

## CHAPTER 24

### CAMILLO

I back away from the enormous bed as soundless as I can. The silky sheets no longer smell like me but like her, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Ethan's small body rests against the fabric, exactly where I placed him, passed out already for his nap.

The door clicks shut softly behind me before I rush down the stairs.

I'm giddy—a word I never thought I'd say about myself, let alone experience, but I'm excited. The adrenaline is pumping through my body.

A soft hum guides me to where Rosa is diligently stirring a pot of pasta, the hearty smell of homemade Bolognese sauce filling the room and making my mouth water.

A grin tugging my lips up, I slowly make my way behind her.

She hears my footsteps because she's paying attention—she always is. I've learned not to surprise her by grabbing her. She's perfected that elbow to the sternum move we've practiced.

Despite the pride I feel over that fact, I hate how jumpy she is with me still—how anxious and uneasy she is before she takes a breath and relaxes.

“Rosa?” I announce quietly. My arms encircle her body slowly, softly.

She jolts, her eyes squeezing shut.

I stay still, letting my heat roll over her for a heartbeat, then another. She relaxes against me, and the tension in my gut eases. “Smells good.”

“It'll be ready just after your brothers get home.”

“Oh?” I don't love the fact that she knows their schedule as well as I do—that she pays them any mind at all. I want her all to myself. “What can I do to help?”

“No, I’ve got it.”

I smile against the side of her face. “I wasn’t asking, really. What can I do, Rosa? What else is left?”

“I’ve got it.”

My arms tighten around her, and I drop my lips to the exposed curve of her neck. “I’m not asking, Rosa,” I say with a low growl.

Her body melts into mine as her pulse leaps under my mouth.

I tug her closer, feeling the curve of her ass rub against me just right as she twists in my loose hold.

“You’re distracting me.”

“Good.” My hands wander over her hip and up under her T-shirt. Goosebumps pebble upon her beautiful skin as I brush her stomach. My fingers trace up higher. “I’ll just keep distracting you until you give me a job to do.” My thumb brushes the underside of her breast beneath her bra.

“Okay!” she squeaks, her face and neck flushed red. “Okay. We’ll make the bread and salad.”

I step back. “Awesome.”

I don’t miss the shy amusement on her face as she shakes her head. It’s progress. Little by little. “What’s first?”

“Wash your hands.”

I can feel the amused smirk tug my lips up. She’s not demanding or forceful with the order, but it does something to me, nonetheless. A minute later, I stand beside her, clueless where to begin.

“So, we’re going to cut the lettuce.”

“Okay.”

Her chin jerks to the knife between us. “I’ve already washed it and everything else we need. You just need to chop it up in bite-sized pieces.”

Easy enough. I can feel her eyes on me as she watches my slow, tentative movements with the knife. It's nothing like how I'm used to handling them. This is different but in a way I don't actually hate.

"Those are too big."

"You said bite-sized."

Her lips purse. "For regular people, not barbarians."

"You clearly haven't watched my brothers eat," I mumble.

Her giggle echoes around the room, and the knife falls from my hand. My world practically stops.

"Did you cut yourself?" she asks with concern.

"No." I shake my head. "I just love the sound of your laugh."

"Oh." Her gaze falls to the ground as her hands twist the fabric of her apron.

Knife forgotten, I step closer. "It's beautiful." I tilt her chin up so she can see just how much I mean it. "I'll just have to make you laugh again to prove it."

Her cheeks flush, and those soft freckles along the bridge of her nose taunt me. Just one taste. I can have just one taste without getting carried away.

As if she's reading my mind, Rosa's pink tongue flicks out, tempting me. "We should finish," she murmurs.

"Right. What's next?"

I step back, watching as she quickly finishes chopping the lettuce into smaller pieces before adding it to the bowl. Step after step, Rosa guides me through the process. It's easy enough, but when she does it, she makes it look effortless.

The counter is covered in a mess. Flour dusts the surface from where it exploded when I added it to the mixer on high. Again, her soft squeal of laughter catches me off guard, stealing my breath from me. Relaxed, she and I worked side by side, as if we've done this our whole lives.

Domestic. That's the word that continues to flash into my mind over and over.

This is too domestic for someone like me. And yet, watching Rosa relax and talk to me with ease erases whatever doubt lingers in the back of my skull.

“Now, we just knead it.”

“Knead it?”

“Yeah.” She swipes her cheek with the back of her hand, streaking it with flour. “Like this.”

She’s so close. Closer than she was when we started. Her arms move as she kneads the dough in demonstration.

I smile down at her.

“You’re staring at me again,” she murmurs.

“I am.”

“Why?”

Because, even covered in flour, she’s stunning. I step closer, watching her eyes widen.

There’s a flash of fear and trepidation, but something else also catches my attention. Desire and hunger sparkle there too.

I want to wipe away the bad and replace it with only the good from now on.

And the only way to do that is to take what I want. To finally cave in and drink my fill of her.

It’s a colossally bad idea.

Anyone can walk in at any moment.

But the look on her face, flushed and delectable, spurs me on. It’s like someone’s lifted a veil from my eyes—I’m seeing clearly for the first fucking time in ages.

Her lips are glistening from where she’s licked them. Fuck.

“You have a little...” My thumb brushes the streak of flour away, lingering against her skin, hot beneath my fingers.

“Oh?” she exhales.

The hold I have on my restraint slips as if I’ve let the chain go willingly. And my mouth swallows her gasp, a lovely sound full of need and surprise, as I claim her mouth.

Her trembling fingers clutch the cotton of my T-shirt.

I brace for her to push me away. But she tugs, pulling me against her more.

Whatever thread of control I had over my actions snaps like a rubber band. And I dominate her mouth with mine.

My hand clutches the edge of the counter to keep my body weight off her. The hand on the island cups her hip, then the back of her thigh, guiding her leg around me. And this allows me to nestle perfectly where I want to be. A groan slips past my lips at the contact.

My nose skims the column of her throat before I follow with my mouth, nipping and sucking at her tender skin.

Her head lolls to the side as my fingers gently grasp the hair at the back of her head, guiding her exactly where I want her.

Labored breaths fill the room as I continue to sprinkle her skin with kisses—laying claim to her so that no one else dares to come near her again.

It’s not enough.

Her soft whimpers and uneven breathing aren’t damn near enough.

My hand moves from her hair to the back of her other thigh, hoisting her up onto the counter.

Her legs automatically wrap around my hips.

I move against her as if my body has a mind of its own. The ache in my cock intensifies as it juts painfully against my zipper, and it’s my turn to groan as her fingers weave into my hair. The feel of them is just right. Fucking perfect.

My fingers move to the inside of her thigh, inching higher with each stroke as I claim her mouth once more.

Each caress of my tongue against hers sends another jolt of need racing through my body. I need to have more.

I inch my hand higher, dragging over the seam of her jeans as her hips lift just slightly before I pause. I lift my gaze just enough so that I can stare at her.

Face flushed and her eyes turning hazy, her mouth is parted as she drags in a ragged breath. She's utter perfection.

"Tell me to keep going, Rosa," I murmur against her skin. "Tell me you want this as bad as I do."

Her beautiful breasts labor with every breath as my fingers continue their intense strokes through the denim.

Is she as eager for this as I am? Is she wet and waiting for me?

With another stroke from me, her head falls back with a small, strangled whimper. "Please..."

It's all the permission I need.

The pop from the snap on her jeans mingles with her gentle pants as I trail my lips down her neck.

Shimming the material from her legs, my hand caresses her now bare calves as I sink to my knees.

My gaze locks in on her lacy black panties. Her whole body is as sexy as hell. And my mind focuses on the one thing I want as I part her legs.

I don't give a fuck about anything else. It's only her that matters.

I want to learn her taste and drown in it.

I want to hear her plea and moan for me.

And I want to feel her touch as she begs for more.

The tip of my tongue presses to her clit through her panties.

Fuck, I can already taste her. And it's even better than I fucking imagined. It's a drug—and I want it from only her.

As she gives a soft moan, I caress my tongue there more forcefully.

My hands grasp her thighs before I can stop myself from pushing her thighs wider.

Gentle. I need to be gentle.

My hands relax against her legs. I move her hips closer to the edge of the counter.

And my tongue flicks over the tight bundle of nerves.

My mind drinks in the delicious sounds escaping her. Her cry of pleasure short-circuits something in my brain. I want to satisfy her and make her hungry for more.

“Oh God,” she gasps.

I can't stop toying with her little bud. Her panties are wet, but I want them fucking soaking before I even contemplate removing them.

I trace lazy circles around her heated center, swiping back and forth, up and down, hitting from every angle I can.

Her body arches and hips lift as my fingers continue to caress up and down her legs. And her thighs wrap around my head snugly and so damn soft against my heated skin. I'd suffocate on her if she'd let me.

My fingers inch higher with each pass, teasing her and myself with the possibility of sinking my fingers deep inside her pussy.

Finally, I ease her panties down her legs, lavishing her inner thighs with kisses and nips, until she's bare before me. Glistening and soaked with arousal.

I dive in like a starving man. My laps turn longer and faster. And my tongue teases her as I devour the taste of her.

Finally, blissfully, she grips my hair and holds me against her. And her fingers shake as her whole body trembles around me.

Her panting fills the kitchen. “Camillo...”

The breathy sound from her arrows a jolt straight to my cock. My name falling from her lips is going to completely undo me like some preteen who's just discovered what sex is.

“I...I need, oh God...”

I growl against her, dipping my tongue into her wet pussy as my fingers move to brush over her clit again and again.

She writhes beneath me as her fingers tighten. “I just...I need to...”

And as another strangled plea leaves her, the brush of my fingers against her bud turns into a firmer stroke. And she shudders around my mouth, pulling me against her.

I’m a prisoner to her, and I’d gladly never leave.

This is heaven, my face between her legs, listening to her cry out and come undone because of me.

But this is far from over...