

CHAPTER 31

CAMILLO

The next morning, we lie in my bed together, and Rosa's finger plays with the empty space along her ring finger. The exact spot that the gaudy band should be.

It hasn't escaped my attention she doesn't wear it. I hadn't seen it on her finger the first time we met, either. I didn't ask then, and I'm not about to ask now. It never feels right to bring that looming blade above our heads. To bring him up.

The fact remains that she's a married woman—even if she has left her husband.

My hand tightens at her hip, needing to feel her beneath my hand. A compulsion to make sure that this is real.

“You're quiet,” she whispers.

I look down at where she lies in my arms. The comforting familiarity is exciting and yet terrifying at the same time. This is different for me. Strange and unknown.

My lips press to her head where the strands are a golden perfection and no longer covered in cheap dye. I prefer her this way. Cheeks flushed, lips slightly swollen, and her blond hair fanned out around her gorgeous face. “It's still early. You should go back to sleep,” I murmur.

“So should you.”

I shake my head. I'm too wound up. My head is a spiral of thoughts that I don't know if I want to face. The emotions are a beast all of their own, but something in my chest beats to make Rosa mine. To have her as mine in a way that no one else can take. And that means dealing with that fucker.

Luckily, he's stayed in his lane and left her alone for now. On my orders, our men have been keeping a close tab on him—and on Rosa when she's out.

I want that fucker's head on a silver platter.

But that isn't possible right now. Because of Grayden's connections—specifically due to him being Conor Davis's son-in-law. Conor Davis is very important to our business right now, and we need to keep him on side.

I want to gag at the thought.

If our business dealings weren't an issue, Grayden would already be six feet under, and I wouldn't have to worry about how to make Rosa mine permanently. Instead, he hides behind others and plays his stupid games.

Why we ever wanted to bring Conor Davis, his pharmaceutical company, or his shitty money into the business, I'm not sure, but I'm not about to argue that point to Marco or Alessio. This is the way our world works. Roles need to be played. And questioning my capo isn't in mine.

My fingers trace along her hand, stilling her fingers. I want to tell her everything racing through my mind.

To explain just how badly I want her.

I nuzzle into her neck, my hands tightening around her as if that can somehow let her know. Because if I hold her tight enough, she'll be mine. And then, maybe I can keep her...

It's a foolish thing to want, to even dare to dream about.

“Are you mine, Rosa?”

I have her body, that much I know. But do I have her heart? Do I have her?

“What?”

She rolls in my arms to face me, her brown eyes clouded with emotions I can't place.

“Are you mine?”

“I...” That tempting lip is sucked between her teeth as she looks at me. “Yes?” It's not a statement from her, but a question.

I don't know the answer I want from her, let alone myself, but that isn't it. I don't want any doubt from her. I don't want to fear that she'll slip through my fingers. I don't want her to question it in any way. I want her to know. I want her to hold on all the tighter. “You can't really be mine as long as he's...there.” My eyes drop to that

bare space on her fingers, slightly lighter than the rest of her sun-kissed skin. I want to replace it with something of my own.

The urge is a slap to my face.

I want her to be mine fully. Unequivocally mine.

Her fingers cup my face. It's a soft touch I'm not sure I deserve. "I don't know how to sort that mess out."

"You can divorce him."

"I can't." It's a soft admission. One I'm not even sure I've heard correctly.

Fire burns hot and out of control in my chest.

She shakes her head. "He has all the power and money. I don't have that."

"We have money. We have lawyers. Use them."

"It's not that simple."

"Isn't it?" Why can't she see how simple it could be? My heartbeat pounds through my body as I stare down at her. My brow furrows. "You don't want to divorce him?"

"What?"

"You don't want to finally be rid of him?"

"Of course I do." My nostrils flare as she scuttles back from me. A look of outrage lights her beautiful features. She shakes her head again. She gets out of my bed, her body moving around the room and gathering the discarded clothing to occupy herself. Her hands tremble with each piece. "It's not as simple as hiring a lawyer. It's complicated."

"Explain it to me."

"Why are we talking about this?" she whispers. "Why does it matter?"

That's the million-dollar question. The one that I keep circling around and around. Why does it matter when I have her here with me? What does it matter if she's still married?

My tongue traces my teeth, and I take a deep breath. “It matters to me.”

“I can’t do it.” She tugs on a T-shirt, a gray one of mine, and the sight of it is distracting enough. My eyes crawl over her legs, moving to how the shirt swallows her whole and brushes the top of her thighs. Messily, she piles her hair on the top of her head. “He’ll take Ethan from me if I try.”

“What?” My eyes snap to hers, glossy now with a fresh sheen of tears.

“He’ll take my son. He has all the power in that situation. He’ll do whatever he can to take him from me. I could hire the best lawyer in the world, and it wouldn’t matter. He has power and pull. I can’t ever risk that happening. I can’t.”

“We have power. We have pull. My brothers and I, we can figure it out.”

“It’s not the same kind of pull.” Her words pierce my chest. She’s not wrong. But it still stings. She perches on the edge of the bed. “I want to be rid of him, but I can’t. I can’t risk my son. I can’t risk the court giving custody of Ethan to that monster. I can’t do that to Ethan.” She’s kneeling now on the bed, pleading with me to understand.

But her words ring in my ears. Not the same kind. The pull that separates us from them. The kind that divides her from me.

“I’m yours,” she breathes, settling herself on my lap. Soft hands cup my face as she searches my eyes. “I’m yours. You have me. Completely.”

But I don’t.

“Please.” Her words are soft, her gaze falling from my face. “Say you understand? I have you, and you have me. That’s all that matters. Right?”

“I do.” My thumb brushes her cheek, watching her eyes flutter closed. But the words are hollow, meaningless.

She might not have said it in so many words, but the rejection still stings. It slices through me like acid. And bile burns the back of my throat.

She’s not mine to keep.

The voice whispers again and again in the back of my head.

I've always known that. I knew it the moment I kissed her. The moment I tasted her and claimed her body. I knew that I'd never be able to hold on to her. Because that's the way the world works.

I'm not like them.

I'm not like him.

He's powerful in a way that stems generations and reeks of nepotism. He's connected and threaded into the high society of Chicago. I'm...none of that. People don't know my name the way they do theirs. I'm the shadow lurking against the wall, barred from entering. And I'm lesser because of it.

My chest tightens uncomfortably as the feeling settles over my skin.

"Camillo?" Her lips graze my jaw and neck.

"I should get up," I tell her as I push the covers back.

Her brow furrows as disappointment and hurt briefly flicker over her features.

I take her in my arms. I can feel the heat in her body, but it's not enough to distract me from my thoughts. I keep hearing that voice in the back of my head that continues to haunt my nightmares. I'm not good enough—and nothing can change that...

I kiss her forehead where it wrinkles as I shove the thoughts and feelings that bubble in my gut down. They don't belong here right now.

Because I have this woman in my arms, pressed against me, demanding my attention. For now, it's enough.

It has to be.

I'll worry later. And I'll deal with the rest later.

"If we don't, we'll never leave this bed. Plus, I have a meeting at the casino this morning."

"Oh?"

"I'll be back before lunch," I assure her, pecking the corner of her lips. "Then we can finish this and watch that movie Ethan wanted."

I ease her from my body. Each of my muscles are wound tight with some push and pull I don't understand.

I need the gym. I need to work out my frustrations to see the bigger picture. I need to figure this shit out. To find a way to be part of her world. But for me, it's an impossible task...

"I'll meet you down there," I murmur, heading toward the shower, each step stiffer than the last.

And all the while, the voice in the back of my head tells me that I can't fix this...