

Chapter 26 – By Fate I Conquer Cora Reilly

I got up, the shirt falling to my knees once more, hiding my nudity. But my legs were sticky and my core still throbbing from my release.

Maddox sat up slowly. “Won’t you return the favor?”

I cocked an eyebrow. “Why don’t you ask one of the pass-arounds to do it for you?” Despite the harsh note of my words, the idea that Maddox could get it on with another woman didn’t sit well with me. He pushed into a sitting position, his jeans tented.

Remembering the piercings and his sinfully s#xy body I felt compelled to get on my knees and do what he asked, but my pride kept me in place. He took a cigarette out of his packet and pushed to his feet, looking as if he didn’t care. He shrugged and sauntered over to the door. “Suit yourself. I know just the right girl to s*ck my d!ck.”

A hot ball of fury built in my chest. “If you do this—” I seethed, not sure what I was going to threaten him with. We weren’t a couple so I couldn’t break up with him. We were nothing except captive and captor, which made the situation all the more ridiculous. I didn’t have anything I could blackmail him with.

“Then what?” Maddox asked, turning with a satisfied grin, as if my reaction had been his plan. Had he tricked me into an emotional outburst?

I couldn’t believe him. I shook my head in disgust. “I don’t care. Do what you must. For all I care you can let all the old ladies...” I wanted to say something crude to match him but the words stuck in my mouth. “...have their way with you.” I finished lamely, and my face heated.

Maddox’s smile broadened, becoming so smug I wanted to strangle him with the gold chain around his neck. “Have their way with me?” he echoed, all teeth and smugness. “S*ck my d!ck is what they would do. Can’t you say the words, Snow White?”

“Unlike the women you choose to do your bidding, I have some style.”

“Oh, you got style and plenty of arrogance to match it. Don’t you feel hypocritical bashing those girls when your p**ssy’s still wet from my magic tongue.”

He had a point but I couldn’t admit it. “They chose this lifestyle. I got kidnapped. Nothing is my choice.”

“Riding my mouth with your p**ssy like a f*cking rodeo rider was your choice, princess. Your cream on my tongue’s proof of that.”

As often as his crudeness turned me on, just as often it annoyed me.

"That's what experts call Stockholm Syndrome," I muttered, hating my cheeks for heating further because I felt caught. Even if I was telling myself that this was part of the plan to get Maddox on my side, so he'd help me escape, I enjoyed our physical encounters too much to blame it on strategy. I felt wanton, s*xy, and naughty in a way Giovanni had never allowed. I felt freed from shackles that had weighed me down more than I'd realized.

"Bullshit, Snow White. Don't insult my intelligence and definitely not your own goddamn backbone. You'd never let some shitty syndrome determine your actions. I doubt anyone or anything could ever force you to do anything you don't want."

He paused. "And you want me. In your prim society life, you'd never be allowed to get nasty with someone like me, but now you got the chance and you took it greedily with your perfectly manicured fingernails."

He was right. I wanted him. I felt freed of the rules of the Famiglia for once. This was a lawless zone. Whatever happened while I was being held here, I would never be blamed for it.

This was cowardice, not wanting to risk living the life you desire.

His eyes trailed the length of me, making me feel hot all over again. "You don't even have to say it. I know you want nothing more than to get even nastier with me, to really unleash the s*xy vamp you hide behind that Snow White face."

His grin became even dirtier. "Aren't you curious?"

"About your genitals?" I said sarcastically.

Maddox laughed, a deep bark I began to like way too much. "Not quite the words I would have chosen, but yes."

"No, thank you. Curiosity killed the cat."

His smile widened. God, a smile had never made me feel as if my insides were being lit on fire.

He reached into his jeans and freed his length. I couldn't look away even though I wanted to do it. But the piercing in his tip captured my attention and didn't let it go. He flicked his thumb over the shiny piece of metal repeatedly as he rubbed his tip.

I stepped closer. "You're really going to do this in front of me. Don't you have any shame?"

"No shame whatsoever, Snow White. But if you're so concerned about my dignity, give me a hand."

I shook my head. "You're impossible, and crude and absolutely shameless."

"Guilty as charged. But you are a coward, a hypocrite, and a liar."

I narrowed my eyes. "I'm not." But I was. Maddox cupped my neck and pulled me down until I had to support myself with one knee on the mattress. "You are," he murmured before he kissed me. He kept rubbing himself and when I finally freed myself from his kiss, my gaze darted down to watch his hand work his length.

My mouth watered seeing his abs flex with every move.

"Coward."

"Shut up. You can't taunt me in to touching you. If I touch you, then I do it because I want to."

"Of course," he said. The sarcastic note in his voice barely registered because I simply couldn't pay attention to anything but the rhythmic up and down movement of his hand. A droplet of milky liquid had gathered on his tip.

"You're impossible," I seethed, kissed him angrily and finally reached for his length. My fingers closed around his firm, but smooth cock. He blew out a breath before he said, "Finally brave."

I silenced him with another kiss and began to move my hand up and down, effectively shoving his hand away. My thumb explored the piercing in his tip, thrilled at the sharp intake of breath followed by a low moan.

I trailed my fingertips lower, to the other piercing at the base, like a decoration for his balls, and was again rewarded by a hiss from Maddox.

"Get naked," he growled.

My eyebrows skyrocketed. I hadn't yet made up my mind if I wanted to go all the way with Maddox. In the last thirty minutes, the scale had definitely tipped in Maddox's favor. I just couldn't stop wondering if s*x would be a revelation like oral had been.

Why should I wait for another Made Man, a future husband, who'd banged countless girls before our wedding night? Why couldn't I enjoy myself a little?

And more than that, a little voice, one I used to call my instinct, told me that Maddox was the guy I should lose it to.

Maddox chuckled as if he could read at least part of my thoughts. "I want to cum all over your perfect body."

"I'm not sure if I want to get whatever s*x*al diseases you have."

"If I had any diseases, you would have gotten them through the p**ssy-tonguing you just had."

He had a point, and I hated feeling stupid.

"But don't worry, I usually use condoms and if I forgot, I got tested. I'm clean."

I stopped rubbing him and pulled my shirt over my head. Maddox's gaze caressed my curves. My nipples pebbled even though it wasn't cold in the room. I started rubbing him again. Maddox reached for my breast, capturing one hard nipple between his fingers and twirling it between them.

His other hand stroked my ass before it snaked between my legs from behind. His thumb parted me, brushing up against my clit, which was already throbbing with eagerness again. One flick of his pad and I was alight with desire, ready to let loose.

"I thought it was your turn," I said in a hushed voice as his thumb worked me up again. I had to admit, getting Maddox off at the same time was a huge turn-on, driving me toward the edge so much faster than expected.

"Watching you cream will make me cum so much harder, Snow White."

For once, I didn't have a clever comment. I was too lost in the sensations, in the heat radiating off Maddox's skin, in the surprising hardness of his cock, and in the pulsating need between my legs. Soon my hips began to shift, chasing Maddox's thumb.

When my second orgasm took hold of me, he, too, came all over his abs. After a deep sigh, he grabbed my neck and pulled me down for a kiss. "I'll really loathe letting you go."

Something was different today. The bikers who arrived after Maddox and Gray left for a run, seemed agitated as they buzzed around the porch. When Earl White peered up to the window, catching my gaze with a superior gleam in his eyes, my stomach plummeted. I doubted I'd be released today. He had more in store for me.

Earl nodded at Cody who grinned.

My eyes darted to the locked door. A few moments later, I heard steps thundering up. I hopped off the windowsill, then rushed toward the bathroom just when the lock sounded. "You can't run anywhere, cunt."

Cody grabbed me by the hair and jerked me backward. I cried out from the sharp pain that shot through my skull. I clutched his wrists, digging my nails in, but he kept

dragging me out of the room and down the stairs. My knees bumped against several steps, making me cry out in pain again.

He didn't stop until we reached the common area downstairs. My already churning stomach turned when the stench of spilled alcohol and old smoke filled my nose. What was happening? Would they exchange me for my dad? The atmosphere was way too tense for that.

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"F*ck, the stupid whore scratched me." Cody shoved me away from himself. I landed on my knees before Earl, gasping from the sharp twinge, but I quickly pushed to my feet. I'd never kneel before someone like him.

He sneered. "Still too proud to bow to your betters?" He shook his head. "Just like your old man."

"One day my father's going to make you regret the day you were born," I said, lifting my chin. A feeling of utter helplessness washed through me, but I didn't let it take control.

Earl smiled in a way that froze my blood. "I was so close to allowing your old man to exchange himself for you, but something about his voice was just lacking the necessary submissiveness I was expecting in a situation like this, you know?"

I swallowed, not liking the way the bikers were looking at me. I couldn't blame Dad. It wasn't in his blood to be submissive. Even if he'd tried to appear that way, it would have never been convincing.

"Today, I'm going to make him regret the day he went against Tartarus and teach him his new place."

He nodded at Cody who grabbed my neck and pressed me against the bar counter. Sharp pain shot through my hipbones from the impact. He shoved my head down so my right cheek pressed against the sticky wooden surface. The stench of cheap liquor was almost overwhelming.

Earl came into view, holding a long knife. I tried to move back but Cody held me tightly, his body pressed against mine in the vilest way. The blade gleamed in the light of the lamps over the bar. Panic worked its way through my body like poison.

Earl held up the knife with a vicious smile, watching my reaction. I wished I managed to look brave and indifferent, but I was too terrified of what he might do. "You are too f*cking pretty, whore. That perfect face makes me angry every time I see it."

Fear choked me as he moved even closer, holding the sharp tip of the knife right before my left eye.

"I wonder what you'd do without those lethal looks." He smiled in a bone-chilling way, revealing one golden tooth.

"Don't," I pressed out. I wanted to sound fierce and threatening but sounded terrified and almost begging, but I couldn't help it. What if he blinded me? There was still so much I wanted to see, so many things I hadn't appreciated enough because I'd thought I'd have time to look at them. My heart throbbed furiously, blood pumping through my veins like an avalanche.

"I'm sorry, sugar, but I need a little gift for your old man. He needs to know we're not playing. We'll destroy him."

He moved the knife even closer. Where was Maddox? God, where was he?

When the blade sliced into me, a high-pitched scream tore from the deepest part of my body until everything pitched into darkness.

The moment I stepped into the clubhouse, I knew something was f*cking wrong. Ruby, Earl's favorite girl and stupid enough to think he'd ever make her his old lady, had a satisfied smirk on her face as Earl wiped blood off his knife. Blood also covered the bar. My heart lurched. "What happened here?" I asked, trying to hide my worry.

Earl sheathed his knife calmly, looking bored as f*ck. "Taught the Vitiello princess a lesson and her old man too."

F*ck. Earl must have used his spare key to get inside my room. I shoved past a grinning Cody and stormed upstairs, my pulse pounding. What the f*ck had he done? I thought Vitiello was ready for the exchange? I unlocked the door and shoved into the room. Blood splatters covered the ground, leading into the small bathroom.

Blood had never bothered me. After the carnage Vitello had caused before my eyes as a little boy I was too hardened to be bothered by it. And yet, the sight of these few blood splatters made my heart race.

I followed them into the bathroom then came to a staggering stop in the doorway.

Marcella perched on the edge of the toilet, face ashen, shoulders and wife beater covered in blood. She pressed a towel over the left side of her face. "What happened?" I asked, fearing the worst. Earl had been like a father to me, but I knew what he was capable of. Over the years, his obsession with revenge had grown rapidly, even worse than my own.

She lowered the towel that her trembling hand had been clutching against the side of her head. Seeing her blue eyes intact, relief washed over me, but then I registered her ear, which was bleeding profusely. It took me a moment to see that Earl had cut her left earlobe off.

My vision turned red and I whirled around and thundered down the creaky stairs. I could barely breathe from fury. My ears were ringing, my temple throbbing. I stormed into the common area. Earl and Cody sat on barstools and downed bourbon as if to celebrate their success.

I charged toward Earl and grabbed his cut, jerking him off the stool. "We agreed not to torture her! You swore it." I'd never talked to my uncle like that, especially not in front of others.

Earl's eyes narrowed and he grabbed my wrist in a bone-crushing grip, trying to unlock my fingers but I didn't release him. He'd grown old, but not less vicious. "What have you done?" I seethed. For the first time in my life, I wanted to kill him.

"Don't forget who's pulling the f*cking strings in the club, Maddox," he muttered, his expression full of warning. "And don't forget who took you in when the little whore's old man slaughtered your father."

Cody had stood from his barstool and was ready to interfere. He'd had an eye on the position as second in command for years, always saying I was too young for the position. Killing me would make his day.

I unfurled my fingers, took a deep breath and stepped back. "You shouldn't have done it. You went too far. I never agreed to this shit. I want to torture and kill Luca Vitiello, not Marcella."

Earl tilted his head, stepping closer and regarding me with a challenging smile. "Is she getting under your skin? Where are your loyalties?"

"With the club," I said.

Earl's lips tightened. In the past they'd always lain with him but after what he'd done today, I wouldn't follow him blindly ever again. "I am the club, don't forget that, Maddox. If you want revenge, you better stop getting into bed with Vitiello's spawn. She's making you lose focus. Maybe it wasn't wise of me to allow you to take her into your room. Maybe we should all share her."

Cody's face lit up like a f*cking Christmas tree. I'd cut his d!ck off before I'd let him anywhere near Marcella.

"I'm not losing focus," I said in a much calmer voice. "But provoking Vitiello like that could lead to rash actions on his part. You know what he's capable of."

Earl smiled grimly. "This time, we are in control. He won't catch us by surprise like last time. With his daughter in our hands, he'll think twice before acting."

Up until this point, I would have agreed with my uncle's assessment. Luca wouldn't risk Marcella's wellbeing, but now that my uncle had started torturing her... my blood boiled, my chest constricting. Earl didn't take his eyes off me. "With your actions, you forced Vitiello's hand. He won't wait for you to cut off more pieces of his daughter, Uncle. I thought he was ready to exchange himself."

"He won't find us. We're well hidden. And if he attacks another of our brothers, we'll send him another piece of her until he learns his place." He climbed back on the barstool and emptied his bourbon. "He wanted to exchange himself but I didn't like his tone when we talked. He still thinks he's better than us. Until he learns his place, his daughter stays with us."

I'd secretly wished for more time with Marcella, but not like this.

"The longer this takes, the higher the risk for all of us," I said, fighting to keep my voice under control.

"I'm in control," Earl said, his voice laced with spite.

I gave a terse nod, seething. Cody gave me a superior look that made me want to smash his face against the wall. I could imagine how he'd gotten off on seeing Marcella being tortured. Just thinking about it made me want to put a bullet through his and even Earl's head. F*ck.

I stalked back to my room, my mind reeling for a solution to the predicament I was in. Marcella was no longer safe in this place. Now that my uncle had begun torturing her, he wouldn't stop. He enjoyed it too much. F*ck. I, too, wanted blood, but not Marcella's. I wanted her father's brutal end, not hers.

I found Marcella still in the bathroom. She hadn't moved from her spot on the toilet seat and was watching blood drip from her ear, drop after drop, and landing at her bare feet. By now, most of her nail polish had peeled off, but what remained of it had the same color as her blood.

She ignored me and peered down at her feet. Then slowly she lifted her head but she still wasn't looking at me. I stared at her profile, trying to sort through my whirlwind of emotions.

Even in a tattered and bloody wife beater and my old boxer shorts, Snow White looked more regal than any queen on a throne of gold and diamonds ever could. She carried her invisible crown with unabashed pride. F*ck, this woman had been born to be a queen and she f*cking owned that title.

I kneeled down beside her but she didn't look my way. Instead, she kept staring straight ahead, her eyes distant.

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"Snow White," I murmured. She didn't react. "Marcella."

Her eyes dragged down to mine, as cold and impenetrable as ice. She couldn't hide the traces of her tears. "Let me take a look at your ear," I said in a beckoning voice.

"At what's left of it, you mean?" she said hoarsely, her eyes full of hatred and accusation, but beyond those obvious emotions, emotions she wanted me to see, I detected her pain and fear, and those emotions cut me deeply. Maybe I should have seen it coming. From the first moment I spotted her, she hadn't left my mind.

What had been lust in the beginning had morphed into something more. I enjoyed talking to her, teasing her. F*ck, I even enjoyed watching her sleep. Whatever I felt and I wasn't ready or willing to analyze my emotions yet, was at odds with my pure hatred for her father.

"I didn't know. I wouldn't have allowed this to happen. It's not part of the plan."

Her lips pulled into a tight smile. "And what's the plan?"

"You were meant to be exchanged for your father, like I told you. It was supposed to happen this week."

"But what's the plan now?"

I wasn't sure telling her would make things better but I knew Marcella was too clever not to realize what was going on. "Earl wants to punish your father through your suffering."

She nodded as if it all made sense. She jerked her head away again, her shoulders stiffening. I shifted, trying to get a glimpse at her face. I could see the struggle in every perfect inch of it but finally the tears tumbled out. Restrained at first but then her walls came crashing down.

"Snow White, I'm sorry, f*cking sorry," I murmured, touching her cheek.

Her eyes flashed. "This is not a fairy tale. And it's your fault this is happening."

She was right. It was irrelevant that Earl would still have gone through with the plan even without my help.

"Let me treat your wound," I said.

She glared. "It's your fault. Go away."

But I didn't leave, not with her crying openly in front of me, vulnerable like I had never seen a Vitiello before. I took out bandages and antiseptic before I started cleaning her wound. The cut was fairly clean and I was sure there were ways plastic surgeons could replace an earlobe, but that wasn't the point. Marcella sat quietly as I took care of her, and I wished she'd say something, even if it were words of spite. Anything was better than this sad, quiet version of her.

"Done," I said.

Finally, her gaze returned to me. The smile she gave me was bitter. "This is what you wanted, huh? Bringing a Vitiello to tears."

"The wrong Vitiello. Even if I've never seen a woman who can cry prettier than you, I never wanted your f*cking tears."

For some reason, this caused a new wave of tears, which only seemed to make her angrier. I slid my arms under Marcella's knees and her back and lifted her into my arms. She didn't resist, instead, she sagged against me. What this did to me caught me by surprise. I felt a wave of protectiveness and affection that almost knocked me over.

I put her down on the bed and stroked her back. Certain that she didn't want me close, I stepped back, wanting to pace the woods to clear my head and figure out a plan.

Her arm shot out, grabbing my hand. "No, stay with me."

"Marcella, are you—"

"Stay."

I stretched out behind her and wrapped my arms around her. I'd never hugged her like that, simply to show affection and give consolation. I didn't remember the last time I'd hugged someone at all.

"It's only going to get worse," she whispered. "Your uncle wants to break my father, but my father can't be broken, so he'll break me."

I knew she was right. Maybe I should have seen it coming but I had been too desperate for revenge. "I'll protect you," I swore. This oath would be my downfall, I could feel it deep in my bones. Yet, I had no intention of taking it back.

When I left my bedroom to a sleeping Marcella an hour later, my mind was still reeling. I wasn't sure how to convince Earl to go ahead with the exchange, especially after our argument. He was probably still pissed at me. The common area was filled with guys. Word about my reaction to Marcella's torture must have gotten around judging by the

curious and sometimes even questioning looks I got. I just nodded at them and stalked outside, not in the mood to justify myself.

I paced the forest when I spotted Gray. He hunched on a fallen tree, smoking, his hair falling down his face. Like me, he had been in the club since he was fifteen, even though prospects usually needed to be at least eighteen years old.

"Hey, why are you hiding out here?" I asked as I went over to him and sank down beside him. Looking up in surprise, he offered me a smoke, which I took.

He didn't say anything, only squinted at the glowing tip. I inhaled deeply but noticed a bit of blood from Marcella on my fingers. A new wave of anger mixed with despair over the hopeless situation crashed down on me. This was such a goddamn mess.

"I heard about what happened to the girl," Gray said eventually.

His expression made it clear that he felt sick to his stomach about it.

"It was a mistake," I said.

Surprise crossed his face. I rarely criticized Earl's decisions.

"I thought you wanted the kidnapping."

"Not at first, but then I figured it was the perfect way to get our hands on Vitiello."

"And now you don't think it is?"

"I still think we should let him exchange himself for Marcella. But Earl wants Vitiello to crawl and beg, and even then, he probably wouldn't be satisfied."

"The guy will go crazy when he sees his daughter's earlobe," Gray murmured. "Earl had me sent it off to him."

I shook my head. "F*ck. This is a f*cking mess."

"How is the girl? She's in your room?"

"Yeah, she's sleeping now. Of course, she was freaked out. Who wouldn't be after what happened?"

Gray sighed. "I hope this is over soon."

"The kidnapping?"

"The kidnapping, the revenge. All my life, I only heard Earl and you talk about revenge on Vitiello. I just want us to move on and really focus on making Tartarus stronger."

A life without revenge as a focus seemed impossible. It had become such an integral part of the club. Revenge was the reason why Earl's authority had never been questioned. Fights within the club just weren't an option while in war with the Famiglia. Maybe that was why Earl suddenly wasn't too keen on ending Vitiello.

"Maybe you can talk to Earl, ask him when the exchange will happen, and convince him to hurry the f*ck up."

Gray gave me a look as if I'd grown a second head. "You know Dad doesn't listen to me. He thinks I'm incapable. You are his favorite son."

"I'm not his son," I said firmly, surprising myself. In the past, I'd often caught myself longing for Earl to be my father, but this desire had disappeared completely after today.

"Someone has to talk to him and make him see reason. The club needs to move on like you said. And that can only happen when we finally kill Vitiello."

"Sometimes I think killing Vitiello will only be another step of the war. After that his family will seek revenge, and then we'll seek revenge on them again, and so on."

Deep down I knew Gray was probably right, but I didn't care what happened after, I just wanted to get rid of Luca. But first I'd make sure Marcella was safe. Whatever came after was irrelevant.

I woke to a fierce throbbing in my left ear. Sitting up, I winced when I touched my bandaged ear, remembering the events of yesterday. I'd passed out quickly after they'd cut off my earlobe and not experienced much of the pain, nor had I seen my cut-off earlobe.

I'd only woken when Gray had awkwardly carried me up the stairs and into the bedroom. I'd dragged myself over to the bathroom where Maddox had eventually found me.

"There are painkillers on the nightstand," Maddox said. My head swiveled around to where he sat on the windowsill, only in jeans. A wave of relief over his presence followed by anger raced through me. This was his fault, and even his worried expression didn't make him less guilty.

His cut lay beside him. It was never far from him. The cut, his club, they meant the world to him.

"You have every right to give me that look. I'd hate myself too if I were you."

I didn't hate him, unfortunately. I was furious but I still didn't hate him. I shoved out of bed, swaying briefly. Maddox crossed the room in a flash, grabbing my waist.

After a moment, I pushed him away. I needed a shower, to clean myself of the dried blood in my hair and neck, and to feel more like myself again. Maddox didn't stop me as I stumbled toward the bathroom. Cowering under the streaming water, despair overwhelmed me.

I was afraid of what else Earl had planned for me. I was scared for Dad, for my family. I was even scared for Maddox, which didn't even make sense. I needed to get away from here.

When I stepped out of the shower, a clean wife beater and boxers waited on the toilet lid for me. I got dressed, then took my time brushing my hair, trying to calm down and figure out what to do, but no matter how often I looked for an out, Maddox came up. He was the only one who could save me, all of us, even himself, now.

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After towel-drying my hair, I returned to the bedroom. Maddox looked as if he too had racked his brain for a solution. He had to see that this was heading in the wrong direction, that it was in his hands to steer us out of the danger zone. He met my gaze and I touched my ear, wondering what he saw now.

"You're still f*cking gorgeous. Knowing you, people will probably soon ask plastic surgeons to cut their earlobes off because you started a trend."

I let out a hoarse laugh. "You don't know the people I have to deal with. They'll have a blast seeing me like this."

"Didn't you hear me? You're still f*cking gorgeous."

"Until Earl cuts more pieces of me off."

It was a fear I hadn't allowed more room in my brain but it lurked at the fringes all night, filled my night with horrid images.

Maddox's eyes flashed with fury. "He won't. This will be over soon. I swore to protect you."

I approached him and peered up into his hard face. "How will this end, if not badly? How will you protect me? You didn't see your uncle when he cut me. He will do it again, no matter what my father does, or you. Your club brothers stood by and watched. They too will follow your uncle down this path."

He grabbed my shoulders, looking torn and angry and desperate at once. "This club is my life, Marcella. I bleed for it. I know what you want me to do but I can't betray the club, not for you or anyone. And I won't spare your father either. He will die, but you will be safe."

"You will lose me, and then my brother or uncle or someone else will kill you to avenge my father. Is that what you want?"

I could see one thing he wanted more than anything, even if he couldn't admit it.

"The last few days were more than I ever expected to get with the spoiled princess from New York." He was good at evading the bitter truth.

"And that's enough?" I asked softly.

He growled and pulled me against his body, his lips crashing down on mine. Part of me wanted to shove him away, but the other wanted this, him. For many confusing reasons.

I raked my fingers through his hair, tugging hard, wanting him to hurt. He snarled into my mouth but only kissed me harder, his hands roaming my back.

His piercing teased my tongue, sending spikes of pleasure through every inch of my body. Kissing had never felt like this, as if lightning bolts zig-zagged through my body. The world around us and everything that had happened faded away.

He tugged down the wife beater and tongued my nipple, making sure to flick his piercing against it a few times. Then he sucked my nipple deeply into his mouth, sucking harder than I expected. My core clenched. I leaned back, watching his lips around my sensitive flesh. His hand slid down my belly, fingertips teasing my skin. I was already growing wet and desperate to feel his touch between my legs. This was our moment, and my last chance. We stumbled backward against the door.

He cupped me through the boxers, sliding his middle finger between my lower lips over the thin fabric. The additional friction of the drenched material against my sensitive flesh made me pant. He rubbed me slowly, completely ruining my underwear but I didn't care. He got down on one knee. "This is the only instance I'll ever kneel before a Vitiello," he growled, but I could only focus on his lips that were so close to my boxers. He hooked a hand under my knee and shoved my leg up. My ass banged against the door, causing the old wood to groan. Maddox slid my boxers to the side. "Dripping," he murmured. Then he buried his face in my possey. His piercing teased my clit mercilessly.

"Mad," someone called. I didn't recognize the voice in my lust-hazy brain. He rattled against the door, almost giving me a heart attack but Maddox didn't release me. His face stayed between my legs.

"F*ck off, I'm eating out p*ssy," Maddox shouted before he noisily sucked at my p*ssy lips.

I wanted to shove him away but he flicked his piercing over my clit before he sucked it into his mouth and I exploded. My fingers tore at his hair as I ground myself against him, riding his face desperately. This was almost like an out-of-body experience, as if I could put all the weight of the past and fear of the future behind.

I knew whoever had called Maddox's name was still there but I didn't care anymore. He wouldn't live to tell the tale anyway. Once my family saved me, everyone would be dead, and they'd take whatever they'd heard or seen into the grave with them. I could only hope Maddox would see reason before he'd have to share their fate.

Maddox straightened, and the look he gave me almost felt like goodbye.

"It's too soon for goodbye," I whispered.

"Don't," he murmured. I got it. He didn't want to think or talk about this now.

He pressed into me, his expression morphing into a playful smile. "Is it true that you Italian girls have to stay virgins until your wedding night, Snow White? Or did you give your fiancé an early gift?"

I smirked, matching his forced lightheartedness. "You'll have to find out for yourself, Maddox. But a word of warning, my father will kill you for it."

"I think death will be worth it."

He ground himself against me. God, I'd never been this wet. One look from Maddox aroused me more than hours of making out with Giovanni ever had.

"I won't be gentle Snow White. Last chance to tell me what I want to know."

I didn't need gentle now. I needed him, this. I bit his lip hard in answer. He growled, his eyes becoming feral. He shoved down my boxers and lifted me off the ground so my legs wrapped around him. Then with one ferocious thrust, he shoved himself into me, or as far as my body would let him. I exhaled, my nails drawing blood on his back.

Maddox exhaled, his forehead pressed against mine, his chest heaving, lips parted as he breathed harshly. "F*ck, Snow White. Your old man will definitely kill me for this."

"Shut up, Maddox." One of them would die, but I didn't want to think about it now. Soon enough, the bloody reality would catch up with us.

He did. My inner thigh muscles trembled as I got used to the feel of him inside of me. My body bore down on him, allowing more and more of his length to slide into me. I held

my breath when my pelvis settled against his and he was sheathed completely inside of me. His piercing pressed against my clit like he'd promised, but my discomfort didn't allow me to feel my G-spot.

"Why did your idiot of a fiancé not pop your cherry?"

I dug my nails even deeper into his shoulders but he didn't even flinch. "Because he was too scared of my father."

"You're worth dying for. He was a moron if he didn't realize it." Maddox met my gaze, his blue eyes full of challenge and dark hunger. "I'm not scared of your old man. When I meet him, I'll tell him that I f*cked you."

"No, you won't," I growled, but I had to admit it thrilled me to know that this man wasn't afraid to go against my father. I only wished there was a chance for us, for both of them to live.

His fingers tangled in my hair, tugging slightly until I bared my throat to him. He licked over my pulse point leisurely. "I sure as f*ck will, Snow White."

He grabbed my ass and began to move. I exhaled sharply in discomfort and Maddox briefly paused, his eyes searching mine.

"Don't stop," I panted.

His fingers tightened even more on my ass and he thrust into me. I gasped at the sharp pain that was followed by a lightning bolt of pleasure as his piercing bar rubbed against my clit. Maddox began to thrust into me at a moderate pace. Sweat glistened on his forehead from holding me up and the controlled thrusts.

"Don't hold back," I got out.

He slammed into me, long hard thrusts that made my core hum with pain. He angled his thrusts so his piercing kept rubbing my clit and then he kissed me. The feel of his tongue as he claimed me only increased the pleasure. Soon it was difficult to determine where my discomfort ended and the low hum of my building orgasm began.

"So wet," he rasped as he slammed into me over and over again. My eyes rolled back. I was on the verge of coming but every time I was sure I'd topple over the cliff, pain reined me in. He stiffened, becoming so much bigger inside of me, and then he exploded with a muttered curse. His thrusts became even harder but less coordinated. My mouth fell open at the overfull sensation. I held my breath when the pain got almost too overwhelming. He bit into my shoulder as his thrusts slowed. He finally looked up, completely disheveled and sweaty. "F*ck. You were supposed to cream."

"Most girls don't come their first time."

“Bullshit,” Maddox growled. He lifted me a couple more inches and pulled out. I exhaled at the stinging pain. My legs almost gave out when Maddox set me back down on the floor but he didn’t allow me to fall. He pressed up to me, peering down at me with a new possessiveness and raw hunger that hadn’t been there before.

“You’re going to cream and scream for me, Snow White,” he rasped. He rubbed me with two fingers then he slammed them into me without warning and began to thrust into me fast and hard. My eyes grew wide at the new wave of discomfort mixed with pleasure. Maddox slowed suddenly and then he added a third finger. I sucked in a sharp breath, shaking my head. “Too much?” Maddox murmured, sucking my lower lip into his mouth. “Your pretty p|_ssy just took my entire cock. You can take three fingers. It’ll be worth it, Snow White.”

Chapter 30 – By Fate I Conquer Cora Reilly

He moved his fingers at an excruciatingly slow pace until I began meeting his thrusts and my eyelids drooped in pleasure.

When I finally came, I clung tightly to Maddox. He wrapped his arms around me even tighter and I rested my chin on his shoulder. Slowly, the exhilaration ebbed away and I became aware of the throbbing in my ear that matched the stinging between my legs.

I pulled back slightly and met his gaze. “You have to save me. Only you can, and you know there’s only one way to do it.”

Marcella lay curled up on her side beside me, her elegant back facing my way. My eyes traced the soft bumps of her spine down to her round ass with the two tantalizing dimples above her cheeks. I fought the urge to kiss every inch of her way too perfect skin.

Her words after we’d f*cked repeated in my mind. I had to save her, but the option she had in mind was out of the question. I couldn’t let her run. This was our only chance to get her old man. If I released her, Earl and my club brothers would never forgive me. F*ck, they’d hail me a traitor and cut my balls off and feed them to me, or the Rottweilers. I wasn’t a traitor.

My eyes were drawn to the bandage over her ear. It had started bleeding again during our f*ck. I still couldn’t believe I’d slept with Snow White, that I had popped her cherry.

Before getting to know Marcella, I’d often fantasized about having her in my bed, but it had never been like this. I’d thought I’d feel triumphant for having touched Vitiello’s precious offspring. I’d imagined taunting him with every dirty detail, imagined using Marcella as part of my revenge. Now all I could think about was that I wanted to keep her in my bed, in my life. I almost laughed at the thought of Marcella becoming my old

lady. Vitiello would lose it. Yet, no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't really imagine Marcella as part of our lifestyle. She was from a very different world.

Despite the impossibility of us, I wanted to taste her every day, see lust replace the cold suspicion in her blue eyes. And the last thing I wanted to do was to share any detail of our first night together with anyone. I wanted every moment with, every inch of Marcella for myself. But I also wanted her safe, and she needed to be far away from the club for that, far away from me. I belonged with the club and she couldn't stay.

I raked a hand through my hair. "Stupid idiot."

Marcella stirred, twisting her head around to look at me sleepily. "Did you say something?"

"Sleep," I murmured.

She simply nodded, turned, and fell back asleep. I stretched out on my back, my arms crossed behind my head. Earl was getting suspicious. The others were getting jealous. This was all not how I'd planned it. I didn't want to let Marcella go, but I had to. I couldn't hope for Earl to hold back from hurting her further. I closed my eyes, wanting to kick my stupid ass. When had Marcella's safety become my top priority, even more important than the one thing I'd worked for all my life: revenge?

I stared up at the ceiling. Marcella had said her father would kill me for taking her virginity. Considering all I had done, he had several reasons to end my life as brutally as possible. But this, f*cking his daughter, was definitely the tip of the iceberg.

But she was worth dying for. F*ck, I'd die a thousand deaths just for one more night with her.

Luca

Protecting my family had always been my top priority. Nothing was more important, not even the Famiglia.

Staring down at the note from Earl White, I realized I'd failed.

Payback time, Vitiello.

Earl White

President of the Tartarus MC

"That imbecile probably doesn't know more words," Matteo muttered. I didn't react. There was a static rush in my ears, similar to the one I'd experienced years ago when

I'd thought Aria was cheating on me and I had gone on a killing spree in the Tartarus clubhouse. I had lost control back then, and I was close to losing it again.

Matteo had been there back then, like he was now. And his gaze held the same concern as he watched me silently as in the past.

My body called for blood, for screams and carnage.

I could do nothing but listen to the furious beating of my heart. "How am I going to tell Aria?" I pressed out. I'd only found out four hours ago that Marcella had been kidnapped from campus. One of the men responsible for her safety had called me to tell me. The only reason why he wasn't dead yet was that I'd need every man to destroy Tartarus and trying to save his hide was a great incentive.

Matteo touched my shoulder. "I can do it."

"No," I croaked, shaking my head. I slanted a look at my boy, his face still buried in his palms. Amo had been there when the call had come in. His shock reflected my own. Despite being introduced to the Famiglia at his thirteenth birthday, I'd kept many horrid aspects of this world from him, by Aria's request.

I got up from my chair in my office where we'd returned after a futile search. There wasn't a trace of Marcella, nor of the members from Tartarus. They'd all crawled into their hiding holes, scared of what I'd do if I caught one of them. They'd sing like a canary, reveal every secret they never knew they kept. "I should go home now before word reaches Aria."

I had already called a meeting for every man of the Famiglia who was close enough to be present tonight. Some of my Underbosses and their soldiers were too far away to join in the search.

Amo stepped up to me, gripping my forearm, his eyes harsh. "Let me be a part of the search and the destruction of Tartarus. I don't want protection. I don't need to be protected. I want to save Marci and kill every f*cker who hurt her. I want to smash their bodies into a bloody pulp."

He was almost my height and the fierceness in his gray eyes, my eyes, reminded me more of myself than ever before.

Protecting him wasn't an option anymore. I nodded and squeezed his shoulder. I hadn't been able to protect Marcella, and I could no longer protect Amo. "We'll fight side by side."

His expression filled with determination and pride. Maybe I should have let him be part of a mission before. This, his first real mission, was riskier than anything we'd been up against in a long time.

My heart rate picked up when I entered our mansion thirty minutes later. Matteo and Amo were close behind me, but this, telling Aria everything, was my burden. Valerio rushed down the steps, grinning, but one look at my face and his expression fell. "What's wrong?"

I indicated Amo and Matteo to take care of him. He was too young for the gruesome details but he, too, needed the truth. Yet, my sole focus was Aria for now.

I followed soft humming into the kitchen where I found her. She was blowing on a steaming cup of tea while reading a magazine. I hadn't expected to find her cooking. Aria was the worst cook in the world.

Her golden blonde hair was up in a messy bun, a few wayward strands framing her gorgeous face. Marcella had inherited Aria's beauty and her eyes, but my black hair.

Aria and I'd been married for twenty-four years, longer than both of us had been without the other. She was still as beautiful as on our wedding day, maybe even more so. What made her even more beautiful was that she loved more fiercely than anyone else I knew, which was why this news would break her.

"Aria," I forced out. Every fiber in my body revolted against disturbing her serenity with an ugly truth even I could hardly bear. I'd vowed to keep all harm from her and our family and failed horribly.

Aria turned with a soft smile which faded away at the look on my face. She knew me better than anyone, every twitch of my face and the meaning behind it. I could only imagine what my expression must have been like.

She set down her cup slowly, worry filling her eyes. "What's wrong?"

How could I tell her? I wanted to lie to her, to protect her at least.

I wasn't a man who shied back from an ugly truth or from anything else. I'd seen and done too much to be scared, but right this moment I was f*cking terrified. "Do you remember the Jersey MC?"

Her brows pulled together. "You killed them all when I was pregnant with Marcella."

My heart shriveled. Of course, she remembered. I'd acted out of sheer desperation and fury back then, not thinking about the consequences of my actions. I wanted to maim and kill, and these bikers had seemed like the perfect target. They had attacked Famiglia warehouses and killed my soldiers before so they were far from being innocent, but back then I'd have killed them even if that hadn't been the case.

My actions had gone unpunished for decades, but now Marcella was paying for my sin.

“They rebuilt their chapter in the last few years.”

She nodded because I’d mentioned it to her on occasion, especially if one of their insane attacks had caused me a headache.

“Luca, you’re scaring me. What’s wrong? Why are you telling me all this?”

I moved toward her and touched her shoulders. “Marcella, they kidnapped—”

Aria took a step back, horror twisting her face. “No.”