

CHAPTER 33

CAMILLO

I'm a caged animal. Prowling along the mats in the gym, my form moves back and forth.

Sitting on the bench silently in front of me is an informant. And he's brought me nothing but more bad fucking news.

"Leave."

"Sir," he starts.

I whirl around to face him, my teeth and claws out. I'm looking for a fight. Anything to keep the beast sedated so that I can think.

His hands fly up in surrender.

"You did your fucking job. Now fucking leave."

Scrambling to the door, he flees.

I continue to prowl. I can't see her like this—wound up and pissed off. It'll only scare her. I've spent too many weeks hiding this part of me from her.

She's delicate and soft. The moment she sees me for the monster I am, she'll run from me. They always do. My chest aches with the haunted and disgusted looks of others. The sting of it steals my breath away as I rub at my sternum as if I can physically make it go away.

My fist clenches, sending a sharp throb through my knuckles. "Fuck." I drag a hand down my face, taking a deep breath in and hissing it out. Repeatedly trying to find some semblance of calm.

Rosa will be here any minute for her self-defense lesson. A weekly excuse to spend more time with her and to sink into her with the mirrors behind us. Who knew such a timid woman would enjoy being such an exhibitionist? My body thrums with the

memory of Rosa wrapped around me, our bodies slick with sweat and reflected in the mirror so I could see just how I filled her...

She's mine.

I need her like I need oxygen. Like my soul needs some shred of humanity to cling to before I tip over into a blackened pit of sin.

She's mine in a way no one else has ever been.

And yet she's not.

Not completely.

I have her body. I have her attention. I even think I might have won her heart. But I can't have her completely. I can't show the world just who she belongs to...belongs with.

"Fuck," I snarl, whirling a tight jab into the canvas bag to my right. It teeters on the hook, creaking from the force.

Divorce is clearly off the table if our conversation was anything to go by. He's old money and full of lies, connections, and deals to get whatever the fuck he wants. I have the power and the ruthlessness of the Fratellanza behind me, but it's not enough. Fighting fire with fire will only engulf us both to ruin.

I won't risk my family being exposed like that. I won't make a sloppy mistake in a rigged system. Rosa's right about one thing. We can't fight him in court. Not that I'd planned it ever making it that far. As far as I'm concerned, Grayden Devlin is a dead man on borrowed time.

"Sorry," Rosa pants from the door, breaking the dark turn my thoughts have taken—the only path they seem to take when it comes to Grayden and his worthless life.

"Why are you out of breath?" The sound of her panting steers my thoughts in a different, more welcome direction.

"I just got back from the store. The line was crazy, so it took longer than I thought. I didn't want to be late for this, though." A sheepish smile spreads over her face. Warmth soothes over the tightness in my muscles, replacing the ice-cold fury that threatens to drag me under.

"You didn't need to rush."

She smiles at me, the meek shyness she always has finding its way onto her face. It's beautiful—but another stark reminder of just how far apart we are. She's innocent and angelic. I'm not by a longshot—because a dark soul doesn't find a halo at the end of his blackened rainbow.

Gently, I wrap her hands, letting the silence envelop us. It's the distraction I need, her body pressing into mine as I listen to the sound of our shallow breathing.

But it doesn't break the wall around me.

The warmups blur by, but before we even start the actual lesson, I can't help pushing Rosa up against the mirror.

She starts to say something, but it's only a weak protest—because she needs this as much as I do.

Silencing her with a finger to her lips, I hum against her neck as I lick up the column of her throat. "I need you now..."

Her beautiful body fills my palms as I drag her hips into mine, pressing her luscious curves against me.

"You're utterly irresistible." I tug off her clothes, only just stopping myself from outright ripping them.

I run my tongue along her heavy tits as I see every inch of her nakedness in the mirrors around us.

Spinning her around, she braces herself against the wall as I kneel down, spreading her legs as I position myself beneath her.

My mouth waters at the sight of her glistening pussy.

I lick along her slick lips and tease with the tip of my tongue as she grinds herself on my tongue.

I know what she wants—and what I need. I latch my lips around her clit, sucking so that she moans loudly for me.

The sweet taste of her only fuels my hunger and hardness. And I push my tongue inside her and show her what I plan to do when my cock penetrates her.

I feast on her, my hands caressing her delicious thighs.

“Please, Camillo... I need to come...”

I deny her, enjoying every single second of worshipping her body.

With each swipe of my tongue, she grows more breathless and desperate.

And one last thrust of my tongue inside her makes her finally explode in pleasure and convulse around me.

But I'm not done yet and push up to my feet. Her breasts are full and perfect for my mouth to explore. I tongue her ripe nipple, grazing it between my teeth.

And snaking my hand down over her belly, my finger traces back along her slick entrance as she arches into my touch.

After teasing her clit with my fingers until she's whimpering, I hitch her up against the wall and wrap her legs around my waist.

Meeting her eyes in the huge mirror at our side, I trail my gaze down her body, feasting on the sight of the goddess before me. “See how fucking gorgeous you are,” I growl, grinding my dick against her slick seam and loving how she loses her inhibitions when we're together like this.

Sinking into her entrance, I take a moment to admire the beauty before me—her skin glowing and her eyes bright with desire.

I want to savor every touch and taste of her as if it's my first time with her.

And unable to hold back any longer, I plunge into her and take her hard and fast.

This is my favorite place to make love to her—watching our reflection in the mirror so that I can admire how perfect she looks with my cock inside her.

As I pound again and again into her warmth, she keeps begging for more.

Her pleas fuel my desire. I hold her in place as I move with urgency, driven by the need to give her another orgasm.

And when she finally comes undone again, unable to contain the sounds escaping from deep within her, it's all I need to let go and join her in ecstasy.

I continue to please her until she can't take any more, her cries echoing throughout the room before we slump against the wall, panting and spent.

And kissing her deeply, my heart beats rapidly, and I know I don't want to ever let her go.

But it's as if the world is whirling past me as I watch from the sidelines like a spectator to my life...

"We only have a couple of hours until everyone gets back from the zoo," she says as she gets dressed and checks the time.

"However will we fill the time?"

"None of that." She raises her blond brows at me as I step closer. "We're supposed to be working on those holds."

"I thought you hated those?"

"Better safe than sorry. You wanted to do this, Camillo, remember?"

"Maybe I changed my mind."

"I haven't." Her voice is soft as I step closer, and invading her space, I can nearly feel her tremble. "I don't want to be helpless again..."

"You aren't helpless, Rosa." Her gaze meets mine, and the softness nearly does me in. I don't deserve the look of reverence she gives me. Like I've saved her somehow.

"You were never helpless. You're a survivor."

"But now, I stand a chance in case something goes wrong." Her voice is timid.

"The only way that'll happen is if I'm dead," I say with a low growl.

She blinks at me, clearly startled at my admission.

But I'm not holding it back from her. Not anymore. If I want her to be mine, she needs to see me.

The thought terrifies the fuck out of me. And I'm hit by another ice-cold splash of water that she's too good for the likes of me. But I can't stop now that I've said it.

I brace for her reaction. For her gasp of horror. Her brow knits, and her eyes search mine, looking for something.

“The only way someone is going to lay a finger on you is if I’m gone. I will easily kill any man who tries to take you and Ethan from me.”

Her lips part. “Camillo...”

My body goes rigid. I know that tone.

Softly, her hand cups my cheek. I lean into the warmth. Eyes closed, I let her ease some of the darkness brewing inside me. Taming the roaring beast that lurks beneath my skin. The light of her cocoons me.

“Camillo, you don’t need to do that.”

“I do. I need you to understand...” I’m fumbling. The words have me tongue tied.

“I’m not a good man,” I breathe finally, forehead against hers. “I don’t deserve you. I won’t ever be worthy of you. But I want you—more than I want anything else. But I need you to understand that I’m going to do whatever I need to do to make sure you’re safe.”

She says nothing.

I can hear my pulse racing in my ears. The blood roaring as my chest constricts. It’s an intense confession. The closest I can get to telling her how I feel. I open my eyes, looking down at her. “That means taking care of your fucking husband.”

“Taking care?”

“If we can’t fight him legally, there are other ways.”

“You mean...” Her voice drifts off, silence filling the gap.

“I have a plan.” This is a goddamn bad idea. But she deserves to know.

I’ve had a plan for a while now. One that’s been formulating since she walked back into the estate, face swollen and beaten. A new beast rumbles to life in my body. One built of brimstone and fire. One that craves blood in payment. It’s settled into my mind and only solidified.

With the FBI off our backs now, the Fratellanza are once again untouchable. I can finally hit him where it hurts. I can repay every single mark and bruise that marred her perfect body until even hell won’t know what monstrosity has landed on their doorstep. Until the taste of copper fills the air and the beast I am is satisfied.

He'll never hurt Ethan or Rosa again.

And that thought beats as hard and solid as my heart.

She wriggles from my grasp. "No." Her head shakes furiously. And her eyes flash with something I can't pinpoint. Is she finally seeing me for what I am?

"No?"

"You can't." She clears her throat, wrapping her arms around her body.

Her words dig the blade in my chest deeper, twisting and serrating my insides. I blink. Pain spreads through my body as I stare at her. The look of horror on her face is mixed with something else, but I'm not sure what.

My hands fall to my sides. It takes every fiber of my body to remain upright. Knees locked, I stare at her, watching her features contort and brow furrow. She's pacing now, her arms still tightly wrapped around her middle. "There has to be another way..."

I can't hear the rest of what she says over the roaring in my head. Over the sound of the fracturing of what little is left of my heart, the jagged pieces crumbling into dust within me.

She's staring back at me now. Eyes wide and mouth trembling. I can see the disgust woven into the fleck of golden yellow amongst the warm brown hues of her irises.

I disgust her.

The thought repeats over and over again.

"Rosa—" I reach toward her.

But she flinches. And my hand drops back down.

"Camillo, promise me you won't do it."

I don't make promises I can't keep. I stare at her. She's only a few feet from me now, but a chasm stands between us that might as well be the Grand Canyon. My throat works around a lump as I try to find the words to make it go away, to drown out the feeling that overwhelms me.

She steps closer. “Please?” Tears rim her eyes. Tears over the monster she realizes I am now. Over the realization of just whose bed she’s been sharing all this time.

Ice fills my veins. She finally sees the nightmare I am. Every bit of the broken, mangled monster that the gossipers have told stories of. Why wouldn’t she? I’ve just offered to kill her husband—to make her mine, utterly and completely.

My chin jerks. A tight nod is all I offer. Because it’s not a promise I’m willing to make.

Despite the coldness that washes over me, I will do whatever I can to get her out from his grasp. Away from his poison. And if that means dirtying my hands, so be it. And even if it means destroying the world for her and myself, I’ll do it.

“We should get started.” I move past her to the gym bag.

Rummaging around for extra wrap, my mind tumbles over everything. I knew it was too good to be true. I knew the moment the mask came off, she’d see the monster everyone else believes me to be. I’d hoped she’d see past it. I’d hoped she’d never look at me the way she just has. I wanted to be better for her. To do better by her. But that isn’t my nature.

I’ve known it since the moment I saw her in that church—I’ve known that I’d ruin her.

Laughter fills the room as we all sit around the table for dinner this evening.

Marco shoots me a look of concern, but I just send him a small nod to let him know that I’m okay.

“Camillo?”

I snap back to reality. Rosa’s hand is on my thigh. The table is empty except for her. “Where did...?”

“Everyone left a while ago. Are you feeling okay?”

I plaster on a smile, squeezing her hand. “Fine. Guess I zoned out a little. We should probably go up to bed.”

“Okay.” I watch as she gnaws her bottom lip, eyes closing. When she opens them, there’s something shimmering in her gaze. “I’m sorry.”

“Sorry?”

“For earlier.”

A hollow laugh leaves me. “Don’t be. It’s fine.”

“It’s not. You don’t understand—”

“I do.”

“No.” How the word leaves her lips freezes me in place. Timid, shy Rosa has never sounded more determined since I’ve met her. Her chin wobbles, just a little, betraying how she really feels, but she meets my gaze with a steel behind her eyes, the brown lit with a fire.

“No?”

“I just...” She sighs, seeming to gather her courage. “It’s complicated. But what you were suggesting, what you said, I just think there’s a better way that doesn’t involve that. And we’ll figure it out. Together.”

As comforting as her words are intended to be, they don’t dispel the bubble of hopelessness that’s blown up inside me. How could someone like her love a monster like me now that she’s seen the beast within me? How could I have ever fooled myself into thinking I wouldn’t drag her to hell by keeping her with me?

“Together.” Mindless, I repeat the word before changing the subject. “Let’s get Ethan to bed, huh?”

“Camillo?” she says with a tug on my hand. “You understand, right? This isn’t... It’s not about him. It’s because I don’t want you to take that risk. I can’t—I won’t let you do that for me. Violence isn’t the only option here.”

But it’s the only one I understand. It’s the only way to ensure he can’t harm her ever again. If I want her the way every bone in my body desires, then I can’t allow him to keep breathing. She’s right about one thing, though. It isn’t about him at all. It’s always been about her.

And the creature that lurks in the darkness of my subconscious is out for blood.

And I won't be satisfied until I have it...

And although I think things have taken a turn for the worse between Rosa and me, I never imagine what happens next, and it's so bad that it makes her want to leave me...