lot as my father always told me it would destroy my beauty. I grinned at the memory as I pulled out a pair of black semi-heels and put them on.

My father always liked my hair up, he insisted it made me look like a businesswoman. I only wore it this way if I was going out these days. Turning in the mirror I felt satisfied with my look.

All dressed and ready, I headed downstairs. Sergei was clearing the table and dishes as I entered the kitchen. He stopped to gawk at me and almost placed the plate in his hand on the floor as he searched for the island without looking.

I smiled, knowing that my look had the impact I was going for. Even though I only wanted him to react this way, I felt sure there might be some other stares today. But these did not worry me as I was going out with an army.

“Oh, my,” Sergei said as he stepped closer and pulled me into his arms. “Maybe we should just go back upstairs,” he whispered in my ear as he kissed my neck.

Giggling, I softly pushed him back. “Naughty boy, but, maybe when I get home?” I said as we heard the doorbell rang.

He pulled me back into his arms and we kissed passionately. “That’s a date then,” he added as I turned and walked to the door.

“Hold that thought till I get back, okay,” I said over my shoulder.

Grinning as I opened the door. I found a string of ladies waiting for me. Some of them were in dresses, some in jeans, and two others in similar suits. I turned and blew him a kiss, which he returned before I stepped out and closed the door behind me.

There were four cars for the lot of us and about eight escort cars that I noted as I got in with Karine and Evelina. I felt safe with so much protection and I was overjoyed at being able to get out.

I had made up my mind that nothing would upset my good mood today. Evelina quickly went through the day’s planned activities with me as we were taken to our first destination. She also assured me that Roman and Leo knew about every move.

We stopped at a chic restaurant for breakfast where we chatted away about families and kids. Evelina asked if I wanted children. This had me thinking for a while. I love children but wasn’t quite ready for some of my own yet. So, I just told them that it was a future plan. After all, I first had to get married.

After breakfast, we headed to one of the largest shopping malls in Miami. We walked from shop to shop where I also bought some clothing and a gift for Sergei. Before we realized it, it was lunchtime.

As we headed back to the cars, I felt relieved that I had not put on high heels. My feet were already aching and just thinking of high-heel shoes made me cringe. I rubbed my calves as we rode to the next stop.

Karine had made a booking for all of us at her spa. They also served meals out of a cute little restaurant on the premises. Most of us only had salads as we had croissants for breakfast. Plus, we were all looking forward to a big supper. After our lunch, we headed inside for a luxurious pampering session.

As we had our nails done, we shared stories of our lives, our husbands, and even our life experiences. It was a magnificent time; we laughed as we shared more while we drank margaritas as we got back massages and foot baths.

My feet felt revived as they finished. I hadn't even realized my back was so tense until they started the massage. Afterward, I felt almost like a new woman.

Once all the pampering was done, I felt more relaxed than I had in a long time. I was also at ease amongst them. It was where I belonged, and I wondered why I was so set on leaving this life. I was born into it, and it was home.

But, thinking back. As a child, I didn't know this part of Bratva growing up without a mother. Then after my father died. I only assisted Oleg for a short time. I never allowed myself to experience the family as I am doing now.

I was so focused on doing what needed to be done and getting out. I never gave myself the time to learn more about the women in the family. I knew most of the ladies as I had met them at Oleg's home. But some were only as passers-by.

Once our spa treatments were all done, we had one last place on the itinerary. The day had proceeded without any issues. I was glad we could enjoy a day without worrying about what could be. Feeling totally relaxed, I didn't hesitate to have a couple more drinks during supper.

The restaurant we visited was in the heart of the city. There was a line outside as people waited in queues to get in. Without a booking, there was no way you would be able to get seating.

But Karine had once again come through. The people were extremely friendly, and the food was absolutely divine. It

wasn't as good as the food at the place Sergei had taken me in LA, but it was good. We ordered everything on their dessert menu. Sharing the variety of desserts as we wanted to try everything they offered.

I felt a bit tipsy by the time we were all ready to leave, but I wasn't the only one. All of us were laughing and walking slightly sideways as we headed to the cars.

Everyone was glad it was over though and couldn't wait to return to their men. With only the four cars, we carefully decided who was traveling with whom. Most of us didn't even live in the same direction.

Instead of all traveling as we did when we came, we decided it would be quicker for everyone if we split up.

"Each car will have two escorts," Karine said as we stepped closer to the cars lined up outside.

"I think Sam and I are the closest to each other out of everyone," I said as Karine and Evelina offered to take me home.

Evelina hugged me tightly. "Are you sure?" she asked as she stepped back.

"We'll be fine," Sam said as she hugged the others, and we said our goodbyes.

Karine also hugged me, and we all got into our separate cars. I was burning to get back to Sergei. The cars pulled out and each had one extra car in front and one behind. Everyone hung out their windows and waved as the cars took separate directions.

Sitting back and closing the window I heard Sam talking to me as we drove, but my mind was already home.

I was in a new room of excitement in my mind. Sergei's playroom as he called it. I grinned, thinking about it.

Sergei was tying me up with his soft leather straps but not only my hands. This time he was tying my legs to the other posts on the bed. Or maybe the bar I saw hanging from the ceiling. Thinking about the bar, I wondered how it worked.

For a while, I tried to imagine different positions that would make them work. But each seemed less likely than the previous one. I would have to ask him to show me, I thought as I licked my lips.

I wondered if this room would be the same as his one in Los Angeles. Even if it wasn't, that would be fine too. It didn't matter how he tied me up I thought smiling at my reflection in the window.

As long as he had his feather and who knows what other toys, I would be his willing woman. I wanted him to fuck me. I wanted to feel his big cock fill me. I shifted as I felt heat rising between my legs.

Yes, I thought, I wanted him to fuck my brains out tonight. My body was tingling as I remembered his touch. I wanted all of him. I was ready to commit after the conversation the previous day and today's fun.

Sergei was my happy place, he completed me, I decided as I crossed my hands across my chest.

"Irina?" I heard Sam say. I think it was the second time she spoke as I vaguely remember her talking to me. Shaking my thoughts into place, I glanced at her.

"Sorry," I replied glancing down. "I was just thinking back to something."

"It's fine, I was asking if you enjoyed the day?" she said, leaning towards me.

"I did, it was so relaxing and more fun than I could have imagined. Is this a regular thing?" I replied.

"We generally try to do it once a month," she said. "But sometimes life gets in the way. Then we make sure to get a day off at least once in three months." She added grinning at me.

"I can see why; it is exhilarating," I said smiling at her. The images of Sergei and his room burned in the back of my mind. I found myself struggling a little to focus completely on our conversation.

Sam glanced out the window and I wondered if she and Leo had a similar thing going on. Even though they weren't married, I was sure they made it work. I wondered if marriage was then needed. Maybe Sergei and I could just live together forever.

The car took a sharp turn and I found myself sitting against Sam. In fact, I was squashing her against her door. We started giggling but stopped abruptly as there was another urgent turn the other way. The car halted sharply, and the quiet night air filled with gunshots.

Sam pulled me down behind the front seat with her as she moved. There were a couple more shots and then the car doors were being forced open.

I screamed as Sam was being pulled out from her side. I tried to hold onto her hand but felt a tug in my middle. Glancing around trying to make sense, I felt my heart stop for a second as I was being dragged out as well.

Instinctively I tried kicking and turning, pulling at the arm around my waist. Then the man holding me placed a cloth over my mouth. Glancing up, I saw a scar on his face.

My eyelids instantly became heavy. I struggled to breathe as my lungs filled with whatever was on the cloth. I tried seeing where Sam was, but the darkness took over.

I heard her scream before my mind shut down. That last feeling of dread and despair took over within seconds before everything disappeared.



## Chapter 25 - Sergei

Irina entered the kitchen as I was clearing the table. She made sure I had enough to eat. The breakfast had been so good that I had too much.

I felt like I had swallowed a baby elephant. There was still some food left which I tossed into a bowl and put in the fridge. I might as well have it for lunch I thought.

Glancing at her, I almost dropped the plate in my hand. She was a vision to behold as she gracefully entered. Staring at her, I was entranced by her attractiveness. Her curves filled the suit she was wearing perfectly.

The pink top she wore with it was a flawless match. It only exposed enough of her bosom to prickle the mind while leaving enough for the imagination. My eyes explored her body as my mind took a trip back to LA.

I felt an immense need to grab her and head upstairs. But instead, I placed the plate down, wiped my hands on my pants, and pulled her into my arms. I tried getting her to stay and go upstairs with me. But she resisted gently, and I also knew she needed to get out a bit.

Our eyes met as she leaned forward, and our lips gathered in a heated kiss. Irina stepped back sliding her hand down my chest before heading to the door. She blew me a kiss before walking out.

I watched as she left with Karine. I was sure she would be safe, but a little voice inside told me that I was a fool. Returning to my cleaning, I wiped the thought away. She was with the wives of the strongest Bratva family in Miami at the moment; what could go wrong?

Once all the dishes were packed, I hit the wash button. I made a cup of coffee and headed up to my office. Today, I had the whole day to myself.

Why not catch up on some work, I decided as I sat down in front of my computer. I scanned my planner, deciding which calls would have to be made. Once I had a list, I could take a look at the rest of my piled-up work.

I switched on the computer and opened my emails. Scanning them, I pulled the needed files from the filing cabinet and got started.

Once the emails were done, I completed some sales details with the office manager in Los Angeles. I headed back down and poured another cup. Then I called a couple of clients to settle the deals still open. Placing the phone down after the last call I noticed that evening was crawling in.

I was so busy that I had not even noticed. Checking the time, I realized that Irina would be home soon. I decided the rest could wait for another day and left my office. As I headed to the kitchen to eat my leftovers for supper instead of lunch, I turned on only the most needed lights.

I grabbed a plate from the washer before taking the bowl of food out of the fridge. After adding everything left onto a plate, I popped it into the microwave and hit the button to heat it.

I walked to the living area and decided on a bottle of wine for Irina and me, which I placed in the fridge. Once Irina returned, we could shower quickly and see what the playroom held for us, I thought. Roman had specific instructions on what was needed in the room, but I have not even checked on the results yet.

As I waited for my food to heat, I grinned at my reflection in the microwave door. I was pulled back out of my thoughts as my phone rang.

Taking it out of my pocket I noticed it was Leo calling. Staring at my half-brother's name on the screen I wondered why he would be calling. This was unusual but I decided to take the call. Maybe he just wanted to talk about the family or the women's day out, I thought smiling as I swiped up on the screen.

Bringing the phone to my ear, I greeted him cheerily. "Hey, Leo, how's it going?"

"Sergei," Leo said, his voice sounding as if he was being choked. "It's the women, brother." The pitch of his voice

changed as he continued. “They have been attacked on their way home and Irina has been taken.”

Somewhere in the back of my mind, I heard the microwave beeping as any and all thoughts left me. My mind and body filled with a deep dark pit of despair as everything went blank. I couldn’t move for a moment as that little voice in my mind went off.

“Sergei,” I heard Leo calling over the phone. I glanced down at the phone in my hand. Lifting it back to my ear, I heard Leo adding. “Roman is on his way to you. Evelina assured us she would have an address in no time. Brother, do you hear me? Do you hear me?” Leo was practically screaming over the phone.

“Leo,” was all I could get out as my rage pushed up beyond control. It was choking me.

“We’ll get her, Sergei,” Leo added before I disconnected the call as I felt my head splitting. I couldn’t think straight, I couldn’t get a grip on myself.

Turning in blinding rage I shoved the microwave off the cupboard. I continued to push everything that was on the island to the floor. Smashing my fists onto the island, I let out a roaring scream.

There was a knock at the door, and I knew it had to be Roman. Storming towards it without thought or control, I swung the door open as the first tears of rage escaped my eyes. My mind was tumbling, trying to get a grip on reality as darkness started taking over.

“Sergei,” Roman said stepping in and placing a hand on my shoulder. “Brother, you have to calm down.”

Pulling back forcefully, I glared at him. “I don’t have to do anything but get Irina back.” I spat at him, feeling my heart being crushed in my chest. I turned and stomped back to the kitchen with Roman, Karine, Ivan, Ashan, and Aleksei all in tow.

Walking into my mess, I stopped and turned to them. Roman froze looking around. “Brother,” he started.

“Don’t you brother me, Roman.” I spat pointing at him. “Where is she? She should have been here with me, not out there.”

Karine stepped past Roman and started picking up some of the mess as she spoke to me. “Sergei, we are sure that Caleb is trying to lure us out. He will not harm Irina. It’s us he wants,” she said sternly, tossing the food and pieces of glass into the bin.

Roman stepped closer and reached out for me. “Sergei, you must calm down. We will get her back even if we have to take her back by force.”

Retreating back as he moved closer, I looked around the room at the faces before me. They were a blur as my vision started to fade in and out.

“Sergei,” Ivan added as he joined Roman stepping up to my side. “Evelina will let us know shortly where they have taken her. I assure you she will not be harmed.”

“After everything that has happened, how can any of you be sure, how can you all be so calm?” I shouted at them.

“I think you should wait here,” Roman said as he squeezed my shoulder. “You need to reel in this anger and calm down.”

Turning out of his grip as my wrath explodes, I storm towards the living area. “No,” I yell. “Like hell, I will get her myself. She is my woman.” I breathe out as I pull the big screen from its bracket on the wall and chuck it at them.

“Caleb will pay for what he’s done.” I hiss barely noticing the look on my family’s faces. I turned to the bar and was about to clear the top when I felt Roman’s arms closing in around mine.

Roman grabbed me around the shoulders and turned with me as he tried to calm my rage. “Sergei, rope it in, brother.” He breathed over my shoulder. “If you want to go with us, you have to bury these feelings deep down for a little longer.”

I tried to turn out of his grip, but he only tightened his clasp around me as I pushed and shoved. “Calm down,” Roman said as we turned in a circle.

His words finally sinking through the darkness, struck me. I stopped fighting him and breathed in deeply. “Okay,” I replied. “Okay, let go.”

Roman eased his hold and stepped back carefully. “If you can just manage your feelings for now. I promise once we get her, you can do what you please to that bastard.”

I surveyed the room, everyone just stood staring at me. “Okay,” I agreed. I pushed my hair back with my hands and straightened out my shirt. Turning to Roman, I held my hand out. Pushing everything within me down, we shook on it.

Still burning inside, I quickly assisted Karine in cleaning up the mess I made as we waited for Evelina’s call. It felt like an eternity, but I had to stay calm if I wanted to go with them. Once the place was reasonable Karine and I joined the rest in the living area.

Roman shoved a glass of Whiskey in my hand and smiled softly at me. “We’ll get her. Don’t worry, we will.” He added as I sat down on a bar stool.

I barely took two sips from my glass when the doorbell chimed again. I jumped off the stool and practically ran to the door. I swung it open and there stood Evelina. My instincts were to pull her in and hug her, but I controlled my emotions as Roman had asked.

Evelina walked in and we joined the family in the living area. She handed Ivan a note, which he studied for a second. Glancing up Ivan nodded, “Let’s get going,” he said.

Everyone exited the house and piled into the cars. Roman and Ivan each made some calls as we drove. All I wanted to do was tell the driver to step on it. I needed to reach our destination immediately but knew I had to stay calm.

It was killing me not to burst out in rage. I felt my fingers closing over my thumbs as I squashed them in my fists. Controlling such brute anger was not something I have learned

to do. I found myself sweating from the effort of keeping the rage engaged.

Roman started explaining to me how operations such as this one functioned as we drove. "Each of us has a place," he said.

"Once we arrive, the bodyguards will surround the place. The made men then enter the building and do a sweep." He said, taking a deep breath.

I felt Evelina and Ivan's eyes focused on me as I listened.

"Once we enter, allow us to go first and make a path. You can't just storm in and get yourself, and most likely Irina killed. Do you understand?" Roman finally asked.

"Yes," I answered nodding my head.

"Once inside, if the path is clear, you can go and rescue her. We are all in this together, remember that." Roman added as he sat back.

Breathing in deeply, I exhaled slowly. "I understand, thank you," I said, looking out the window. We were entering some kind of industrial-looking area, the kind of place I presumed business such as this took place.

We turned down between some warehouses and in the distance, I noted a couple of cars parked to one side. That must be it, I thought, sitting up.

## Chapter 26 - Irina

My body ached as I started gaining consciousness. I tried moving but couldn't. Fluttering my eyes as I opened them, I realized I was tied to a chair. My hands and both feet were tied up. Glancing around trying not to attract attention, I noted that I was in a warehouse.

Not again, I thought as I tried to see if there were any distinct markings of where I was. There were a lot of men standing around in small groups of three or four.

As my vision cleared, I recognized some of the men. No, my mind screamed, not again. Once again, Caleb's men captured me. However, this warehouse was not the same one. This one had a lot of windows high up and two large doors a little way before me.

Some barrels were close to the door but had no markings on them. Most of the building appeared to be empty. There was a part to my right that was cordoned off that had a door in, it might be an office of sorts, I thought.

To the left were more barrels with what looked to me like a danger warning on them. Most of them had been scrubbed off and the ones I could see weren't very clear. Further back were big machines, but I couldn't see them and wasn't sure what they actually were.

I closed my eyes again wishing I was back in LA with Sergei. We could have stayed in our bubble and lived our lives without any of this. My ankles and wrists were burning from the ropes, and I felt like crying. Biting back the tears, I tried to listen to the conversations around me.

Most of the men were too far away and their voices mixed together as the little groups of men spoke among themselves. This made it hard to discern what they were saying.

But as some groups fell silent, I heard someone saying that I wasn't the target of their attack. They only abducted me to get to the Morozov family. To draw them out, the one guy was saying to another.

My heart slowed down as fear entered. A cold sweat broke out covering my entire body. Sergei, my mind screamed in echoes. He wasn't trained in this type of life, and I felt sure he would not be ready to take on such a challenge.

Even though I wasn't their ultimate target, it didn't imply in any way that I would not become collateral damage. I felt sure that Caleb wasn't only angry at them but also at me.

This situation could get extremely ugly quickly I thought as I glanced at the men with their guns. The ones I could see, basically only those in front of me counted up to about fifteen men. But I was sure there were more men behind me that I just couldn't see. "Hey," I called out to the man with the scar, recognizing him from the previous encounter.

Looking over his shoulder, he grinned at me as he turned and walked closer. "Well, well, sleeping beauty has awoken." He said as he stopped before me. Bending down to look me in the face, he smirked. "You are the perfect bait." He added.

"What does your boss want with me?" I inquired, trying to find out what their plan was. Maybe if I knew more, I could assist in my escape when the family came, I thought.

Feeling my heart skipping a couple of beats, I had to hold onto the fact that they would be here soon. Hope was all I had. I knew Sergei was surely turning the world upside down looking for me right now. But knowing Oleg, Sergei would not be alone in this endeavor.

Scarface was about to say something when there was a loud bang from somewhere behind me. I shrieked slightly as I bounced on the chair from the noise. Scarface stood erect and stepped back. I tried to see what was happening but couldn't turn my head enough.

The room went quiet, the men lowered their heads, and I knew the big man had entered. I was sure it was Caleb who had arrived. But why did Scarface seem so nervous, was there someone else, someone higher up the chain?



I heard footsteps nearing me from behind. Suddenly my head was heaved backwards as he pulled at my hair. I let out a small scream as pain shot down my spine.

Looking up at the roof, an ugly face pushed into view. I blinked, trying to clear my view from the tears fogging it up. I needed to focus on the face before me.

“I’ve gotten word.” He spoke. “I’m sure the Morozov family will be here shortly,” the man hissed almost choking me with his dire breath. I tried pulling out of his grip but felt it tighten as I struggled. My tears started running out the sides of my eyes as pain infiltrated my head.

“Should we stand ready, boss?” I heard Scarface ask from somewhere to my left.

The man shoved my head forward as he let go of my hair, chuckling. “Not yet,” he said stepping into view. “We still have time to play with her.”

He nodded at Scarface as he moved to stand before me. Scarface pulled a thick piece of cloth from his pocket and forced it through my mouth gagging me.

It was Caleb, my mind registered as I blinked away the tears. No, no, this can’t be happening, my mind screamed as my body froze in fear. My veins filled with ice as my skin went cold and my heart struggled to keep up the pace.

Gasping, I tried to fill my lungs with air. I was sure I was about to faint as the room appeared to be swirling around me. Caleb grinned as Scarface handed him a chair, and he sat down before me.

“Let’s play a little game,” Caleb said as he shoved his gun into my chest. He didn’t pull the trigger but pressed hard. Heat radiated out from where the gun struck my ribs and I gulped for air. My lungs were on fire, burning as I tried to find some air. Looking up, I saw his men stepping closer, forming a wide circle around us.

They smiled and nodded at each other, surely intrigued to see what Caleb was doing. “You thought you could get

away, didn't you?" Caleb said as he spat at me, a big blob of oozing goop landed on my cheek.

"You little bitch. You have no idea what is good for you." He added leaning in even closer. "You and the Morozov family will pay for your actions."

Caleb slowly pulled back and pushed the tip of his gun up my inner thigh. I struggled against the ropes, trying to scream through the gag. But all my efforts were useless. He laughed as he pressed the gun against the constraints of my pants between my legs.

I stopped moving and glanced down. His men were also laughing, and I wished I had a gun.

"Maybe we should teach you what a real man is," Caleb said glancing at his men as he moved the tip of the gun up and down.

Turning back to me he leaned in again and started undoing the buttons of my top. Once they were all undone, he trailed a line down my center with the tip of his gun. As he passed between my breasts, he stopped. He shoved the gun forcefully left and right before moving further down.

I felt a sharp pain radiating through both breasts. A new flood trailed down my cheeks as I closed my eyes forcing my mind to another place.

I was panting as I tried to fill my lungs with air. "Bring the bucket," Caleb said glancing over his shoulder at Scarface. Obeying Caleb, Scarface quickly stepped out of sight and returned shortly with a big black bucket.

"Let's see if your body likes something cold, as cold as you, I suppose," Caleb said as he stood and shoved his chair backward. One of the men to his right stepped in and took one side of the bucket. Scarface and the other man pulled the bucket back and chucked the content at me.

Water and ice struck my body, sending shivers and a shocking burning sensation through my senses. I was drenched from my head to my feet. I felt some of the ice settling on my breasts, my hips, and between my legs.

The ice on my bare skin burned as it lay there. Shivering within my constraints my tears flowed freely, my heart ached as my lungs struggled. I hung my head as the room filled with laughter. Caleb stepped back in and using the tip of his gun, he pushed my top down over my shoulders.

I felt dirty and wanted nothing but Sergei's arms and a hot shower. Closing my eyes, I tried to leave my current situation and travel to a place of safety. I managed to clear my mind and enter Sergei's home. Our home. I saw him standing at the fridge offering me some snacks. Everything went black suddenly.

It didn't last long. My eyes sprung open as Caleb started pulling my bra straps over my shoulders. Feeling his fat fingers caressing my neck and shoulders made me tremble even more. My stomach turned as vomit pushed its way up my throat.

Shrieking into the gag I wished I had stayed home instead of going out today. Glancing around the room, all the men's eyes were on me. They were enjoying the show, some more than others I noted as a couple licking their lips.

Feeling Caleb's breath on my neck pushed everything inside me up. I felt like I was bursting at the seams. My body shook as liquid pushed its way out through the gag.

There was a loud shrieking sound. Vaguely, I saw the double doors of the warehouse being shoved open. The air around me filled with bullets flying in all directions. I quickly scanned the room as the Morozov family kept piling in. I was searching through the family for Sergei.

Caleb was still standing behind me, his hand over my shoulder. His fat fingers were lying half between my breasts with his thumb on the nipple of my right one. Everything occurred so quickly that I was sure he couldn't comprehend what was happening. He seemed frozen behind me.

As the family started spreading out, I saw him. My eyes met Sergei's as he walked in. His eyes filled with a deep fire locked on me. I have never seen him like this. Whatever

was happening in his mind was taking control of him. I felt my body convulsing again, my vision blurred.

In that instant, it dawned upon me. He is the one, he is the man I want. I love him with all I am, and I want to spend the rest of my life with him. My love for him has grown beyond reason, and we must get out of this.

I wanted to tell him how much I wanted him. I saw him step closer, then the room was spinning. Opening my eyes again, I saw his face; he was saying something, but I couldn't make it out.

I tried opening my eyes, but it felt like they were glued shut. I could hear murmuring, but it sounded far away. My body felt cold, and I was moving, but it didn't feel like I was moving by myself. My mind swirled as white clouds flew through the blackness.

Even though I could not see or hear clearly, I sensed Sergei's presence. I felt calm in all the chaos that was seemingly in my mind. Through the darkness and clouds, I saw a light. My mind was in two as uncertainty settled in my heart.

## Chapter 27 - Sergei

“Sergei,” Roman said after a brief pause.

I turned and looked at him, shifting my focus back to our conversation.

“Situations like these,” he said glancing at Ivan. “They can change unexpectedly in the blink of an eye. You have to always be ready for anything.”

Roman took out his gun, pointing it at the ground between us. “When handling a gun, there are a couple of things to keep in mind,” he said looking at me.

“Never point it in a direction you are not sure of or wave it around pointing nowhere specifically.”

“Okay,” I replied hastily.

Roman tilted his head. “I am not done; these are important things to know. Please listen carefully, we are not playing cops and robbers anymore.” He said, grinning at me.

“I know, I am listening,” I replied, shifting in my seat.

“You never keep your finger on the trigger unless you are ready to shoot. You keep your finger straight and once you find your target, you aim, fold your finger in, and squeeze,” he said, demonstrating with his gun.

I nodded as he returned his gun to his side holster. “I suggest you also get a holster at some point,” he added. “It’s easier and safer than walking with it by your side. You might shoot your foot off that way.”

Ivan grunted at Roman, but I didn’t find his comment very funny. I understood that carrying my gun in my pants may not be a good idea. But at the moment, it was all I could do.

As we neared the parked cars, we slowed down. Looking back, I saw some of the cars behind us turn down a side street, and others turn up.

“Is this it?” I asked, reaching for the door handle.

“Slow down there Sergei,” Roman said, pushing my hand back. “Let the men make sure, you don’t want to go barging in where there is no fire brother.”

“Sorry, you’re right,” I replied wiping sweat from my forehead with the back of my hand. My stomach was in a tight knot. My mind was trying to make me see things that weren’t there, and I had to fight to keep it from strolling down coo-coo street.

One of the cars that were behind us came out on the other side of the warehouse where the cars were parked. They flashed their lights at us. “This is it,” Roman said as we parked on the corner.

As we peeled out of the car, Roman grabbed my arm. “Please stay behind us until it is safe. We will make way for you.”

I nodded and allowed the family to move out before me. Burning inside, I wrestled with myself to control my legs. They had a movement of their own and my heart a pull I had never felt before. I watched the guards shove the doors aside, and the family poured into the building.

Following close behind Roman I stepped in through the doors scanning the room. Bullets were already flying in all directions. Some of our guards went down as I tried to lock onto Irina through the chaos.

Pausing just inside, I watched as the family started to spread to the sides, gunning down Caleb’s crew as they moved. People were moving around like ants on fire.

A trail of bodies formed down the middle as men were hit and blood streaks scattered the air. As they cleared my view, I saw her. Locking eyes on her, I saw he was there standing behind her.

Caleb’s face filled with bewilderment as our eyes met. He was positioned behind her with his filthy hand perched over her shoulder touching her breast.

Irina’s shirt was open, and she was soaked, shivering from the cold. There was a sudden surge through my veins as a

fire within took hold. My vision narrowed as blackness invaded it, all my thoughts flew out the door.

Silence filled my mind as I rushed forward. Nothing Roman had said made sense anymore. There was no controlling the fury that burned with intent inside my mind and body. Flying across the room, there was only one thought.

Kill the bastard and save my woman I thought, leaping over the men dropping before me. My weapon was aimed and true to its target. There was no other way this time. “Here, today this was going to end,” I heard myself scream as I stopped before Irina.

Caleb straightened himself out as I aimed my gun at his head. His arm reached under his jacket into the holster holding his gun. “Not today,” I screamed as his arm came forward, and I squeezed the trigger.

Bullets flew from my gun, and I felt the recoil pulling at my shoulder. I stood firm and held my aim emptying the clip. Each bullet hit the target sending blood splattering all over, but I didn’t care. I was seeing black, and this was the end for Caleb. I would make sure there was no saving him this time.

The clip clicked and clicked as the bullets ran out. I watched as Caleb sank behind the chair. His eyes had gone glossy as his life left him. His chest looked like a sift with all the holes I had put in it.

Reaching down, my hand found the spare clip and I reloaded the gun without any thought. I felt a firm hand on my shoulder as reality set in. I shook my head trying to return to the situation. “Sergei,” Roman spoke behind me. “It’s almost over, brother. Get Irina out of here.”

I glanced over my shoulder, nodding my head as everything started to return. The room came into view and before me sat the desire of my life. Her complexion had turned white, and the shivering appeared to have calmed down.

Shoving the gun into my belt, I knelt and pulled at the ropes holding Irina’s feet. Once they were out of the way, I

untied her hands and picked her up into my arms. No, my mind shrieked as my heart stopped for a second. She was limp in my arms and cold as ice.

I stood for a second, my mind filling with the worst ideas as I waited for her to breathe. Feeling her chest lift against mine I exhaled deeply and turned swiftly, wanting to head out the door.

As I looked up, I saw Leo standing on the inside of the door shoving me to come to him. Out of the corner of my eye, I caught movement behind him. Focusing, I saw two men aiming at him from behind some barrels.

Shifting Irina's weight into one arm, I pulled my gun, aimed, and took the shot. The first man went down like a fire doused with water. The second glanced at me before scurrying away into the shadows.

Roman and Ivan headed in his direction as I made my way to Leo at the door. There were so many men covering the floor of the warehouse it was sickening. More gunshots rang through the air, and I was sure they had found him as Ivan and Roman came back around the barrels.

Leo thanked me for saving his life as he made sure we got to one of the cars safely. He sent us home with two extra guards just in case. I held Irina tight as we sped through the streets reaching home quickly.

The guards assisted me inside and I headed upstairs with her. Entering our room, I laid her down gently on the extra-large bed. I pulled the spare blanket over her and sat down staring at her porcelain face. I softly rubbed her arms and legs hoping her color would return soon.

She only woke slightly during our ride home. She glanced up at me and said my name before slipping away again. But now here in our room, she looked peaceful where she lay sleeping.

I hoped she knew she was safe and back home. Pushing a strand of hair from her soft face, I bit my lower lip. I



could have lost her, I thought. Glancing around the room I breathed in deeply, wiping at the tear that escaped my eye.

But I hadn't lost her; she was safely back home, and the danger had been taken out. She would never again in her life know of any danger, I promised as I rubbed her hand.

Damn, I thought, I couldn't have done this without the family. If not for all of them, we could have both died. Or worse, I could have lost her forever.

I leaned over and kissed her forehead. Her temperature had returned to normal. Sitting back, I noticed her color was also returning. Smiling, I felt grateful that the family was there to assist.

Picking up Irina's hand, I resolved to put my feelings and reservations on the back burner. It was time to accept the family, all previous convictions about them were over. They have stepped up every time I needed them. Now it was my turn.

Deciding to embrace my new life, I stared at Irina lying on my bed. I shifted down beside the bed grinning at my sleeping beauty.

"I am going to marry you Irina," I professed taking her hand in mine. "I don't care whether you agree or not, but I am never leaving your side ever again."

My mind traveled back to the warehouse, seeing her there, the torture in her eyes. I almost lost her. I was not going to lose her I swore to myself as I stood and sat back down on the bed.

Irina started stirring as if she heard my thoughts. Leaning closer I kissed her cheek. "I love you, Irina," I whispered.

Her eyes fluttered as she started regaining consciousness. "Irina," I said caressing her cheek. "You're safe, dear."

My heart skipped a beat as she pulled her hand from mine and reached up. Feeling her tender touch on my cheek heated all my senses. I leaned in and embraced her. She was

going to be fine, I saved her, and she was going to be here with me.

“I’ll keep you safe,” I whispered into her ear as I pulled her tight into my embrace. The bed and covers were slightly moist where she lay. Why didn’t I take off her wet clothes, I thought to myself as I felt the slight breeze blowing in.

I could only think of warming her and keeping her safe once we entered the house. I covered her with a blanket without even considering how drenched she was.

“Sergei,” Irina whispered, and I felt a soft kiss touch my cheek. Her lips were warm and tender even though her hands were still slightly cool.

I released my grip allowing her to pull back slightly. Looking into her eyes, I felt my heart leaping as an intense love filled my being. There was a split second where fear crossed her face before she fully comprehended, she was safe. Well, I hoped that she realized it.

She was perfect; she was everything I could ever have dreamed of having in a woman. I would never let her go. I would make her mine forever. The feelings inside me bubbled up, my body heated up and my mind calmed even though my heart was racing.

She was everything and more that I could ever need or want in life. I realized I loved her so much that I would die for her as I kissed her cold hands.

## Chapter 28 - Irina

Waking from my nightmare, I reached out. Glancing around the room, I noticed I was home, in our room, and safe. Sergei pulled me up into his arms holding me against him. “Sergei,” I said as I kissed his cheek relieved that I was safe.

As his grip softened, I could ease back and look into his majestic eyes. He radiated love and care.

“Sergei, thank you,” I said softly as he kissed my hands.

Before I could continue, he shifted off the bed kneeling beside me.

“Irina,” he started taking a deep breath. “This last month with you has been like a fairytale. You fill my life with love, excitement, and feelings I can’t even describe. I can’t even imagine life without you anymore.”

Leaning in, Sergei pulled me closer to him, placing his hands around my hips. “I can’t let you go; you won’t be returning to your old life or your apartment. Even with the bastard dead, I can’t let go. I love you.”

Easing back slightly Sergei smiled up at me as he took both my hands in his. “Irina, my love, I want to marry you. I want nothing more than to spend the rest of my life growing old with you in my arms.”

“Sergei,” I said through the tears streaking my face. I gasped for air as my lungs tightened and my heart sped up. Trying to straighten the smile off my face was useless as my body refused to cooperate.

“You know,” I said, finally catching my breath. “With the looming danger removed, you may want to wait with the marriage proposal. For all you know, we won’t get along anymore with no danger in our lives.”

Sergei rose and sat back down before me on the bed clutching my hands. “There is no way that we won’t work my love.” He breathed out between kisses as he laid them all over my hands.

Laughing I tried to contain my excitement. “I love you too, Sergei,” I replied. “But I still think we should wait on the whole marriage thing.”

Leaning forward I pushed out my lips forming a kiss on them. Without hesitation, Sergei leaned in, took my face in his hands, and kissed me passionately.

“Let’s just take it one day at a time for now,” I added as he pulled back for air.

Grinning at me he nodded his head and stood up from the bed. Grabbing me around the waist, Sergei lifted me off the bed. “It’s time we saw what the playroom looked like,” he said as I flung my arms around his neck.

“I agree,” I replied as he picked me up and I wrapped my legs around his waist. We walked out of the bedroom and down the short passage. I felt a cool breeze blowing over my moist clothes but didn’t care. Soon, I would be heating up, I thought.

He pushed through the door and flipped the light switch. Glancing around, I gasped in awe. The room was very similar to the one in LA. However, the cupboards were all open.

They were filled with a variety of toys. One contained fluffy cuffs, leather straps, cloth ropes, some feathers, and what looked like whips.

As he turned and closed the door, I saw the three beds. There was a normal double bed with tall posts and a hanging bar like the one in LA. Then there were two more.

Looking at the chaise without the backrest, I remembered that first night. Little did I know then how much pleasure was to come. Grinning to myself as we turned, my eyes caught a clear view of the last couch or bed. I couldn’t quite be sure which it was.

It almost looked more like some sort of exercise bench than a bed or couch. I felt a fluttering in my stomach as he moved to the chaise-looking couch and lowered me onto it. It

wasn't quite straight. It had a small bend in it lifting my butt slightly.

The lights were soft and glowed off the red and gold furniture. Sergei leaned in kissing me softly. "If you get uncomfortable, please tell me to stop." He breathed out heavily.

"Make me forget, Sergei," I answered, caressing his cheek.

Sergei grinned as his hands slowly moved lifting my upper body and removing my top and bra. He lowered me back as his hands traveled slowly over my shoulders and down my breasts.

Shivering lightly as he moved, I smiled up at him. His hands knew what I needed; I thought as my heart rate started picking up. He undid the button of my pants before folding his fingers into the sides.

I lifted my butt as he started pulling the sticky pants from my body. It looked like he was peeling it off and I couldn't help but grin.

"Is this amusing?" Sergei asked in a playful voice beaming at me.

"A little," I said nodding.

"Good," he replied taking off his shirt and exposing his sculpted chest.

I licked my lips as my senses started lighting up. He was an image of desire. Sitting up, I pulled him closer by his jeans. I couldn't resist laying kisses across his smooth, chiseled pecs.

Slipping my hands around his waist, I left a trail of kisses down his abs. Sergei pushed his hands through my hair and gently pulled back my head as I reached the top of his pants.

"Baby," he breathed out heavily as he leaned in and kissed me enthusiastically. "Me first," he said lowering me back on the chaise.

My body returned to normal temperature without my clothes, and I no longer felt cold. Sergei walked to one of the cupboards and came back with soft rope-like bounds.

He straddled me, leaning in for a deep, hard kiss as his hands pushed my arms up above my head. Glancing up he tied one and then the other before standing again.

Sergei trailed a line down my body with tender kisses sending sparks through my body as he moved. I couldn't keep the grin off my face as he looked up.

Smiling back at me he softly pushed my legs down the sides of the chaise. I felt my stomach turn as my pussy lips parted. I felt thick leather straps around my ankles as Sergei leaned down and clasped my legs to the feet of the chaise.

“Are you still good?” he asked softly, kissing each thigh warmly.

Feeling the butterflies in my stomach, I nodded grinning. Sergei turned and walked to another cupboard. He returned with what looked like a stick and two small balls. He caressed my legs as he lowered himself to the bottom of the chaise.

Sitting on his haunches, he kissed my legs moving up my inner thighs. As he neared my pussy, I lifted shifting slightly as I felt the heat rising within. He placed tender kisses on my lower stomach as he moved down between my legs.

He delicately pulled one lip and then the other into his warm mouth sending my body into shudders. I felt his fingers moving up and down between my lips. Suddenly something hard and round pushed into my pussy.

I gasped and Sergei looked up. “You want to stop?” he asked tenderly. I felt the hard balls in me, but they didn't hurt.

Smiling down at him I shook my head. “No,” I breathed out feeling my heart racing.

There was a sudden vibration within my pussy as the balls seemed to have a life of their own. Moaning from the pleasure my body pulled taught within the constraints.

The room echoed as my moaning turned into groans and heavy breathing. The vibrations stopped, and I had time to catch my breath. Flopping back onto the chaise as my body relaxed, I felt Sergei pulling the toy out of my pussy.

I looked at him smiling but couldn't form any words as my body was still trying to recover from the overload of emotions. Just as I thought I was calm, I felt a thick hard stick vibrating between my pussy lips.

"Oh, Sergei," I breathed out as my body spasmed with pleasure.

Lifting my head slightly, I looked down at him. Sergei was grinning widely. With one hand he held the vibrator to my clitoris as his other hand's fingers found their way into my pussy.

Arching up I let out a scream as my senses lit up. Clutching my knees to the sides of the chaise, I felt the shudders traveling through my body. My voice echoed as I climaxed.

Before I could completely relax or even open my eyes, I felt Sergei's head between my legs. His hot tongue played with my clitoris sending my body back into overdrive. Before I could come again, he pulled back.

Sergei rose and straddled me again. This time he was as naked as I was. Unsure of when he took off his pants, I felt him fill my pussy with his hardened dick.

His movements were tender but unrestrained. He pumped me hard twice and then slowed down. I kept my eyes closed as his hands moved over my breasts pulling at my nipples. The groans escaped my mouth without control as my body reacted to his touch.

Sergei leaned forward moving his hands up my arms as his mouth found mine. His tongue penetrated my open gasping mouth with a delicate force. His kiss was vigorous and fiery as his hands fumbled at the ties around my wrists.

As my arms came loose, I couldn't resist grabbing his back. My mind and body were in overdrive filled with more

desire than I could handle. Sergei Pushed in hard as he caught a rhythm. I breathed out heavily.

Our bodies melted into one as he moved faster and faster. He sat up as he climaxed with me this time. Feeling his hard cock sliding in deeper took my breath away.

I disappeared into his eyes as he placed his hands next to my head beaming at me. "I love you," he whispered, coming in for a soft kiss.

Sergei got up and undid my legs before picking me up. He carried me through a door to the back of the room. The entire room looked like a big shower. The walls were lined with sprayers, and to the back was a large bench.

He lowered me to it before reaching up and opening the water. All the nozzles came on at once filling the room with warm water spraying in all directions. In one corner was a shelf filled with a variety of liquid soaps. It looked like the shelf in the other corner was filled with different lubricants.

This made my mind wonder about the possibilities within the shower. Giggling at myself, Sergei eyed me raising one brow.

"Share with me?" he asked as he pulled me up into his arms.

"Not today, maybe another day," I replied rising onto my toes and kissing his cheek.

Sergei smiled, nodded, and started bathing me. Once he was done, I turned and bathed him. Holding each other, we stood for a while allowing the water to rinse us. We just stood holding each other as euphoria settled within.

After a while, Sergei turned off the water and stepped back into the playroom. He returned with two robes. Once dressed he picked me up into his arms and headed back to our room.

Laying down, I rested my head on his chest as he caressed my hair. I couldn't be sure that we would still feel the same after a couple of months. But for now, I am grateful to be here with Sergei.



As I slipped off to Dreamland, I felt him kiss my forehead. I pushed my arm across his chest and held him tightly. There was a strong pull within my heart for him, and I could only hope it wouldn't change.

## Epilogue - Sergei

It had been about two months since my full encounter with violence where I killed Caleb. I knew without the help of the family I would not have been able to get it done.

During this time, I had multiple meetings with Roman. I also had some with Ashan and Luder as I learned more about how things were done within the Bratva.

Roman and I worked hard to make sure we could get to a comfortable place where the two businesses could function without influencing each other.

We finally found a fine line that allowed us to keep our empire separate from Bratva's business. I was relieved that we could once again work together. I almost felt like the good old days had returned.

Brushing my hair back, I smirked at my reflection in the mirror. "Hi, Dad," I said to the face staring back as I extended my hand. Shaking my hand out, I tried again. "Hi there, I am pleased to finally meet you in person."

Lowering my head, I tapped the counter. My nerves were eating me up. Irina walked in and squeezed my shoulder. "You'll be fine, honey," she said as she kissed my cheek tenderly. She always knew what I needed and when.

I threw her a smile as I turned and took her hands in mine. "What would I do without you," I said, returning her kiss.

Irina laughed; I loved the sound of her laugh. It was so unique to her. Some may say it sounded childish, but it was one of the attributes that attracted me to her except for her alluring curves.

"I know," I added. "I have spoken to him several times over the phone during the last two months." Taking a deep breath, I continued. "But this is the first time I will meet him in person. Plus, we're meeting at Ivan's place."

"You're funny you know. You've met Ivan and just because he is the head of the Morozov family doesn't make

him different.” Irina said, stepping into my arms. “It’s going to be fine. You have me at your side. What could go wrong?”

We both burst out laughing as she pulled her face into a scrunch. I hugged her tight, “I know I will, and I love you,” I whispered.

Taking one more glance at my reflection, I turned and headed downstairs. After collecting my wallet, keys, and the gun I now carried around permanently by my side, I was ready.

Irina followed shortly. As she gracefully descended the stairs, I felt my heart leaping. She was dressed in a peach-colored summer dress. Coming down the stairs, she looked like a princess. I fought an intense desire to carry her back upstairs to the playroom. Instead, I held out my hand and kissed hers as she placed it in mine.

If the last couple of weeks were any indication, I was sure we were going to make the perfect couple. She might have some reservations, but I had none. “Ready?” I asked as she came to stand beside me. Irina nodded and we headed out the door.

Our guards were waiting in two cars as we came out of the house. I opened the door for Irina and closed it as she took her seat. Getting into the driver’s side, I winked at her as we drove out. Heading down to Ivan’s beachfront property, I felt a cool calmness settle over me.

We pulled into the long driveway and parked alongside the house with some other cars. The guards parked outside joining the long line of cars filled with guards. As I got out and headed over to open the door for Irina, I wondered how many family members were present as the cars seemed to line a couple of blocks.

As I closed the door and placed Irina’s hand on my arm, Roman and Karine were there to welcome us. Glancing at the mansion beside us I wondered how many people he had living with him. The place was surely about four times the size of Roman’s place.

“Glad you could make it,” Roman said as he laid a kiss on my cheek before greeting Irina. Karine also stepped closer, giving me a quick kiss and hug before turning her attention to Irina.

“You both look good,” I replied as we started walking to the side of the house.

Looking up as we walked, I was sure our three-bedroom place would fit into this mansion a couple more times as we walked around the side to the backyard. “Wow,” I exclaimed as we turned the corner. I could no longer keep my amazement in.

Roman grinned at me as we walked through the trees entering into a yard larger than my two homes combined.

Over the huge back walls, I could see the ocean which appeared to lap at the walls outside. In the far corner was a waterfall falling into a pool that terraced into another.

It was breathtaking. In the middle of the yard was a circle of tables and chairs. To the side of it was an outside hut or bar of sorts. It felt like we had gone to a beach party, not a family gathering.

There were about as many people as you would expect at such a party. “Is everyone here family?” I whispered to Roman as I pulled him to a stop.

“Yup,” he answered shortly and continued forward.

Irina stepped closer and took my hand. Roman led us through the people to a table further back. Evelina and Leo were seated there with an older man.

As we neared the table, they all rose and walked around to the front of the table. “Father,” Roman said to the older man before turning to me. “This is Sergei.” He concluded pointing his hand my way.

“Father,” I breathed out stepping forward. Oleg took my shoulders firmly. He seemed to be staring deep into my soul as he looked into my eyes. I swallowed hard at the lump suddenly forming in my throat.

“Son,” he replied in a raspy voice, leaning in and kissing each cheek. His grip was stronger than I would have expected from a man his age. Glancing at him, I noticed a lone tear rolling slowly down one cheek.

I felt bad thinking back at my reaction and resistance to meeting him. Especially knowing that it was our mother who kept us from him and him from us. It was not by his choice or doing.

“Well,” Oleg said tapping my arm. “I am glad we could eventually meet. Let’s sit.” He added pointing to the chairs at the table.

“I’m sorry,” I found myself blurting out. Oleg turned back and studied my face.

“Son,” he said, looking around. “It’s never too late and we will catch up.”

I nodded, feeling the lump in my throat starting to choke me. Biting my lower lip, I felt a tear slip out and race down my cheek.

“I’m sorry it took me so long,” I said.

Oleg laughed, it was a deep comforting sound as he pulled me closer and hugged me. “We all have our own time, son.”

As I moved to the side pulling out a chair for Irina, she stepped in and hugged Oleg. For a moment I had forgotten she knew him her entire life. They both looked pleased at seeing each other again.

Irina sat down in the chair I pulled out and I took the seat beside her. Roman brought us each a drink as some of the other family joined us at the table.

“Well then,” someone said behind me as I felt a large hand hit my back. Glancing up I saw Ivan standing behind me. “Let me officially welcome you to the fold.” He continued as he held out his hand.

I rose and reached out. As Ivan folded his fingers around mine, Roman stepped closer. “I’d be careful who I

shake hands with within the family,” he said grinning.

Raising my eyebrows, I wanted to ask why but then I felt my fingers being forced into each other. Shock filled me as I looked up at Ivan. His smile broadened as he kept squeezing. I tried to return his solid grip, but the giant of a man was pure brute strength.

I felt my knees grow weak as my fingers turned to mush in his hand. Just before I started going down, Ivan let go and pulled me up by the shoulders.

Ivan and Roman smiled at each other before taking their place at the table. I sat back down rubbing my fingers softly.

“Right then,” Oleg said as he rose and picked up his glass. Silence filled the backyard as everyone turned toward him. “No business today, it’s family time.” He said waving his glass around.

“Morozov,” the family replied in unison before continuing with what they were doing. I grinned glancing around. There were so many people, and I didn’t know more than half of them.

Oleg introduced me as his long-lost son to everyone present. I shook more hands and shared hugs and kisses on the cheek with more people than I thought could be done in one day. Once the introductions were finally done, we could sit down and get to know each other.

Leo and Samantha came over and sat with us. Leo told the story of how I saved his life in the warehouse. I tried to deny it as I didn’t want the attention all on me. But he wouldn’t let it go until I agreed with him.

Oleg beamed at me, “You make me proud already,” he said raising his glass. “Long live our sons,” he added. Everyone cheered and Leo thanked me once again.

As we shook hands, the people around us insisted on a speech as they all cheered, “Speech, speech, speech.”

Oleg beamed at me as I rose to my feet. “Okay, okay,” I said, lifting my glass into the air.

“Starting out, I didn’t want to be part of this family,” I said staring at Roman. “But, after everything we have been through. After seeing and living the life this family offers,” I said, swallowing hard. Glancing at the faces around me, I saw compassion and kindness.

“I have learned so much in the last couple of months. And I have to thank each and every one of you. I am honored to be part of such a great loving family. Salute,” I ended my speech by lifting my glass higher.

The air filled with ‘salutes’ and everyone made sure to congratulate me on joining the family.

After sharing some snacks, drinks, and childhood stories some of the family started leaving. The day had passed quite quickly, and I had other plans for the evening. But I wasn’t quite ready to leave.

Spending the day with my father and family turned out to be relaxing. I loved hearing about their lives and the excitement they lived. Ivan’s wife Reina took Irina and me on a magnificent tour of their lovely home.

After most of the extended family had left, about twelve men, brothers, and cousins with their wives and kids were present. We pulled some tables together and gathered in a big circle.

Before I knew it Roman had spat out the news about me wanting to marry Irina. Blushing, I shook my head at him. Glancing over to Irina, I noticed her cherry cheeks as we hadn’t made anything known. We didn’t want to be influenced or pressured into something.

Now, with the news out in the open, the family started in on us. Ivan, Nikolai, and Roman ganged up on me as they poured our drinks.

“Thinking about something and not doing it is like winking at a girl in the dark,” Ivan said, grinning at me.

“Well,” Roman added. “He actually sat in the dark when he first saw her.”

“Were you stalking her?” Nikolai asked.

The family laughed as Yuri stepped closer and tapped me on the shoulder.

“Did little Irina scare you?” Yuri asked.

Glancing at him I shook my head as I rose from the table.

“No,” I started but Irina jumped in and answered for me.

“It’s coming, okay.” Irina blurted out grinning at me. “Just not yet, keep your horses in check.” She spoke glancing around at everyone.

“So, Irina, we can start planning the wedding then?” Evelina added to the conversation.

Karine, Samantha, and Reina all rose and walked over to Irina.

“Irina,” Sam said as she went down on one knee with Karine and Reina at her sides. Flinging her arms into the air, she added, “Marry me.”

Roman and Yuri stepped in beside me. “See, it’s easy.” They said in unison as they lightly shoved me forward.

Irina was blushing even more. I took her in my arms as I whispered in her ear. “I’m sorry for my family.” Irina smiled at me and gently touched my cheek.

“It’s fine,” she said. “I know them this way.” Irina turned to the table and placed her hands on her hips. “Now, now,” she started. “When the time is right, we will let you know.”

Oleg lifted his glass. “I’ll drink to that child.” He spoke out, and everyone took their seats again.

I was relieved that their teasing was over as we shared another drink. Noticing the day would be turning to night soon, I just wanted to leave. There was someplace else I wanted to take Irina.

Making up an excuse for us to leave, we said our goodbyes and headed to my car. Ivan and Reina walked with



us this time and waved as we rode out.

“That was fun, right?” Irina asked as we turned onto Ocean Road.

“Yeah, it kind of was,” I replied, smiling at her.

“Where are we going, I thought we were heading home?” Irina inquired as we drove.

“I made a booking for us, for dinner,” I said smiling warmly at her. “I’m sure I told you this morning, didn’t I?”

Irina shook her head, “Not that I can remember. So, where are we going?” she insisted.

Removing the blindfold from my pocket, I leaned forward. “If I tell you, I have to kill you,” I blurted out smiling. “To make it worse, I have to blindfold you now.”

Irina brought her hands up to the blindfold as I moved to tie it around her head. “Is this really needed?” she asked, pulling lightly at it. “I can always just close my eyes.”

Laughing, I pulled it from her grip and bound it around her head. “No, not you. Remember I know you and you don’t like surprises. Plus, you can never wait to open your eyes.”

Irina lowered her arms allowing me to tie the blindfold. We rounded a corner, and the building came into view. Just in time, I thought as I held her hand.

The car pulled up to the front. I got out and ran to her side. Opening the door, I took her hand and eased her out. “Can I look now?” she asked sounding a bit nervous.

“Irina,” I replied. “You are safe and no, just a little while longer dear.”

I led her through the large double doors into the building. Glancing around I was amazed at how much was done within days. The place surely had a facelift and looked astounding.

Walking through the entrance hall and up a couple of steps we came to the new dining hall. In the middle was a

table set for two. The lights were dimmed just enough to create the perfect romantic atmosphere.

I swallowed hard as I led her to her chair and assisted her to sit down. My mind and heart were in conflict. I could only hope that she would see this for the release I intended it to be. There was still a lot to be done. I felt sure she would also like to have a say in how things were to be done.

So, the place was not finished, I thought. But the dining hall was practically complete. The kitchen was operational, and the rest would follow soon. I could only hope she would not be offended. If she was, this entire evening would end up being a bust.

As I took my seat opposite her, I raised a hand, showing the server to step closer. "Irina," I started as I leaned forward and took her hands in mine. "Before I remove the blindfold, I am going to ask that you keep a level head." I swallowed hard. "Look around and hear me out before you say anything, okay?" I asked.

Irina was quiet for a bit before shaking her head in agreement. I nodded at the waiter to remove the blindfold. Irina blinked a couple of times and then surveyed the area in silence.

After a minute or two, which felt like an eternity, she focused her gaze on me. "Sergei," she said as I felt her grip on my hands tighten. "Are we?"

Even with the changes already made to the place, I knew she would still recognize it. "Hear me out Irina," I said, squeezing her hands. She blinked rapidly as tears filled her eyes.

"The only way to truly rid yourself of the scars you have lived through is to take charge and change the memories," I added feeling sweat breaking out on my forehead.

"I bought this place. I know it holds awful reminders of your near-actioning experience. But we can change it into

something beautiful you and I.” As I spoke, the first tear rolled down her cheek.

“Karine, Evelina, and Sam will also assist. They are excited to help you turn this place into anything you want.” I blurted out trying to soothe her.

“You can add a spa to the restaurant area we are building. You can even add shops or a nursery school. Anything you want, the building is yours to mold into something good.”

I rose and leaned over the table wiping at the tear on her cheek. Irina looked like she was about to faint as her face turned white. I walked around to her and picked her up into my arms.

“Please say something,” I asked as I kissed her cheeks.

Slowly, she started shaking her head from side to side as the tears she kept in burst free. I held her tight as she cried. This wasn’t the reaction I expected, but maybe it was what she needed.

I picked up the napkin from the table and handed it to her as her crying started to subdue. She wiped her cheeks and glanced up at me. She looked torn, and tender from the wounds this place opened.

“I am sorry,” I said, “I don’t know what I thought. We can get rid of it.”

Irina smiled softly, “No, it’s fine,” she said between deep breaths. “It’s perfect, we’ll turn this nightclub into something amazing. A place of safety.” She added glancing around.

I felt the noose around my heart releasing as she stepped back and sat down. I showed the waiter to bring the champagne as I took my place opposite her.

“So, what are we having for supper?” Irina asked as she sipped from her glass.

“I have something special,” I said, grinning. “I brought in my friend from LA to run the restaurant here.”

Irina glanced over her shoulder towards the kitchen. “You brought him here?” she asked astounded.

“Well, you wouldn’t stop talking about that one meal. So, I decided he would be the best fit.” I replied seeing her lit up.

Music started playing in the background setting the mood for what was coming next. Irina looked around as her favorite song blared out of the speakers fitted into the ceiling.

The waiter came over with our food, placing hers down first and then mine. The plates were covered with silver lids which was a new addition to recreating our first date.

I needed them to conceal the real reason for this night. As we ate, Irina shared some ideas on the changes she would be making. I was thrilled to see her mood change as she accepted my gift.

Once we were done with supper, the server removed our plates. We had another glass of champagne before dessert. Dessert was also served on closed plates to keep the intrigue going. Once we finished dessert, I took Irina for a swing on the newly built dance floor.

We strolled through the building as I showed her the changes that had already been made. The small office at the back had been taken down and the walls done over to give it a clearer appearance.

Once we returned to our table, I showed the waiter it was time. As he came over with the last plate, I rose from the table. He handed me the covered plate as I moved closer to Irina. Clicking my fingers in the air, the lights turned off and a glittering ball lit up. The room was filled with tiny bright lights sparkling gold, silver, blue, and pink.

I knelt before her as rose petals rained down from the roof over us. Irina gasped as she lifted her hands to her mouth.

“Irina Gusev,” I breathed out looking into her now sparkling eyes. “Since I laid my eyes on you that very first night in your red dress, I knew you were different. You made

my heart pound and every time you enter a room it still goes into overdrive.”

Smiling at her I felt a lump forming in my throat. “Waking up to my empty bed the next morning was devastating. I didn’t even know where to start looking for you. But as fate would have it. I believe we are meant for each other.”

I lifted the lid from the last plate revealing the gold and diamond ring. “Nothing in this world means anything if I have to continue without you by my side as my wife.” Swallowing hard I continued. “Will you do me the honor of marrying me?”

Irina sat frozen as tears once again rolled down her cheeks. She was fixated on the plate in my hand and for a moment, I wasn’t sure what was happening.

I felt my heart stop as my mind tried to comprehend what was happening. Irina looked at me as a smile crossed her lips.

“Yes, Sergei, yes, I will marry you,” she blurted out, bouncing up and down on her chair.

Relieved and excited, I grabbed the ring and dropped the plate. My breathing was jagged as I took her shaking hand in mine. I was sure my hands were trembling more than hers as I slipped the ring onto her finger.

Irina flung her arms around my neck almost throwing us over as she covered my face in kisses. I felt pinned to the floor and couldn’t get up. Holding her tight in my arms I sat back as our lips met.

Pulling back for air I whispered into her ear. “Time to go home.” Irina beamed as she stood up from my lap. I got up off the floor and took her hand as we ran down the stairs and out the door.

The trip home was quick, and I couldn’t wait to get her inside as my senses lit up every corner of my body. Once inside and the door closed behind us, I picked her up into my embrace.

Irina closed her legs around my waist as I headed upstairs. Before even entering the playroom, I had unzipped her dress. We barged through the door, almost tumbling to the floor as she bathed me in warm sensual kisses.

I lay her down on the bed as I pulled her dress off. She removed her underwear while I stepped out of my jeans and pulled my shirt off over my head. Picking her up I turned and walked to the bench she called the exercise bed.

My dick was pumping hard for her and the heat we shared was more than I had ever felt before. As she stretched out on the bed, my mind stepped out. I tied her hands and legs as she moaned with pleasure.

For the rest of our lives, I would aim to teach her and please her more and more. Together we would make things work as our love is strong. We had already faced more than most and nothing could ever break our bond.

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THE END

## **About the Author**

Lexi Asher gave up a promising career in the medical field to focus entirely on her family—and her writing. She lives in the beautiful, luscious Virginia countryside with her husband, 3 young children and 4 pets.

The Ashers' rustic cottage is bustling with activity all day long, so when Lexi wants to get her head down and let her creative juices flow, she will often take refuge in their beautifully ornate conservatory where Lexi does most of her writing.

When it comes to love, Lexi is a big believer in second chances—sometimes you just meet the right person at the wrong time. So, her stories often feature old flames that are reignited and broken hearts that are mended. But is love really better the second time around? Well, read and find out!

## **Books by Lexi Asher**

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\* \* \*

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