

CHAPTER 45

ROSA

I stifle a soft groan as I sweep up the last of the broken vase from the den. The soft rays of morning light fill the room. It's a mess. Blood smears and puddles in certain spots, but I make a point not to look too long at it.

I don't know where Camillo and his brothers moved Grayden's body. It's better that I don't.

"Rosa?"

I blink, shaking the thoughts from my mind. "Yes?"

"You don't have to do this."

"I know, but I want to." I already owe Juliana and Cate big time for managing to get the kids up and in their rooms without seeing all the carnage.

Camillo's large body slides behind mine, his warm hand cupping my hip tenderly. "We can handle this. You should be resting."

It's the same argument he's given me over the last hour. First in the kitchen, then in the foyer, and now here. "I will. Once this is done. And I did tell you I wanted to make breakfast."

His hand holds me tighter, but not painfully as he's aware of where the bruises and scrapes are. His lips ghost along my throat to the juncture behind my ear. "You can make breakfast without having to clean the whole damn house."

I suck in a breath, trying to banish the fog in my head that his nearness brings. "Please let me do this."

"Okay." His soft heated puff of air against my skin has it pebbling with goosebumps. Cleaning is now the furthest thing from my mind.

He steps back, letting the cool air rush in, stealing the heat from my body. And we work in a companionable silence from then on until it looks as if nothing ever

happened. But when I close my eyes, I can still see the vases and lamp shattered on the ground and the drag marks smeared through the blood.

“Rosa.”

“I’ll be okay.”

Tugging gently on my hand, Camillo pulls me toward him until I’m in his lap on the plush sofa, his dark eyes searching mine.

“I just need to give it time. I’ll start to feel better.” I try to sound confident. Because despite the pit that fell in my stomach when Camillo admitted he’d killed Grayden, I feel lighter. I feel free.

Camillo’s thumb brushes my cheek, and I lean into the heat of his hand. “I know you will. But it’s okay if you’re not right now.”

Tears sting my eyes, and I squeeze my eyes tighter. I’m done crying for a man who wanted to kill me. I’m done mourning a life he should have given me. And yet, that doesn’t stop the soft trickle from the corners of my eyes.

“You’re safe, Rosa.” The words are murmured again and again against my temple before Camillo kisses my forehead, my cheeks, my mouth. Replacing every terrible memory I have with something else. I cling to him as he holds me. “You’re safe, I promise.”

“I know.” I rest my forehead against his, opening my eyes. His dark eyes soften as they hold mine.

I’m not sure how long we stay like that. Something between us has shifted, though neither of us has said a word about it.

“I love you, Camillo.” The words are barely above a whisper. I’m not even sure he’s heard me. They just came out. But I mean them. I am in love with this brutal man before me. I’m in love with every part of him, even those that scare me to death.

His hands on my hips tighten, pulling me closer against his chest. His fingers thread into my hair. My heart thumps wildly as my head fogs. “Say it again, Rosa,” he whispers.

“I love you, Camillo.”

His mouth tugs upward, and the hardened mafia man before me transforms once more into that boyish guardian angel who first swept me off my feet. “Fuck, I could hear that all day,” he growls. A laugh bubbles out of me. “You mean it, Rosa?”

“I do.”

He closes his eyes and just breathes in deeply. Once more his lips claim mine, deeper and hungrier than before. His large hands move around my hips until I’m grinding against him, panting with need.

“Fuck.” The word is gruff and needy. He’s just as affected as I am every time we touch. “When I thought you’d left me and weren’t coming back, and then, when you were lying there on the floor yesterday…”

His eyes squeeze shut tightly, and he grips me all the tighter, like he’s scared I’ll vanish into thin air.

“Shit…” His calloused fingers cup both sides of my face as he looks directly into my eyes. “I’m not good with emotions and words, Rosa. But after how close I came to losing you, you better get used to me telling you how much I love you every single fucking day and night. And I’ll go to war and back with the devil himself just to keep you here so that I can keep telling you.” He sighs deeply. “Nulla è difficile per chi ama,” he murmurs against my hair.”

“What do those words mean? I keep hearing you murmur them.” It’s something I’ve been curious about for a while.

“They mean ‘nothing is difficult for those who love’. They mean that I’ll always do whatever I can for you because I love you.”

Everything in my body melts, and I lean my forehead against his, keeping us eye to eye.

“I think I fell in love with you the first time I met you, Rosa.”

His bruised and battered hands drop to the back of my thighs as he lifts me flush against him. I can feel how hard he is for me. My legs circle his waist as he carries me toward the hall with a wicked gleam in his eyes.

“I love you,” he whispers against my neck as he sprinkles it with kisses. “I love you.” He pulls back, tasting my lips once more. “I’m going to make you sick of hearing it.”

“Not possible.” I giggle against his lips. “What about breakfast?”

“What do you mean? I’m about to have it...”

A flush spreads across my cheeks in the way only he can cause.

The sound of soft voices floats down the hall, but he doesn’t even pause in his strides. I hear a snicker and a stifled groan before the door to our bedroom is closed behind us. My body falls into the plush mattress and silken sheets as he kneels before me.

His eyes lock on to mine. “I love you, Rosa.”

His hand moves over my legs, causing my body to shudder with pleasure. “I love you too, Camillo.”

“Good. Now let me show you how much.”

A thrill of need shivers through my body, and I can’t help the laugh that leaves me.

This man wants me. Loves me. I never believed I’d get so lucky, but Camillo has turned my whole world upside down.

And I can’t think of a better way to live my life than tied to this dark angel of a man.

Camillo’s just taken Ethan up to bed while I finish up the dishes. As soon as I’m done in the kitchen, I head up to them, loving the bedtime routine that’s always so special now. It’s probably one of my favorite times of the day, more so now that Camillo’s always part of it too.

As I reach Ethan’s bedroom, I pause by the door. Ethan’s already fast asleep, and I watch Camillo as he tucks the comforter around his small body, speaking to him in a low voice.

“I know you’re asleep, buddy, but I’ve been thinking about a really special story that I want to tell you.”

My brows knit into a frown. Aren’t they supposed to be reading Treasure Island at the moment? But I listen as Camillo starts the story...

“Once upon a time, there was a big grizzly bear and a cute gentle koala.

The grizzly bear thought someone as sweet and gorgeous as the koala could never love someone as scary and brutal as him. But then she surprised him—by showing him that she did love him.

And what's more, she had a baby koala secretly tucked into her koala pouch, surprising the grizzly bear in the best possible way when she brought her little boy out and introduced them.

And they showed the grizzly bear how to love, and it was a frightening feeling for him, but it was also the best feeling in the whole wide world.

The grizzly bear fell madly in love with not just her but also with the baby koala called Ethan.

And they gave the grizzly bear the one thing he'd wanted more than anything else in his entire life—his own family.

And you know, I might not have seen the ending of this story yet, but I just know that they're going to live happily ever after..."

I watch as he smooths back Ethan's fair hair from his forehead with a tender touch, and tears pour down my cheeks as I hear this. How did I find a man as wonderful as Camillo?

And I want this moment to last forever, thinking that things can't possibly get any better...